



Daily Report

Monday, 24 May 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 24 May 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Peter Dowd:

[\[2310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has undertaken an assessment of the potential links between (a) universities based in the UK and research institutes in China and (b) the People's Liberation Army.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK's research sector is independent, but Her Majesty's Government is supporting the sector to make informed decisions on international research collaboration. The government has published "Trusted Research" and supported the Universities representative body, Universities UK, to develop its own security guidelines which were published in October 2020. We continue to work closely with universities to promote advice and best practice, and to respond to specific inquiries.

■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Procurement

Chris Elmore:

[\[2390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on updating procurement strategies for the Advanced Research and Invention Agency prior to projects beginning.

Amanda Solloway:

The Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) is expected to commission and support others to conduct research in pursuit of its highly ambitious goals, bringing together parties from public and private spheres. This may involve procuring R&D services and equipment to support research goals.

The Bill exempts ARIA from the Public Contracts Regulations, to enable ARIA to procure services, equipment and works relating to its research goals at speed, in a similar way to the private sector.

In addition to the statutory requirement for ARIA's statement of accounts and annual report to be provided to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and laid before Parliament, ARIA will report publicly on its procurement activities.

■ Business: Luton

Sarah Owen:

[\[3182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many times (a) he and (b) Cabinet colleagues met business leaders in Luton in (i) 2020 and (ii) 2021 to discuss plans to support Luton businesses through the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Departments publish quarterly details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations on GOV.UK. Details for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

The latest published data covers October to December 2020. Data for January to March 2021 will be published in due course.

■ Conditions of Employment**Gavin Newlands:****[3017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with ACAS on bringing forward legislative proposals on employment rights.

Paul Scully:

I have monthly meetings with the ACAS Chair, Clare Chapman, and Chief Executive, Susan Clews, that cover both operational and policy matters. ACAS are an important partner for the Department, and provide important insight into workplace issues as we prepare for an Employment Bill.

■ Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988**Julie Elliott:****[3863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of clause 182D of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 on artists' incomes.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government has made no recent assessment of the effect of section 182D of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 on artists' incomes.

However, the Government is aware of the current debate around revenues for musicians and is following it closely. Robust evidence in this area is vital, so we welcome the DCMS Select Committee's inquiry into the economics of music streaming and look forward to its analysis and recommendations. Alongside this, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is working closely with industry on a research project to investigate the flow of money to music creators. This project is due to report in summer 2021 and will help improve our understanding of this important issue.

■ Coronavirus: Research**Dan Carden:****[2427]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure funding for covid-19 research is not affected by reductions to the Official Development Assistance budget.

Amanda Solloway:

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

BEIS is working with its delivery partners to implement the R&D ODA settlement for financial year 21/22. This work looks to protect the most impactful research programmes, with prioritisation driven by the Government's Strategic Framework for ODA. The Framework includes priorities to tackle climate and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science and research; open societies and conflict; humanitarian assistance; and trade.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Civil Service Agencies**

Seema Malhotra:**[3000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the membership of boards of each of his Department's agencies are (a) women, (b) minority ethnic and (c) disabled people.

Amanda Solloway:

BEIS sponsors 43 public bodies, including Arm's Length Bodies (Executive Agencies, Non-Departmental Bodies and Non-Ministerial Departments), statutory officeholders and Public Corporations.

Any Public Appointments to the Boards of these organisations are made by BEIS and are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The diversity statistics for these appointments are reported on a regular basis via the Cabinet Office Public Appointment Data Report. In the most recent report, the proportion of BEIS Public Appointees who identified as female, minority ethnic or having a disability were as follows:

FEMALE	35%
Ethnic Minority	6%
Declared a disability	9%

You can see the report in more detail here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-appointments-data-report-201819>.

The Cabinet Office will be publishing the 2019-2020 report in due course.

■ **Electricity Generation: Fossil Fuels**

Alan Brown:**[1331]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the capacity market contracts awarded for fossil fuel generation.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

A full list of Capacity Market (CM) agreements awarded in each CM auction since 2014 can be found in the annual auction results reports published on the Electricity Market Reform Delivery Body (EMR DB) website (<https://www.emrdeliverybody.com/CM/Auction-Results-1.aspx>). Additionally, the EMR DB publishes CM registers containing current information on CM agreements for each delivery year. These can be filtered by fuel type and are also on the EMR DB website (<https://www.emrdeliverybody.com/CM/Registers.aspx>).

The CM's role is to provide security of supply by guaranteeing that we have sufficient capacity to manage with even the highest peaks in electricity demand at the least cost to electricity consumers. The CM is technology neutral as it does not seek to procure specific volumes of capacity from different types of technology. All types of capacity can participate, including renewable technologies, storage, and demand side response.

We have recently taken steps to better align the CM with our net zero ambitions. Wind and solar technology have been permitted to participate in the CM from 2019 onwards. Carbon emissions limits were also introduced to apply to all auctions from 2020 onwards. This means that new build plants that exceed these limits have been excluded from competing in auctions from 2020; and existing plants that exceed the limits will be excluded from being awarded agreements for all delivery years from 1 October 2024. As a result, the 2021 four-year-ahead (T-4) auction marked the first time that coal plants did not participate or secure agreements in a CM auction, and they will be unable to do so in any future T-4 auction.

■ Employment: Environment Protection**Mr Nicholas Brown:****[3803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of high quality green jobs in Tyne and Wear.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are determined to seize the once-in-a-generation economic opportunities of the net zero transition by creating new business opportunities and, by one estimate, supporting up to 2 million green jobs by 2030 across all regions of the UK. The UK has a strong base to build upon, in 2019 there were already over 410,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains across the country. Through my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan, we will support a further 90,000 green collar jobs across the UK by 2024, and up to 250,000 by 2030.

The Getting Building Fund is investing £64.4 million in 20 projects across the North East, creating an estimated 2475 jobs. This includes £1.82 million for Tyne Dock Enterprise Park in South Shields, which will accelerate site preparation and infrastructure for the offshore wind sector. This site has been selected by Equinor/SSE to establish a major Offshore wind land-based hub to service the offshore wind farms off the North East coast and will create over 200 jobs. The

Getting Building Fund is also investing £1.3 million to develop a strategic riverside offshore wind enterprise zone in Wallsend, which could create a further 500 jobs and £1.86 million in the InTEGReL Customer Energy Village research facility in Gateshead, which will demonstrate technologies enabling existing housing stock decarbonisation to net zero.

Through the Growth Deal agreed with North East LEP, we provided £379.6 million to support nearly 50 projects and programmes, which are estimated to create up to 8200 jobs and attract £300m of public and private investment. In Tyne and Wear, this included £8 million for the Swans Energy Park in Wallsend, a key strategic site for the offshore and subsea sector, which will host several hundred jobs when fully developed.

In order to ensure we have the skilled workforce to deliver net zero and our Ten Point Plan, we have launched the Green Jobs Taskforce. The taskforce will conclude its work in summer 2021, with the actions feeding into our Net Zero Strategy to be published later in the year.

■ Hydrogen: Iron and Steel

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[4064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to support the development of the UK's hydrogen sector; and whether he has made an assessment of the steps the Government can take to support hydrogen-based steelmaking in the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan was clear on our aim for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030 for use across the economy. The forthcoming Hydrogen Strategy will set out what is required to build a hydrogen economy fit for 2030, Carbon Budget 6 and beyond, whilst maximising economic benefits. We will also consult on priority policies, including hydrogen business models, a low carbon hydrogen standard, and the £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund.

The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, published on 17 March, commits to work with the newly constituted Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'. Hydrogen-based steelmaking is one of the technological approaches being examined as part of this process.

In order to support these efforts, the Government has announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The decarbonisation of the steel sector and industry more widely will also be supported through the £1 billion CCUS Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and the £240m NetZero Hydrogen Fund.

■ Iron and Steel: Carbon Emissions

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[4062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans for the Net Zero Strategy to include an assessment of the steps required to decarbonise the UK steel industry.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[4063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of decarbonising the UK steel sector; and what plans his Department has to support that project.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Decarbonising UK industry is a core part of the Government's ambitious plan for the green industrial revolution. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy published on 17 March, commits to work with the Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

Hydrogen, electrification, and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) are the main technological options being examined as part of this process. The industry decarbonisation pathways technical annex of the strategy (pg. 153-155) presents two possible options for the decarbonisation of the iron and steel industry: Our wide-ranging support also includes: providing over £500m in recent years to help with the costs of energy; a £315m Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, which aims to support businesses with high energy use to cut their bills and reduce carbon emission; and our £250m Clean Steel Fund that will support the decarbonisation of the steel sector.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Seema Malhotra:

[\[3001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support the UK Steel industry.

Nadhim Zahawi:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has reformed and co-chairs the UK Steel Council, an important a forum to work together on transitioning to a competitive, sustainable and low carbon future. My noble Friend the Minister for Investment, Lord Grimstone, has also formed and co-chairs the Steel Procurement Taskforce to help the sector be well placed in competing for and securing public contracts.

Our wide-ranging support also includes: providing over £500m in recent years to help with the costs of energy; a £315m Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, which aims to support businesses with high energy use to cut their bills and reduce carbon emission; and our £250m Clean Steel Fund that will support the decarbonisation of the steel sector. The sector has also had access to our unprecedented package of

COVID support, which is still available to the sector to protect jobs and ensure that producers have the right support during this challenging time.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's long-term plan is to support jobs in the UK steel industry; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of hydrogen-based steelmaking to decarbonise the sector.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to secure the future of primary steelmaking in the UK.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to page 53 of the Climate Change Committee's report, The Sixth Carbon Budget Manufacturing and construction, what plan he has to set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near zero emissions by 2035 as pledged in the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to decarbonise the UK steel industry in the Net Zero Strategy; and what plans his Department has to direct the Clean Steel Fund towards hydrogen-based steelmaking.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Decarbonising UK industry is a core part of the Government's ambitious plan for the green industrial revolution. UK steel plays a critical role in the economy as a foundation industry and the Government remains committed to the UK steel industry and a decarbonised future, supporting local economic growth and our levelling-up agenda. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, published on 17 March, commits to work with the newly constituted Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'. Hydrogen-based steelmaking is one of the technological approaches being examined as part of this process.

The Steel Council offers the forum for Government, industry and trade unions to work in partnership on the shared objective of creating an achievable, long-term plan to support the sector's transition to a competitive, sustainable and low carbon future. In order to support these efforts, the Government has announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The decarbonisation of the steel sector and industry more widely will also be supported through the £1 billion CCUS Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and £240m Net-Zero Hydrogen Fund.

■ Land Registry

Julian Sturdy:

[1311]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate his Department has made of the average length of time a first registration of a property with the Land Registry takes to complete; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce that time.

Paul Scully:

HM Land Registry processes over 70,000 applications every day (based on 2020/21 figures). Over 80% are completed within three days. The vast majority of the remainder are completed within 5 weeks.

Of these applications, 1.4% are complex, including first registrations, creation of a new lease or transferring part of a property. It currently takes HMLR an average of seven months to complete an application for first registration of a property.

HM Land Registry is making significant investment in long-term transformation to improve customer experience and efficiency. It is improving processing times by greater digitisation and automation, and by building more operational capacity.

HM Land Registry will fast track applications, on request, where a delay would put a property sale or any kind of property transaction at risk, or cause any other problems not related to a land transaction.

■ Medicine: Research

Colleen Fletcher:

[3008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support charity funded medical research programmes that have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognise that this is a particularly difficult time for medical research charities, given the impact of COVID-19 on their fundraising activities.

We appreciate the globally recognised expertise of these charities, and the substantial contributions they make to our world-leading life sciences sector.

The Government already provides significant funding to charities' research, for example through Research England's Quality Related (QR) charity support funding. This year charity QR will amount to £204 million, to support charity funded research in universities in England and equivalent support is provided in Scotland through devolved funding arrangements.

The Government has demonstrated its ambitions for research by committing £14.9 billion to R&D in 2021/22. This funding will support the life sciences sector within which medical research charities operate alongside other research areas.

BEIS and DHSC regularly discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on charity-funded research with the Association of Medical Research Charities in order to review how we might provide support for medical research charities this financial year.

■ **Mineworkers' Pension Scheme**

Julie Elliott: [\[2975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to review the existing surplus sharing arrangements of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The BEIS Select Committee recently undertook an enquiry into the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme and published its findings on 29 April. I am due to meet the Scheme Trustees next month to discuss the Committee's report and I am keen to hear their views before responding to the Committee.

Julie Elliott: [\[2976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations made by the the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee in its report on the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme published on the 29 April 2021.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

I am due to meet the Scheme Trustees next month to discuss the Committee's report. I am keen to get their views and will respond formally to the Committee following that discussion.

■ **Music: Copyright**

Julie Elliott: [\[3862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to update copyright law in the music industry.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government has no specific plans to update copyright law in the music industry.

However, the Government is aware of the current debate around music streaming revenues and is following it closely. Any change in the law would need to be justified by robust evidence, so we welcome the DCMS Select Committee's inquiry into this issue and look forward to its analysis and recommendations. Alongside this, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is working closely with industry on a research project to investigate the flow of money to music creators. This project is due to report in summer 2021 and will help improve our understanding of this important issue.

■ Overseas Companies: Xinjiang

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[3029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of (a) how many British businesses operate in Xinjiang, China and (b) proportion of those businesses have published Modern Slavery statements.

Paul Scully:

We do not have data setting out trade and investment flows between the UK and individual Chinese provinces. However, we are undertaking some internal analysis to strengthen our evidence base. Businesses can have complex, multi-tiered global supply chains which create significant challenges in having visibility over working conditions throughout the supply chain. This means that companies need to be constantly vigilant in assessing and addressing their risk exposure. We have provided detailed and specific guidance to UK businesses, and we will continue to engage them on this issue.

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 established the UK as the first country in the world to require businesses to report annually on steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. In order to assess compliance rates, the Home Office contracted the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) from September 2019 to January 2020 to undertake an audit of compliance on the Home Office's behalf. The audit findings on levels of compliance were published on 17 September 2020 in the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's annual report (available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-annual-report-2019-to-2020>).

■ Package Holidays: Repayments

Seema Malhotra:

[2998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Competition and Markets Authority on the refund rights of holiday makers for holidays booked with package holiday companies.

Paul Scully:

BEIS Ministers and officials meet the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) regularly to discuss a wide range of issues, including the CMA's work to enforce consumer law in cases where consumers have not received refunds they are owed. If the CMA finds evidence that businesses are failing to comply with the law, the CMA will take appropriate enforcement action, which could include taking a firm to court if it does not address its concerns.

■ Poverty

Seema Malhotra: [2997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Competition and Markets Authority on (a) measuring and (b) tackling the poverty premium.

Paul Scully:

The Department engages regularly with the Competition and Markets Authority and other regulators on poor business practices such as the loyalty penalty which result in vulnerable and low income consumers paying more. A summary of some of the Competition and Markets Authority's work is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consumer-vulnerability-challenges-and-potential-solutions>.

I also chair the Consumer Forum which convenes economic regulators and government departments. The Consumer Forum aims to coordinate the support for vulnerable consumers in the economically regulated sectors, including support for consumers struggling to pay their essential service bills.

■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [2861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total (a) financial and (b) tCO₂ per annum savings projected were for all grants issued through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Grants issued through Phase 1 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme are projected to reduce carbon emissions by around 100,000 tCO₂e per annum.

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is not designed to produce financial savings, so although some projects may result in financial savings, no projection has been made of total financial savings.

■ Re-employment

Gavin Newlands: [3016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the ACAS report on fire and rehire will be published.

Gavin Newlands: [3019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of employees who have been subject to dismissal and re-engagement proceedings in the last 12 months.

Paul Scully:

The Department engaged ACAS to gather evidence of how fire and rehire is being used and they have concluded their work. ACAS engaged with a range of groups,

including employer bodies and trade unions, as well as professional bodies with advisory contact with employers, such as employment lawyers, accountants, and payroll services.

Officials are now giving ACAS' due consideration, and the Government will respond in due course.

The Department does not collect quantitative evidence on dismissal and re-engagement.

Employers are however required to notify my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State if they are proposing making more than 20 people redundant. The Office for National Statistics produce detailed statistics on redundancies by industry and individual characteristics.

■ Renewable Energy: Heating

Virginia Crosbie:

[3210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure the economic viability of hydrogen-ready boilers, (b) ensure the successful roll out and uptake of heat pumps and hybrid heat pumps and (c) help reduce the running costs of electricity powered heating systems and (iv) encourage the transition away from fossil fuel domestic heating systems.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Meeting our carbon goals will require the vast majority of the UK's homes and non-domestic buildings to be zero carbon by 2050, through a combination of energy efficiency measures and moving to low carbon heating.

(a) We are supporting a range of research, development and testing projects designs to help determine the feasibility of using low carbon hydrogen as an alternative to the use of natural gas for heating. The Government has been supporting the development of hydrogen-ready boilers through the Hy4Heat programme. The programme includes ongoing projects to assess the timelines for the scale up of hydrogen-ready boiler production and their potential future costs. We will be consulting on the potential role of hydrogen-ready boilers in the transition to Net Zero later this year.

(b) The Government is bringing forward a wide-ranging package of policies to support the development of the heat pump market towards our ambition for 600,000 installations per year by 2028 including targeted regulations and financial support. We are working closely with industry to grow the supply chain, manage any impacts on the electricity network and provide support to consumers. Furthermore, the Government is helping to drive wider consumer acceptance and demonstrating the suitability of heat pumps, including hybrid heating systems, across the UK housing stock, through the £14.6 million Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project.

(c) The Government is keen to ensure that households and businesses are aware that all energy users are fairly sharing in the benefits and costs of the UK's transition

to Net Zero. Ensuring costs of the transition are allocated fairly is a priority for this Government, and we will shortly begin a dialogue on this between Government, consumers and industry, by publishing a call for evidence on affordability and fairness.

(d) Transitioning away from fossil fuels will not be simple and will require clear, long-term policy. The Government will shortly unveil a comprehensive policy package to support this ambition, including targeted regulatory, market-based and public investment measures, and will set out further detail on this in our forthcoming Heat and Buildings Strategy.

■ Restart Grant Scheme: Southport

Damien Moore:

[3137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of coronavirus restart grants applied for by businesses in Southport were approved by Sefton Borough Council before 17 May 2021.

Paul Scully:

The £5 billion Restart Grants scheme announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3 March 2021 are one-off grants to businesses in the non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure, personal care and accommodation sectors to support businesses to reopen as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted in the coming months.

Businesses in the non-essential retail sector are able to apply for grants of up to £6,000. Businesses in the hospitality, leisure, personal care and gym sectors are able to apply for grants of up to £18,000.

We are not able to share a breakdown of the funding distributed by Sefton Borough Council at this stage. We will publish data on Restart Grant payments in due course.

All data on Government allocations and Local Authority payments of grant schemes is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>.

■ Shipbuilding: Loan Guarantee Scheme

Martin Vickers:

[2263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders on the establishment of a home shipbuilding loan guarantee scheme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

BEIS officials, working with colleagues in the Department of Trade and with the support of various industry bodies, have conducted extensive consultation on a prospective home shipbuilding credit guarantee scheme. They have consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders including industry, vessel operators and commercial

lenders. These discussions are helping to shape the development of the business case and inform the requirements for the prospective instrument.

■ Space Debris

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[2402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of a Kessler Syndrome type of occurrence in space on the UK's (a) national security, (b) domestic and international defence operations, (c) economy, (d) communications capability, (e) scientific research capability, (f) weather forecasting, (g) aviation and shipping sectors, (h) GPS needs; and what assessment the Government has made of the level of risk of an event of that kind occurring.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK Space Agency, as an executive Agency of BEIS, is the lead department assessing and mitigating space-based risks to Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), covering the aspects including those highlighted in (a) to (h). There are heavy dependencies between the CNI sectors such as defence operations, communications, aviation and shipping, which we are engaged in identifying as well as working to ensure the impact of disruptions to space services is understood and mitigated. A Kessler Syndrome incident is a theoretical risk which has the potential to significantly impact operational services, up to and including a total loss. This has never been experienced, but we are working to understand the likelihood, assess the impacts and mitigate the risk.

The Government is committed to regularly reviewing and assessing risks to ensure that they are accurately prioritised in our resilience framework. Our Space Surveillance and Tracking function is dedicated to reducing the risk from orbital hazards. We supplement US data with UK sensors and analysis to monitor orbital collisions and other events, working in conjunction with MOD Space Operations Centre. We also support several programmes and initiatives looking at options for safely removing orbital debris.

■ Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme

Steve Double:

[1323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential merits of an extension to the Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme beyond 30 June 2021 and (b) potential effect of that extension on the hospitality sector.

Paul Scully:

The Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme has successfully supported over half a million businesses across a range of different sectors to keep trading throughout the pandemic.

The Government is working closely with businesses and participating insurers to ensure businesses continue to be able to access appropriate levels of credit insurance coverage to support economic recovery.

■ UK Research and Innovation: Grants

Dan Carden:

[\[2426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for UKRI of the £120 million funding gap between its allocations and commitments as a result of reductions in the Official Development Assistance budget.

Amanda Solloway:

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

We are currently working with UKRI, and all our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners, to manage the Financial Year 2021/22 ODA allocations. UKRI have written to their award holders to set out the process for reviewing ODA funding this year, and to explore options for individual programmes. (Full details have been published on the UKRI website).

The Government recognises the importance of supporting international research partnerships and supporting the UK research sector. The Government is committed to increasing UK investment in R&D to £14.9bn in 2021/22. This follows four years of significant growth in R&D funding, including a boost of more than £1.5 billion in 2020/21. It will mean UK Government R&D spending is now at its highest level in four decades.

■ UK Seabed Resources: Deep Sea Mining

Caroline Lucas:

[\[2254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to publicly consult on an extension to UK Seabed Resources' exploration licences for deep sea mining beyond their initial 10 years.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We do not have plans to publicly consult on an extension. The two licences issued to UK Seabed Resources in 2012 and 2013 are for exploration, and not exploitation (mining) activity. The licences are granted subject to periodic review, and so would not be extended beyond 10 years without a review by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which is in line with the relevant legislation. Exploitation is not currently permitted to be conducted, and the International Seabed Authority is still working towards exploitation regulations that would need to be in place. A full Environmental Impact Assessment – subject to public consultation – would be

required before any mining could be conducted by UK Seabed Resources or any other operator.

Caroline Lucas:

[2255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will update the UK's licences with UK Seabed Resources for deep sea mining exploration in order to extend the conditions for sponsoring a future exploitation contract to cover the precautionary principle.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK is playing a crucial role in ensuring that strong environmental standards are upheld in the growing deep sea mining industry.

We have agreed not to sponsor or support the issuing of any exploitation licences for deep sea mining projects until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impact on deep sea ecosystems, and strong and enforceable environmental standards have been developed and put in place by the International Seabed Authority.

The licences issued to UK Seabed Resources Ltd (UKSR) already include significant conditions in relation to environmental considerations, including sections on protection of the environment and environmental monitoring & reporting. In addition, the licences are issued in line with prevailing legislation which provides further environmental safeguards. The licences (which are published on UKSR's website) also include explicit reference to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA). The conditions for the UK acting as a sponsor state for an exploitation contract include that "the Licensee has completed exploration activities pursuant to the plan of work..." and that "the Licensee makes an application for, and satisfies the requirements for, an exploitation licence...". These conditions would not be met without detailed evidence, including in relation to environmental assessments, and an exploitation licence would not be granted by the International Seabed Authority until strong and enforceable environmental standards have been developed and are in place.

■ Water Power

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[2860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what actions he is taking to support the development of wave and tidal stream technologies.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has a long history of supporting the development and deployment of wave and tidal stream technologies in the UK. To date, we have provided sustained and targeted support enabling the wave and tidal stream sectors to move from initial concept onto prototypes and now the first arrays. Since 2003, various bodies across Government have provided innovation funding of £175m to the wave and tidal sectors. Wave and tidal stream projects remain eligible to compete in Pot 2 for

Contracts for Difference auctions, with the next allocation round commencing December 2021.

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence inviting views on the scope for marine technologies across the UK. This concluded on 30th September 2020 and we are currently reviewing the responses received.

■ Wind Power: Procurement

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[2859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the onshore wind industry on their supply chains.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Onshore wind is a key part of the Government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector. Achieving our ambitious 2050 Net Zero target will require significant increases in renewable electricity generation, and we will need to increase deployment across a range of technologies, including onshore wind.

The BEIS ministerial team and officials have regular discussions with the onshore wind industry about how we can achieve this, including the role of supply chains.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[2856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of developing (a) 2GW of floating wind by 2030 and (b) 16GW of floating wind by 2040.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[2857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the floating wind industry on the potential economic benefits of setting a target of 16GW of floating wind by 2040.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

One of the key priorities of this Government is putting in place policies to support a significant growth of offshore wind to 2030 and beyond. Within this, we are committed to supporting the development of floating offshore wind, as reflected by our ambitious target of 1GW of floating wind by 2030.

The Department has regular discussions with members of the floating offshore wind sector. Floating offshore wind projects will be eligible to bid in the next Contract for Difference allocation round, which will open in December 2021. This approach will provide the foundation for investment in a sustainable, competitive UK based supply chain from which we will learn to help plan our future approach and the feasible scale of ramp up of deployment.

CABINET OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Peter Dowd:**[\[2311\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) offices, (b) envoys and (c) advisors the Government plans to create as part of the Strategic Framework outlined in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (IR) established the Government's national security and international policy objectives to 2025. The IR Strategic Framework is designed to be flexible, rather than an exhaustive description of all of the Government's activity to 2025.

The Government is considering the processes, systems and structures for effective implementation of the IR. A new strategy team in the National Security Secretariat will lead implementation, working with Departments to develop plans to deliver the vision described in the IR Strategic Framework. This work is ongoing.

■ **Cabinet Office: Buildings****Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[3807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has for the future use or disposal of No. 36 Whitehall, formerly the Paymaster General's Office; when it was vacated by its last public service occupants; what the annual cost to the public purse has been of the building in (a) rates and (b) maintenance; what estimate he has made of its (a) rental and (b) freehold value; and if he will make a statement.

Julia Lopez:

The Government Property Agency is currently developing plans to refurbish the building for use by civil servants.

Due to reasons of commercial sensitivity, I will write to my Hon. Friend separately with details of these costs.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[2923\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 140, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of adopting a zero covid-19 strategy; and whether the Government made such an assessment as part of its public health strategy.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 22 February, the Government published the ['COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021'](#), providing a roadmap out of lockdown restrictions in England. I refer the hon. Member

to the Prime Minister's [statement](#) when presenting this to Parliament, where he said that there is no credible route to a zero-covid Britain.

In the meantime, the vaccination programme continues at pace. However as we have set out in our roadmap, no vaccine is 100% effective and, even when vaccinated, there is still a chance people can contract the virus and pass it on. In time, scientists expect COVID-19 to become endemic, meaning the virus will reach a stable, and hopefully manageable level.

■ **Coronavirus: Misinformation**

Carol Monaghan: **[2339]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to (a) tackle covid-19 misinformation amongst African communities in the UK and (b) provide accurate information in (i) Tigrinya, (ii) Amharic, (iii) Blen, (iv) Kibajuni, (v) KiSwahili, (vi) Tigre, (vii) Oromo, (viii) Afar, (ix) Sidayama, (x) Wolayatta, (xi) Hausa, (xii) Chichewa, and (xiii) Igbo.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQs [144853](#) on 1 February 2021 and [161667](#) on 15 March 2021.

The Government is clear that targeting misinformation at any community is completely unacceptable. This is why the cross-Whitehall Counter Disinformation Unit was stood up on 5 March 2020. The Rapid Response Unit, operating from within the Cabinet Office and No10, also tackles a range of harmful narratives online - from purported 'experts' issuing dangerous misinformation, to criminal fraudsters running phishing scams.

We have been working with a wide range of faith groups to support vaccine confidence communication amongst different communities. Regarding African communities specifically, HMG has partnered with community news outlets including the African Voice over the course of the pandemic to address key points of concern and serve to provide reassurance within these communities.

Moreover, on 28 February, 60 black majority church leaders issued a joint statement in support of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout. The Christian leaders united to ensure the community were kept informed, and to dispel misinformation and disinformation about the vaccine in response to data that shows black people are among those most likely to be hesitant about receiving the Covid-19 vaccine.

■ **Earl Mountbatten of Burma: Disclosure of information**

Dr Julian Lewis: **[2854]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason his Department has prevented release of Lord Mountbatten's diaries.

Dan Carden: [3128]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) amount and (b) breakdown of costs incurred by the Government to date in respect of preventing the release of the personal diaries and correspondence of the 1st Earl and Countess Mountbatten of Burma.

Dan Carden: [3129]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason his Department has prevented access by the public to the full Lord and Lady Mountbatten archives at the University of Southampton; and if he will make a statement.

Julia Lopez:

The Cabinet Office is working with the University of Southampton to support the release of the Mountbatten archive whilst ensuring sensitive information, including personal data, is handled appropriately and in line with Freedom of Information Act.

Diaries from 1918 to 1934 have already been released. Further volumes will be released in due course as necessary sensitivity work is completed. This is in line with undertakings given by Earl Mountbatten in 1969 on the publication of the archive.

■ Foreign Relations: China

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [3033]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, who leads the China National Strategy Implementation Group; when that group last met; and what minutes of that group have been published in relation to Xinjiang.

Penny Mordaunt:

The China National Strategy Implementation Group (NSIG), a cross-Whitehall group of senior officials, prepares NSC discussions and implements our detailed approach to China in line with policy agreed by the NSC. The China NSIG is chaired by the Deputy National Security Adviser. It meets monthly. Minutes are not published, reflecting normal practice for internal meetings between civil servants.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Seema Malhotra: [2999]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the share of Government contracts that are won by SMEs.

Julia Lopez:

The government wants SMEs to benefit from central government procurement spend, either directly or indirectly via the supply chain.

Reports on central government spend with SMEs are published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) on an annual basis by the Cabinet Office. The latest procurement figures for 2019/20, published on the 7th of May 2021 show that across central government, £15.5bn was paid to SMEs to help deliver vital public services. The figure is an increase of £1.3bn

on the previous year and the highest since records began in 2013. Overall, spending with SMEs represented 26.7 per cent of the £58bn spent by the government in 2019/20 – an increase of 1.1 per cent on the previous year.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Sarah Owen: [\[3183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with the Cabinet Secretary on the Cabinet Secretary's plans to respond to the correspondence of 25 March 2021 from the hon. Member for Luton North.

Julia Lopez:

The Cabinet Secretary responded to this letter on 19 May 2021.

■ **Procurement**

Sarah Owen: [\[3181\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking with cabinet colleagues to avoid potential conflicts of interest involving ministers in the upcoming Procurement Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Julia Lopez:

The existing regulations impose binding obligations on contracting authorities effectively to prevent, identify and remedy conflicts of interest. We propose to maintain these controls. Our broader proposals to strengthen transparency and non-discrimination measures complement these existing processes.

We also intend to publish new commercial guidance to assist government departments to develop and enhance local strategies, systems, processes and procedures to prevent, identify and remedy conflicts of interest in a consistent and effective way.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ **Church of England: Rural areas**

Mark Pritchard: [\[3820\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on what steps the Church of England is taking to support the diocese of (a) Hereford and (b) Lichfield; and what plans the Church of England has to support dioceses with large rural parishes.

Andrew Selous:

Diocesan resourcing of mission and ministry is supported by congregational giving, historic investments and other income. Additional support is provided from national funds generated by the investments of the Church Commissioners and distributed by the Archbishops' Council.

The Diocese of Hereford has received:

- £1.172m of Lowest Income Communities Funding over 2020-22 to support mission and ministry in areas of low economic activity.
- £113k of Strategic Ministry Funding to help fund curates costs.
- £120k in 2020 to support work on congregational giving.
- £525k of Strategic Development Funding was awarded in 2017 towards a 5-year project supporting missionaries in six parishes in the Diocese, including 3 of its market towns, focusing on reaching children and young people. More details can be found [here](#).

The Diocese of Lichfield has received:

- £6.23m of Lowest Income Communities Funding over 2020-22 to support mission and ministry in areas of low economic activity.
- £850k to support diocesan finances in the light of the impact Covid-19.
- £1.690m of Strategic Development Funding in 2019 for a 6-year project to support ministry and mission in Telford, focusing strongly on social engagement and reaching children and young people. More details can be found [here](#).

Through the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, parishes and cathedrals of the two dioceses have also received:

- Lichfield: 14 grants to parishes, totalling £379,141, and two grants to Lichfield Cathedral, totalling £152,900
- Hereford: 12 grants to parishes, totalling £304,678, and two grants to Hereford Cathedral, totalling £284,400

Rural parishes make up around 60% of the Church of England's footprint with approximately 10,000 buildings. These parishes serve about 17% of the population, with 91% of rural churches being listed. These rural churches are an important community asset as they are often the only public building left in their community and serve multiple purposes in addition to being a place of worship.

The Association of Festival Churches ([The Association of Festival Churches](#)) was recently formed with the express purpose of supporting mostly rural churches to expand community use of their church buildings, working with pre-existing specialist resources such as the [Arthur Rank Centre](#) to provide targeted guidance and advice for rural churches.

DEFENCE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Grahame Morris:

[900400]

What recent discussions he has had with Capita on the levels of firefighter cover at Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department has been closely engaged with Capita on the level of firefighter cover at Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde as their modernisation plans are implemented.

Dave Doogan:[\[900402\]](#)

What steps he is taking to promote economic development in the UK through his Department's operations.

Jeremy Quin:

Our spending review settlement will increase the defence budget by over £24 billion over the next four years. This includes at least £6.6 billion spent in research and development. These investments will modernise our Armed Forces and support jobs across the UK.

Defence spending benefits every part of the UK. In Scotland, shipbuilding jobs have increased significantly since 2018/19, Thales Glasgow is contributing to the Boxer programme, and Leonardo Edinburgh is supporting UK radar capability.

Mohammad Yasin:[\[900414\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the fighting readiness of the British Army; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The Army is always ready to fulfil the task of protecting the nation and holds various people and units at different readiness, along with the equipment and stocks required to support them, to enable us to compete against our adversaries, tackle threats at source and reassure allies. The Integrated Review will ensure that we have the people and equipment to continue to do this.

Tony Lloyd:[\[900415\]](#)

What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on improving the transition of armed forces personnel into employment.

Leo Docherty:

Improving and recognising the employability of our Service leavers is a personal priority. All personnel have access to the Career Transition Partnership for two years before and after discharge - over 84% of Service leavers find employment within six months. But we go further, working across Government, we have launched an interview scheme and a national insurance holiday for employers. I will shortly be writing to cross-Government colleagues to continue this work throughout 2021 and beyond.

Carol Monaghan:[\[900426\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support the LGBT+ veterans community.

Leo Docherty:

All veterans have access to a range of support from Veterans UK, the NHS, and the charity sector. We acknowledge the importance of this support, recognising the

needs of every individual and diversity within the veteran community. This is why we are providing funding and working with the charity sector to build the capacity of veterans' services to support LGBT veterans as well as other groups, such as female veterans.

■ **A400M Aircraft: Parachuting**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[3809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the Military Aviation Authority does not accept French accreditation for parachute operations for the A400M aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The existing French accreditation for their EPC (Ensemble de Parachutage du Combattant) parachute is based on Airbus trials for A400M Simultaneous Side Door exit, using French equipment and techniques. This foundation certification is the baseline from which the UK, and the other nations, must undertake further trials to account for its own regulations, equipment and standards. The Airbus certification for A400M High Altitude tailgate parachuting was achieved by using UK test teams, equipment and procedures and so other nations, including France, will have to clear their equipment before employing this capability. This approach has simplified the process of approving new parachuting capabilities for use on UK A400M.

■ **Afghanistan: Military Aid**

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[2917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish details of UK military equipment worth over £10,000 that will be left in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of UK forces.

James Heappey:

The majority of UK military equipment will be returned to the UK. Some equipment may be de-militarised and disposed of in Theatre should it be deemed uneconomical to recover to the UK. Should the Department propose to gift any equipment to the Government of Afghanistan, this will be reported to the House in line with established parliamentary procedure.

■ **Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations**

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[2914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel were (a) killed, (b) injured and (c) injured with life changing injuries during Operation Herrick.

James Heappey:

There were 457 fatalities on, or subsequently due to, Op HERRICK. Of which 403 were due to hostile action. Op HERRICK ran between 1 January 2006 and 30 November 2014, during which there were 10,382 UK Service personnel casualties. Of these 5,705 were injuries, and the remainder being illness or disease.

Between 1 January 2006 and 31 March 2021, there were 645 UK Service personnel who were categorised as Very Seriously Injured (VSI), Seriously Injured (SI) or who sustained a traumatic or surgical amputation due to Op HERRICK. This includes any amputations in recent years that were elective or necessary during treatment as a result of previous injuries sustained.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[2915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost of Operation Herrick is as at 18 May 2021.

James Heappey:

As at May 2021, the total cost of Operation HERRICK to Her Majesty's Treasury Special Reserve is £22.2 billion.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[2916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) NATO and (b) UK personnel will remain in Afghanistan after the drawdown from that country.

James Heappey:

The UK's contribution to NATO's Resolute Support Mission will draw down along with Allies and partners within a few months. The nature of NATO's future relationship with Afghanistan, including out of country training and the Senior Civilian Representative's office, is a matter for the UK to agree with the US and other Allies.

■ **Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry: [\[3034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with NHS Scotland on ensuring that covid-19 vaccines are made available to (a) eligible personnel serving with the (i) Black Watch, (ii) 3rd Battalion and (iii) Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 Scots) and (b) eligible military personnel who are temporary residents in communities in Scotland.

James Heappey:

All personnel in the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland have been briefed by their Commanding Officer on the provision of the vaccine ahead of, or during, their operational tour. All military serving in the United Kingdom will receive their vaccine through the Defence Medical Services according to the timelines recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations.

■ **Armed Forces: Overseas Aid**

Steve Double: [\[3947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2021 to Question 327 on Armed Forces: Overseas Aid, what estimate has made of the total cost of the delivery of aid and relief efforts by the UK's armed forces in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

James Heappey:

Overseas aid provided through the Official Development Assistance (ODA) mechanism is reported in accordance with the calendar year rather than financial year, therefore, Defence had reported a spend of £6.08 million in 2019 and a provisional figure of £5.18 million has been reported in 2020. The expenditure for 2021 is still to be determined and will be published in 2022. The cost of Defence providing overseas relief in 2019-20 totalled £730,000 and £548,000 in 2020-21, however these figures do not include Defence's support to the COVID19 crisis overseas (Operation BROADSHARE), which to date is estimated to have cost £370,000. There may be other instances between 2019-2021 where Defence provided aid/relief, however these were not recorded centrally.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment**Sajid Javid:**[\[1426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to encourage recruitment to the armed forces in (a) Worcestershire and (b) the UK.

Leo Docherty:

The Armed Forces recruit nationally and do not operate a specific policy of increasing recruitment from particular geographic areas. Armed Forces Career Offices (AFCO) are spread across the UK including six in the Midlands. AFCOs are complemented by dedicated call centres and online recruiting operations, ensuring that all communities have the same recruitment opportunities. During the pandemic, the Armed Forces have conducted COVID-secure outreach programmes and virtual careers events, supported by web-based information services and social media campaigns.

■ Crisis Management: Overseas Aid**John Healey:**[\[2884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 20 of the Government's Defence Command Paper, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of a reduction in development aid on his Department's crisis management approach to prevent and manage crises before they escalate.

James Heappey:

The MOD's ability to prepare for and manage crises before they escalate will be strengthened by an increase in defence spending of £24 billion over the next four years.

As the Defence Command Paper sets out, this significant investment will enable the UK to build a more proactive, adaptable, and engaged Armed Forces working with partners to shape the global environment and manage crises. As a force for good the UK remains a global leader in international development and is committed to supporting the world's poorest people.

■ Cybercrime

John Healey: [2195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the threat to UK security posed by non-state actors' use of (a) digital communications and (b) social media platforms.

James Heappey:

As Her Majesty's Government outlined in the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper, we recognise hostile cyber activity, by whatever vector, as a top-tier threat to UK interests. We are committed to ensuring that our national security is protected. Working together with partners across Government, the Ministry of Defence monitors non-state activities closely, assesses the risks and takes action to counter them using the full spectrum of national capabilities as appropriate. The Online Safety Bill is testament to our commitment to tackle harmful online content and behaviours, including holding social media platforms to account.

■ Defence Equipment: Procurement

John Healey: [2875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total value of defence equipment contracts awarded by his Department was in (a) March and (b) April 2021.

John Healey: [2876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the details of defence equipment contracts over a value of £5 million awarded since 1 March 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence procurement projects cover an extensive range of equipment, infrastructure, information services and broad service contracts.

With over 500 contracts placed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) since March 2021, including over 40 contracts with a value over £5 million, specific details concerning equipment contracts could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The MOD publishes statistics on organisations paid more than £5 million and the levels of expenditure against competitive and non-competitive contracts, although due to the need to verify the information before publication, the next update is not expected until later this year. The most recent publication can be found at the following link: www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-trade-and-industry-index.

MOD contracts worth over £10,000 are published on the Government's Contracts Finder website at: www.gov.uk/contracts-finder.

■ Israel: Military Alliances

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[4041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the agreement signed between the British Armed Forces and the Israeli Defence Forces on 2 December 2020 on strengthening military co-operation.

James Heappey:

The agreement signed in December 2020 by The Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Nick Carter and his Israeli counterpart, Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Aviv Kohavi, strengthens the defence relationship between Britain and Israel. While this agreement is an important piece of defence diplomacy, the security implications of this work warrant the agreement being kept at a higher security classification, and therefore it will not be made public. In essence the new agreement is an organising mechanism for our relationship. The agreement formalises our defence relationship and supports our partnership and cooperation with Israel. It will streamline and provide a mechanism for planning our joint activity, allowing collaboration on a number of areas that will include defence medical training, organisational design concepts, and defence education.

■ National Cyber Force

John Healey:

[\[2193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that (a) tools and (b) weaponry that may be used by the National Cyber Force against British nationals for offensive cyber operations are (i) legitimate and (ii) proportionate; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The UK has rigorous processes in place to ensure that offensive cyber operations are conducted in accordance with domestic and international law. Oversight of National Cyber Force activity is provided by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office and the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

■ National Security: Infrastructure

John Healey:

[\[2191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to protect (a) critical infrastructure, such as the energy industry and financial services, and (b) physical infrastructure, such as airports and the NHS.

James Heappey:

The protection of critical national infrastructure (CNI) in the UK is the responsibility of its owners and operators in collaboration with the Centre for the Protection of Critical National Infrastructure (CPNI), the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and Civil Police Forces. Ministry of Defence Police support the protection of UK CNI through the provision of guarding services for a small number of sites.

■ Nepal: Coronavirus**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[3792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of sending a unit of Gurkhas who have been vaccinated against covid-19 to Nepal to help counter the spreading of that virus in that country; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

We are committed to our long-standing bilateral defence relationship with the Government of Nepal. Gurkhas have made an outstanding contribution to the UK through their years of dedicated service and are held in high esteem by the British Army and public alike. We are hugely proud that Gurkhas continue to serve in the British Army.

The UK Government is one of the leading donors to Covax, committing £548million to the scheme, which will provide doses for almost a fifth of Nepal's population. The UK has funded a new £180,000 duplex oxygen generation plant at the Nepal Police Hospital in Kathmandu to help address oxygen shortages to treat COVID19 patients. To further support the Government of Nepal during the current wave of COVID19 in the region, the MOD will send a small Military Advisory team to Nepal to assess the situation in-country. The advisors have experience of dealing with the challenges of COVID19 in the UK and will draw on subject matter experts.

We will continue to monitor the situation in Nepal and keep our assistance under careful review.

■ Oman: Military Alliances**John Healey:**[\[2883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 16 of the Government's Defence Command Paper, how much does he plan to increase (a) investment in and (b) deployments to Oman by.

James Heappey:

The £23.8 million investment in the UK logistics hub at Duqm port will triple the size of the existing UK base. This investment will help facilitate Royal Navy deployments to the Indian Ocean including the ability to support the UK's two aircraft carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. Work is ongoing to determine the scale and timing of further investments.

The Defence Command Paper committed to increased UK deployments to Oman. We are working through the detail of what this will mean in practice, including with our Omani partners.

■ Shipbuilding

Peter Dowd:

[\[2325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the maritime sector on priorities for the refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy announced on 16 March 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence, together with Departments across Government, have worked closely with industry to develop the National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh. We have held one-to-one discussions and workshops with a cross-section of industry to understand their priorities. We have also been working with the Maritime Enterprise Working Group, to develop a shared industry-Government vision for the future of the sector.

We are keen to work with industry as we implement the strategy and will ensure we have the right structures in place to deliver on our shared vision and reinvigorate the enterprise together.

■ UK Space Command: Finance

John Healey:

[\[2878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what will the annual budget be for the Space Command announced on 1 April 2021.

James Heappey:

The annual budget for UK Space Command for this Financial Year is approximately £51.8 million. This includes the transfer of operating budgets from Air Command of existing RAF Units of RAF Fylingdales and UK Space Operations Centre.

■ UK Space Command: Recruitment

John Healey:

[\[2879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where will the Space Command announced on 1 April 2021 recruit from; and for what roles will it recruit.

James Heappey:

Space Command is a Joint organisation and will have personnel from all three single Services and the Civil Service. UK Space Command personnel will undertake a range of roles to enable assured access to the space domain and space operations; as well as space workforce development (training and growth) and capability development of space domain military equipment programmes. When fully operationally capable, UK Space Command will provide command and control of all of Defence's space capabilities to achieve Defence's and the UK's ambition for space.

■ UK Space Command: Staff**John Healey:** [2877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel will be allocated to the Space Command announced on 1 April 2021.

James Heappey:

At Full Operating Capability, there will be approximately 650 personnel within UK Space Command which will be a Joint Organisation with personnel from all three single Services and the Civil Service. There will be approximately 250 personnel in the Headquarters and capability development element of UK Space Command. As well as 320 personnel at RAF Fylingdales, 45 personnel in the UK Space Operations Centre and 35 personnel in Space Assurance, Training, Test and Evaluation Unit.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ 5G: Expenditure****Chi Onwurah:** [1059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference the Written Statement of 30 November 2020, HCWS610 on Telecoms Update, how much and what proportion of the £250 million initial investment for telecoms diversification has been spent.

Matt Warman:

The Government recognises that there is a need to work at pace to make early progress on 5G market diversification. As a first step towards delivering our long-term vision, we have committed an initial investment of up to £250 million, to kick off work to deliver key priorities. These priorities include: the establishment of a world-class UK Telecoms Lab; investing in a R&D ecosystem; and seeking to lead a global coalition of like-minded partners to mount a coordinated international approach to diversification.

The Government's work in this area has been informed by the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce report, which is now available for you to view here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/telecoms-diversification-taskforce-findings-and-report>

We will respond to the Taskforce's findings, and outline our next steps on diversification in the summer. This will include outlining how we will use the initial investment, of up to £250 million, to deliver our key priorities and maximise benefits across the UK.

■ BBC: Broadcasting Programmes**Zarah Sultana:** [892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what representations his Department has made to BBC executives on the broadcaster's plans to make BBC

Four the home of archive content, with the channel no longer set to commission new programmes.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The BBC is independent of the government and the government has no say over the BBC's editorial or operational decisions, including proposed changes to the BBC Four service.

■ **BBC: Finance**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing Government funding of public broadcasting to tackle the BBC funding shortfall.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government will assess the merits of increasing funding for the BBC as part of the ongoing licence fee settlement negotiations, which began on 10 November 2020.

The Secretary of State has written to the BBC and S4C setting out the key factors they should consider when submitting their requests for the next settlement period, as is required by the Charter.

■ **Bowling: Finance**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) the British Tenpin Bowling Association and (b) other stakeholders on the financial viability of bowling alleys.

Nigel Huddleston:

DCMS officials have engaged extensively with visitor economy stakeholders throughout the pandemic and will continue to meet with representatives from across the sector. I met with representatives of the Tenpin Bowling Proprietors Association on 28 January to discuss the financial impact on bowling alleys.

Bowling centre operators can continue to access the Government's comprehensive support package - including the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes, new grant schemes, as well as various government-backed loans.

Alongside a range of other measures to support leisure and hospitality, the Government will continue to provide eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England with 100% business rates relief from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. This will be followed by 66% business rates relief for the period from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022.

■ **Broadband**

Esther McVey: [\[3854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the economic merits of full-fibre broadband roll out in the context of the findings of the CEBR report, Ultra Fast Full Fibre Broadband: A Platform for Growth, published April 2021.

Matt Warman:

The Government notes the CEBR report, commissioned by Openreach, which predicts a huge productivity boost from nationwide gigabit connectivity, suggesting a £59 billion boost to the UK's Gross Value Added (GVA) by 2025.

Increased productivity is one of reasons why the Government remains committed to delivering national gigabit connectivity as soon as possible. Today, over two in five premises can access gigabit-capable networks, up from just one in ten in November 2019. By the end of the year, 60% will have access, and by 2025 the Government is targeting a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage, working with industry to reach as close to 100% as possible.

On the report's suggestion that 270,000 people could move from urban to more rural areas as a result of changing attitudes towards home working, the Government recognises the importance of strong digital connectivity in rural areas. That is why we are investing £5bn to ensure those living in hard-to-reach areas get the gigabit connectivity they deserve. This is consistent with the Government's wider ambition to level-up the UK.

■ **Broadband: York**

Rachael Maskell: [\[1333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the upgraded York exchange to provide fibre to the cabinet service, how many cabinets in York have not yet been upgraded to deliver fibre to households and businesses.

Matt Warman:

There are no cabinets involved, as full fibre brings fibre direct from the exchange to the premise. It would only go via a cabinet in a Fibre On Demand scenario, where existing infrastructure was used as a stop-gap, but there are none of these in York under this LFFN project.

■ **Camelot Group: Licensing**

Alex Sobel: [\[4021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the basis upon which the Gambling Commission renewed the Camelot UK Lotteries Limited license to run the National Lottery in June 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

In order to facilitate the competition for the next licence to run the National Lottery and ensure a smooth transition between the third and fourth licences, the current National Lottery licence contains provisions through which it can be extended by the Gambling Commission by up to one year, through two six-month extensions. Any extension will be on the existing terms of the licence.

In May 2020, the Gambling Commission announced that they would be triggering the first of these extensions to accommodate a delay to the launch of the competition for the next licence due to concerns expressed by interested applicants about the challenges posed by the Covid 19 pandemic. The updated third licence and a notice setting out the decision behind the extension can be found on the Gambling Commission's [website](#).

The competition launched successfully in August 2020 and the Gambling Commission are currently reviewing initial applications. The next licence will start in August 2023.

■ Camelot Group: Profits**Alex Sobel:****[4017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 188089, if he will publish the declared profits of Camelot UK Lotteries Limited in 2020-21; and if he will publish a breakdown of profits (a) generated online and (b) via sales in retail premises in each year since 2010.

Mr John Whittingdale:

In line with the conditions of the [Third Licence](#), the operator of the National Lottery is required to publish its Annual Report and Accounts for 2020/21 by 7th October 2021. At this point, the information requested in question 1(a) will be available.

In response to question 1(b), total profit figures are not itemised in this way. However, the [2019/20 annual report](#) of the current operator reported that digital sales accounted for 31.1% of total sales, up from 25.4% in 2018/19.

■ Camelot Group: Sales**Alex Sobel:****[4018]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish sales figures by Camelot UK Lotteries Limited by (a) draw-based, (b) Instant Win and (c) scratchcard sales for each year since 2010; and whether those sales were made (i) online and (ii) offline.

Alex Sobel:**[4019]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish information on online sales by Camelot UK Lotteries Limited by whether that sale was made (a) on the website and (b) via the phone application.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The table below shows sales data, broken down by draw-based games and instant win games, which includes both scratchcards and online instant win games. Sales are not publicly reported at a more granular level, therefore it has also not been possible to differentiate between sales on the website or the mobile application.

	DRAW-BASED GAMES SALES (£M)	INSTANT WIN GAME SALES (£M)
2009/10*	4,761	1,541
2010/11	4,389	1,436
2011/12	4,778	1,726
2012/13	4,915	2,062
2013/14	4,595	2,141
2014/15	4,646	2,629
2015/16	4,663	2,952
2016/17	4,020	2,902
2017/18	4,101	2,835
2018/19	4,083	3,125
2019/20	4,536	3,368

* 2009/10 covers a 14 month period due to the third Licence beginning on 1st February 2009.

The [2019/20 annual report](#) of the current operator shows that digital sales accounted for 31.1% of total sales, up from 25.4% in 2018/19.

■ Cultural Heritage: Government Assistance

Dr Rupa Huq:

[3076]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he plans to take to support the (a) Victoria and Albert Museum and (b) wider heritage sector.

Caroline Dinenage:

We have supported the Victoria and Albert Museum ("V&A"), an arms' length body, since the very start of the pandemic and will continue to do so. The V&A has benefited considerably from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, it received tailored revenue support from the Government last year, and is eligible for additional investment this year. Furthermore, we are investing in the V&A's estate to help with the maintenance of its unique heritage interiors.

Likewise, the Government has provided unprecedented support to the arts, heritage and museums sectors through the Cultural Recovery Fund which has distributed over £1.2 billion, reaching over 5000 individual organisations and sites. This includes £53 million to specifically support construction and conservation projects at heritage sites across England. This fund has supported over 1000 projects directly and is estimated to have safeguarded between 744 and 1137 heritage construction and conservation jobs.

■ Dormant Accounts Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act 2008, Reclaim Fund Ltd scheme, how many reclaims from the scheme there have been since it was set up; and how many have ended up in dispute and been referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Matt Warman:

Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL) is legally obliged to retain a portion of the funds it receives as a result of the Dormant Assets Scheme in order to repay owners who come forward to reclaim their money. Data provided by RFL indicates that it has processed reclaims for 134,031 accounts, totalling £106m in value, up to 31 December 2020.

RFL is part of the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) scheme. However, as participating banks and building societies hold the customer relationships, RFL does not have any data on how many reclaim disputes, if any, have been referred to FOS by participating firms. RFL has had no direct referrals to FOS.

■ Education: Finance

Robert Halfon:

[\[2265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using dormant assets set to be unlocked from the savings and investment sector to fund the delivery of financial education at a primary level to build future financial resilience.

Matt Warman:

The distribution of dormant assets is a devolved matter, and in England, dormant assets spend is currently restricted by legislation to three areas, including financial inclusion. To date, in England, we have invested £96 million of dormant assets in financial inclusion, delivered by an independent organisation (Fair4All Finance) who have focused on building financial resilience through better access to affordable credit.

The purpose of the Dormant Assets Bill, which has recently been introduced to parliament, is to expand the Scheme and amends the approach to restrictions in England to mirror the model used for the devolved administrations. This will allow the government to consult on, and respond more flexibly to, changing social and environmental needs in England over time.

Subject to this measure passing, the Government is committed to launching a public consultation to give people a say in how future funds are spent in England.

The funding unlocked through Scheme expansion will consist of all eligible dormant assets in scope of the Scheme and will not be differentiated by sector or asset class.

■ Events Industry: Beverage Containers

Meg Hillier: [\[2231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the use of reusable cups at outdoor events will be permitted as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department has produced a number of high level guidance documents in partnership with stakeholders on how relevant sectors should operate in a Covid secure environment as restrictions are eased.

However, it is for event organisers to determine whether to use reusable cups at outdoor events. There is no government guidance which prevents the use of reusable cups.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas: [\[2176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many people have taken part in his Department's covid-19 testing trials for the return to events with large numbers of people; where those trials took place; how many people were tested before each event; how were those people required to present the evidence of a negative covid-19 test before they were allowed access to events; what steps were taken to ensure that access was allowed only to those who could prove they had a negative covid-19 test; and how many people took part in post-event testing.

Nigel Huddleston:

Over 80,000 people have taken part in the ERP's first phase of events in total, covering:

- FA Cup Semi Final, Wembley Stadium (18 April)
- World Snooker Championship, Sheffield Crucible Theatre (17 April-3 May)
- Carabao Cup Final (25 April)
- ACC Business Event, Liverpool (28 April)
- Circus Nightclub, Liverpool (30 April-1 May)
- The Sefton Park Pilot, Liverpool (2 May)
- BRIT Awards, London (11 May)
- Mass Participation Run, Kempton (15 May)
- FA Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (15 May)

Public safety is our main priority and proof of a negative lateral flow test was required for entry to all these ERP events. Throughout the ticket purchase and consent form process, all attendees were informed and reminded of the negative Lateral Flow Test being a condition to entry. To aid research, participants are also requested to undertake a PCR test as close as possible to their attendance at an event, and again five days after attendance at an event. The scientific research teams are still collating the data on post-event testing.

The ERP's research findings, including the independent scientific reports, will be published shortly.

Julie Elliott:

[2973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of (a) the effect of the pilot events under the Events Research Programme on the transmission of covid-19 and (b) the effectiveness and take up of the testing regime required for event attendance.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Events Research Programme is examining risk of transmission of Covid-19 from attendance at events, and exploring ways to enable people to attend a range of events safely.

Our Science Board agreed that admission of participants to our pilot events in April and May was subject to evidence of a negative Lateral Flow Device test result for Covid-19. The ERP will publish its research findings shortly, including independent scientific reports. This research will cover the testing protocol for the pilot events.

These reports will feed into decision making on removing restrictions safely ahead of step 4.

Julie Elliott:

[2974]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the full findings of the Events Research Programme in respect of the pilot events.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Events Research Programme is examining risk of transmission of Covid-19 from attendance at events, and exploring ways to enable people to attend a range of events safely. The research findings will be published on GOV.UK shortly and will feed into decision making on removing restrictions safely ahead of step 4.

■ Food: Advertising

Andrew Rosindell:

[2909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on ensuring proposals for restricting the online advertising of products high in fat, sugar and salt balance public health aims with business freedoms, protecting the public purse and ensuring businesses can grow and invest in reformulation.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Prime Minister has made it clear that tackling obesity is a priority for this Government. In July 2020 the Government outlined its Tackling Obesity strategy which details a host of measures aimed at improving the chances of citizens living a healthy lifestyle.

The Government proposed various options for restricting HFSS advertising in the 2019 and 2020 consultations targeted at protecting children from being exposed to advertising of unhealthy food products.

Balanced against the priority of protecting children and tackling obesity, we have carefully considered the impact that any restrictions will have on industry and in particular the potential for reformulation of products or commercial impacts on key business sectors.

The final policy will be set out in our consultation response due to be published shortly. The Government is committed to acting collaboratively to prepare businesses, individuals and organisations for changes to the rules around HFSS advertising.

Andrew Rosindell:

[2910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what representations he has received from businesses on the proposed online advertising ban for foods high in fat, sugar and salt; and whether those representations have been relayed by his Department to the Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, HM Treasury and Number 10.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Prime Minister has made it clear that tackling obesity is a priority for this Government. In July 2020 the Government outlined its Tackling Obesity strategy which details a host of measures aimed at improving the chances of citizens living a healthy lifestyle.

The Government proposed various options for restricting HFSS advertising in the 2019 and 2020 consultations targeted at protecting children from being exposed to advertising of unhealthy food products. We received a number of responses from a spectrum of parties including industry bodies, food manufacturers, advertisers and health NGOs. Ministers and officials from DCMS, DHSC and other Government departments are working together to ensure impacts are being taken into account, while being balanced with the vital public health goals set out in our strategy.

The final policy will be set out in our consultation response due to be published shortly. The Government is committed to acting collaboratively to prepare businesses, individuals and organisations for changes to the rules around HFSS advertising.

■ Football

Damien Moore:

[\[3140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to progress the fan-led review of football; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent football regulator.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is continuing to work at pace on the review having already appointed the Honourable Member for Chatham and Aylesford as Chair and published the Terms of Reference. We have also announced the advisory panel members to support the Chair and I look forward to receiving an interim report over the Summer, before the full report in the Autumn.

I would not want to pre-judge the recommendations of the review but can confirm that the merits of an independent football regulator will be examined as part of the review.

■ Football: Clubs

Sarah Olney:

[\[2392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make it his policy to ensure that professional football clubs have at least 51 per cent fan ownership.

Nigel Huddleston:

Fans are the beating heart of their clubs and it is vital they have their voices heard.

The Government has launched its fan-led review of football governance, which will be a root-and-branch examination of the big issues facing the national game.

I would not want to pre-judge the recommendations of the review but I can confirm that club ownership, including models found in other countries, will be examined as part of the review.

■ Football: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas:

[\[2177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many people attended the FA Cup Final in Wembley on 15 May 2021; and whether those people were required to (a) provide a negative Lateral Flow Test and (b) confirm their identity with photographic ID linked to a negative covid-19 test result before they were allowed access to the stadium.

Nigel Huddleston:

The number of attendees at the FA Cup Final in Wembley on 15 May 2021 was 18,720 people.

Admission to the event was subject to evidence of a negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test result for Covid-19. Participants receive a text or email address from NHS Test and Trace which they present to staff at each event in order to gain entry.

Results were then validated by the event organisers before ticket-holders were admitted to the venue. Pre-event communications stressed to attendees that ID checks would take place upon entry. Spot photo ID checks took place across all operating entrances to check that the name on the negative test matched the ID.

■ **Gambling: Advertising**

Ronnie Cowan: [\[2347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of gambling advertising during the upcoming European Championships on people at risk of gambling-related harm.

Ronnie Cowan: [\[2348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of advertising breaks which will contain a gambling advert during the upcoming European Championships; and if he will take steps to prohibit gambling adverts from being broadcast before the 9.00pm watershed.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government does not hold data on the volume of broadcast gambling advertising and so cannot provide an estimate of the number of advertising breaks that will contain a gambling advert during the UEFA European Championship. Broadcasters have discretion over how advertising breaks are set and what adverts are broadcast, in line with Ofcom and ASA standards. The Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising also prohibits adverts being shown around or during live sports broadcast before the 9pm watershed.

The government has not seen any evidence which demonstrates a causal link between exposure to gambling advertising and the development of problem gambling. However, all gambling advertising, wherever it appears, is subject to strict controls on content and placement.

Gambling adverts must never be targeted at children or vulnerable people. The Advertising Standards Authority independently administers these standards through the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) which covers online and non-broadcast spaces and the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) for TV. If an advert for gambling holds particular appeal to children and is freely accessible then it will break the rules.

The government launched the Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. This closed on 31 March and received approximately 16,000 submissions from a broad range of interested organisations and individuals. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing gambling operators to advertise and we are considering the evidence carefully.

■ Internet: Safety

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to tackle (a) financial and (b) dating apps scams in the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

We recently announced that fraud will be in scope of the Online Safety Bill. This means that companies will have to take action to tackle fraud, where it is facilitated through user-generated content.

We expect this to have an impact on some financial scams, such as fraudulent user-generated posts on social media, and on dating app scams or “romance fraud”.

Romance fraud (as seen on dating apps) is estimated to cost £60m a year and can have a devastating psychological impact on victims.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[3858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the indirect benefits of reducing online harms on encouraging wider participation online; and is this considered by the government's impact assessment for the Online Harms Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Online Safety Bill seeks to empower all users, including vulnerable users, to keep themselves safe online and to enjoy their right to freedom of expression. It aims to ensure everyone can participate online, without risk of bullying or being attacked on the basis of their identity.

The Bill's Impact Assessment does not directly address the indirect benefits of encouraging wider participation as a result of reducing harm encountered online. However, the impact on online participation is being considered by the Department, as part of wider work on the impact of the policy and through the continued development of the evidence base around online harms.

The forthcoming Media Literacy Strategy will also consider how media literacy, education and empowerment can support all users to participate in online life.

■ Loneliness

Rachael Maskell:

[\[2366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to measure delivery of the Government's loneliness strategy.

Matt Warman:

In the Tackling Loneliness Strategy, published October 2018, the government committed to publishing annual progress reports to provide an update on the implementation of policies set out in the strategy.

The first annual report was published in January 2020 and the second in January 2021. The two reports set out progress to date, including action by frontline workers

across the public sector to recognise and act on loneliness, the launch of the Let's Talk Loneliness campaign, and the inclusion of standardised loneliness measures in a range of national surveys. The 2021 report also set out the government's response to tackling loneliness during Covid-19, including investing over £34 million to charities focused on reducing loneliness in response to the pandemic.

Copies of the progress reports are available in the Libraries of the House and online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-first-year>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-second-year>

Rachael Maskell: **[2367]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his priorities are for delivering the loneliness strategy.

Matt Warman:

In the Tackling Loneliness Strategy, published October 2018, government set out three overarching goals which guide its work on loneliness: reducing stigma by building a national conversation on loneliness; driving a lasting shift so that loneliness is considered in the work of government and other organisations across society; and improving the evidence base on loneliness. Delivering progress against these three goals remains a priority, particularly as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the coming year, we will make progress against our three goals by: delivering communications activity to amplify loneliness messaging; supporting organisations to tackle loneliness through our Tackling Loneliness Network; and convening organisations interested in coordinating research activity so that we can fill priority gaps in our understanding of the issues surrounding loneliness.

■ Music: Industry

Julie Elliott: **[3864]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a regulator in the music industry to support musicians' (a) wellbeing and (b) incomes.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government believes all artists have a right to exercise their profession free from harassment, bullying and discrimination and we also recognise that it is important that artists are fairly remunerated for their work. We are aware of the concerns that have been raised recently with regards to musicians' wellbeing and incomes.

The music industry already has routes for tackling welfare issues and providing advice on financial matters through codes of conduct and independent advice services.

For instance, the Musicians' Union has a Safe Space facility to enable individuals to confidentially report incidents without fear of unwanted consequences, and also provides a Contract Advisory Service to assist musicians starting out on their careers

to have any contracts they are offered checked by independent and respected industry lawyers.

In this context, the creation of a new regulatory body would need to be carefully considered to ensure that it is not duplicating industry efforts to address these issues and does not create undue burden on either the creative workforce or employers.

We are actively engaging with the industry to better understand how effective these industry initiatives are at a) supporting the wellbeing of artists, and b) providing advice on financial matters.

Following this engagement, we will consider what further steps are necessary and how the Government can support the sector and artists.

■ National Lottery: Computer Software

Alex Sobel:

[4020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that there are player protections in place for people using Camelot UK Lotteries Limited's (a) website and (b) phone application to participate in the National Lottery.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Under the terms of the current National Lottery [Licence](#) the operator is required to implement player protection strategies to prevent underage and excessive play, which must be approved by the Gambling Commission, as regulator of the National Lottery.

For new game proposals and changes to existing games, the operator must provide the Gambling Commission with a range of information, such as assessments of the risks associated with certain product characteristics, a broader assessment by the operator's game design governance group and relevant academic research.

In addition, the Gambling Commission conducts regular, detailed monitoring to identify risks to players, and where appropriate, undertakes strategic reviews of areas of the portfolio which are identified as higher (but not necessarily high) risk. For example, in 2020, the Gambling Commission commissioned research to better understand the players of Online Interactive Instant Win Games. The research found an association between players of Interactive Instant Win Games at the £10 price point and some problem gambling behaviours. As a result of this research, the operator suspended the sale of £10 Online Interactive Instant Win Games, which followed the removal of the £10 scratchcard in 2019.

In December 2020, the government increased the minimum age for the National Lottery as a precautionary measure to ensure the protection of young people. These changes were introduced for all games in April 2021, both for online and retail sales.

■ NEC Corporation: 5G**Chi Onwurah:** [\[3859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2021 to Question 1058, whether funding for the NEC NeutrORAN trial will be provided by the Diversification Task Force.

Matt Warman:

The Government announced its support for the NEC NeutrORAN trial in the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy last November. The project was funded as part of the Government's successful, long-standing 5G Testbeds and Trials programme. The project is progressing at pace, and is expected to deliver live 5G Open RAN within the UK in 2021.

The Telecoms Diversification Taskforce was established as an independent advisory group to help guide the Government's design of targeted interventions to deliver the diversification strategy. All funding decisions remain with Government, as part of a wider programme of delivering on our long-term vision for a competitive, open and resilient supply chain.

■ Ofcom: Competition**Chi Onwurah:** [\[2963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether Ofcom's principal duty in carrying out its functions to further the interests of (a) citizens in relation to communications matters and (b) consumers in relevant markets where appropriate by promoting competition will apply across all its new functions in the (i) Telecoms Security Bill and (ii) draft Online Harms Bill.

Matt Warman:

Ofcom must take account of its general duties when carrying out all of its functions, as set out in the Communications Act 2003. Ofcom also has certain specific requirements it must comply with when carrying out certain regulatory functions.

The Telecommunications (Security) Bill will amend Ofcom's regulatory duties under Section 105A to D of the Communications Act 2003 to strengthen Ofcom's existing role in ensuring the UK's public telecoms networks are secure and resilient. As the Bill amends those duties, Ofcom will continue to have to comply with the requirements set out earlier in the Act in discharging their new functions.

The general duties referenced will apply to Ofcom's new online safety functions. The Draft Online Safety Bill, published on 12 May 2021, proposes to amend the Communications Act 2003 to add a specific duty on Ofcom in relation to online safety. This will be to secure, in the carrying out of its functions, 'the adequate protection of citizens from harm arising from regulated services, through the appropriate use by providers of such services of systems and processes designed to reduce the risk of such harm.'

■ Parkrun

Nick Smith: [\[3831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential for Parkruns to return in England in June 2021.

Nick Smith: [\[3832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken with the Local Government Association and others on the return of parkrun.

Nick Smith: [\[3833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure bureaucracy at a local authority level does not restrict the return of safe and legal community sports events as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nick Smith: [\[3834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Parkrun's covid-19 operating framework; and what plans he has to include Parkrun in his Department's list of approved sports published on the Government's website.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government has prioritised the safe return of sport including team sports, contact combat sports and organised sports participation events. Organised outdoor sport, such as Parkrun, is exempt from legal gathering limits and can take place with any number of participants, as long as undertaken in line with published COVID-secure guidance. As such, Parkrun has been able to take place since 29 March as part of Step 1 of the government's response to the Covid-19 Roadmap.

We are aware of issues at local levels around this, which is why I met with ParkRun on the 21 March to discuss the issues regarding their return. As the Secretary of State announced on 20th May, DCMS will be writing jointly with MHCLG to all Local Authorities to ensure these important events take place. I am committed to supporting them to return as soon as possible.

■ Parkrun: Coronavirus

Chris Grayling: [\[2899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that Parkrun can resume following the easing of covid-19 social distancing restrictions.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government has prioritised the safe return of sport including team sports, contact combat sports and organised sports participation events. Organised outdoor sport, such as Parkrun, is exempt from legal gathering limits and can take place with any number of participants, as long as undertaken in line with published COVID-secure

guidance. As such, Parkrun has been able to take place since 29 March as part of Step 1 of the government's response to the Covid-19 Roadmap.

I met with ParkRun on 21 April to discuss their concerns regarding their return and my officials have engaged extensively on this issue over the past year . In addition, I have also issued a letter of support to ParkRun which they have sent on to landowners, clearly acknowledging that these events can take place. I have also raised my support in the House and through social media.

I am committed to supporting them to return as soon as possible. and I appeal to local authorities and landowners to work constructively with park run organisers on the safe return of park runs.

■ Reclaim Fund: Third Sector

Rachael Maskell: [\[2357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much of the £150 million of funding from Reclaim Fund Ltd which was allocated to good causes during the covid-19 outbreak contributed to the £750 million in funding announced on 8 April 2020.

Rachael Maskell: [\[2358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what initiatives have been supported by the £150 million in funding allocated from Reclaim Fund Ltd during the covid-19 outbreak.

Matt Warman:

In May 2020 the DCMS Secretary of State announced that £150 million of dormant assets funding would go to help charities, social enterprises and individuals in need of support during the coronavirus outbreak. This funding was completely separate to the government's £750 million support package for the voluntary and community sector, announced in April 2020.

The £150 million of dormant assets funding – consisting of £71 million of new funds alongside repurposing £79 million already unlocked – has supported a variety of initiatives focused on youth, financial inclusion, and social investment:

- £10 million was used by Youth Futures Foundation to launch an emergency levelling up fund for young people from the communities hit hardest by this crisis, including those from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic groups.
- £65 million was used by Fair4All Finance to create a robust programme to tackle the heightened needs of the financially marginalised as a result of the crisis.
- £45 million was used by Big Society Capital to allow better access to investment, including emergency loans for charities, social enterprises and some small businesses facing cash-flow problems and disruption to their trading.
- £30 million was used by Access – The Foundation for Social Investment, making up to £10 million available for emergency support through social lenders, while also

developing a wider £20 million programme of flexible recovery finance for the social sector.

■ Telecommunications

Chi Onwurah: [2293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the life time of the UK's (a) 2G and (b) 3G networks.

Matt Warman:

The Government is working with mobile operators, suppliers, and users to set a clear roadmap for the sunsetting or streamlining of 2G and 3G technologies, following the recommendations of the Diversification Taskforce, published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The Government expects to set out next steps this summer, in order to provide operators, suppliers and users with clarity and confidence about the long-term technology roadmap in the UK.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

John Nicolson: [2331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to amend the Electronic Communications Code to apply paragraph 17 automatic upgrading and sharing rights to Code agreements concluded before 2017.

John Nicolson: [2332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to amend the Electronic Communications Code to ensure that alternative telecoms operators benefit from an existing wayleave agreement when accessing existing ducts or poles on private land in Scotland in order to roll out gigabit capable networks.

Matt Warman:

The Department has recently consulted regarding changes to the Electronic Communications Code through a public consultation which closed on 24 March 2021. That consultation included questions specifically about operator rights to upgrade and share apparatus. Responses to that consultation are being considered and legislative proposals will be laid before this House in due course.

■ Telecommunications: Scotland

John Nicolson: [2330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the extent to which the current Electronic Communications Code enables alternative telecoms operators to use Ofcom's Duct & Pole Access remedy in Scotland.

Matt Warman:

The Department has recently consulted regarding changes to the Electronic Communications Code through a public consultation which closed on 24 March 2021. That consultation included questions specifically about operator rights to upgrade and

share apparatus. Responses to that consultation are being considered and legislative proposals will be laid before this House in due course.

■ **Telecoms Diversification Task Force: Finance**

Chi Onwurah: **[2290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding will be provided to the Telecommunications Diversification Taskforce in the current Parliament.

Matt Warman:

The Telecoms Diversification Taskforce, composed of independent experts from industry and academia, was established on a voluntary basis to look at where the Government should target measures to ensure effective, accelerated and sustainable diversification. No funding has been or will be provided to the Telecommunications Diversification Taskforce.

The Taskforce's findings and recommendations were published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). We will respond to the Taskforce findings in the summer, and outline our next steps on the delivery of the diversification strategy, which is backed by an initial investment of up to £250 million.

■ **Tourism: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher: **[3901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to support the recovery of the tourism sector in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England from the impact of the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department is taking a number of steps to encourage tourism across the country once restrictions are eased, including in Coventry and the West Midlands.

We are currently working with VisitBritain, VisitEngland and local partners to champion the UK's diverse tourism offer through the Escape the Everyday campaign.

We are also working with regional partners to maximise the tourism benefits of hosting the UK City of Culture in Coventry and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The March Budget included £700m of extra funding to support our world-leading arts, culture and sporting institutions - protecting the venues which make the UK an attractive destination to visit.

In total, over £25bn has been provided to the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors in the form of grants, loans and tax breaks. The Tourism Recovery plan will shortly set out how we will continue to support the sector's reopening and recovery from the pandemic.

■ Tourism: Disability

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[3209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) encourage private businesses in the tourism sector to be more accessible to disabled people and (b) work with the Welsh Government to supply businesses with free access to accessibility guides.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[3211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) encourage private businesses in the tourism sector to increase their accessibility to disabled people and (b) work with the Welsh Government to supply businesses with free access to accessibility guides.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department, alongside VisitBritain and VisitEngland, have taken a number of steps to improve accessibility within the tourism sector.

For example, VisitBritain and VisitEngland launched the Channel 4 Mission: Accessible series last year, which highlighted the perspective of visitors with access needs enjoying the tourism landscape and included an episode filmed in Wales.

VisitEngland has a dedicated web portal providing tailored business advice to tourism businesses, including guidance on how to welcome guests with different access needs.

The Tourism Sector Deal, published in June 2019, set out an ambition to make the UK the most accessible destination in Europe by 2025. The Tourism Recovery Plan will set out how we will support the tourism sector to build back better from the pandemic, including by making it more accessible.

More generally, the Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people, and will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People this year. The strategy will take into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people and will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects and phases of life.

As tourism is devolved, the Welsh Government is responsible for any targeted initiatives to support the sector in Wales - though we will continue to engage with the Devolved Administrations to discuss issues relevant to the tourism sector.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Standards

Stephen Metcalfe:

[\[2276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the recent decision to replace the mandatory qualification for the laboratory technician apprenticeship with a requirement for theoretical knowledge, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that

(a) that apprenticeship delivers sufficient scientific knowledge and skills for apprentices and (b) the career progression of apprentices is not adversely affected by that decision.

Stephen Metcalfe: [\[2277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the recent decision to replace the mandatory qualification for the laboratory technician apprenticeship with a requirement for theoretical knowledge, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that standards for apprenticeships are consistent across the science sector.

Gillian Keegan:

This is a matter for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. I have asked its Chief Executive, Jennifer Coupland, to write to the honourable member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[2947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what amount of apprenticeship levy funding has remained unspent after a period of 24 months in each month since January 2018.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[2948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to announce the amount of the total apprenticeship levy underspend for the financial year 2020-21; and if he will make a statement.

Gillian Keegan:

The funds in apprenticeship service accounts are available for levy paying employers to use for 24 months before they begin to expire on a rolling, month by month basis. Employers began to pay the apprenticeship levy in April 2017 and unused levy funds began to expire in May 2019.

The attached table shows the figures for monthly levy expiry from May 2019 to date.

The levy is an important part of our reforms to apprenticeships which are vital for driving our economic recovery. It supports employers of all sizes to invest in high quality apprenticeship training. In the 2021-22 financial year, funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England will remain around £2.5 billion – double that spent in the 2010-11 financial year in cash terms.

We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds available to them, but they are able to if they wish. As well as funding new apprenticeships in levy paying employers, income from the levy is used to fund new apprenticeships in employers that do not pay the levy, as well as existing apprentices that started in previous years.

The funds available to levy paying employers through their apprenticeship service accounts are not the same as the Department for Education's annual apprenticeships budget. The annual apprenticeship budget is set by Her Majesty's Treasury, and

although closely linked, is distinct from the total levy income collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Details of apprenticeship budget spend for the 2020-21 financial year will be included in the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Annual Report and Accounts which is due to be published in November 2021.

Attachments:

1. 2947_2948_table_monthly_levy_expiry_from_May_2019
[2947_2948_monthly_levy_expiry_from_May_2019_to_date.xls]

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Damien Moore:

[\[3139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what steps he is taking to ensure that schools and teachers are reimbursed for taking on the role of exam boards and marking examinations internally.

Nick Gibb:

Due to the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, it was announced on 6 January that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead as planned this summer. This year, pupils will be awarded grades determined by their teachers and based on a range of evidence, only being assessed on the content they have been taught and not what they have missed. Whilst we recognise that teachers will need to assess their pupils this year on a range of evidence, in many ways, assessing pupils and determining their standard of performance is an important part of teachers' roles in a typical year.

The Department continues to work closely with Ofqual and the exam boards to ensure that teachers feel supported. As part of this process, we are regularly engaging with the teacher unions and other sector representatives to ensure the processes developed and guidance which supports them reflects their feedback. The Joint Council for Qualifications and the exam boards have published extensive guidance and materials for schools and colleges to support teachers with their assessment, marking, and making their judgements of pupils' performance.

Exam boards are responsible for setting their exam fees, taking into account the costs involved with alternative arrangements in 2021. Exam boards will need to cover their costs, and the Department expects they will make commercial decisions on fees and refunds on that basis. Given the unusual circumstances this year, it is not possible for them to have certainty about their 2021 costs in advance.

■ Curriculum

Ms Diane Abbott:

[\[1269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which (a) institutions and (b) stakeholders he has met with recently to discuss diversifying the curricula.

Nick Gibb:

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain.

The Department regularly engages with teachers and other stakeholders on the curriculum, including on diversity and inclusion. There is already a wide range of high-quality teaching resources on culturally diverse curriculum content throughout the curriculum, including those produced by education publishers, voluntary organisations and subject associations, and remote education resources from the Oak National Academy.

The Government is currently considering the recommendations in the report by the Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparities, including on curriculum resources, and assessing the next steps for future policy. In recognition of the extensive scope of recommendations, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has established a new Inter Ministerial Group to review recommendations. The group will be chaired by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Ms Diane Abbott:

[1270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what policies his Department is considering in relation to diversifying the curricula.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity and supports all pupils to tackle racism and have the knowledge and tools to do so. As part of the statutory curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain.

The Government is currently considering the recommendations in the report by the Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED), including on curriculum resources, and assessing the next steps for future policy. In recognition of the extensive scope of recommendations, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has established a new Inter Ministerial Group to review recommendations. The group will be chaired by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The report recommendation is for curriculum resources and is not a change in the statutory curriculum. In particular, the report calls for resources that complement and enhance the content and quality of lessons taught in all schools, so that all children can be taught about the UK and the evolution of our society.

As the report highlights, there is a wide range of high quality teaching resources on black history or other culturally diverse curriculum content throughout the curriculum, including those produced by education publishers, voluntary organisations and subject associations, and remote education resources from the Oak National Academy.

The Government will publish its response to CRED later this year.

■ Education: Ethnic Groups

Ms Diane Abbott: [1271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the Education Recovery Package fund that will be allocated to supporting the needs of Black and Asian children and students.

Ms Diane Abbott: [1272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is planning to take specific steps to support the educational experiences and outcomes of Caribbean heritage students, other than the measures that his Department is taking to support disadvantaged pupils generally; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is focused on raising education standards for all pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Department does not design education policy to exclusively target certain groups of pupils based on ethnicity.

The Department recognises that the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has been felt most heavily by disadvantaged children and young people.

In June 2020, the Department announced a £1 billion catch up package, which includes £350 million for the National Tutoring Programme to increase the availability of high quality tuition for the most disadvantaged children and young people, helping to accelerate their education and tackle the attainment gap.

In February 2021, the Department committed to funding of £700 million for summer schools, expansion of our tutoring programmes and a Recovery Premium for the next academic year. The £302 million Recovery Premium for state funded primary and secondary schools, builds on the Pupil Premium, to further support pupils who need it most.

The Department is also considering the education recommendations from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.

■ Graduates

Alison McGovern: [2959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his Department holds on the number of students that are expected to graduate in 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes data on students enrolled in higher education (HE) in the UK.

The latest statistics on students graduating from HE refer to the academic year 2019/20. They are available in Figure 15 (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb258/figure-15>) of the HESA publication 'Higher Education Statistics: UK': <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/27-01-2021/sb258-higher-education-student-statistics>.

Statistics about students obtaining qualifications in the 2020/21 academic year will be published by the HESA in January 2022. The department does not hold an estimate of how many students are expected to graduate.

■ **Home Education: Standards**

Derek Twigg: [\[3799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 618 on Home Education: Standards, what his planned timetable is for publishing his Department's response to the consultation which closed on 24 June 2019.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to publishing the Children Not in School consultation response in due course. We hope to have this published in the coming months.

■ **Pioneer Academy: Complaints**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[3097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 407 on Pioneer Academy: Complaints, how many individual complaints have been made to his Department about schools run by the Pioneer Academy.

Nick Gibb:

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) are responsible for investigating complaints about academies. Over the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, one complaint has been submitted to the ESFA about a school in the Pioneer Academy Trust.

The ESFA was satisfied that the academy was compliant with statutory policies and procedures and therefore the complaint was not upheld.

■ **Pioneer Academy: Finance**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[3096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 404 on Pioneer Academy: Finance, what additional financial assistance has been offered to Pioneer Academy in the event that they become the sponsor of Moulsecoomb Primary.

Nick Gibb:

The Pioneer Academy has been offered 'full sponsorship' funding, which means it is eligible to receive up to £110,000 in pre-opening costs before Moulsecoomb opens as an academy.

The Pioneer Academy has not yet been offered any additional financial assistance. Further support is sometimes provided to fund additional costs, such as necessary capital works.

■ Pioneer Academy: Moulsecoomb School

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[3993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of his decision to appoint the Pioneer Academies Trust as sponsor to Moulsecoomb Primary school following the alleged safeguarding incident outside the school involving a visit from the Trust on 10 May.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is aware of the alleged safeguarding incident. We understand the allegation is unfounded and that the police are taking no further action having reviewed the situation.

■ Pioneer Academy: Timothy Rowe

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[3992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the academisation order of Moulsecoomb Primary school, what assessment his Department has made of any potential conflict of interest of appointing, Pioneer Academy Trust as the sponsor when Director Timothy Rome was one of the Ofsted inspectors who rated the school inadequate.

Nick Gibb:

Ofsted has confirmed there was no conflict of interest, given that Timothy Rome was not employed by the Pioneer Academy at the time of the inspection. His previous employment as an Ofsted inspector who has visited the school in the past does not preclude the Pioneer Academy from sponsoring the school in the present day.

■ Postgraduate Education: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that PhD researchers whose research has been affected by the covid-19 outbreak will receive the funding extensions needed to finish their research.

Michelle Donelan:

This is a difficult and uncertain time for students. We are working with the sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies.

English students eligible for the doctoral degree loan can access one loan up to the maximum amount that was available when they started their course. There is no discretion within the regulations to increase the entitlement where a student extends their study, but those who have not accessed the maximum amount can apply for an additional amount of loan. If a student has withdrawn from their PhD due to compelling personal reasons, they may nonetheless be eligible for a further loan for a second full course. Withdrawal as a result of reasons connected to COVID-19 is usually considered a compelling personal reason.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) fund around 25% of the total PhD population in the UK. They have made several interventions to support PhD students who have been disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent national restrictions.

In terms of financial support, UKRI will have provided over £60 million of financial support to UKRI-funded students most impacted by COVID-19. This support was announced over two phases in April and November 2020. UKRI continued to monitor the situation and, in February 2021, any unspent funds were reallocated to support those students who needed it most. This included, but was not limited to, students with projects where adaptations may not be possible, and students with a disability, long-term illness, who are neurodivergent, or have caring responsibilities.

On 24 March 2021, UKRI announced that training grant holders will now be given further flexibility to support extensions for UKRI-funded PhD students most in need. Training grant holders can now support extensions by using their training and cohort development funding and by reducing investment in recruitment by up to 10% of the new studentships committed to in 2021/22. This reduction can be implemented over 2021/22 and 2022/23 starts.

Research England will also be delivering around £11 million of block grant funding to English universities as a contribution to their support for their postgraduate research communities, including to students not funded by UKRI.

We also recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The department has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. The government is making a further £15 million of additional student hardship funding available for academic year 2020/21. In total, we have made an additional £85 million of funding available for student hardship.

Providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need. The funding could be distributed to a wide population of students, including postgraduates (whether taught or research-based) and international students.

■ Pupils: Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of digital exclusion on the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers; and what steps he is taking to reduce the level of digital exclusion.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognised that a lack of digital access posed a risk to the efficacy of remote education during the COVID-19 outbreak. In response, over £400 million was invested to support access to remote education as an injection of support to minimise digital exclusion. Over 1.3 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education colleges. Over 100,000

families have been supported to get online by providing uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers.

Through our existing grant funding partnership with Nesta, in autumn 2020 the Department launched the EdTech Research and Development Programme. This programme will further our understanding of the impact of technology in education, particularly the impact and disparity between advantaged and disadvantaged students in attainment and outcomes during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The programme includes the evaluation of six remote education tools being used in schools and colleges in England. The first evaluation cycle is complete, with iterations to the products underway. A final evaluation cycle is due to be completed by the end of the summer term, and a concluding report with key findings on using remote education tools effectively for all students, with particular recommendations for disadvantaged students, will also be shared with the wider sector by December 2021.

The Department is also working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to improve broadband connections in schools. DCMS has powers to address some affordability issues for some telecoms services.

■ School Leaving

Alison McGovern:

[2958]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of pupils that will leave school in summer 2021.

Nick Gibb:

Pupil counts by year group are published in the annual "Schools, pupils and their characteristics" statistical release. This includes pupils who are coming to the end of their secondary education in Year 11 and those in Years 12 to 14 in school sixth forms. Data relating to the 2020/21 academic year will be published in June 2021 at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

■ Social Services: Sefton Borough Council

Damien Moore:

[3135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the findings of Ofsted's report on children's services at Sefton Borough Council published on 10 May 2021 are addressed.

Vicky Ford:

I have noted the findings of the recent Ofsted focus visit to Sefton Borough Council's children's services department, including the two areas for priority action identified in their report.

My officials have been working with Sefton Borough Council on their response and met again with the Chief Executive and the new Interim Director of Children's Social Services on 19 May 2021 to discuss how the findings will be addressed.

I am minded to issue an Improvement Notice and appoint an advisor for 12 months. This will require Sefton to establish an improvement board and draw up an improvement plan to ensure that the two areas identified are addressed within that 12 month period.

We will continue to work closely with colleagues at Sefton Borough Council as they take forward their improvement plan.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell: [\[3057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether all children with special educational needs will have access to additional support in response to the covid-19 outbreak before the summer 2021 school holidays.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether children with special education needs and disabilities will have priority access to a recovery programme of activities over the summer 2021 school holidays.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether all children with special educational needs and disabilities will have additional tutor support for the 2021-22 academic year in response to missed schooling over the last 12 months.

Vicky Ford:

We are committed to helping all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to make up learning lost as a result of COVID-19.

We have made available £1.7 billion in funding to support education recovery. In June 2020, we announced a £1 billion catch-up package, including a National Tutoring Programme and a Catch-up Premium, for this academic year. In February 2021, we committed to further funding of £700 million for summer schools, expansion of our tutoring programmes and a Recovery Premium for the next academic year. Funding will support pupils across early years settings, schools and providers of 16-19 education.

Both special schools and alternative provision will be able to access funding to provide for summer schools and access the National Tutoring Programme. Eligible pupils in special schools, special units in mainstream primary and secondary schools and alternative provision settings will attract a higher rate of funding for summer schools. We have also consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts both in the 2020 Catch-up Premium and in the 2021 Recovery Premium funding.

In addition to summer schools, a broader programme of summer enrichment activities, including the Holiday Activities and Food programme, will be running to support children and young people and their families.

We want children to enjoy the school holidays and to access fun, enriching experiences and to eat nutritious meals. That is why we are investing up to £220 million in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every local authority across England this year.

Children eligible for benefits-related free school meals will have the option to join a holiday club programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the summer in 2021, giving these young people opportunities that they might otherwise lose out on. It is our clear expectation that all local authority co-ordinators will ensure that their provision is fully accessible and that children with SEND can access appropriate provision.

Young people with SEND aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care plan will be eligible for support via the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund, where they meet the fund criteria. Providers are asked to have regard to the needs of students with SEND when prioritising students that would benefit most for small group tuition. Furthermore, the proposals to support early language and literacy catch up will benefit all children, including those with SEND.

The department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy both for the summer term of the 2019-20 academic year, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to year 11. This includes specialist content for pupils with SEND. The Oak National Academy's resources will continue to be available for free throughout the summer term and summer holidays.

We are committed to ensuring that the National Tutoring Programme is as inclusive as possible. When selecting Tuition Partners for this academic year, we worked with the Education Endowment Foundation to ensure that they have had the relevant experience of working with children who have SEND in both mainstream and specialist settings. We have 26 providers that are able to support students with SEND, and 17 of these also able to support students in special school settings.

We are currently progressing the procurement process for the supplier of the programme for next academic year. Once appointed, we expect the supplier to work with potential Tuition Partners to ensure the programme offers appropriate provision for children with SEND.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Stephen Morgan:

[3130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of the Resource Account and Budgeting charge his Department estimates to be made up of tuition fees that are not expected to be repaid.

Stephen Morgan:

[3131]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of the Resource Account and Budgeting charge his Department estimates to be made up of maintenance loans that are not expected to be repaid.

Michelle Donelan:

The Resource Account and Budgeting (RAB) charge is the estimated cost to the government of providing a subsidy for the student finance system. It is the proportion of loan outlay expected to not be repaid when future repayments are valued in present terms. The RAB charge is calculated by taking repayment forecasts for income contingent repayment loans and discounting them back to the period that the loan is issued using the discount rate provided by HM Treasury.

The department publishes forecasts of loan outlay and RAB charges for each loan product. The latest forecasts, published June 2020, are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/student-loan-forecasts-for-england/2019-20>.

The RAB charge in the 2019-20 financial year was forecast to be 53% for full-time higher education loans, and 45% for part-time higher education loans. Tuition fee loans and maintenance loans are both higher education student finance products. Borrowers who have taken out both tuition fee loans and maintenance loans repay these at the same time. Therefore, the department does not calculate separate RAB charges for tuition fee loans and maintenance loans.

In the 2019-20 financial year, the government provided £16,371 million of student loan funding to English funded full-time higher education students, of which £9,503 million was in tuition fee loans and £6,868 million in maintenance loans. The value of the loan outlay that is not expected to be repaid is known as the RAB cost and can be calculated by multiplying loan outlay by the RAB charge. Therefore, the RAB cost of full-time higher education tuition fee loans in the 2019-20 financial year was £5,036 million (£9,503 million × 53%), and the RAB cost of full-time higher education maintenance loans was £3,640 million (£6,868 million × 53%).

■ Students: Mental Health

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[1349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to universities on safeguarding the mental health of (a) students on placements and (b) other students.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[1350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve mental healthcare provision for students in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[1351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the number of university students on placements who took their own lives between in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

Student mental health and suicide prevention are key priorities for this government. We continue to work closely with the higher education (HE) sector to promote good practice. Universities are not only experts in their student population, but also best placed to identify the needs of their particular student body, including those students undertaking placements as part of their studies.

Whilst it is for HE providers to determine what welfare and counselling services they need to provide to their students to offer that support, the government is proactive in promoting good practice in this area. We continue to work closely with Universities UK (UUK) on embedding the Stepchange programme within the sector. Further information can be found here: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>. Stepchange calls on HE leaders to adopt mental health as a strategic priority and take a whole-institution approach, embedding it across all policies, cultures, curricula and practice. The Stepchange programme relaunched in March 2020 as the Mentally Healthy Universities programme. The university Mental Health Charter, announced in June 2018, is backed by the government and led by the sector. The charter, developed in collaboration with students, staff and partner organisations, aims to drive up standards of practice, including leadership, early intervention and data collection. Further information can be accessed here: <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html>.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, I have stressed the importance of protecting student and staff wellbeing. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the outbreak. I have engaged with universities on this issue and have written to Vice Chancellors on numerous occasions during the past year, most recently last month, outlining that student welfare should remain a priority. I have also convened a working group of representatives from the HE and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

My hon. Friend, the Minister for Children and Families, and I have also convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group to drive action to mitigate the impact of the outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.

We expect HE providers to continue to support their students, which has included making services accessible from a distance whilst restrictions have been in place. We encourage students to stay in touch with their provider's welfare teams as these services are likely to continue to be an important source of support. Many providers have bolstered their existing mental health services, and adapted delivery

mechanisms including reaching out to students who may be more vulnerable. Staff at universities and colleges have been proactive in supporting their students, showing resourcefulness and there are many examples of good practice.

We have worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, a dedicated mental health and wellbeing platform for students, which has been funded by up to £3 million by the OfS in the 2020/21 academic year. We have also asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities Grant funding, to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach students.

The Office for National Statistics data shows that in 2016/17 – the last year on record – there were 95 student deaths by suicide in England and Wales. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/estimating-suicide-among-higher-education-students-england-and-wales-experimental-statistics/2018-06-25#:~:text=The%20rate%20of%20suicide%20in,it%20difficult%20to%20identify%20statistically.>

The incoming President of UUK, Professor Steve West, and I will jointly chair a new roundtable on suicide prevention in June. Through this we will develop and support the adoption of the Suicide Safer Universities framework and promote good practice in the sector, helping to make sure students are well supported during their time at university, including when undertaking placements as part of their studies.

■ Teachers: Ethnic Groups

Ms Diane Abbott: [1267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to take specific steps to increase the recruitment of Black and Asian teachers.

Ms Diane Abbott: [1268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to (a) support, (b) retain and (c) support the promotion of Black and Asian teachers.

Nick Gibb:

Apply for Teacher Training is a new application service for initial teacher training (ITT). To support recruitment, Apply has been designed to be as simple and user friendly as possible and it has been extensively tested with a diverse range of potential applicants. Currently, Apply is in public beta, running alongside the existing application service for teacher training. As we roll the service out further, we will continue to develop and test interventions to support people from diverse backgrounds to become teachers.

The Department's 'Teaching – Every Lesson Shapes A Life' recruitment campaign is targeted at audiences of students/recent graduates and potential career changers of all races and backgrounds, and we take every effort to ensure that our advertising is fully reflective of this across the full range of marketing materials we use.

Alongside a focus on recruitment, it is important we retain people from diverse backgrounds. From September 2021, all new trainee teachers will be entitled to at least three years of evidence-based professional development and support. This starts with ITT, based on the new ITT Core Content Framework, which sets out a core minimum entitlement for all trainees, describing the fundamental knowledge and skills that ITT providers must draw upon when designing and delivering their programmes.

Following on from their training, all new teachers will be entitled to two years of funded high quality professional development, including the support of a dedicated mentor, through the Early Career Framework reforms. Schools will receive additional funding so new teachers can spend time away from the classroom for this extra training and mentoring. Together, these reforms will ensure that all new teachers will develop the expertise and confidence they need to thrive in the classroom.

Our new suite of National Professional Qualifications, available from September 2021, will make sure that we continue to develop our best teaching and leadership talent, whatever their background.

■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

Dr Julian Lewis:

[2855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the proposed legislation on free speech in universities (a) recognises the disruptive effects of investigations of students and staff for expressing their personal opinions within the law, (b) provides for the immediate dismissal of vexatious complaints and (c) would have precluded any formal investigation by Abertay University of a student who gave her opinion of what defines a woman, having been asked in a class discussion to do so.

Michelle Donelan:

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, introduced on 12 May 2021 in the House of Commons, will protect the fundamental principle of freedom of speech by strengthening existing freedom of speech protections and addressing gaps within the current framework.

This bill, particularly the new duty to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education (HE), will empower those who run our universities and colleges to publicly defend the right of all of their students, staff members and visiting speakers to speak freely within the law.

In many cases, this should mean that they do not feel a need to investigate where an individual is clearly expressing lawful, if perhaps offensive or controversial, views. Some examples will be less clear-cut, and some investigation will be needed to ascertain the facts. It will remain the responsibility of the provider (or students' union)

to balance their duties when considering the issues, having particular regard to the importance of freedom of speech.

The new Office for Students (OfS) complaints scheme will ensure that students, staff members and visiting speakers have a clear route for making complaints and seeking redress where they believe their freedom of speech or academic freedom has been unlawfully restricted on campus. The OfS will have the ability to dismiss complaints that it considers to be frivolous or vexatious.

The statutory tort will act as a backstop, offering a direct route to the courts for redress for individuals who have suffered loss due to a breach of the freedom of speech duties. In the case of a vexatious claim, the claimant would struggle to make their case if they could not clearly point to any tangible loss suffered as a result of a breach of the freedom of speech duties, and they would also risk having to pay substantial legal costs as a result, both their own and the provider's or students' union's.

The subject matter of the majority of the bill is education, which is a devolved matter. Accordingly, the principal measures in the bill will only apply to England and will not apply to Scottish universities.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution: Newcastle upon Tyne

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[3800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the average level of air pollution in Newcastle upon Tyne; and if he will publish those figures for each of the last five years.

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[3802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce air pollution in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Rebecca Pow:

We are continuing to deliver our ambitious plans to improve air quality. To tackle local nitrogen dioxide exceedances, we are providing £880 million to help local authorities develop and implement local air quality plans and to support those impacted by these plans.

The Joint Air Quality Unit has provided funding and support to, and continues to work closely with, Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council as they develop plans to tackle their nitrogen dioxide exceedances.

There are two monitoring stations on the national Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN) that are located within the Newcastle City Council area. Both the Newcastle Centre and Newcastle Cradlewell Roadside stations measure

concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and PM10. The Newcastle Centre station also measures concentrations of PM2.5 and ozone.

Measurements from the Newcastle Centre station are published on the UK-AIR website at the following URL: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/flat_files?site_id=NEWC

Measurements from the Newcastle Cradlewell Roadside station are published on the UK-AIR website at the following URL:

https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/flat_files?site_id=NCA3

Local authorities are additionally required to review and assess local air quality and to publish monitoring data in their Annual Status Reports along with the measures they are taking to improve air quality in their areas. Newcastle City Council's Annual Status Reports can be viewed on the council's website:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/environment-and-waste/environmental-health-and-pollution/air-pollution/air-quality>

Attachments:

1. 2020 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) [NCC_ASR_2020.pdf]

■ **Animal Products: Imports**

Dr Rupa Huq: [3075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ban the import of hunting trophies into the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

This Government takes the conservation of endangered species in the UK and internationally very seriously, which is why we will be banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species. Our approach will be comprehensive, robust and effective and will deliver the change we promised to help protect thousands of species worldwide. We will be setting out plans soon.

■ **Environment Agency: Fees and Charges**

Luke Pollard: [R] [1386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many permit fees were paid to the Environment Agency in the financial year 2019-20.

Luke Pollard: [R] [1387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many permit fees were paid to the Environment Agency in the financial year 2020-21.

Rebecca Pow:

In 2019/20 the Environment Agency (EA) issued approximately 80,000 permit or licence fee invoices.

In 2020/21 the EA issued approximately 78,000 permit or licence fee invoices.

Luke Pollard: [R] [1388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what revenue the Environment Agency received from permit fees in the financial year 2019-20.

Luke Pollard: [R] [1389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what revenue the Environment Agency received from permit fees in the financial year 2020-21.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) billed £346 million of permit and licence income in 2019/20.

In 2020/21 the EA billed £365 million of permit and licence income.

■ Environment Agency: Finance

Luke Pollard: [R] [1392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to provide funding to mitigate changes in the level of income of the Environment Agency in the fiscal year 2021-22.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency's budget for 2021-22 has now been delegated and there are no current plans to provide additional funding.

The Environment Agency is every year exposed to some credit risk, and we note the Agency was successful in achieving its expected income collection in 2020-21.

■ Environment Agency: Public Expenditure

Luke Pollard: [R] [1391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what consultation meetings relating to the Comprehensive Spending Review his Department (a) has held and (b) plans to hold with the Environment Agency.

Victoria Prentis:

Departmental budgets for future years beyond 2021-22 will be set by HM Treasury (HMT) through the Spending Review later this year. HMT will set out further details, including the envelopes for the Spending Review, in due course.

Defra's Spending Review proposals will be developed in line with the outcomes we seek to achieve over the next Spending Review period. We will work closely together with our arm's length bodies, including the Environment Agency, in developing our Spending Review plans.

Prior to Ministerial submission, Defra's response to the Spending Review will also be approved by the department's Executive Committee, of which the Environment Agency CEO is a member.

■ Flood Control: Sefton

Bill Esterson:

[3842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of recent bids for Flood Resilience funding for projects in the Borough of Sefton.

Rebecca Pow:

25 projects across England were selected to receive a share of £150 million to demonstrate how practical innovative actions can work to improve communities' resilience to flooding and coastal change.

79 eligible expressions of interest (EOIs) were received, and independently assessed by a panel of experts. Two EOI proposals were received from project teams in Sefton, one of which will receive funding from this programme.

The project approved for funding in Sefton (*Ecological Community Owned Coastal Buffer Strips*) is being led by Wyre Council. Sefton Council is a key partner. This project will deliver actions across the North West coast, including Formby, to improve resilience to flooding in the area.

The Environment Agency provided feedback to the lead officer at Sefton Council on 26 April 2021 to help the team identify the strengths of the unsuccessful proposal (*Increasing Community Flood Resilience in Merseyside: Novel Applications of Smart Technology and Data Analysis*). The feedback also notes areas they might want to consider improving if they choose to continue to develop the ideas further.

The Environment Agency is working with all projects that did not secure funding via this programme to take their good ideas forward through other routes. Sefton Council has provided summary information about its proposal for the Environment Agency to share with partners and stakeholders who may be interested in supporting the proposal.

■ Food: Waste

Julian Sturdy:

[1309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce food waste.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra supports a range of action to reduce food waste.

At the household level, we are tackling food waste through supporting campaigns such as *Love Food, Hate Waste* and *Wasting Food: It's Out of Date* as well as the UK's first Food Waste Action Week which was held in March 2021. We also support the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and its work with retailers and other food businesses who play a key role in influencing household food waste through interventions such as pack sizing and labelling. These measures all help consumers to buy what they need and use what they buy.

For reducing waste in the supply chain, we support the Courtauld 2025 voluntary agreement delivered by WRAP that looks to reduce food waste by 20% by 2025. Action here is primarily through the Food Waste Reduction Roadmap and the Target, Measure, Act approach where businesses set a reduction target, measure food waste and act to reduce it. This is currently voluntary under the Roadmap, but we will consult this year on introducing regulations to make the transparent reporting of food waste mandatory for businesses of an appropriate size. We also support resource efficiency in the hospitality sector through the *Guardians of Grub* campaign delivered by WRAP.

Since 2018 Defra has made a series of grants available to help redistribute more surplus food to those who have a need and to stop it from going to animal feed or disposal destinations. In total over £11 million has been awarded to both large and small redistribution organisations across the country.

Defra has appointed Ben Elliot as Food Surplus and Waste Champion. Ben is motivating business leaders to tackle food waste from farm to fork, including through support for the delivery of the Courtauld 2025 commitments.

■ Marine Environment: Finance

Sarah Olney: [\[1356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will increase investment in new forms of finance to fund ocean recovery.

Rebecca Pow:

We are at a pivotal moment for ocean recovery, and the Government is supporting ocean protection through appropriate funding, both domestically and internationally. We are extending our Blue Belt initiative with £7 million of funding, which is now on course to provide world-leading marine protection for over 4 million km² before the end of this year. Additionally, the Government's £80 million Green Recovery Challenge fund is helping environmental organisations start work on projects across England, including marine and coastal projects, to restore nature and tackle climate change. The Government has also launched the £6.1 million Fisheries and Seafood Scheme which will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the English seafood sector and support a thriving marine environment.

The Government has pledged £500 million to create a new Blue Planet Fund to help developing countries reduce poverty, protect and sustainably manage their marine resources and address human-generated threats across four key themes: biodiversity, climate change, marine pollution, and sustainable seafood. Financed from the UK Official Development Assistance Budget, the Fund will be managed by Defra and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and will be launched later this year.

Beyond public investment, this Government also recognises the importance of mobilising private finance for the development of sustainable ocean-based economies, which are particularly dependent on a healthy ocean. Building on

experience and growth in climate and green finance over the last ten years, new ocean-specific private finance initiatives (Blue Finance) are beginning to gain global traction across the world, covering topics such as marine biodiversity, blue carbon and marine plastic pollution. We are collaborating with international partnerships to scale up innovative finance solutions and considering how the Blue Planet Fund could support mobilising Blue Finance. This has recently been highlighted in the G7 Climate and Environment Ministers' Communique, published on 21 May 2021, where the G7 committed to strengthening support to the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance, whose purpose is to build resilience in communities most vulnerable to ocean risk, by pioneering finance and insurance products.

Departmental budgets for future years beyond 2021-22 will be set through the Spending Review later this year. Further details, including the envelopes for the Spending Review, will be set out in due course.

■ **Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs**

Kenny MacAskill:

[4038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs entering Great Britain via the Pet Travel Scheme held British pet passports in each year from 2012 to 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The information requested is not held by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

Data regarding the Pet Travel Scheme covers the number of pets entering Great Britain, which is provided by checkers, employed by approved carriers of pet animals. The type of passport is not a requirement of data submitted to APHA and therefore this information is not held.

■ **Pets: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood:

[3204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress he has made on discussions with the European Union to ensure that pets can travel between Northern Ireland and Great Britain without additional impediment following the UK's exit from the European Union.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has been formally 'listed' as a 'Part 2' third country for the purposes of the EU pet travel regulations, which means that new rules apply to pet movements from Great Britain to the EU and also – under the Northern Ireland Protocol – to the non-commercial movements of pets into Northern Ireland. The health and documentary requirements for such pet travel are set out under the EU Pet Travel Regulations.

We are continuing to press the European Commission on securing Part 1 listed status and in regaining recognition of our freedom from the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis*, as achieving these would alleviate some of these new requirements for

pet owners and assistance dog users. We meet all the animal health requirements for this, and we have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity.

Additionally, the Government is engaging with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to explore means to streamline pet travel between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, recognising the high standards of animal health that we share. Current guidance on pet travel to Northern Ireland is available on DAERA's NIDirect website.

■ Rabbits: Animal Welfare

Sir Greg Knight:

[3806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason domestic rabbit welfare was not included in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare published on 12 May 2021; what plans he has to improve the welfare of domestic rabbits in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government continues to take positive action to protect the welfare of companion animals – including domestic rabbits. The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations, introduced in 2018, require anyone who is in the business of selling rabbits as pets, to obtain a valid licence from their local authority. Licences must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse or revoke licences. The 2018 Regulations are supported by statutory guidance which provides specific information about the keeping of rabbits for sale:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936832/selling-animals-as-pets.pdf

Meanwhile other advice is available to educate pet owners on providing for the welfare needs of their rabbit, including the British Rabbit Council's Codes of Practice: <https://thebritishrabbitcouncil.org/codes-practice.php>

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is an offence to cause any animal unnecessary suffering or to fail to provide for its welfare. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 was recently granted Royal Assent. This realises the Government's manifesto commitment to increase the sentences available to our courts for the most serious cases of animal cruelty. It means that from 29 June 2021, anyone who is cruel to an animal (including domestic rabbits) faces being sent to prison for up to 5 years, or receiving an unlimited fine, or both. This strengthened penalty sends a clear message that animal cruelty will not be tolerated. Following a conviction for animal cruelty or welfare offences, the court may also ban the offender from keeping certain types of animals and/or order that their animals are removed from them. The Action Plan for Animal Welfare provides an overview of current priorities – particularly those which require legislative action and reform. We will continue to work closely with the

companion animal welfare sector to monitor future developments in welfare standards for all domestic animals including rabbits.

■ Rivers: Plastics

Virginia Crosbie:

[3208]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce microplastic contamination in rivers arising from the discharge of untreated sewage and wastewater by water companies.

Rebecca Pow:

Although there has been research reporting the presence and impacts of microplastics in the marine environment, little is known about their sources, release and impact on rivers. Defra has published research to contribute to better understanding of these issues, and will use the outcomes from this and other studies to develop policy options to help mitigate the impact of microplastics in the environment.

Defra is also working with the Environment Agency, academics and the UK water industry to understand the scale of the microplastic pollution problem and to establish detection methods to identify, characterise and quantify the types of microplastics entering wastewater treatment plants; evaluate the efficiency of treatment processes for the removal of microplastics from domestic wastewaters, and assess the fate and biological effects of microplastics in receiving rivers.

With regards to discharges of untreated waste water, tackling the harm caused by sewer overflows is a top priority for this department.

To achieve this, the new Storm Overflows Taskforce - bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - has agreed to set a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. The Taskforce is meeting regularly and working on plans to start making progress towards that goal, and they have commissioned research to gather evidence on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options.

We are also introducing new duties in the Environment Bill that will require the Government to publish a plan by September 2022 to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows and to report progress to Parliament on implementing that plan. We are also introducing duties requiring water companies and the Environment Agency to publish data on storm overflow operations on an annual basis. These legally binding obligations on water companies and Government will help reduce pollution in rivers, including microplastic contamination, protecting wildlife and public health.

Water companies are committed in the five-year business planning period (2020-25) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.3 billion.

■ **Water Supply: Chemicals and Lead**

Dawn Butler: [\[1026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the level of (a) lead and (b) other chemicals in the water supply.

Rebecca Pow:

Drinking water is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Water companies are responsible for monitoring the level of lead and other chemicals in public supplies and local authorities are responsible in private supplies. The drinking water regulations for public and private supplies set sampling frequencies and standards to be achieved. Water companies and local authorities are responsible for identifying risks to the quality of the water and are required to sample the supply for any element, organism or substance that may be at a level which would constitute a potential danger to human health.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate is the regulator for drinking water quality. They hold water companies to account and take action to ensure any failures are addressed. They also provide technical and scientific advice to local authorities.

In 2019, public water supply compliance with the drinking water regulations was 99.96% and private water supply was 96.6%.

■ **Water Supply: Lead**

Julian Sturdy: [\[1308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) grants and (b) other provisions are available to support householders in replacing domestic lead water pipes beyond the stopcock; and what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of support for householders to replace those pipes.

Rebecca Pow:

As with other parts of a home, pipes on the customer's property are the customer's/homeowner's responsibility. However, we are aware there can be problems relating to lead content and leakage issues in these supply pipes. Some water companies provide help to customers to replace these pipes, but this is not consistent.

Defra is gathering evidence on policies to reduce lead exposure. The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) has published a review of the currently available evidence on lead in drinking water and the possible long-term strategies to reduce exposure, which is available on the DWI's website. Ofwat recently approved two trial projects to replace customer supply pipes made of lead by South West Water and Severn Trent.

With regard to leakage, a response to the 2019 'Water conservation: measures to reduce personal water use' consultation, is expected to be published this spring. Measures to address leakage were considered as part of this consultation, and

protecting our water resources is a priority for this Government. The consultation response will more clearly set out our intentions with regard to reducing leakage on customer supply pipes.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Layla Moran:

[\[3134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether armoured land rovers exported from the UK under arms export licences have been used in reported attacks on Palestinian civilians in the West Bank in the week to 18 May 2021; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all our export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[3828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement of the UK's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Launch of Rohingya Joint Response Plan in Bangladesh on 18 May 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of a reduction in the level of UK support for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh compared to the support given in previous years on (a) food security, (b) shelter, (c) security, (d) education, (e) safeguarding and (f) public health in those refugee communities.

Nigel Adams:

The UK remains a leading donor to the Rohingya response in Bangladesh despite the financial pressures. At the launch of the Joint Response Plan on 18 May, we announced £27.6 million of new funding to the Rohingya response in Bangladesh, bringing our total contribution to over £320 million since the start of the crisis in 2017. This new funding will deliver more lifesaving aid, including food assistance, health services, water and sanitation, camp management, shelter, cooking gas, and protection for survivors of gender-based violence. We have prioritised this assistance and the consolidation of the provision of services to achieve better effectiveness, impact, and value for taxpayers' money. In addition to bilateral funding, the UK is providing support to the Rohingya refugee response through global funds such as the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, Central Emergency

Response Fund, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. UK funds also support the Rohingya through the UN agencies and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Ms Lyn Brown: [3829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement of the UK's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Launch of Rohingya Joint Response Plan in Bangladesh on 18 May 2021, how much funding his Department has allocated to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in (a) 2017-18, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

Nigel Adams:

£49.1m in 2017-18; £62.98m in 2018-19; £112.36m in 2019-20; and £65.5m in 2020-21. In addition to bilateral funding, the UK is providing support to the Rohingya refugee response through global funds such as the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, Central Emergency Response Fund, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. UK funds also support the Rohingya through the UN agencies and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Postage Stamps**

Patrick Grady: [3940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Universal Postal Union on its recognition of postage stamps issued by the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary is aware that the subject of British Ocean Indian Territory (BIOT) was raised at the Universal Postal Union's (UPU) Council of Administration session on 26-30 April 2021. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which leads on Her Majesty's Government engagement with the UPU, restated the UK position on sovereignty over BIOT at that meeting.

Patrick Grady: [3941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the (a) number of editions issued and (b) total value sold of postage stamps by the British Indian Ocean Territory in each year since 2015.

Nigel Adams:

The regulation and production of postage stamps for the British Indian Ocean Territory is the responsibility of the British Indian Ocean Territory Administration (BIOTA) rather than FCDO. BIOTA should therefore be contacted directly regarding this request for information.

■ Burkina Faso: Security

Ruth Jones:

[\[859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Burkina Faso; and if he will make a statement.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, including in Burkina Faso. There were more deaths by violence in the Sahel in 2020 than in any previous year in the past decade. I discussed regional insecurity and its impact on Burkina Faso with President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré in January.

Through our recent deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and our programmatic support for stabilisation and conflict resolution, the UK is committed to building long-term peace and stability in the Sahel. We also use our humanitarian assistance to support those worst affected by conflict. I am saddened by recent incidents in Burkina Faso, including the destruction by landmine explosion of an ambulance carrying six people in March 2021, and the attack in April 2021 which killed a number of people involved in an anti-poaching project in eastern Burkina Faso. I condemn these attacks and urge the Burkinabe authorities to bring their perpetrators to justice.

■ Chad: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his French counterpart on the recent events in Chad.

James Duddridge:

We are working closely with France and other partners at all levels to encourage the Transitional Military Council to deliver an inclusive, timely, civilian-led transition to constitutional rule. These principles were set out in the communiqué issued on 5 May by the Foreign Secretary, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs and their other G7 counterparts. G7 Foreign Ministers also expressed their support for African Union-led efforts, condemned the recent repression protests and stressed the importance of respect for human rights.

Ruth Jones:

[\[857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the political situation in Chad.

Ruth Jones:

[\[858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Chad.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned by the situation in Chad. The Foreign Secretary and I have publicly condemned the killing of President Déby, the broader violence in Chad and the recent repression of protests. In support of the African Union, we encourage the Transitional Military Council to deliver an inclusive, timely, civilian-led transition to constitutional rule. The recent appointment of a civilian government is a step in this direction.

Regarding the human rights situation, the UK remains concerned by reports of increasing human rights abuses and violations across the Sahel, including Chad. We condemn the violence and repression of protesters in Chad over recent weeks, and are deeply concerned by allegations of the use of live ammunition against civilians. Recent events underline the need for an inclusive transition to help build a peaceful and stable future for the Chadian people. The UK ambassador designate will be returning to Chad imminently and will, in due course, present his credentials to the Chadian transitional government. More widely, the UK also uses our humanitarian assistance to support those worst affected by conflict in Chad and we have been pressing in the UN Security Council and in the region for renewed efforts to tackle impunity for human rights abuses and violations across the Sahel.

■ Emmerson Mnangagwa**Ruth Jones:**[\[854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last spoke to President Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary has not spoken with President Mnangagwa. In November 2017, the then Minister for Africa became the first UK minister to meet a Zimbabwean President in over 18 years, meeting with President Mnangagwa at his inauguration when hopes of political and economic reform in Zimbabwe were high. In April 2018, when he was Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) met the then Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Sibusiso Moyo to urge him to ensure Zimbabwe's 2018 elections were free and fair.

FCDO Ministers and officials continue to take all opportunities to press for political and economic reform in Zimbabwe and to insist that human rights are respected. The UK sanctioned four senior security officials in February 2021 for their part in human rights abuses.

■ Ethiopia: War Crimes**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[2922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how his Department plans to work with the Ethiopian Government to allow for UN-mandated independent investigations into alleged war crimes rather than a combined effort by the state-funded EHRC.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned at human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia's Tigray region. We condemn violations as consistent with an apparent policy of collective punishment of Tigrayans. We have and continue to press hard for unfettered access for independent international human rights organisations. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously shown its willingness to act independently and must continue to do so through the joint investigation, which we judge is the most credible prospect available for holding the perpetrators of atrocities in Tigray to account. The UK will therefore support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the EHRC are independent, transparent and impartial. The Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights' participation in the joint investigation must in no way compromises their mandate to independently investigate and report on atrocities in Tigray.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**Alicia Kearns:**[\[1404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps are being taken to vaccinate his Department's staff in missions overseas.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO and MOD have worked together to deliver supplies of Covid-19 vaccine to over 30,000 people at more than 200 posts around the world since the end of February. This distribution is aligned to the UK national programme covering staff and dependants for whom the UK Government has duty of care. FCDO staff in the UK have access to the NHS programme in the same way as everyone else.

G7**Nadia Whittome:**[\[951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will reconsider inviting Narendra Modi to the G7 Summit in light of (a) the widespread reports of attacks on minority groups in India and (b) Mr Modi's previous 10 year diplomatic ban from the UK.

Nigel Adams:

Our ambition is to re-energise the G7, strengthening unity and working with democratic partners. Prime Minister Modi's attendance will broaden geographic representation and demonstrates the importance of the Indo-Pacific region. We are disappointed that Prime Minister Modi will not be able to attend the G7 Summit in person because of domestic coronavirus priorities, but look forward to welcoming him virtually. We engage with India on a range of human rights matters, working with union and state governments, and with non-governmental organisations, to build capacity and share expertise to promote human rights for all. Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at ministerial level.

■ **Gaza: Israel**

Stephen Timms: [\[2862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will call on the Government of Israel to cease its airstrikes on Gaza.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. The UK offers our condolences to the families of those civilians killed. The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts to that end, working closely with the US. Hamas must now end all attacks on Israel. It is also important for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop, and every effort must be made to avoid loss of life.

■ **India: Coronavirus**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[1210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to provide (a) vaccines, (b) oxygen, (c) ventilators and (d) other covid-related support to India.

Nigel Adams:

We stand side by side with India as a friend and partner in the fight against COVID-19, and send our solidarity and condolences to the Indian people at this difficult time. The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, treatments, and tests globally. As the multilateral mechanism set up to support international co-operation of COVID vaccines, COVAX is best placed to allocate any surplus vaccine the UK has, based on where it is most needed and where it will be most effective.

The UK has put together a package focusing on India's most urgent needs, including oxygen concentrators, ventilators, and oxygen generating units. The first shipment was delivered on 27 April. On 2 May, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would send a further 1,000 ventilators to support India's response, these arrived in Delhi on 9 May bringing the total package of equipment to 495 oxygen concentrators, 1,200 ventilators and three oxygen generating units.

There is also extensive scientific and medical collaboration underway. Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance have spoken to their Indian counterparts to provide advice, insight and expertise to the Indian healthcare system as it deals with the surge in Covid-19 cases. NHS England and NHS Improvement are establishing a clinic advisory group, led by Chief People Officer Prerana Issar, to support India's Covid-19 response.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the UK's logistical support to India during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has worked closely with the Indian Government on our package of support to ensure that it focuses on India's most urgent needs. The first shipment was delivered on 27 April. On 2 May, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would send a further 1,000 ventilators to support India's response, these arrived in Delhi on 9 May bringing the total package of equipment to 495 oxygen concentrators, 1,200 ventilators and three oxygen generating units.

Given the importance of effective coordination of the large quantities of assistance arriving in India, the UK is channelling its support through the Indian Government and Indian Red Cross. Decisions on exactly where support provided by the UK will be deployed are for the Indian Government. Ministers and officials remain in regular contact with their counterparts to ensure the transfer of medical equipment is as efficient as possible.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Sarah Olney:

[\[1358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking in response to the military trial, detention and reported ill-treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli authorities.

James Cleverly:

We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised the issue of Palestinian children in detention on 19 March with the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children.

Afzal Khan:

[\[4025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to end illegal annexation and occupation in Palestine; and what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on that matter.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life.

On 8 May I communicated online our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We

continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

■ Jagtar Singh Johal

Ruth Jones: [\[856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when officials of his Department last made representations to their Indian counterparts on the case of Jagtar Singh Johal.

Nigel Adams:

We regularly raise Mr Johal's case directly with the Government of India at official and Ministerial level. The Foreign Secretary raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, on 6 May. The Secretary of State for International Trade raised the case with the Indian Minister for Law and Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad, on 5 February. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kishan Reddy and with Minister Prasad on 15 March during his visit to India. Lord Ahmad also raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian High Commissioner on 16 April. On 7 April, officials at the British High Commission in New Delhi wrote to the Indian Government, raising Mr Johal's allegation that he was threatened with torture in police custody in January 2021, and emphasising the need for a prompt and independent investigation. This Government will continue to look to raise our concerns about Mr Johal's case at all appropriate opportunities.

■ Marine Environment: Treaties

Luke Pollard: [\[851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to secure a Global Ocean Treaty to protect the high seas in 2021.

Luke Pollard: [\[852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to establish a Global Ocean Treaty to enable governments to establish Marine Protected Areas, set conservation goals and adopt management measures to deliver protection.

James Duddridge:

The draft Treaty text being negotiated is intended to be a legally binding instrument under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement).

The BBNJ Agreement is important for ocean conservation and the UK is working proactively in the negotiations, and more widely including with G7 partners, to try to ensure that an ambitious text is concluded by the end of this year. In particular, the Agreement should enable the designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the High Seas, which will be crucial to delivering a new target under the Convention of Biological Diversity of protecting at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030. The Agreement should also enable a more holistic approach to global ocean governance, facilitating cooperation between existing bodies and filling in gaps, such as requiring Environmental Impact Assessments for new activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

■ Mohan Peiris

Stephen Kinnock:

[3889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans in the UN General Assembly to oppose the election of Mohan Peiris, Sri Lanka's nominee for membership of the UN's Law Commission, on the basis of performance as that country's Attorney General; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the election of Mohan Peris on the credibility of the Law Commission.

Nigel Adams:

As a matter of established policy, the UK does not reveal its voting intentions in international elections. We recognise the important role of the International Law Commission in promoting the progressive development of international law and its codification. The UK will carefully consider all candidates in determining our voting position.

■ Myanmar: Arms Trade

Afzal Khan:

[4023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to mobilise support around the world for a global arms embargo against the military regime in Myanmar through (a) the United Nations and (b) a coalition of countries.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar. We are clear that no one should sell arms to Myanmar, we are actively lobbying bilaterally to achieve this and we welcome the recent South Korean and Japanese adoption of arms embargoes against Myanmar. The UK autonomous Myanmar sanctions regulations prohibit the provision of military related services, including the provision of technical assistance, to or for the benefit of the Myanmar Security Forces. The UK worked to secure a strong G7 statement on the 3rd and 23rd of February urging all countries to immediately suspend arms sales to Myanmar. We will continue to work closely with partners and through multilateral fora to apply pressure on those who sell arms to the military.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Afzal Khan: [\[4024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the UN Secretary-General to increase and intensify efforts to mobilise a high-level diplomatic initiative to tackle the situation in Myanmar, including in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region.

Nigel Adams:

We urgently convened the UN Security Council following the coup and secured a unanimous statement expressing concern at the situation on 5 March. We convened the UN Security Council again on 10 March. We welcomed the strong statements from the UN Secretary General in response to the coup and subsequent violence. We are working with partners to explore all options including with a high-level visit to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis. I met with the United Nations Special Envoy on 24 May, as she completes her recent trip to the region. We discussed the importance of encouraging dialogue, promoting inclusivity, and increasing pressure on the military.

The Foreign Secretary represented the UK at the second ASEAN-United Kingdom Open-Ended Troika Dialogue on 8 April where he discussed the situation in Myanmar with his counterparts. We welcome the Five Point Consensus on Myanmar and ASEAN's unique role in addressing the crisis and supported ASEAN's call for an end to violence, for restraint, and for a peaceful resolution, in line with the purpose and principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter. The military must implement this plan without delay.

■ Nepal: Coronavirus

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[3791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to Nepal to help tackle the spread of covid-19 in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is one of the leading donors to Covax, committing £548m to the scheme, which will provide more than a billion vaccines to developing countries including doses for almost a fifth of Nepal's population. The UK has funded a new £180,000 duplex oxygen generation plant at the Nepal Police Hospital in Kathmandu to help address oxygen shortages to treat COVID19 patients. On 19 and 20 May Lord Ahmad held meetings with Foreign Minister Gyawali and the Nepalese Ambassador to discuss what further support the UK could offer.

Alison Thewliss: [\[3938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what specific assistance his Department is providing to Nepal in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is one of the leading donors to Covax, committing £548m to the scheme, which will provide more than a billion vaccines to developing countries including doses for almost a fifth of Nepal's population. The UK has funded a new £180,000 duplex oxygen generation plant at the Nepal Police Hospital in Kathmandu to help address oxygen shortages to treat COVID19 patients. On 19 and 20 May Lord Ahmad held meetings with Foreign Minister Gyawali and the Nepalese Ambassador to discuss what further support the UK could offer.

Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[3095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a list of all the projects and programmes which have received a reduction in Official Development Assistance by (a) more than 25 per cent, (b) more than 50 per cent and (c) more than 75 per cent and (d) 100 per cent in the 2021-22 financial year.

Nigel Adams:

Final audited spend will be published in our annual report in due course as well as through the Statistics on International Development. We are committed to improving transparency of aid globally and maintaining our high standards for overseas spending. We do that through publication of quality and accessible information on our aid programmes, available on Devtracker.

Harriett Baldwin:[\[701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 April 2021, HCWS935 on FCDO update, what estimate he has made of the number of women and girls who will be affected by a reduction to UK Official Development Assistance to South Sudan.

James Duddridge:

The UK is committed to supporting the people of South Sudan, including women and girls, on their path to peace and stability. While we are still working through what the reduction to UK ODA means for individual programmes in South Sudan, our aid budget will be allocated according to the UK's strategic ODA priorities: global health security, girls' education, humanitarian preparedness and response, open societies, and conflict resolution. This includes continuing to provide life-saving access to health services in eight states across South Sudan and reaching at least 2 million people with at least one form of humanitarian assistance. Our Girls' Education in South Sudan programme is expected to support 550,000 students to get a decent education between 2019 and 2024. Through this, we will increase access and enable South Sudanese children, especially girls, to stay in school and complete primary and secondary education.

Zarah Sultana:

[888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on UK aid efforts of the reduction in Official Development Assistance from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent of national income.

Nigel Adams:

The Strategic framework for aid announced in November by the Foreign Secretary, sharpens the focus of our aid on seven priorities where UK support can make the most difference including on Covid and global health security; and open societies and conflict, in our overarching pursuit of poverty reduction and achievement of the sustainable development goals. This, alongside the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, uniting our world class diplomacy and development expertise will ensure we bring together the best of Britain's international effort bear on the world's global challenges.

■ Overseas Aid: Impact Assessments

Daniel Zeichner:

[759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether an impact assessment was carried out prior to the decision to reduce the Official Development Assistance budget (a) in general and (b) on UK research and development.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is facing the worst economic contraction in over 300 years, and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion. Given the impact of this global pandemic on the economy and, as a result, the public finances, the UK has moved to spend 0.5% of GNI as Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in 2021.

To ensure coherence and maximum value for money from ODA spending, the Foreign Secretary ran a cross-government process after the 2020 Spending Review to allocate ODA against the government's priorities this year. During the following ODA allocation process for FCDO budgets in 2021/22, officials considered risks and impacts to inform advice to Ministers.

■ South Sudan: Peace Negotiations

Harriett Baldwin:

[702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to planned reductions in Official Development Assistance spending, what assessment has been made of the effects of changes in the level of funding to the South Sudan Council Of Churches' Action Plan for Peace; and what assessment he has made of the total reduction to grassroots peacebuilding projects in South Sudan.

James Duddridge:

Faith organisations such as South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) play an important role in supporting peacebuilding in South Sudan. SSCC's work, under their Action Plan for Peace, has promoted advocacy, peace and reconciliation at both a national and community level. SSCC remains an important partner and we will

continue to engage with them regularly, as well as work closely with other international partners to support SSCC in delivering our shared goals on bringing a lasting end to the conflict.

The UK supports a number of initiatives aimed at promoting peace and stability at a grassroots level, on top of ongoing efforts to drive forward implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement. This includes continued support to peace process grassroots mediation activities via the UK Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund and the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan, to which the UK contributed £57.9 million in 2020-21. Earlier this year, through Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund, we supported peace dialogues in Jonglei state, an area of intractable conflict with extreme levels of humanitarian need, to bring fighting communities together and broker an agreement which has dramatically reduced violence. We will continue to support initiatives like this to help build lasting peace in South Sudan.

■ Sri Lanka: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[3073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to provide (a) vaccines, (b) oxygen, (c) ventilators and (d) other support to Sri Lanka in the context of the covid-19 outbreak in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is concerned about the rising number of COVID-19 infections in Sri Lanka, and is in regular contact with the Government of Sri Lanka and the World Health Organisation's (WHO) representatives in Sri Lanka. The UK has committed £548 million to the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment to support equitable access to vaccines across the world. The Prime Minister has confirmed that the UK will share the majority of any surplus vaccines with COVAX and this multilateral mechanism, set up to support international co-operation on vaccines, remains the best way to ensure global equitable access to vaccines. It is too early to determine if and when the UK will have any vaccine surplus to our domestic needs, but we are keeping the situation under continual review.

The UK has taken a leading role in the COVID-19 global health response, both in addressing the direct health impacts, and keeping essential services going. In addition to our average annual contribution of £120 million to assist the WHO, including in their role to provide technical guidance and operational support on maintaining essential health services, we recently announced a further £340 million (2020-24) in new core contributions. This is a significant uplift in support towards its vital work on public health.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Jonathan Ashworth: **[3878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans are in place to ensure that NHS accident and emergency departments are adequately prepared for winter 2021-22.

Edward Argar:

The Government provided £450 million in 2020-21 to upgrade emergency departments across England. National Health Service trusts have used the new funding to expand waiting areas and increase the number of treatment cubicles, helping them boost capacity by providing additional space, reducing overcrowding and improving infection control measures. These improvements will continue to support emergency departments in their preparations for winter this year.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have set out operational priorities for services for 2021-22 in their published planning guidance. The planning guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/operational-planning-and-contracting/>

■ Air Pollution

Mr Nicholas Brown: **[3804]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of air pollution on the health of people living in (a) deprived areas compared with (b) other areas.

Jo Churchill:

Although air pollution can be harmful to everyone, some people are more affected because they live in a polluted area, are exposed to higher levels of air pollution or are more susceptible to air pollution exposure. The most vulnerable face all of these disadvantages. Groups that are more affected by air pollution include older people, children, individuals with existing cardiovascular or respiratory disease, pregnant women, communities in areas of higher pollution, such as close to busy roads low-income communities.

Public Health England has developed a five-year cleaner air programme of work, which aims to reduce people's exposure to air pollution particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

■ Air Pollution: Death

Mr Nicholas Brown: **[3801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of deaths that were attributed to air pollution in (a) Newcastle upon Tyne, (b) the North East and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

Of the last five years, data estimates are available are for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. The following table shows the fraction of adult mortality attributable to long-term exposure to human-made particulate air pollution in Newcastle upon Tyne, the North East and England.

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Newcastle upon Tyne	3.6%	3.7%	3.8%	3.5%
North East	3.6%	3.7%	3.8%	3.6%
England	5.4%	5.1%	5.2%	5.1%

Source: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/air%20pollution>

■ Apetamin**Jim Shannon:****[240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with social media platforms to ensure that appropriate warnings are provided on such platforms on unlicensed weight gain drugs such as apetamin.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Apetamin is considered to be a medicinal product and requires a Marketing Authorisation or product licence to be legally sold and supplied within the United Kingdom. A Marketing Authorisation guarantees the medicine has met required standards of quality, safety and efficacy. No authorisations or licences have been granted for Apetamin and consequently offers to sell or supply it are in breach of UK legal requirements.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency issues regular warnings to the public concerning the risks of purchasing from unregulated websites and has run a targeted public awareness campaign #FakeMeds across social media which provided detail and tips to purchase medicines online safely.

■ Borderline Substances Advisory Committee**Paula Barker:****[2480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, what assessment he has made of (a) the effectiveness of that committee's performance and (b) its timeliness in responding to applications in 2020-21.

Paula Barker:**[2483]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 132826 on Borderline Substances Advisory Committee,

what assessment he has made of the performance of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances since 31 March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has made no assessment of the performance of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances since 31 March 2020.

Paula Barker:

[\[2481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the ability of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances to review product applications.

Jo Churchill:

No recent assessment has been made.

Paula Barker:

[\[2482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) type 1, (b) type 2 and (c) type 3 applications due to be considered by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances are outstanding.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is shown in the following table.

TYPE OF APPLICATION	SUBMITTED	UNDER REVIEW
Type 1	1	0
Type 2	18	0
Type 3	3	6

Paula Barker:

[\[2484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 132828, on Borderline Substances Advisory Committee, whether his Department has plans to undertake a performance review of the work carried out by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

Jo Churchill:

We have no plans to do so.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[3007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the size of the cancer backlog resulting from the covid-19 outbreak in terms of (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment and care; and what (i) planning, (ii) investment and (iii) priority his Department is providing to tackle that backlog.

Jo Churchill:

Cancer diagnosis and treatment has remained a priority throughout the pandemic, with 2.26 million general practitioner urgent cancer referrals and over 570,000 people treated for cancer between March 2020 and March 2021.

Local systems, drawing on advice and analysis from their Cancer Alliance, will ensure that there is sufficient diagnostic and treatment capacity in place to meet the cancer needs over the course of the year.

Cancer patients will benefit from the additional £1 billion announced within Spending Review 2020 to tackle the elective backlog. The priorities set out in the Operational Planning and Guidance 2021/22 for recovering cancer services focuses on reducing the number of people waiting for more than 62 days to pre-pandemic levels.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[2900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's definition of a low risk visit in respect of taking care home residents out of the care home during the covid-19 outbreak includes visits to indoor hospitality settings.

Helen Whately:

The guidance on visiting, which came into effect on 17 May 2021, says that care home residents should be able to leave their care home to spend time outdoors or to go to medical appointments excluding overnight stays, their workplace, educational settings or day centres, without having to self-isolate on their return.

In addition, the guidance says that residents can go on other visits out of the home where an individual risk assessment is in place and they are essential to maintaining the individual's health and wellbeing.

■ Chickenpox: Vaccination**Matt Western:**[\[3098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including the chickenpox vaccination in the childhood vaccination programme.

Jo Churchill:

The decision to offer a chickenpox vaccine to all children in the United Kingdom is under ongoing review by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The JCVI has previously advised that offering a universal varicella or chickenpox vaccination programme would not be cost-effective and is highly likely to increase the risk of severe disease and complications in adulthood, both from chickenpox and shingles.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[3113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who do not have a mobile device are able to check in at venues with the NHS covid-19 app.

Jo Churchill:

Those venues required to collect contact details must have provisions for those who do not own a smartphone. If venues are using an electronic device at the entrance to collect contact details, there should be a member of staff available to assist those who need it. Venues must ensure that there are other options for people to leave their contact details if they do not own a smartphone.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[4002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who do not have a mobile device are able to check in at venues with the NHS covid-19 app.

Jo Churchill:

Those venues required to collect contact details must have provisions for those who do not own a smartphone. If venues are using an electronic device at the entrance to collect contact details, there should be a member of staff available to assist those who need it. Venues must ensure that there are other options for people to leave their contact details if they do not own a smartphone.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Gareth Thomas:** [\[2178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what systems does the NHS have in place to monitor the potential effect on the levels of covid-19 infections in parts of the country that are trialling the return of events for large numbers of people.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service monitors the levels of COVID-19 infections in all parts of the country, including locations where event pilots are taking place, via the NHS Test, Trace and Isolate system. This system is key to identifying local outbreaks and variants of concern.

The Events Research Programme explores how different approaches to social distancing, ventilation and test-on-entry protocols could ease opening and maximise participation in larger events. Evidence from these pilots will inform and shape the Government's policy to bring about the phased return of fuller audiences to venues and events. All pilot event attendees are encouraged to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test five days after attendance, to identify any positive cases associated with that event. Anyone with a positive PCR test should self-isolate and be contract traced through the NHS Test, Trace and Isolate system.

The NHS are now using mobility data to show travel patterns and highlight where the virus is at risk of spreading and wastewater analysis is taking place in 70% of the country, helping to identify communities where there are COVID-19 infections.

Rachael Maskell:

[2371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent the spread of the new covid-19 variant in other parts of the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Additional rapid response measures will be implemented in areas where clusters of variant cases have been detected to stop further spread. These measures include:

- enhanced testing and contact tracing, including enhanced community and surge testing in areas defined by the local authorities and regional teams;
- increased community engagement, including ensuring that messages are accessible in languages that are used by communities;
- working closely with communities and community leaders to ensure that individuals are supported to test and self-isolate; and
- ensuring access to vaccination in the age and risk groups currently prioritised for vaccination and encouraging uptake.

The Government is working closely with the devolved administrations to support them with their testing and vaccination efforts.

Jim Shannon:

[2979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to (a) recognise and (b) tackle the Indian variant of covid-19 in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Genotype assay testing is being deployed across the whole laboratory network to enable quick identification of known variants. Additional rapid response measures will be implemented in areas where clusters of cases have been detected to stop further spread. These measures include:

- enhanced testing and contact tracing, including enhanced community and surge testing in areas defined by the local authorities and regional teams;
- increased community engagement, including ensuring that messages are accessible in languages that are used by communities;
- working closely with communities and community leaders to ensure that individuals are supported to test and self-isolate; and
- ensuring access to vaccination in the age and risk groups currently prioritised for vaccination and encouraging uptake.

We are working closely with the devolved administrations to support them with their testing efforts.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine**Munira Wilson:** [\[3179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his oral contribution of 17 May 2021, Official report 431, if he will publish the details of the pilots his Department is conducting on assisting people to self-isolate as a result of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Test and Trace is co-designing a range of pilots with local authorities to improve support for people self-isolating and encourage people to come forward for testing.

The pilots cover a range of financial and practical support measures. We will publish the details of the pilots shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Rachael Maskell:** [\[2372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps he is taking to ensure that people working in retail and hospitality have rapid access to a covid-19 vaccine in (a) York and (b) other parts of the UK.

Rachael Maskell: [\[2373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps he is taking to ensure that people working as taxi drivers have rapid access to their covid-19 vaccine in (a) York and (b) other parts of the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Retail and hospitality workers and taxi workers have not been prioritised for vaccination due to their occupations, in line with advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI). For Phase 2 of the vaccination programme, the JCVI published its final advice on 13 April 2021. This advice sets out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, as this is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity, and hospitalisations, as well as speed of delivery, which is crucial as we provide more people with protection from COVID-19 as quickly as possible.

Emma Hardy: [\[2418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of people who have had health complications after receiving a covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) operates the Yellow Card scheme on behalf of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM). The scheme collects and monitors information on suspected safety concerns or incidents involving vaccines, medicines, medical devices, and e-cigarettes.

In the United Kingdom as of 5 May, 55,716 Yellow Cards have been reported for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, 167,141 for University of Oxford/AstraZeneca, 1,081 for

Moderna and 606 where the brand of the vaccine was not specified. For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, University of Oxford/AstraZeneca, and Moderna vaccines the overall reporting rate is approximately three to six Yellow Cards per 1,000 doses administered.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to offer the covid-19 vaccine to children under 16 years old; and whether he plans to prioritise young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, such as those with cystic fibrosis and other serious lung conditions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation currently advises that only those children at very high risk of exposure and serious outcomes, such as those aged 16 years old and over with a chronic respiratory disease such as cystic fibrosis, should be offered COVID-19 vaccination. Public Health England's Green Book also sets out that children under 16 years of age, even if they are clinically extremely vulnerable with a condition such as cystic fibrosis, are at low risk of serious morbidity and mortality and given the absence of safety and efficacy data on COVID-19 vaccines, are not recommended for routine vaccination.

Duncan Baker:

[\[3184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 181447 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, for what reason The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline and Bloom et al were not used by the JCVI in determining the vaccination priority list.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The definitions used by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) were based on evidence of the risk from COVID-19 disease as set out by OpenSAFELY and QCOVID.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline on severe asthma was based on European Respiratory Society and American Thoracic Society definitions of severe asthma, which are not related to the risk of hospitalisation associated with COVID-19 disease. Similarly, the Bloom et al definition is not based on COVID-19 disease risk. Therefore, these definitions were not used. The JCVI has advised that all adults should be offered COVID-19 vaccination, unless it is contraindicated.

Sarah Owen:

[\[4047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure greater uptake of the covid-19 vaccine in (a) Luton North constituency and (b) other areas with lower take up of the vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 13 February 2021, the Government published the COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Plan, which aims to improve uptake across all communities in the United Kingdom.

We have allocated £23.75 million for councils and voluntary groups through the Community Champions scheme. Through this scheme, Community Champions will use their local networks to provide advice about COVID-19 and the vaccine. Champions will also work with councils to identify the barriers to accessing accurate information about the vaccine and to provide tailored support, such as phone calls for people who are digitally excluded and linking to general practitioner surgeries.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation supports flexibility in delivery of the programme at a local level to ensure that every opportunity is utilised to offer the vaccine to groups with lower uptake. This can include offering vaccine in a wider range of settings. In Luton, additional vaccination centres, including a gym and a youth centre, have been set up by the local clinical commissioning group to maximise vaccine uptake.

Sarah Owen:

[4049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to tackle covid-19 vaccine hesitancy related to (a) fertility and (b) pregnancy issues.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has produced a range of advice on pregnancy and fertility with regards to COVID-19 vaccination, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding>

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify and take action against false claims about COVID-19 vaccines in lines with their terms and conditions. This includes false narratives about the alleged impact of the COVID-19 vaccine on fertility. There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility.

Our vaccine communications toolkits for stakeholders, partners and employers cover information around these concerns and we have been sourcing and sharing case stories of women of childbearing age who have had the vaccine before, during or after pregnancy to tackle vaccine hesitancy. At a local level webinars and engagement sessions have been focused to address women's concerns around the vaccine and have also been tailored to specific demographic groups.

■ Coronavirus: Ventilation

Paul Bristow:

[2466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the advice of the SAGE Environmental and Modelling Group on the role of ventilation in controlling covid-19 transmission has been updated since it was published on 23 October 2020.

Paul Bristow:

[2467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the advice of the SAGE Environmental and Modelling Group on the potential application of air cleaning

devices and personal decontamination to manage transmission of covid-19 has been updated since it was published on 4 November 2020.

Jo Churchill:

A summary paper by the Environmental and Modelling Group (EMG) on ventilation actions to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 was published on 18 December 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emg-simple-summary-of-ventilation-actions-to-mitigate-the-risk-of-covid-19-1-october-2020>

There have been no papers on the application of air cleaning devices and personal decontamination to manage transmission of COVID-19 published by the EMG since 4 November 2020.

■ **Dementia: Coronavirus**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[1347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the article published in the Lancet in November 2022 entitled Anti-psychotic prescribing to people with dementia during covid-19, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the increase in the number of people with dementia who have been prescribed anti-psychotic drugs during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps his Department plans to take to increase the number of medication reviews for those people.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of anti-psychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia and continue to have regular conversations with regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for trends being seen.

NHS England and NHS Improvement also continue to promote best practice for medication reviews and monitor the data to ascertain trends to help evidence this element of post-diagnostic support. In addition, Public Health England has recently published CCG factsheets which will help to provide context around prescribing activity and support initiation of conversations at a local level to facilitate an understanding of the patterns in prescribing. These factsheets are available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/dementia/data#page/>

■ **Dementia: Social Services**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[3074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to reform the social care sector to support personalised, high-quality dementia care.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals in 2021. We are working closely with local and national partners, such as Alzheimer's Society, to ensure our approach to reform is informed by diverse perspectives, including of those with lived experience of the care sector. In addition, we will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in due course.

■ **Dental Services: Contracts****Alex Norris:**[\[3124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many urgent courses of treatment were delivered by NHS General Dental Services contract holders in England in each of the last 6 months.

Jo Churchill:

Data on NHS dental activity for the last six months is not currently available.

■ **Dental Services: Migrant Workers****Mr Robert Goodwill:**[\[2931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's plans are for reducing bureaucracy in dentistry by giving the General Dental Council more discretion to assess the qualifications of overseas dentists, in line with the powers used by the General Medical Council.

Mr Robert Goodwill:[\[2932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to enable the General Dental Council to have greater discretion in the assessment of overseas qualifications.

Mr Robert Goodwill:[\[2933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what changes are being made to the Overseas Registration Exam used to assess the dental qualifications of dentists who are trained outside the EEA.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working with the General Dental Council on legislative proposals which will allow it greater flexibility to expand and improve on the registration options open to international applicants, which includes the Overseas Registration Exam. We aim to launch a public consultation on these proposals later this year.

■ **Drugs: Northern Ireland****Gareth Thomas:**[\[2864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on the supply of medicines in Northern Ireland of the Northern Ireland Protocol; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[2865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ameliorate the potential effect of new medicines being restricted in Northern Ireland as a result of being placed under the EU regulatory framework as a result of the Northern Ireland Protocol; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The Government has published guidance on the regulation of human medicines in the United Kingdom from 1 January 2021. This guidance also sets out mitigations to help ensure the continuous supply of medicines to patients in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Health and Social Care, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the Northern Ireland Department of Health have been working closely with industry to support them in their preparations to comply with the Northern Ireland Protocol and to support the availability of medicines for patients in Northern Ireland.

We are continuing to engage with the European Commission on the practical application of the Protocol. This includes immediate resolution of outstanding practical issues, and a long-term approach that ensures no barriers to the movement of medicines into Northern Ireland.

■ **Electroconvulsive Therapy**

Julie Elliott:

[\[2972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) risks and (b) potential benefits for patients of the use by the NHS of electroconvulsive therapy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made no such assessment. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides guidelines for the use of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) based on the most up to date available clinical evidence. NICE has also produced guidance, 'Depression in adults: recognition and management', which includes recommendations on when to use ECT for complex and severe depression. The Department expects commissioners and providers of services to pay due regard to these guidelines. NICE keeps its guidance under regular review.

■ **Epilepsy: Cannabis**

Catherine West:

[\[2388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 26 March 2021 to Question 134037, what steps his Department has taken to ensure the continued supply of Bedrocan oils for the treatment of severe epilepsy in advance of the end of the existing agreement on 1 July 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The Dutch Government has agreed to a further six months extension, to allow continued access to Bedrocan oils - a form of unlicensed cannabis-based product for medicinal use - produced in the Netherlands until 1 January 2022.

We will continue to work closely with the Dutch Government to secure a permanent solution.

■ Foetal Alcohol Syndrome**Bill Esterson:**[\[3841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) implications of his policies of the report published by Salford University on 18 January 2021 entitled the prevalence of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders: an overview of current evidence and activities in the UK, published by Salford University on 18 January 2021, and (b) adequacy of service provision for people with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made of the report published by Salford University. However, the Government is taking action to raise awareness and education on the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant and improve support for those living with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) and its consequences. We have also asked the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to produce a quality standard in England for FASD to help the health and care system improve diagnosis and care of those affected, which is expected to be published later this year.

The Department will consider the report and its recommendations when developing future policies on FASD.

■ Food: Labelling**Julie Elliott:**[\[3865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of adding calorie counts to menus on people (a) with eating disorders and (b) in recovery from eating disorders; and what evidence his Department has on the merits of publishing calories for public health.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:[\[3983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what specialist eating disorder organisations he has (a) met and (b) consulted on calorie counting on menus.

Wera Hobhouse:[\[3986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis is for the Government's legislative proposals on introducing calorie labelling on menus as announced on 12 May 2021.

Jo Churchill:

We have been careful to consider the views of a wide range of experts in response to our public consultation on introducing mandatory out-of-home calorie labelling including representatives from eating disorder groups. The Department has also engaged with the eating disorder charity BEAT, as well as others representing the views of people living with eating disorders, on several occasions since the Government published 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' last July.

The Department has published an impact assessment detailing the likely effect the policy will have, including the potential effect of the policy on people living with eating disorders. This and the Government's response to its public consultation on calorie labelling in the out-of-home sector, set out the evidence used to support the policy. The impact assessment and consultation response are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/calorie-labelling-for-food-and-drink-served-outside-of-the-home>

■ Fractures: Medical Treatments**Jim Shannon:****[2980]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the use of artificial intelligence to treat wrist fractures; and if he will consider use of that treatment in the NHS.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No formal assessment has been made.

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Award in Health and Social Care, part of the National Health Service AI Laboratory, run by the Accelerated Access Collaborative in partnership with NHSX, is providing £140 million of funding available to support the development and deployment of AI technologies within health and social care. The Award will accelerate the testing and evaluation of the most promising AI technologies which meet the needs of the NHS Long Term Plan.

The AI Award is open to many different applications of AI technologies, at any stage of the development lifecycle. We are open to receiving applications from anyone developing musculoskeletal related applications. The next round of the AI Award will open for applications in June 2021.

■ Functional Neurological Disorder**Peter Dowd:****[2309]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the need for specific NICE guidance for the diagnosis and treatment of functional neurological disorder.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has guidance in place to support clinicians in the diagnosis of functional neurological disorder. The 'Suspected neurological conditions: recognition and referral' guideline published in 2019 covers the initial assessment of symptoms and signs that might indicate a neurological condition. It helps healthcare professionals to identify people more quickly who should be offered referral for specialist investigation and includes recommendations for people who have previously been diagnosed with functional neurological disorder. The guideline is available at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng127

In January 2021, NICE also published a quality standard on suspected neurological conditions which states that adults diagnosed with a functional neurological disorder should be supported to manage symptoms that are a part of the disorder in non-specialist care. The quality standard is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs198>

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:****[3966]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he (a) has made and (b) plans to make to support GPs experiencing acute increases in demand on their services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

To support general practice, we have extended the General Practice Covid Capacity Expansion Fund, making £120 million available from April to September 2021, further to £150 million allocated from November 2020 to March 2021. This is ring-fenced exclusively for use in general practice, for priorities including increasing general practitioner (GP) numbers and capacity, identifying and supporting patients with 'long' COVID-19 and continuing to support clinically extremely vulnerable patients. Furthermore, the January 2021 interim GP Contract agreement for 2021/22 provides stability and assurance to general practice to allow a focus on the COVID-19 response, including the vaccination programme, while supporting the recovery of long-term condition management.

General practice receives additional funding and comprehensive support from NHS England and NHS Improvement to deliver the COVID-19 vaccine programme. However, to ensure that patients can continue to access primary care as we move into phase two of the programme, NHS England and NHS Improvement are asking practices to confirm that they have capacity to continue to deliver their core services alongside the programme in order to continue to take part.

■ General Practitioners: Rural Areas

Anne Marie Morris:

[3887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the additional requirements of general practice in rural areas.

Jo Churchill:

Capitation payments to practices include a formula weighting for rurality. We also recognise there are issues with recruitment and retention in some rural locations. The Targeted Enhanced Recruitment Scheme offers a £20,000 salary supplement to attract general practitioner trainees to work in areas of the country in which training places have been unfilled for a number of years.

Additionally, NHS England and NHS Improvement have allowed commissioners to waive the Primary Care Network (PCN) minimum population where a PCN serves a community with a low population density across a large rural and remote area.

■ Health Services: Learning Disability

Helen Hayes:

[3069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the use of restrictive interventions and seclusion on people with learning disabilities.

Helen Whately:

The Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018 will increase the oversight and management of the use of force or restraint in mental health units so that force is only ever used as a last resort. We will publish the Act's draft statutory guidance for public consultation by late spring 2021 and we will set out a full timetable for commencing the Act at the earliest opportunity.

As part of the joint arm's length bodies' programme on reducing use of restraint and restrictive practices, a set of standards and an accreditation scheme for training providers has been developed to provide assurances that staff in mental health services are adequately trained in safe and appropriate use of restraint.

■ Health: Babies

Sarah Owen:

[3180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of reductions in the number of health visitors since 2015 on the health of babies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not made an assessment.

Health visiting services have continued to deliver the Healthy Child Programme throughout the pandemic. Contacts were initially virtual unless there was a clinical or safeguarding need. Health visitors have also prioritised families not already in contact

with services. Services have now been restored in line with the community services prioritisation guidance.

■ HIV Infection

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[2926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 May 2020 to Question 30704, on HIV Infection, what steps he is taking in the forthcoming sexual and reproductive health strategy to (a) improve health-related quality of life, (b) tackle stigma and discrimination, (c) tackle inequalities in service provision and (d) support the mental health needs of people living with HIV.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to achieving zero new HIV transmissions in England by 2030. As part of this commitment, we are developing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan on reaching the 2030 target, which we plan to publish in 2021. We will consider issues related to improving care and living well with HIV, tackling stigma and health inequalities and providing mental health support to people living with HIV as part of the development of both the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[3881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in waiting times for elective surgery for people with inflammatory bowel disease.

Edward Argar:

No formal assessment has been made.

■ Live Covid Testing

Justin Madders: [\[1098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date and for what reason LiveCovidTesting were removed from the Government's approved list of covid-19 testing companies.

Jo Churchill:

LiveCovidTesting is currently on the list of providers on GOV.UK. They were removed on 30 March and have since been reinstated. Organisations are removed from the list for either failing to meet the minimum standards set out in legislation or performance expectations. Providers are reinstated to the list once they demonstrate they have rectified the issues set out in the notification of their removal.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection

Chi Onwurah: [\[3860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2021 to Question 707 on Medical Records: Data Protection, what the criteria are for making reference sets held at NHS Digital available for research and planning.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Applications for data are assessed against the Data Access Request Service Standards.

These are reviewed and assessed by NHS Digital, in addition to independent oversight provided by the Independent Group Advising on the Release of Data. For the release of GPES Data for Pandemic Planning and Research and for future release of General Practice Data for Planning and Research, the Professional Advisory Group will also be consulted.

■ Members: Correspondence

Robert Largin: [\[3206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for High Peak of 18 February 2021, reference RL18991.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 19 May 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Mike Amesbury: [\[2433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) sufficiency of resources provided to and (b) efficiency of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Cheshire.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have not made a formal assessment.

■ Music: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney: [\[3984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will amend covid-19 regulations to allow more than six people to sing non-professionally indoors.

Sarah Olney: [\[3985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason only six people are allowed to sing non-professionally indoors under covid-19 restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has no plans to amend regulations to allow more than six people to sing non-professionally indoors. In general, limiting mixing indoors, where the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is much higher, is critical to halting the spread of the virus.

Singing is considered a high-risk activity because it increases the risk of transmission through small viral particles in the air and droplets.

The Government keeps these and other COVID-19 restrictions under continual review.

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Sarah Owen:

[4046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish data on the number of NHS workers from overseas who (a) are charged the Immigration Health Surcharge and (b) successfully received a refund of the Immigration Health Surcharge since May 2020.

Edward Argar:

The information is not collected in the format requested.

■ **NHS: Procurement**

Caroline Lucas:

[1287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the criteria for accrediting suppliers to the Health Systems Support Framework.

Edward Argar:

The Health System Support Framework (HSSF) comprises a number of service categories of accredited suppliers which integrated care systems can use to source subject matter expertise. There are currently over 29 service lines on the HSSF with each having different criteria of access based on policy need, maturity of the market and application national standards or technical capabilities. The assessment criteria for each of the different service lines is routinely published alongside the relevant Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) advertisement when the service is put out to competitive tender.

For each of these categories, suppliers have been tested against a rigorous set of criteria to test organisational capability, track record of delivery, specialist skills and customer responsiveness. These are published through OJEU advertisements at the time of inviting suppliers to respond. The national contract with suppliers ensures they adhere to the latest standards around interoperability, information governance and cyber security.

■ **NHS: Protective Clothing**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[3787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether personal protective equipment freely distributed to care homes has included items from consignments that were rejected for use in the NHS for failing to meet required standards.

Jo Churchill:

Personal protective equipment (PPE) sent to care homes has passed the essential safety specifications in line with European Union standards and Health and Safety England regulations. No PPE products that have been rejected for use in the National Health Service on the basis of safety standards have then been sent on for use in care homes.

Obesity: Surgery**Jim Shannon:**[\[2978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to control and regulate the use of bariatric surgery.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no such assessment. Clinical commissioning groups are responsible for commissioning complex obesity services for adults, which include all bariatric surgical procedures and the associated care. To help practitioners deliver the best possible care and give people the most effective treatments, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has produced a suite of guidance on reducing obesity including 'Obesity: identification, assessment and management'. This includes recommendations on when to consider bariatric surgery for people who are obese.

Osimertinib: Northern Ireland**Louise Haigh:**[\[3063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the European Medicines Agency on the approval of Osimertinib for use in Northern Ireland.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There have been no recent discussions.

Palliative Care**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[1398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of Marie Curie's Better End of Life report, published on 8 April 2021, and what plans he has to improve the resourcing of palliative and end of life care in the community.

Helen Whately:

As raised by Marie Curie's report, the Government recognises the vital role hospices have played in the response to the pandemic and made up to £280 million of additional funding available from March 2020 to March 2021. Within this funding was provision to support 46,500 community contacts per day, which included supporting people at the end of their life within the community. The Government has also either funded directly or committed to reimburse all known personal protective equipment

requirements for all end of life and palliative care providers, including hospices, until March 2022.

Clinical commissioning groups commission palliative and end of life care services in response to the needs of their local population to fulfil their core duty to commission high-quality care. NHS England and NHS Improvement have developed Palliative and End of Life Care Strategic Clinical Networks, working closely with local commissioners to develop and implement sustainable commissioning models for palliative and end of life care, including hospice services.

■ Pharmacy

Feryal Clark: [\[3191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential role of community pharmacies in tackling the backlog in primary care after the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Under the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2019-24 five-year deal, community pharmacy will be more integrated into the National Health Service, deliver more clinical services and provide initial treatment for minor illnesses. Since 2019, NHS111 can refer patients to a community pharmacist for minor illness or the urgent supply of a prescribed medicine. At the end of last year, we extended this service to general practitioner surgeries, who can now also formally refer patients to community pharmacy for consultation. We expect to introduce more clinical services in community pharmacy that will relieve pressures on the NHS during the recovery from the pandemic.

■ Podiatry

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[3877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of the podiatry workforce to meet demand for services over the next (a) five and (b) 10 years.

Jo Churchill:

It is the responsibility of individual National Health Service trusts to have staffing arrangements in place that deliver safe and effective care. This includes recruiting the staff needed to support these levels and meet local needs.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the NHS has the workforce it needs to deliver high quality care. As part of the new funding package for healthcare students, non-repayable, training grants of at least £5,000 per academic year are available to eligible new and continuing pre-registration podiatry students, studying at English universities. There is an additional specialist subject grant of £1,000 to eligible new students who choose to study in shortage professions, including podiatry.

There has been significant investment both via Health Education England, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Office for Students over the last three years

in a number of specific programmes of work involving the College of Podiatry, including television and social media campaigns to stimulate interest in podiatry careers both in school leavers and those seeking a second career.

The latest data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service shows there were 275 acceptances on podiatry courses in England in 2020, an increase of 53% compared to 2019.

■ **Postnatal Depression: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in rates of postnatal depression in new mothers during the covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have not made a formal assessment.

We are taking action to increase the support available in the perinatal period, including expanding perinatal mental health services around England to include new mental health 'hubs' for new, expectant or bereaved mothers. These will offer physical health checks and psychological therapy. The hubs will offer treatment for a range of mental health issues, including postnatal depression, to around 6,000 new parents in the first year. Ten of the 26 hubs will be set up in the coming months, with the rest due to open by April 2022.

■ **Prescriptions**

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[3886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing dispensing doctors to use the Electronic Prescription Service.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Digital piloted phase four of the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) at general practitioner practices and dispensers across England, from November 2018 and the national deployment, which includes dispensing doctor practices, began in November 2019. The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently looking at what potential further support can be provided to dispensing practices to implement EPS dispensing functionality.

■ **Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[3161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support for prescription costs is available to people with (a) Turner Syndrome and (b) other long-term medical conditions.

Jo Churchill:

Approximately 89% of prescriptions are dispensed free of charge and extensive arrangements are in place to ensure that prescriptions are affordable for everyone. A broad range of prescription charge exemptions are in place, for which those with Turner Syndrome and other long-term conditions may qualify. To support those with the greatest need who do not qualify for a prescription charge exemption or the NHS Low Income Scheme, pre-payment certificates are available. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ Prostate Cancer**Elliot Colburn:**[\[3175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of men with suspected prostate cancer who were able to access and receive diagnostic tests through private sector capacity block purchased by the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak, by region.

Jo Churchill:

No estimate has been made.

Elliot Colburn:[\[3176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to prioritise prostate cancer in a new cancer strategy for England; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Department's cancer strategy is incorporated as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. Prostate cancer priorities are included as part of the Long Term Plan such as the introduction of a faster diagnosis standard. This includes the delivery of optimal timed diagnostic pathways for specific cancers, including prostate cancer.

Personalised stratified follow up pathways for prostate cancer are being launched across England to empower patients to take control of their care. Prostate cancer is one of the first three cancers for which this is being implemented.

Elliot Colburn:[\[3177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that men with advanced prostate cancer have access to quality patient care and innovative treatments.

Jo Churchill:

Treatment options for prostate cancer are always expanding and in February 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement's specialised commissioning team announced that it would make available external beam radiotherapy to treat hormone sensitive, low volume prostate cancer. In addition to external beam radiotherapy, the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence will review several new treatment options for prostate cancer in the next 12 months.

Following treatment for prostate cancer, patients move to a Personalised Stratified Follow-Up pathway that suits their needs and ensures they can get rapid access to

clinical support where they are worried that their cancer may have recurred. This stratified follow-up approach was established in all trusts for prostate cancer in 2020. In response to the pandemic, the NHS also made available a range of 'COVID-19 friendly' treatments, offering benefits such as fewer hospital visits or a reduced impact on the patient's immune system. This includes targeted hormone therapies such as enzalutamide for prostate cancer treatment.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants

Emma Hardy:

[3127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the specialist mesh treatment centres that opened on 1 April 2021, if he will publish details of (a) what data is to be recorded following mesh removal and (b) the database to be used for that data collection.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The specialist mesh removal centres are required to send data to the Pelvic Floor Registry database as part of the Surgical Devices and Implants Data Collection, which is in development at NHS Digital. The registry will include data from the specialist mesh removal centres, including Patient Reported Outcome measures and will feed into the wider Medical Devices Information System, which covers all implantable devices. The data collected will be used to build a picture of longer-term outcomes associated with surgical procedures and will also facilitate a track and trace function in the event of safety concerns with particular mesh.

Details of the data collection and the Technical Data specification are available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/directions-and-data-provision-notice/data-provision-notice-dpns/surgical-devices-and-implants>

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Conor McGinn:

[1330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make PCR covid-19 testing kits more (a) affordable and (b) widely available for the purpose of international travel.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 May 2021]: Since requirements were introduced for international travel testing, the costs have fallen significantly. We are committed to working with the travel industry and private testing providers to reduce the cost of testing. NHS Test and Trace tests are available at the market mid-point.

To increase the availability of polymerase chain reaction testing we have published a list of over 250 private test providers based on cost, turnaround times and geographic location on GOV.UK.

Drew Hendry:**[2350]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department makes of the transparency of other nations' (a) covid-19 medical case rate reporting and (b) media freedom to discuss the covid-19 pandemic prior to making decisions on potential inclusion of those countries on the UK's list of covid-19 acute risk countries for international travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 20 May 2021]: The decision to include countries on the 'red list' is made by the Government, informed by the latest scientific data and public health advice from a world-leading range of experts. Data includes evidence of variants of concern, epidemiology, imported cases and traveller volumes. The list of red list countries is kept consistently under review.

The Government is committed to the open sharing of the scientific advice guiding our response to COVID-19 where possible. Transparency and confidence of reported data by other countries is considered as part of the assessment process. We continue to engage and encourage other countries to share best practice and data.

Holly Mumby-Croft:**[2499]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress he has made on (a) removing and (b) reducing the cost of covid-19 tests for people who need to travel for medical purposes.

Holly Mumby-Croft:**[2500]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the provision of covid-19 tests for people who need to travel for medical purposes.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly discusses a range of issues related to the pandemic response with Cabinet colleagues.

Since requirements were introduced for international travel testing, the costs of testing have fallen significantly. We are committed to working with the travel industry and private testing providers to reduce the cost of travel testing. NHS Test and Trace tests are available at the market mid-point.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Mr Kevan Jones:**[627]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to widen the scope of exemptions for quarantine on compassionate grounds to include people who have recently suffered a bereavement.

Jo Churchill:

We have no current plans to do so. However, it is possible to request permission to leave managed quarantine for a limited period if a close family member or member of

an individual's household is dying. It is also possible to request permission to attend a funeral.

HOME OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Peter Dowd:

[\[2312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding the Government plans to allocate to the owners and operators of public spaces and venues for measures to protect the public from terrorist attacks as part of the new Protect Duty announced on 26 February 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The Protect Duty consultation has proposed that certain owners and operators, responsible for publicly accessible locations, would be required to consider the threat posed by terrorist attack, and to take reasonably practicable mitigating measures.

The Government considers that it is reasonable for responsible parties to take appropriate and proportionate security measures to protect their staff and the public who visit their venues, in the same way that they prepare for and fund measures for the risk of fire, or to ensure that health and safety requirements are met.

Ahead of any changes, the Government will continue to provide a range of support to owners and operators, including freely available information on threat, mitigations, tools, and training products. To further support delivery across the public and private sector, a new interactive online platform will be launched later this year. The Government will also consider, further to the consultation, where additional support may be required when the Protect Duty is taken forward. We encourage all with an interest in public security to respond to the consultation by 2 July.

■ Animals: Theft

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[3200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many animal thefts were reported to the Police in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire in 2020.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[3201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department are taking to tackle animal theft in (a) Wakefield, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) the UK.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects information from police forces in England on Wales on offences covered by the notifiable offence list. Whilst animal thefts are covered by the notifiable offence list it is not possible to separately identify these crimes from others in the wider offence category of theft offences.

The Government is ensuring police forces have sufficient resources to respond to the challenges they face. We have committed to recruit an extra 20,000 police officers by March 2023, with nearly 9,000 already in place. Furthermore, we are also investing in situational crime prevention through the Safer Streets Fund, to stop these crimes happening in the first place.

The Government recognises the distress pet theft causes and will consider the evidence and what more could be done to prevent these cruel crimes. That is why we launched the Pet Theft Taskforce on 8 May. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/taskforce-launched-to-investigate-reported-rise-in-pet-thefts>.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[3895]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the levels of anti-social behaviour incidents in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England during the covid-19 outbreak; and what (i) financial and (ii) other steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in those areas.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and communities.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides flexible powers to authorities in local areas to deal with anti-social behaviour. As the powers are local in nature, the Home Office only collects data at Police Force Area level and not at lower levels of geography.

The Office for National Statistics do publish data on perceptions of ASB, which has remained relatively flat. According to the latest ONS survey (released in February 2021) the majority of people perceived ASB levels in their local area to have stayed the same during the pandemic period.

A total of £45m has been allocated through the Safer Streets Fund, which supports areas that are disproportionately affected by acquisitive crimes, and many of these projects also help to tackle ASB.

To help ensure that the police have the resources they need to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, we have given them the biggest funding increase in a decade and are recruiting 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, which provides extra resource to protect the public and keep us safe.

■ Asylum

Anne McLaughlin:

[3027]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people (a) in 2019, (b) in 2020 and (c) since 1 January 2021 to date have been issued with a Notice of Intent under the Government's guidance on inadmissibility: safe third country cases.

Chris Philp:

Figures on the number of asylum application decisions made in the first quarter of 2021 are due to be published on 27 May 2021. We are working to bring inadmissibility data in line with current reporting and hope to publish that information in the same timeframe.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Asylum: Accommodation Centres

Anne McLaughlin:

[3024]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to commence the remainder of Part 2 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, to give effect to the reception centres proposed in the UK government's New Plan for Immigration, published on 24 March 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government is considering options for how this proposal could be given effect.

One option for implementing the plans is to commence some or all of the provisions in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 which relate to Accommodation Centres.

■ Asylum: Finance and Housing

Anne McLaughlin:

[3028]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under what powers people issued with a Notice of Intent pursuant to her Department's guidance on inadmissibility: safe third country cases are being (a) accommodated and (b) supported.

Chris Philp:

If an individual would otherwise be destitute, they would be eligible to be provided with accommodation and support to cover their essential living needs under sections 95 or 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

■ Au Pairs: EU Nationals**Hilary Benn:** [\[3797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether au pairs from the EU can enter the UK to help look after a friend or a relative's children unpaid, without a work permit.

Kevin Foster:

EU nationals can enter the UK as visitors without needing to apply for a visa or a work permit in advance. They can do a range of activities but should not be intending to work in the UK or fill a UK-based role without status.

As set out in the Visit guidance, a family member may come to look after a child in the UK, provided it is for a short visit and does not amount to the relative being employed as a child-minder or au pair.

Decision makers need to be satisfied the visit is of a short duration, the relative is a genuine visitor and will not live in the UK for extended periods through frequent or successive visits.

■ Firearms: Safety**Karin Smyth:** [\[3946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the Government's response to the Firearms Safety Consultation.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the interest generated by the firearms safety consultation which ran from 24 November 2020 to 16 February 2021. The public consultation sought views on a number of proposals on firearms safety issues and received over 12,000 responses. The Government will publish a response to the consultation following a full and careful consideration of the responses we received.

■ Immigration**Anne McLaughlin:** [\[3025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to engage with devolved Administrations on the New Plan for Immigration; and whether the outcomes of that engagement will inform the public consultation which closed on 6 May 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The NPI consultation was open to people and organisations across the UK to share their views

The Home Office will consider responses to the consultation carefully, including the method for reporting on its findings, in line with our duties as the policy develops in this area

In relation to the devolved Administrations, efforts were made to meet with officials to discuss the plan however the invitations were declined as the devolved authorities did not feel able to meet with the Home Office. Further attempts to engage the devolved Administrations will continue.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Stephen Farry:

[1413]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether funding for front-line charities to support vulnerable EU citizens and non-EU family members to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme will continue beyond September 2021.

Kevin Foster:

We are committed to making sure everybody eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) can apply, including those who are vulnerable or need extra support.

Since April 2019 we have awarded £17 million in grant funding to a network of 72 organisations, who provide a wide range of invaluable support across the UK, ensuring those most at-risk continue to get the help they need.

We have committed a further £4.5 million of grant funding for the period 1 April to 30 September this year to fund the current network of 72 organisations to continue to provide a range of support across the UK well beyond the 30 June deadline.

We are working closely with the Grant-funded Network (GFN), collating feedback and data, to help establish the needs for and scale of support beyond September 2021

■ Immigration: Glasgow Central

Alison Thewliss:

[3939]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been subject to immigration removal action in Glasgow Central constituency in each month of the last three years.

Chris Philp:

The only available statistics are ones published on a quarterly basis at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics>

Anyone with no right to be in the UK may be subject to removal or deportation action as appropriate.

■ Independent Office for Police Conduct

Andrew Selous:

[2225]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many ongoing cases the Independent Office for Police Conduct has been investigating for more than 12 months.

Kit Malthouse:

As at 18 May 2021, the IOPC has 29 cases that have been open for longer than 12 months.

For context, in 2020/21 the IOPC started 465 independent investigations.

Of the investigations it completed in 2020/21, it completed 86% within 12 months.

When major investigations are excluded, the IOPC completed 91% of investigations in 12 months or less (against a target of 85%).

■ **Independent Office for Police Conduct: Staff**

Andrew Selous:

[\[2223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff work for the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Kit Malthouse:

As at 30th April 2021, the IOPC workforce totalled 1,004 people.

■ **Intelligence Services: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[4040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Scottish Government on the routine operation of the security services in Scotland.

Kevin Foster:

As has been the policy of successive governments, we do not comment on matters relating to the intelligence agencies.

■ **Police Scotland: Intelligence Services**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[4039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) protocols and (b) memoranda of understanding are in place between (i) Police Scotland and (ii) the security services.

Kit Malthouse:

The Security Service Act of 1989 places the Security Service under the authority of a Secretary of State, in practice the Home Secretary, who is accountable to Parliament for their work. This Act sets the overarching working protocol between the Security Service and the Home Secretary.

To support the delivery of the Act, there are more detailed agreements that set out delivery of the Home Secretary's oversight responsibilities, including a framework agreement formerly referred to as the Protocols.

Police Scotland are a devolved competence and there is no formal relationship between the Home Office and Police Scotland. The Home Office and Police Scotland have a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to three areas: data sharing, Police and Public Protection Technology and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). In relation to ESMCP and in recognition of section 4 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, the Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the Scottish Police Authority, agreeing the terms under

which the Home Secretary will provide the relevant mobile communications network services to the Authority for the purpose of its maintenance of Police Scotland.

■ **Police: Demonstrations**

Caroline Lucas:

[2945]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services report, Getting the Balance Right, an inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests, published on 11 March 2021, what plans she has to undertake a public consultation on the legislative proposals on the policing of protests in Part 3 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

As part of their inspection, HMICFRS engaged with civil rights and protest groups, multiple police forces, as well as holding a wider consultation. The Home Office also consulted key partners in law enforcement in developing the proposals. The Bill will now be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny.

■ **Undocumented Workers: EU Nationals**

Hilary Benn:

[994]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU citizens have been (a) detained and (b) deported since 1 January 2021 for being in the UK without a work visa.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 18 May 2021]: Home Office publish transparency data figures, which can be accessed via published data in the link below.

[Immigration Enforcement data: February 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-enforcement-data-february-2021)

■ **Windrush Generation: Compensation**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[2376]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 179274 on Windrush Generation: Compensation, how many claims to the Windrush Compensation Scheme were fully settled in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Priti Patel:

Cumulative data on the number of claims received and the number of payments made is published as part of the regular transparency data release which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-april-2021>

The specific information requested is not held centrally.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[3065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 179276 on Windrush Generation: Compensation, how many of the impacts listed in Annex H2 of the Compensation Scheme Rules: December 2020 must claimants to the Windrush Compensation Scheme demonstrate to qualify for a preliminary payment.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[3066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 179276 on Windrush Generation: Compensation and paragraph H2 of the Compensation Scheme Rules: December 2020, how many claimants to the Windrush Compensation Scheme her Department has determined demonstrated no impact on life to date.

Priti Patel:

A preliminary payment of £10,000 will be made to a primary claimant, or someone claiming on behalf of the estate of someone who has sadly passed away, as soon as they can show any impact on their life under the terms of the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

With regards to the number of claimants to the Windrush Compensation Scheme that have demonstrated no impact on life to date; the specific information requested is not held centrally and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Additional Restrictions Grant

Bob Blackman:[\[1297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with businesses which have applied for the Additional Restrictions Grant; and if he will apply lessons learnt from the process to the new £1.5 billion business rates relief fund for businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak outside the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

Luke Hall:

The Department will work closely with local government throughout the development of the £1.5 billion relief scheme and will ensure that experiences from the delivery of other support measures are taken on board. This includes experiences of administering the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which – as of 28 March 2021 – has delivered £816 million in support to over 400,000 businesses. The Government will continue to support local authorities in making further ARG payments throughout 2021/22.

■ Broadband: Planning Permission

Grahame Morris:

[\[2949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 212, if he will make it his policy to require broadband providers to seek full planning permission to erect new timber telegraph poles rather than allowing the use of permitted development rights.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government's ambition is to deliver nationwide gigabit-capable broadband, including full-fibre connection to premises as soon as possible. This will give people more freedom to live and work flexibly and be instrumental in supporting economic growth, communities and social inclusion.

The Government considers that there are sufficient measures in place to control the use of telegraph poles for broadband infrastructure by providers designated as Code Operators. Limits on the ability to install such equipment are provided in the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003, which sets out circumstances in which lines may not be installed underground. Additional conditions and limitations in the General Permitted Development Order, 2015 (as amended), restrict the scale and height of apparatus which may be installed without planning permission. Operators are also expected to adhere to the Cabinet and Pole Siting Code of Practice to ensure new apparatus is installed sensitively.

■ Building Regulations: Safety

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[4087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made in bringing forward legislative proposals to establish a new Building Safety Regulator as announced in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Bill was published in draft on 20 July 2020 and has undergone pre-legislative scrutiny by the HCLG Select Committee. The Government has been considering the Committee's report and recommendations and will introduce the Bill as soon as Parliamentary time allows. In addition, we have already established the Building Safety Regulator in shadow form within the Health and Safety Executive. The shadow Building Safety Regulator is primarily focused on developing, and preparing for, the new regulatory regime

■ Buildings: Insulation

Dean Russell:

[\[2474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how buildings are measured when deciding whether they are entitled to cladding remediation support.

Christopher Pincher:

The method of determining a building's height for the Building Safety Fund can be found in Prospectus Annex A: Technical Information of the Building Safety Fund Prospectus. It is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund> The same method is used for the Private Sector ACM Remediation Fund.

■ **Flats: Insulation**

Dean Russell: [2473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish guidance for leaseholders in flats who obtained an EWS1 certificate when they were not required to; and whether those EWS1 certificates will continue to apply.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 is not a Government form nor a legal requirement. The industry form helps ascertain if a building has remediation requirements which may affect building value and therefore mortgage lending decisions.

The requirement for and use of the EWS1 form is determined by the lending policies of banks and building societies. Having access to an EWS1 form and the professional reports behind it should help flat owners reassure potential buyers, identify issues which may need addressing or indeed act as part evidence towards any future fire risk assessments, even if a lender no longer requires the EWS1 form. An EWS1 form remains as valid information for five years.

■ **Hedgehogs**

Virginia Crosbie: [4076]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to protect hedgehogs by ensuring that new housing developments include hedgehog highways, a hole at the bottom of a fence that allows hedgehogs to move freely between gardens.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government welcomes any action by individual developers who wish to provide hedgehog highways. The *National Planning Policy Framework* makes clear that planning policies and decisions should minimise the impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains. Moreover, our Planning Practice Guidance was updated in 2019 to highlight that relatively small features can often achieve important benefits for wildlife, including providing safe routes for hedgehogs between different areas of habitat

■ **Holiday Accommodation: Non-domestic Rates**

James Wild: [3188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Tax policies and consultations: Spring 2021, when he plans to publish the

response to the consultation on the business rate treatment of self-catered accommodation.

Luke Hall:

The Government announced on the 23 March that it will legislate to change the business rates criteria for self-catering accommodation to account for actual days the property was rented. We are working to finalise details of this change and how it will be implemented, reflecting the responses received to the consultation. The Government's response to the consultation will be published shortly.

■ **Homelessness**

Rachael Maskell: [\[2361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homeless people he has met since 24 July 2019.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many times he has visited a hostel for the homeless since being appointed in 2019; and what steps he is taking to improve hostel accommodation.

Eddie Hughes:

Ministers have visited several hostels or rough sleeping services and will continue to do so in future as Covid-19 restrictions allow. Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on Gov.uk.

Our team of expert rough sleeping advisers work closely with local authorities across the country to support their work to implement the Rough Sleeping Initiative and to provide advice and support on the delivery of their work on rough sleeping, including but not limited to hostels. This includes ensuring that people sleeping rough can be placed into secure accommodation, appropriate for their needs.

■ **Housing: Fire Prevention**

Stephen Timms: [\[2863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to his Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 35, what his Department's definition of a short period of time is in respect of how long a Responsible Person should operate a Waking Watch; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Where a building moves from a Stay Put to Simultaneous Evacuation fire safety strategy, those responsible for the fire safety of the building should follow the expert guidance on Simultaneous Evacuation published by the National Fire Chief's Council. The guidance recommends that a Waking Watch should only be in place for a short period of time and that the Responsible Person should move quickly to install a common fire alarm system as they are a more cost effective and reliable option. The guidance defines 'short term' as the following:

“Short-Term 2.14. The amount of time needed for Responsible Persons to formulate a longer-term plan for other interim measures (such as the installation of a temporary common fire alarm system or remediating the risk of the external wall system). The length of the ‘short term’ will be dependent upon factors such as the design of the building, the different types of tenures, particularly leaseholders and the needs of residents. The short-term should be as soon as practically possible and no longer than 12 months.”

For more information, please refer to guidance available at:

www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Simultaneous-evacuation-guidance.

■ Leasehold

Caroline Lucas:

[1286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals on proposed limits on the cost of extending a lease; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

Under the current system, too many leaseholders find the process for extending their lease or buying their freehold (a process known as enfranchisement) too complex, lacking transparency and prohibitively expensive. We will reform the process of enfranchisement valuation that leaseholders must follow to calculate the cost of extending their lease or buying their freehold.

The Government will abolish marriage value, cap the treatment of ground rents at 0.1% of the freehold value, and prescribe rates for the calculations at market value. The Government will also introduce an online calculator, further simplifying the process for leaseholders and ensuring standardisation and fairness for all those looking to enfranchise. These changes to the enfranchisement valuation process will result in substantial savings for some leaseholders, particularly those with less than 80 years left on their lease.

Through our reforms, the length of a statutory lease extension will increase to 990 years, from 90 years (for flats) and 50 years (for houses). Leaseholders will be able to extend their lease with zero ground rent on payment of a premium. Leaseholders will also be able to voluntarily agree to a restriction on future development of their property to avoid paying ‘development value’

The Law Commission’s report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to lease extensions, including payment of costs incurred by this process and the terms of the new lease. We will bring forward a response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations in due course.

■ Leasehold: Service Charges

Andrew Rosindell:

[2221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to help ensure that service charges for leaseholders are (a) fair and (b) transparent.

Andrew Rosindell:

[2222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what protections are in place for leaseholders to prevent unaffordable rises to service charges.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government believes very strongly that service charges should be transparent and communicated effectively. The law is clear that service charges and any increase in costs must be reasonable and, where costs relate to work or services, the work or services must be of a reasonable standard. A summary of leaseholders' rights and responsibilities must also be provided with the demand for charges. The Government believes that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. Leaseholders may make an application to the First-tier Tribunal for it to make a determination on the reasonableness of their service charges.

We established an independent working group chaired by Lord Best to raise standards across the property sector, which also considered improvements to the transparency of service charges. The working group published its final report to Government (available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Damien Moore:

[3141]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that local authorities in priority category 3 without capacity funding apply for the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

The Fund will be allocated competitively. Funding will be delivered through local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, and through local delivery partners and public sector bodies in Northern Ireland.

The index places areas into category 1,2 or 3 based on the local area's need for economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and regeneration.

These bandings will form part of our criteria for assessing bids. The bandings do not represent eligibility criteria, nor the amount or number of bids a place can submit.

Following the launch of the Fund, Ministers and officials held webinar events open to all local authorities to provide details on the design of the new Fund, including how to apply.

■ **Local Government Finance: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher:

[3006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of local authorities that have had to use reserves to balance their budgets as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps his Department is taking to help those local authorities replenish their reserves.

Luke Hall:

The Government allocated over £9 billion directly to councils in 2020-21 for COVID-19-related expenditure and income pressures. At the Spending Review the Chancellor announced that local authorities will receive over £3 billion of additional support for COVID-19 in 2021-22. This includes a further £1.55 billion of grant funding to meet additional service pressures which has now been paid to authorities. This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of COVID-19 to over £12 billion.

As part of our support package, councils also have access to a compensation scheme for lost income from sales, fees and charges, which has been extended to June 2021, through which the Government will support local councils with 75% of losses beyond the first 5% of losses.

We are aware that a number of local authorities have used reserves to balance their budgets as a result of the emergency circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak. Official statistics on reserves used during the pandemic are not yet available, though will be published in due course. We would ask that any local authority that is faced with an unmanageable pressure or is concerned about its future financial position should approach MHCLG for discussion.

■ **Local Government: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher:

[3004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimates his Department has made of the funding gaps between (a) what each local authority has spent in responding to the covid-19 outbreak and (b) the central Government covid-19 funding allocated to each of those local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

The Government allocated over £9 billion directly to councils in 2020-21 for COVID-19-related expenditure and income pressures and at the Spending Review the Chancellor announced that local authorities will receive over £3 billion of additional support for COVID-19 in 2021-22. This includes a further £1.55 billion of grant funding to meet additional service pressures which has now been paid to authorities.

This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of COVID-19 to over £12 billion.

We have now carried out 11 rounds of COVID-19 sector monitoring with the outcome of round 12 due to be published shortly. As at round 11, the estimated expenditure pressures in 2020-21 were £7.2 billion. Now the financial year has ended, we aim to publish more detailed monitoring data in due course.

We continue to keep the situation under review through our monthly financial monitoring returns and will respond to the impacts of COVID-19 appropriately as our understanding develops.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Scotland**

Patrick Grady:

[\[2335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish a list of (a) properties owned by his Department located in Scotland and (b) the companies responsible for the management and operation of each of those properties.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department does not own any properties in Scotland.

■ **Non-domestic Rates**

Bob Blackman:

[\[1296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to simplify and homogenise across local authorities the process of applying for business rates relief under the Government's new £1.5 billion of funding for businesses affected by the covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Luke Hall:

The Department will ensure that local authorities have the guidance they need to deliver the additional £1.5 billion business rates support package once primary legislation is passed, in line with the announcement on 25 March. As with other business rates reliefs, officials will work closely with local government on the development of the relief scheme and guidance for local authorities will be published in due course.

Steve Double:

[\[1327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to simplify and homogenise across local authorities the process of applying for business rates relief under the Government's new £1.5bn for businesses affected by covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Luke Hall:

The Department will ensure that local authorities have the guidance they need to deliver the additional £1.5 billion business rates support package once primary legislation is passed, in line with the announcement on 25 March. As with other

business rates reliefs, officials will work closely with local government on the development of the relief scheme and guidance for local authorities will be published in due course.

■ **Property Development: Green Belt**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[1396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what requirements are in place to ensure that local people are fully consulted prior to previously developed land that is part of the green-belt is built on.

Christopher Pincher:

Applications for development on previously developed land in the Green Belt are subject to the statutory publicity requirements as outlined in article 15 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Local planning authorities must give notice by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates or by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier. The Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the Green Belt in line with our manifesto. The National Planning Policy Framework outlines strong protections for Green Belt land, making it clear that most new building is inappropriate in Green Belt, and should be refused planning permission unless there are very special circumstances.

Where an application is a departure from the local plan they must also advertise in a local newspaper and publish information about the application on their website. A local planning authority may not determine an application until the period of public consultation, a minimum of 21 days, has been completed but they can extend this period of time if necessary. Local planning authorities also have discretion to undertake additional publicity on a case by case basis and may take into consideration the level of public interest in an application.

■ **Regeneration: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the outcomes were of his recent discussions with representatives of the National Railway Museum.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had on the York Central project with representatives of the National Railway Museum.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) the National Railway Museum and (b)

Network Rail on working with the local community in York on plans relating to the York Central project.

Christopher Pincher:

Homes England meet regularly with National Railway Museum and Network Rail representatives to discuss the York Central Housing Investment Grant project, including to discuss community engagement relating to the project. The outcome of the most recent discussions was to confirm that the project is proceeding as expected.

■ **Rented Housing**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[2440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to provide support for renters who are in arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

Government support has ensured that the vast majority of tenants have maintained their rent payments. Data from the English Housing Survey (EHS) Household Resilience Study November-December 2020 suggests that around 9 per cent of households in the private rented sector are in rent arrears, and two thirds of those are in less than 2 months of arrears.

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to tenants. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are supporting private renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020 in cash terms. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

We continue to closely monitor the ongoing impact of the pandemic on renters, working with the Department for Work and Pensions.

■ **Richmond House**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[3077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to prevent Richmond House on Whitehall from being demolished.

Christopher Pincher:

Applications for planning permission and listed building consent related to the Northern Estate Programme were submitted to Westminster City Council in October 2019 following consultation carried out earlier that year. It will be for the council to

consider the proposals following publication of the Strategic Review of the Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal programme in March 2021, and representations concerning the proposals should be made to them

■ **Travellers: Caravan Sites**

Rachael Maskell: [\[3964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with representatives of local authorities on (a) making sufficient provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and (b) increasing the number of sites for those communities in their local authority areas.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with stakeholders on the (i) adequacy and (ii) sufficiency of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites (A) nationally and (B) in York.

Eddie Hughes:

During the formal consultation period for the Government's Planning for the Future White Paper, my department held a series of roundtable discussions with national stakeholders which included local authorities and Gypsy and Traveller support groups. We are progressing wide ranging reform of the planning system, which includes consideration of how to plan for the traveller communities.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Arms Trade: Israel**

Kenny MacAskil: [\[4042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish details of the (a) companies and (b) components associated with the twelve licences that her Department identified as being of potential use to the Israel Defence Forces in Gaza on 12 August 2014.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

In these cases, the names of companies are commercially sensitive and will not be disclosed.

HM Government takes its export responsibilities seriously and will continue to assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely, and keep relevant licences under review. We will take action to suspend, refuse or revoke licences – in line with the Consolidated Criteria – if circumstances require.

The items on the relevant twelve licences were:

COMPONENTS FOR MILITARY AERO-ENGINES	ONE LICENCE
Components for targeting equipment	Three licences
Components for military radars	Three licences
Technology for military aero-engines and technology for naval engines	One licence
Components for combat aircraft	Two licences
Components for tanks	One licence
Launching/handling/control equipment for munitions	One licence

HM Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on GOV.UK containing detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences.

Kenny MacAskil:

[4043]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the similarities between (a) active export licences for Israel and (b) the twelve licences that the Department for Business identified as being for components which could be part of equipment used by the Israel Defence Forces in Gaza on 12 August 2014.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

On 12th August 2014, HM Government said it was concerned that, in the event of a resumption of significant hostilities, it would not be able to clarify if the export licence criteria were being met and, accordingly, would suspend the twelve licences identified.

Today, HM Government is satisfied that we are able to assess extant licences and new applications against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria ('the Consolidated Criteria').

We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely and keep relevant licences under review. We will take action to suspend, refuse or revoke licences – in line with the Consolidated Criteria – if circumstances require.

HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

■ Forced Labour: Xinjiang**Ms Nusrat Ghani:** [3032]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which (a) organisations, (b) Government Departments, (c) NGOs and (d) others attended the roundtables on forced labour in Xinjiang in March 2021; what the job titles were of those representing organisations; and how many of those attendee organisations have (i) published a Modern Slavery statement and (ii) removed their supply chains from Xinjiang.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

On 10th and 11th March, the Secretary of State for International Trade hosted two roundtables on the issue of forced labour in Xinjiang. 22 organisations attended, including representatives from the technology and retail sectors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and business organisations.

Under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, commercial organisations with a turnover of £36m or more, that have a footprint in the United Kingdom, are required to publish a modern slavery statement. Organisations are responsible for determining whether the legislation applies to them and those in scope of the Act are required to publish statements for each financial year online.

HM Government is keen to encourage businesses to share their perspectives on how they are responding to the situation in Xinjiang, and we continue to make clear that they should act without delay to make sure they are not complicit in any way in the violation of rights and responsibilities.

■ Migrant Workers: Coronavirus**Duncan Baker:** [3185]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the planned timetable is to restart unrestricted employee relocation activity into the UK from abroad, and if she will make a statement.

Duncan Baker: [3186]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the criteria is that employee relocation professionals should apply to determine how and when they may relocate employees into the UK from (a) EU countries, (b) outside the EU during the period of covid-19 travel restrictions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

International travel to and from the United Kingdom is restricted to protect public health in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. HM Government is operating a 'traffic light system', which commenced on 17th May when the 'Stay in the United Kingdom' regulation ceased. The three categories – Red, Amber and Green – determine the health measures that are present at the border. You can see the full list of countries in each category on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), where you can also find the steps to be taken before entering the country.

The risk posed by individual countries will be continuously monitored and ratings will be reviewed every three weeks. The traffic light system itself will be reviewed through a series of checkpoints in June, July and October, taking into account the latest domestic and international data. In addition, the visa application criteria is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Overseas Trade

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[3030]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the outcomes of the comprehensive programme of engagement with business and UK trade bodies set out as part of the Overseas Business Risk guidance.

Greg Hands:

HMG's Overseas Business Risk guidance provides geopolitical and economic analysis on over 100 overseas markets to new and expanding exporters. The guidance, which is available on GOV.UK, also provides information on potential risks including human rights issues, bribery and corruption, terrorism, criminal activity and intellectual property. Section 6.1 of the guidance for China was updated on 12 January 2021 following a change in the government's policy on Xinjiang.

HMG is keen to encourage businesses to share their perspectives on how they are responding to the situation in Xinjiang. Following the update to the guidance, HMG's Ministers engaged with UK businesses to make clear that they should act without delay to ensure they are not complicit in any way in these gross violations of human rights.

■ Overseas Trade: Environment Protection

Emily Thornberry:

[2242]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps the UK is taking in multilateral and plurilateral forums to liberalise trade in environmental goods and services; and whether she will plans to apply for the UK to participate in the initiative towards an Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability as a means of promoting that goal.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is committed to environmental goods and services liberalisation and is exploring the most effective ways to promote clean growth through enhanced international trade.

HM Government was able to liberalise over 100 environmental goods after we took back control of our trade policy from the EU for the first time in almost 50 years, as we take our first steps towards a more Sustainable Global Trade Agenda.

The United Kingdom welcomes international dialogue on environmental goods and services liberalisation and encourages the widest possible participation across the World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership. The United Kingdom will use her independent seat at the WTO, and her G7 and COP26 presidencies to further this.

■ Trade Agreements: India**Sarah Owen:** **[4048]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she had with Cabinet colleagues in (a) April and (b) May 2021 on the potential effect of adding India to the covid-19 red list for travel on the prospects of agreeing a trade deal with the Indian government.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The decision to add India to the 'red list' on 23rd April was made by the Department for Transport under the international traffic light system, using an independent risk assessment methodology developed by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, part of the United Kingdom's Health Security Agency.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan**Emily Thornberry:** **[1279]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 175773, for what reason it took her Department four months to provide Japan with the list of 77 additional products for which it is seeking Geographical Indication protection under the terms of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership which came into effect on 1 January 2021.

Emily Thornberry: **[1280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 175773, what estimate she has made of when Geographical Indication protection will be confirmed by the Japanese government for the 77 UK products provided to Japan on 30 April 2021.

Greg Hands:

Article 14.34.5 of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement sets out that both Parties shall, as soon as practically possible after the entry into force of the Agreement, enter into consultations with a view to adding additional geographical indications. The UK subsequently started discussions with Japan in early 2021 regarding adding new geographical indications. After these consultations concluded, and following the necessary translation of technical documents, the UK shared its list of additional products with Japan on 30 April 2021.

These 77 GIs will now go through Japan's procedures as quickly as possible.

Emily Thornberry: **[1281]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 175776, whether she plans to correct or provide an addendum to paragraph 51 of her Department's response to the House of Commons International Trade Committee report UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, HC 1163, published on 25 January 2021, to correct the record.

Greg Hands:

The Department's response to the House of Commons International Trade Committee report on the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was accurate at the time of its placement in the Library of the House of Commons on 25 January 2021.

The right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury is referred to the answer given on 29 April 2021 to Question 175776, in which it was noted that in February 2021 the EU and Japan subsequently agreed to protect an additional 28 products from 12 EU countries under the EU Japan agreement.

JUSTICE**■ Sexual Offences: Mental Health Services****Sarah Champion:**[\[3002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether there are any legal restrictions or Government guidance preventing victims of sexual abuse from accessing therapy prior to their trial taking place.

Kit Malthouse:

Victims of crime have a right to be referred to support services and have services and support tailored to their needs. There are no rules that restrict access to therapy in advance of criminal proceedings.

The CPS published guidance on the provision of therapy for vulnerable or intimidated adult witnesses in 2002. The CPS is currently developing revised guidance. A three-month public consultation has taken place on a draft version of this guidance and new finalised guidance is due to be published later this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Sir John Hayes:**[\[1274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the (a) recommendations of the report by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on abortion law in Northern Ireland and (b) majority judgments of the Supreme Court in *In the matter of an application by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for Judicial Review (Northern Ireland)* [2018] UKSC 27.

Mr Robin Walker:

We recognise that access to abortion services is an emotive and sensitive issue for many. In July 2019, Parliament imposed on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland a duty under section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act

2019 to ensure all of the CEDAW recommendations are implemented in Northern Ireland. This is a matter of domestic, not international, law.

The devolution settlement does not absolve us of our responsibility to uphold the rights of women and girls, given the duty in section 9 of the EF Act did not fall away with the restoration of the Executive, nor with the making of the initial regulations that came into force on 31 March 2020.

While we made the Regulations last March providing the framework for access to abortions, and some service provision commenced, this has not discharged those legal duties in full. We carefully considered the views and evidence presented through the consultation - including those who took the time to share individual, and often deeply personal experiences, to help shape the final framework for Northern Ireland. The CEDAW Report and recommendations require that evidence based protocols are adopted in terms of provision of services in Northern Ireland, and we took particular account of the views and evidence provided by experts and medical professionals, alongside the views of other respondents in making decisions on the final proposals. We considered the range of views in light of our legal obligations, and took evidenced based decisions, in order to bring forward a new legislative framework that is operationally sound, works best for Northern Ireland and that delivers on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's duty. To this end, we developed an abortion framework that provides access to services consistent with what the CEDAW Report and the section 9 duty require.

We consider the Regulations to also be compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and we are confident that the legal framework put in place, and the ongoing efforts to ensure the CEDAW recommendations are implemented, is lawful in light of case law and the statutory obligations imposed on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

■ **Army: Civil Proceedings**

Andrew Rosindell:

[2911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to prevent vexatious lawsuits against soldiers that served in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has been clear about its intention to prevent vexatious claims against former service personnel.

That is why we have delivered the Overseas Operations Act, and we remain committed to delivering for Northern Ireland veterans separately as part of a wider package to address legacy issues in Northern Ireland that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims and ends the cycle of investigations that is not working well for anyone.

We are seeking to make progress on this issue as quickly as possible and are engaging substantively with key stakeholders - including the Irish Government, Northern Ireland parties and civil society - on the way forward.

■ **Borders: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon:

[\[2986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the number of EU border checks completed in Northern Ireland, if he will have discussions with his EU counterpart on taking a more pragmatic approach towards the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol ('the Protocol') is a unique solution to complex challenges. To work, it must be given effect in a pragmatic, practical and proportionate way. That is how we ensure it can meet its core purposes: to uphold the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in all its dimensions, safeguard Northern Ireland's integral place in the United Kingdom, and prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland.

This has been the basis on which the UK Government has continued to give effect to its obligations under the Protocol, conscious of the need to minimise its impact on everyday lives in Northern Ireland - as the Protocol itself sets out.

There have been difficulties in the operation of the Protocol, and we are working through the structures of the Withdrawal Agreement to seek to resolve these. Issues remain, but our aim is to find common sense, risk-based approaches that enable us to agree a pragmatic way forward that substantially eases the burdens on Northern Ireland.

■ **Prince of Wales**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[3808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when was he informed of the decision by the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland that she was unavailable to meet HRH The Prince of Wales on his visit to Northern Ireland which began on 18 May 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

Private audiences with members of the Royal Family are a matter for the Royal Household.

■ **Terrorism: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh:

[\[3061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether the Government plans to proceed with legislative proposals to address the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland announced in the Queen's Speech 2021 without legislative consent from the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations.

The Government intends to request legislative consent for its legislative proposals in accordance with Standing Order 42A of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and in line with the Sewel Convention.

Louise Haigh:[\[3062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he had with (a) people and (b) the families of people affected by IRA terrorism in Great Britain prior to the announcement that the Government will introduce legislation to address the legacy of the past in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government remains committed to bringing forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles as quickly as possible and fully recognises the importance of engaging with victims and survivors and their families as part of this process.

Since March last year, and prior to the Queen's speech, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his officials have listened to a wide range of people on legacy issues, including the Victims and Survivors Forum and groups funded under the Victims and Survivors Service's Victims Support Programme.

The Government is committed to publishing a list of ministers' meetings with external organisations, including those with victims groups, on a quarterly basis. Publications for the Northern Ireland Office can be found on Gov.UK.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**Elections: Scotland****Alan Brown:**[\[3955\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for City of Chester, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2021 to Question 2352 on Elections: Scotland, what is the planned timetable for post-poll reporting.

Christian Matheson:

The Commission will report formally on the delivery of the polls in the autumn, after the summer recess periods for the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Senedd. Reporting will be informed by a detailed process of information gathering and evaluation.

Alan Brown:[\[4627\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for City of Chester, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2021 to Question 2353 on Elections Scotland, if the Commission will make a comparative assessment of the (a)

number of votes received by the Independent Green Voice and average number of votes received by parties with a similar level of electoral campaign spending.

Christian Matheson:

The Commission's reporting on the Scottish Parliamentary election will cover the administration and delivery of the polls, and will be published in the autumn. The Commission will also publish details of campaign spending by political parties at the election, so that voters and other campaigners can see how parties spent their money at this election.

Post-poll reporting and the publication of financial returns comprise of responsibilities given to the Commission by the UK's parliaments. The number of votes received by individual political parties is not a factor in this work.

Alan Brown:

[\[4628\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for City of Chester, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, whether the Commission made an assessment of the extent to which the Independent Green Voice's description as Organic Green Scotland on the Scottish parliamentary election regional listing ballot paper represented the key objective of that party.

Christian Matheson:

Parties have the option to register descriptions which can appear on the ballot paper. The Commission, as the registrar for political parties, must assess whether a party's description meets requirements set out in law. Where an application to register a description meets the legal requirements, it must be registered.

There is no requirement in law for a party's descriptions to reflect its policies and objectives. As such, this is not a consideration when the Commission assesses an application to register a description, and it is not a basis on which a description could be refused.

TRANSPORT

■ **Buses: Ventilation**

Huw Merriman:

[\[3944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the guidance published by his Department on 17 May 2021 on bus service improvement plans, whether he plans to publish guidance on the ventilation of buses and preventing the spread of covid-19.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has published 'Safer Transport' guidance for operators, which helps transport organisations understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers.

The Safer Transport guidance, which is reviewed and updated regularly, includes a section on 'Ventilation', which suggests ways in which transport operators could ensure that a fresh air supply is consistently flowing through vehicles.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan guidance, which was published by the Department on 17 May 2021, is intended to help Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators develop an ambitious plan to improve bus services and access new funding, as outlined in the National Bus Strategy.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Dan Jarvis: [\[2996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with officials in HM Treasury on removing VAT from the price of covid-19 PCR tests.

Robert Courts:

My officials have discussed a number of options with HMT officials to reduce the cost of testing for international travel, which have seen significant reductions over the last few months. Decisions on tax policy rest with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on placing covid-19 testing facilities at (a) York railway station and (b) other major rail stations.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport has been working with railway station operators, including Transport for London and Network Rail, to roll out workplace testing. All operators were given the opportunity to register their interest in the scheme, with the offer including government funded tests.

That offer has since expanded to include community testing sites and a home testing model. The introduction of Universal testing enables all adults to access free tests from local pharmacies, other outlets and online. Transport operators have a wide range of options for testing their staff, as best suits their operation.

■ **Driving Tests: Certification**

Gerald Jones: [\[3067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to extend the expiry date of driving theory test certificates for people who have been unable to take a practical driving test as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place to ensure a candidate's road safety knowledge and ability to identify developing hazards is current. This validity period is set in

legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

It is important road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point a person drives unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring now will have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, they have been unable to take lessons and practice for long periods of time, and not at all during recent lockdowns. It is difficult to maintain knowledge and understanding of driving theory at the level required during that time without being able to put it into practice. Research suggests that this would be particularly harmful for hazard perception skills, a key factor in road safety.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the preparation of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Learners will therefore need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ **Driving Tests: Coronavirus**

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[3948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to protect people whose driving theory test has expired and who have been unable to book a practical driving test as a result of the covid-19 outbreak from incurring additional financial costs.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no current plans to waive the charge of a theory test for those whose theory test certificates have expired, given that they will have already received the service for which they paid.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) pays its contractor, Pearson, per theory test delivered. If candidates were exempted from having to pay for a retake then the DVSA and in turn other fee payers would incur these costs. This would be unfair to fee payers who would not benefit from the arrangement. In addition, applications for a re-test would need to be validated and systems amended to remove the requirement for payment in these cases. The DVSA's focus should rightly be on developing solutions to address the backlog of practical driving tests that has arisen as a result of the pandemic.

■ **Driving Tests: Learning Disability**

Kirsten Oswald:

[3015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure priority access to (a) theory (b) practical driving tests for people with additional needs or their carers.

Rachel Maclean:

Emergency practical driving tests are available for critical workers in England or Wales who work for the NHS, in health or social care, the emergency services or a

local council, who also need to drive as part of their job or respond to 'threats to life' as part of their job. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has not been able to offer critical worker tests in Scotland following advice from the Scottish Government.

■ Electric Scooters: Accidents

Sir Greg Knight:

[2894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring all police forces to include the involvement of e-scooters in the information provided in STATS19 data collection in respect of road traffic accidents.

Rachel Maclean:

The STATS19 data collection system has recently been reviewed. As part of this review, it is proposed that a new category of 'powered personal transporter device' – including, but not exclusive to, e-scooters – is added to the list of available vehicle types in STATS19. Stakeholder feedback on the review recommendations is currently being analysed and is scheduled for publication alongside the next road casualty statistics in June 2021.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Felicity Buchan:

[3189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of mandating interoperability between electric vehicle charge point networks as part of the allocation of Government funding for that infrastructure.

Rachel Maclean:

For public chargepoints funded with public money, the Government already requires that they meet a strict eligibility criteria. This includes that chargepoints be capable of at least charging those vehicles with a Type 2 connection and that they meet at least the minimum technical specifications required by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles including ensuring chargepoints provide ad-hoc access in line with the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulations 2017.

We want to ensure that all public chargepoints are easy to use and accessible for all motorists who need to use them. The Government has powers under the Automated and Electric Vehicles Act 2018 to improve the customer charging experience and increase provision of electric vehicle infrastructure, and stands ready to introduce regulations if they are needed. We recently consulted on improving the consumer experience at public chargepoints. This covered four key areas: making it easier to pay, opening up chargepoint data, using a single payment metric and ensuring a reliable network. The consultation closed on 10 April and we are analysing responses with a view to legislating later in the year.

■ Electric Vehicles: Grants

Kerry McCarthy:

[2918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 127, on Electric Vehicles: Grants, if he will publish details of the plug-in grants allocated to each vehicle category; and place a copy of that information in the Library.

Rachel Maclean:

Yes we will publish details of past plug in grants allocated to each vehicle category and place a copy of that information in the library.

■ Hitachi Rail Europe: Tax Yields

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[4007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much revenue has been received by the Exchequer in tax receipts by Hitachi Rail UK Ltd in each of the last five years; and how much funding the Government has given to Hitachi Rail UK in (a) payments, (b) grants, (c) loans and (d) other financial transactions over that time period.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Hitachi is part of the wider UK rail supply chain. Typically, we do not make direct payments for the trains because they are procured by the private sector rolling stock companies or, in the case of the Intercity Express Programme (IEP), Agility Trains. The Department for Transport IEP contract with Agility (noting that Hitachi is a shareholder) is a £5.7billion contract for procurement, design, manufacture, delivery, offering into passenger service and subsequence maintenance. Although much of it does, not of all of the IEP contract costs relate to Hitachi directly.

With regard to tax receipts, the administration of the tax system is a matter for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). HMRC does not disclose details of the tax affairs of particular taxpayers.

■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[4014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many railway platforms (a) have and (b) do not have tactile edging on the platform to assist blind and partially sighted people.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Rail Delivery Group collates and updates data on facilities at stations. Information is published on the National Rail Enquiries website:

https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/default.aspx

It is my ambition to install tactiles across the network. I therefore asked Network Rail to devise a plan for all mainline station platforms across England, Scotland and Wales.

■ Railways: South West**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[4006]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that passenger services are restored to the South West as a result of cancellations following cracks on Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following safety inspections on the Hitachi Class 800 series trains, Great Western Railway focused on returning to a reliable and punctual timetable, which was in place by Monday 17 May.

■ Railways: Standards**Sarah Olney:****[3092]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the effect of a reduction in subsidies to the rail industry on the frequency of services provided.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The amount of Government support to the rail industry and what the rail industry must do for the travelling public in return for that money is regularly reviewed at Spending Reviews (for passenger services) and regular Periodic Reviews (which set rail infrastructure funding for a set 5-year period, with the next one due in 2023). While frequency is one factor in train service provision, other factors, such as reliability and on-board capacity are equally important, and are balanced to provide an appropriate total service for passengers. Factors such as improved working practices in the industry and total passenger revenue, in addition to Government support, all impact the total funding to the industry. All these factors will be balanced when considering rail services, of which frequency is one aspect.

It should be noted that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Department put in place emergency measures to support all operators holding franchise contracts with the UK government. The total costs of these measures in 2020/21 is estimated to be around £8.5 billion in Government support.

■ Railways: Timetables**Sarah Olney:****[3093]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason there can only be two train timetable changes per year.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

It is important for passengers that the timetable is as stable as possible so they can plan their journeys effectively. Timetables are also highly complex and need meticulous planning to be able to operate reliably. The rail industry responded rapidly to re-plan services during the pandemic and as we recover it will be important to balance this flexible response to demand changes with the clear need to provide stability to passengers and to plan changes in a robust way.

■ Trailers: Safety

Huw Merriman:

[\[3945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's policy is on safety inspections of light trailers with regard to the planned cessation of safety checks by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on light trailers weighing more than 0.75 tonnes and less than 3.5 tonnes in September 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is not planning the cessation of safety checks on light trailers weighing more than 0.75 tonnes and less than 3.5 tonnes.

The DVSA is actively supporting work to help improve trailer safety. It is running checks throughout the summer to support the 'Tow Safe for Freddie Campaign', which has focus on caravans that tend to have greater use in this period. That campaign ends in September 2021, but the DVSA will continue with roadside checks of trailers and its broader educative work.

■ Trains: Hitachi

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[2413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the original lifespan was of Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The design life of the trains is 35 years.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[2415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Government will take steps to review the award of the tender for the Intercity Express Programme to Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department will not be reviewing the award of the contract, but we will use the contractual levers available to us under the contract to ensure the taxpayer does not pay for the disruption caused or the rectification of the faults.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[4004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment or has received any information as to whether the cracking of the Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series has arisen due to (a) any flaw in the design of those trains, (b) the materials used in construction, (c) trains operating outside of specified limits, (d) poor maintenance and (e) any other reason or combination of reasons.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Hitachi, as the manufacturer and maintainer of the trains, are undertaking a thorough investigation into the causes of the cracking that was found. Their findings will be

reviewed by all parties concerned and until that is complete, it is inappropriate to speculate on causes or on the solutions.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[4008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information he has received on whether the cracking issue found in the UK Class 800 fleet is limited to only the trains within that fleet.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Other Hitachi fleets were checked for faults to ensure it was safe to operate them in service.

■ Trains: Safety

Sarah Olney: [\[3091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's policy is on the proportion of seats that can be safely occupied on a train; and how that matter is being enforced in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In line with the Government's guidance on social distancing and safer transport, train operators have taken significant measures on their vehicles to support social distancing. All train operators are expected to carry out their own risk assessments on the most appropriate action to take, taking account of factors such as the design of different types of rolling stock. Some operators of long-distance services have limited capacity by selling only a set number of seats and requiring reservations. In addition, train operators have increased services levels as we move through the roadmap to provide additional capacity as demand increases.

Passengers are urged to check before they travel and to plan ahead, as transport services and roads are likely to be busier as restrictions ease. They are reminded to follow safer travel guidance when they travel, including wearing a face covering unless exempt, sanitising their hands regularly and keeping their distance where possible.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[3960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide guidance on whether coach companies are advised to run trips from the UK to countries classified as in the Amber zone under covid-19 travel restrictions.

Robert Courts:

Individuals should not travel to countries or territories on the amber and red list. The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produces risk assessments of countries and territories. This risk is based on factors such as the level of community transmission of variants of concern or variant under investigation, levels of testing, genomic sequencing and

reporting. A summary of the JBC methodology has been published on GOV.UK, alongside key data that supports ministers' decisions.

TREASURY

■ Climate Change Convention: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[3086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is Government policy for the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority to discharge their functions consistently with the goals of the (a) Paris Agreement and (b) global greenhouse gas emissions reductions required to meet those goals.

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[3087\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to direct the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority to discharge their functions consistently with the goals of the (a) Paris Agreement and (b) global greenhouse gas emissions reductions required to meet those goals.

John Glen:

The Chancellor sent letters of recommendations to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Prudential Regulation Committee on 23 March 2021. These letters make recommendations about aspects of the government's economic policy that the two organisations should have regard to when considering how to advance their objectives and discharge their duties. For the first time, these letters specified that the regulators should have regard to the government's commitment to achieve a net-zero economy by 2050 under the Climate Change Act 2008 (Order 2019).

However, it is important to note that both the FCA and Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) are operationally independent, non-governmental bodies. Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services, it has strictly limited powers in relation to the FCA and PRA. In particular, the Treasury has no general power of direction over the FCA and PRA.

■ Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation

Neale Hanvey:

[\[4053\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make a statement on the methodology for the calculation of payments made through the Equitable Life Payment Scheme.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[4054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to reassess the calculation of the compensation payments made to people affected by the Equitable Life scheme.

Neale Hanvey:

[4055]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with (a) hon. Members and (b) representatives from the Equitable Members Action Group on further compensation for people affected by the Equitable Life scheme.

John Glen:

I refer the Honourable Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath to the answer I gave on 17 May 2021.

■ Financial Institutions: Carbon Emissions

Matthew Pennycook:

[3085]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by the Advisory Group on Finance for the Climate Change Committee entitled *The road to net-zero finance*, published in December 2020, whether he plans to take steps to implement the recommendation in that report that net-zero greenhouse gas targets should be made mandatory for financial institutions.

John Glen:

In a Statement to the House of Commons in November 2020, the Chancellor set out his vision for the financial services sector for an open, green, and technologically advanced sector acting in the interests of communities and citizens across the UK, creating jobs, supporting businesses, and powering growth as we direct all our energies towards economic recovery.

In November 2020 we became the first country in the world to announce our intention to make TCFD-aligned disclosures fully mandatory across the UK economy.

Concurrently, the Chancellor announced that the UK would create a green taxonomy to help companies and investors determine which activities are sustainable. Both policies will facilitate transition finance and prevent greenwashing.

■ Financial Services Consumer Panel

Dame Angela Eagle:

[2891]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with members of the Financial Services Consumer Panel on the appointment of members of that panel who are nominated by trade associations.

John Glen:

The FCA is an operationally independent non-governmental body and is solely responsible for everyday operational decisions. Appointments to the FCA's statutory panels, including the Consumer Panel, are a matter for the FCA. The Treasury does not make those appointments although its role is to approve the decision taken by the FCA regarding the appointment or dismissal of the Panel's Chair. It would not be appropriate for the Treasury to otherwise intervene in the FCA's appointment process, beyond its statutory role in approving the appointment or dismissal of the Chair.

■ Free Zones: Anglesey

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[4075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of designating Anglesey a Freeport on the ability to (a) resolve the issue of reduced trade flows in the central corridor and (b) use the central corridor to facilitate the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Steve Barclay:

Freeports will be national hubs for international trade, innovation and commerce, regenerating communities across the UK by attracting new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities up and down the country.

We want to ensure that the whole of the UK can benefit, which is why we remain committed to establishing a Freeport in Wales as soon as possible.

Any Freeport in Wales will be allocated by a fair and open process. The government will not be analysing the merits of any specific locations in advance of that.

We have reiterated our commitment to ensure Freeports policy upholds our obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

■ Free Zones: Northern Ireland

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[3165\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made as to the potential merits of designating Northern Ireland as a freeport.

Steve Barclay:

We want to ensure that the whole of the UK can benefit. We continue to work with the Northern Ireland Executive to establish a Freeport in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

Our priority is to ensure we design a Freeport model which meets our international legal obligations and provides an attractive and competitive offer for ports, businesses and communities in Northern Ireland.

■ Funerals: Pre-payment

Stella Creasy:

[\[2961\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to protect consumers that purchase pre-paid funeral plans.

John Glen:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer that I gave on 20 May to the Hon Member for South Holland and The Deepings to PQs UIN: 2183, 2184 and 2185.

■ Net Zero Review

Matthew Pennycook: [\[3084\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the final report of his Department's Net Zero Review.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury's Net Zero Review final report will be published this spring.

■ Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[3094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 826 on Overseas Aid, what metrics his Department plans to use to determine whether the fiscal circumstances have sufficiently improved to return to spending 0.7 per cent of GNI on Official Development Assistance.

Steve Barclay:

The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. We cannot at this moment predict with certainty when the current fiscal circumstances will have sufficiently improved.

■ Retail Trade: Government Assistance

Colleen Fletcher: [\[3896\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support high streets in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to supporting the crucial role that high streets play in our communities – both in the West Midlands and across England. This is why the Government has made up to £25bn grant funding available to businesses in England, as well as ensuring eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in Coventry and across England will benefit from business rates relief worth over £6 billion in 2021-22. To help councils boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups, we also launched the Welcome Bank Fund in March this year. On top of this, we are investing £830m for 72 places to transform their high streets into vibrant hubs for future generations and to protect and create thousands of jobs. For the West Midlands, this includes an ambitious package of funding for Leamington Town Spa (£10m), Wolverhampton (£15.8m), Tamworth (£21.7m), Kidderminster (£20.6m), Brierley Hill (£10m), Walsall (£11.4m), Nuneaton (£13.4m), Newcastle-Under-Lyme (£11m), and Stafford (£14.4m).

■ Shipbuilding

Peter Dowd:

[\[2324\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with relevant stakeholders on the levels of investment required to refresh the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Steve Barclay:

The Prime Minister has appointed the Defence Secretary as Shipbuilding Tsar. As you will no doubt be aware, on 16 March 2021, the Defence Secretary outlined in his speech to the Society of Maritime Industries that he is working to refresh the National Shipbuilding Strategy to deliver a successful and sustainable UK shipbuilding enterprise.

The Chancellor is in regular contact with Cabinet colleagues, including the Defence Secretary, on investment priorities. Officials are likewise closely engaged with counterparts across government on matters of public spending.

■ Taxation: USA

Catherine West:

[\[3974\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the global minimum corporate tax rate being proposed by the US Administration on low and middle income countries.

Catherine West:

[\[3975\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of securing a global minimum corporation tax rate and a level playing field for UK businesses as part of G7 negotiations.

Catherine West:

[\[3976\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department expressed support for the US Administration's Made in America Tax Plan including a global minimum tax rate proposed at the G7 foreign and development ministers meeting from 3 to 5 May 2021 in London.

Catherine West:

[\[3977\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will use its presidency of the G7 to ensure the US Administration's proposed Made in America Tax Plan is on the agenda for discussions at the UK 2021 G7 summit in Cornwall.

Catherine West:

[\[3978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of risk of diplomatic isolation at the G7 summit in the event that the Government does not support the US Administration's proposed Made in America Tax Plan which seeks to introduce a global minimum corporate tax rate.

Catherine West:

[3979]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department's policy is on the US Administration's proposals for a global minimum corporation tax rate in the event that the Government does not secure a Digital Sales Tax in OECD Pillar One negotiations.

Jesse Norman:

The Government welcomes the US administration's renewed commitment to reaching a two-pillar solution reforming the international tax framework through the OECD, and it is optimistic that an agreement can be reached.

The OECD proposals to update the international tax framework have been under negotiation for a number of years and the UK has been at the forefront of these talks.

A global minimum tax (Pillar 2) is an important part of the package being developed by the OECD and the UK has been working with other countries on this initiative for a number of years.

The Government supports agreement on a global minimum tax. It is also crucial that this is agreed alongside changes to profit allocation rules (Pillar 1). Pillar 1 is vital to ensure large digital businesses pay more tax in the UK, commensurate with their economic activities.

The Chancellor has made supporting progress towards a two-pillar solution a priority of the UK's G7 presidency. As such, he has regular discussions with his G7 counterparts on these issues.

Given that these discussions are still in progress and important details are still subject to international negotiation, it would not be appropriate for the Government to provide detailed impact assessments.

■ **Whisky: Excise Duties**

Brendan O'Hara:

[3890]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of a differential duty rate on administration costs for (a) producers and (b) retailers of Scotch whisky.

Brendan O'Hara:

[3891]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's Alcohol Duty Review citation of concerns that a differential duty rate could increase levels of fraud, what effect those concerns have had on his assessment of the potential merits of introducing a differential duty rate.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury is considering the merits of differentiating products based on the place of retail as part of its alcohol duty review. Officials are working closely with HMRC to assess the practical implications of potential options and the Treasury will provide further updates in due course.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Ellie Reeves:

[828]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when the Government plans to respond to the Women and Equalities Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2019-21, 'Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact', HC 385.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government response to the Women and Equalities Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2019-21, 'Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact', was published on 14 May 2021 and is available on the [Parliament website](#).

■ Gender Recognition

Zarah Sultana:

[890]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) making non-binary a legally recognised gender identity and (b) including non-binary as an option under the Gender Recognition Panel (GRP)/ Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC).

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government acknowledges that some citizens identify as non-binary. However, as set out in the response to the Gender Recognition Act consultation, there are no plans to make changes to the 2004 Act.

Following a considerable amount of consultation with the public and representative organisations, the Government decided that the current provisions within the GRA allow for those that wish to legally change their sex to do so. The GRA provides a means for transgender people to change the sex on their birth certificate, but there is currently no provision for those who do not identify solely as male or as female.

■ LGBT People: Homelessness

Marsha De Cordova:

[1198]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the 2018 LGBT+ Action Plan, whether the research carried out by her Department and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on LGBT+ homelessness, also includes research on (a) LGBT+ youth homelessness and (b) the experiences of LGBT+ youth who are hidden homeless.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that homelessness amongst LGBT people is an important issue and is determined to understand it better.

The research on LGBT homelessness aims to improve understanding of the needs of people who are homeless and LGBT. It also looks at how housing and support services are being delivered to LGBT people and how they can be improved to better

meet their needs. The research takes into account the experiences of LGBT people of a range of ages and with experiences of different forms of homelessness.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Biocidal Products

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[2895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of regulations on the manufacture, marketing and sale of biocides; what testing is required in each case to determine the efficacy of those biocides against viruses and bacteria before being sold to the public; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) was introduced as a stand-alone regime for Great Britain at the end of last year. Any review by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) would follow evidence based on experience of operating the stand-alone regime in Great Britain. Efficacy is a requirement for the approval of biocidal active substances and authorisation of biocidal products under the BPR.

While the approach to testing varies, all products require the same level of robust testing to demonstrate efficacy. Whether or not a product needs to be authorised by HSE, it is the responsibility of product manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that their products are suitably safe and effective, including meeting any necessary testing standards.

■ Children: Maintenance

Damien Moore:

[\[4022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Child Maintenance Service is taking to ensure that the maintenance liability of paying parents reflects their income.

Guy Opperman:

The income information for a child maintenance calculation is obtained directly from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This method is consistent for all of our paying parents including earnings from self-employment.

Either parent may request a variation to a maintenance calculation to allow the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) to consider some circumstances which are not covered by the basic calculation. This includes unearned income such as rental income from property or land, or dividends and interest from savings and investments. If a variation succeeds, the maintenance liability may be adjusted.

Cases involving complex income or suspected fraud can be referred to the CMS's Financial Investigation Unit (FIU), a specialist team who can request information from financial institutions to check the maintenance calculation accurately reflects financial

circumstances. If an investigation finds evidence of criminality the FIU may seek to prosecute or forward to HMRC for fraud action.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Jim Shannon:

[\[2989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to encourage the full-time return to work for staff of her Department as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has successfully enabled the majority of colleagues to work from home over the last 12 months.

As Covid restrictions began to be lifted in April, many of the Work Coaches in Jobcentres have returned to the office so that they can continue to support jobseekers, including offering face-to-face appointments, all in accordance with government guidelines.

The Department is developing plans for more colleagues to return to offices, and move to the next stage of easing of restrictions, currently planned for 21 June in England. This will be managed in a planned and phased way in line with government guidance. As part of this the Department will also work towards adopting further flexibilities, aligned to smarter working, which includes more opportunities to work in a hybrid way.

■ Employment and Support Allowance

Dan Jarvis:

[\[3874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to amend the employment and support allowance eligibility to include claimants who have been unable to pay National Insurance contributions as a result of shielding.

Justin Tomlinson:

We have no plans to amend the National Insurance (NI) contributions conditions for contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals advised to 'shield' in line with public health guidance were eligible for ESA and would have received NI credits as part of their award. Where an individual required further financial assistance they may have been eligible for Universal Credit.

In addition, employers could and still can furlough clinically extremely vulnerable employees, who remain eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) even whilst shielding guidance is not in place. Individuals continue to pay NI contributions as normal as part of CJRS.

■ Employment: Coronavirus**Andy McDonald:** [3003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the Health and Safety Executive has categorised covid-19 in the workplace according to Table 1 Consequence table in the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) Operational version 3.2 following the latest review.

Mims Davies:

The Enforcement Management Model (EMM) review of the classification of Covid-19 is largely completed and is currently subject to internal assurance and clearance processes. We will update the Health and Safety Executive website in due course.

■ Employment: Disability**Florence Eshalomi:** [3214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will publish guidance to advise employers on how to support physically disabled workers to return to the workplace in a covid-safe way, while having their needs met, to ensure that disabled people are able to return to the workplace on an equal basis as covid-19 restrictions ease.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has existing guidance for employers of people with disabilities: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/disability/employers.htm> which remains applicable to those returning to work following absence related to COVID-19. Employers are required to ensure that their workplaces are COVID secure for all employees and there is extensive guidance on the HSE web site to help them do that.

Under equality law, employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure, as far is reasonable, that employees with disabilities have the same access to everything required to do the job as a non - disabled worker.

■ Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing**Gill Furniss:** [3980]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she made of the potential merits of suspending the under-occupancy charge during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

The policy already allows for the provision of an additional bedroom in certain circumstances, such as to support the needs of disabled people, as well as exempting households in receipt of pension age Housing Benefit.

If a claimant's ability to mitigate any shortfall between their housing support and rent has changed as a result of Covid-19, Discretionary Housing Payments can be considered by their local authority. We have allocated a further £140 million for Discretionary Housing Payments for 2021/22 in England and Wales.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Anne McLaughlin:

[3943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to ensure companies that have been contracted by her Department to fulfil outsourced work comply with covid-related health and safety regulations.

Guy Opperman:

All contractors that deliver the Department contracts are required to deliver their contractual obligations in accordance with all applicable law regarding health and safety as a matter of course. We expect all our contractors to comply with current government guidelines to ensure Covid safe working practices as part of that commitment.

In many instances the Department has supported contractors moving to Covid safe working practices by delivering services to participants using digital platforms, where appropriate to do so and in many cases our contractor's staff have moved to working from home during the height of the pandemic.

We have also collaborated closely with providers to establish procedures for the safe resumption of face to face services where these are necessary, including advice on social distancing requirements, sanitisation, PPE and face coverings

In specific cases the Department has actively worked in consultation with its suppliers to assess Covid related risk in the workplace and identify ways in which the services can be delivered in a safer manner. Specific examples include –

- Review of reactive and planned maintenance services on the Department estate, (against criticality and risk) and identification of services which should be suspended or amended for periods of restricted movement
- Provision of PPE equipment
- Increased cleaning regimes and social distancing measures implemented across the estate to ensure working environment continues to be Covid secure.
- Reduction in the numbers of Security Officers required to attend sites in line with reduced Operational requirements.
- Provision of PPE equipment for those Security Officers required to attend sites

We have also supported providers in meeting and exceeding their obligations under Covid related procedures, for example where Security Officers test positive they are required to self-isolate for 14/10 days and not return to work but still receive their full pay whilst self-isolating.

Unfortunately, the Department cannot attend sites to verify that providers are adhering to Covid safe working practices, as this in itself would breach the same standards.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[2359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will undertake a review of how Local Housing Allowance is calculated.

Will Quince:

Local Housing Allowance rates are reviewed annually by the Secretary of State in the usual way.

■ Long Term Unemployed People: Mental Health

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[3894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of long-term unemployment on mental health; and what steps she is taking to support the mental health of people facing (a) redundancy and (b) long-term unemployment in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to discuss health and employment support.

In recognition of the important link between work and health, including mental health, in 2015 we created the joint Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Health and Social Care Work and Health Unit (WHU). This brings the two departments together to pilot new ways of joining up the health and employment systems. The WHU delivers a programme of trials, initiatives and policy development to support disabled people and people with health conditions to remain in and return to work, and to support health and wellbeing in the workplace.

One of the largest initiatives of the joint WHU is providing additional Employment Advisors (EAs) in NHS Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Services. This provides combined psychological treatment and employment support to help clients receiving IAPT treatment for depression and anxiety to remain in, get back to, or find work, including those impacted by changes to the labour market resulting from COVID-19. This initiative is currently running in 40% of Clinical Commissioning Groups in England, including the Coventry and Warwickshire CCG.

Large scale trials in the West Midlands and Sheffield City Region have been testing the internationally-recognised Individual Placement and Support approach to employment support in a health setting for people with common mental health and/or physical health conditions.

Nationally, DWP has developed and implemented mental health guidance and training for its frontline staff across the nation. To support vulnerable customers, DWP has created a national network of senior leaders who will liaise locally with authorities who have safeguarding responsibilities to identify individuals who may need extra support. National employment programmes, including the Work and Health Programme and the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme, provide specialist employment support to individuals. The Access to Work Mental Health Service also provides a package of tailored support and advice for up to nine months and can provide coping strategies, a step-by-step support plan, advice on adjustments and support for employers to enable them to fully understand the person's condition.

■ **Personal Independence Payment**

Drew Hendry:

[3035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken for a decision on a new personal independence payment claim.

Justin Tomlinson:

We are committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment in a timely manner. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence.

We are currently operating within expected levels. Average clearance times from initial claim to a decision being made for new claims are currently 19 weeks, which is the same as average clearance times achieved in January 2020.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[2406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential effect of the benefit cap on a domestic abuse survivor's decision to leave their abuser.

Mims Davies:

DWP is committed to supporting all our claimants, including the most vulnerable in society. This includes those who are, or have been, victims of domestic abuse.

The benefit cap and the two-child limit policies help to restore fairness between those receiving working age benefits and taxpayers in employment. However, important mitigations are in place to support the most vulnerable.

We provide a tailored service that recognises those with complex needs and ensures provision of appropriate support. This might include pausing job search requirements, initiating alternative payment arrangements or deferring repayments. In addition, claimants that are temporarily absent from home due to fear of violence can receive the housing element of Universal Credit, and/or Housing Benefit, for both the home

that has been left and any new home for up to a year. Housing support for specified accommodation, including refuges, is excluded from the benefit cap calculation as is any Housing Benefit paid to a Universal Credit claimant.

Departmental training and awareness is now better than it ever has been, allowing Jobcentre staff to proactively identify, support and signpost victims of abuse.

Discretionary Housing Payments are available for households that need additional financial support to meet housing costs. While the allocation of this funding is at Local Authority discretion, we have strengthened the associated Guidance Manual to ensure that individuals or families fleeing domestic abuse are considered a priority group for DHP support.

■ Social Security Benefits: Lone Parents

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[2442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits exempting or limiting lone parents from work-related conditionality.

Mims Davies:

The Secretary of State has not made a specific assessment on the merits of exempting or limiting lone parents from work-related conditionality. For those lone parents receiving Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit there are specific flexibilities to help them balance their caring responsibilities with work search and availability requirements.

Work Coaches have the ability to tailor the frequency and type of face-to-face support they offer to the needs of each lone parent/lead carer and have the discretion to require parents to undertake work-related activity in cases where they feel this will move them closer to the labour market. Additional safeguards apply where the youngest child in the claim is 3 or 4. Those expected to look for work may also limit the time they can spend travelling to and from work and have additional time to attend an interview or take up work so they can make childcare arrangements.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[3893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the economic cost of youth unemployment in terms of (a) lost national output, (b) lost tax revenue and (c) higher welfare spending in each of the last three years; and what fiscal steps her Department is taking to reduce youth unemployment in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England.

Mims Davies:

No estimate has been made.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to supporting everyone who has been affected by the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on the economy

and the labour market. We want everyone to be able to find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Through Plan for Jobs, the government invested £30bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs. This included over £3bn investment in the Kickstart programme for young people and an additional 13,500 Work Coaches in our Jobcentres, as well as other measures focussed on boosting work search, skills and apprenticeships.

■ Universal Credit: Domestic Abuse

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[2925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the five week wait for universal credit claimants who are fleeing domestic violence.

Will Quince:

Nobody has to wait for a payment in Universal Credit (UC). Urgent payments are available which allows claimants to receive up to 100% of their estimated UC payment upfront. These payments are designed to ensure that the most vulnerable claimants receive the money they need to live on during their transition to UC. Claimants have the option to spread twenty-five UC payments over twenty-four months, giving them more flexibility over the payments of their UC award.

■ Universal Credit: Payments

Feryal Clark:

[\[3194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the five-week wait for universal credit payments; and what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the time taken to receive such payments and the level of household debt.

Will Quince:

Nobody has to wait for a payment in Universal Credit (UC). Urgent payments are available which allows claimants to receive up to 100% of their estimated UC payment upfront. These payments are designed to ensure that the most vulnerable claimants receive the money they need to live on during their transition to UC. Claimants have the option to spread twenty-five UC payments over twenty-four months, giving them more flexibility over the payments of their UC award.

■ Welfare Assistance Schemes

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[2197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that the UK welfare system provides people with enough funds to access (a) food and (b) other essential supplies.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending an estimated £112 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2020/21. This included around £7.4 billion of Covid-related welfare policy measures.

We introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme providing funding to Local Authorities in England to help the most vulnerable children and families stay warm and well fed during the coldest months. It will now run to the 20th June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

We are investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme which has been expanded to every local authority across England this year. Children eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals will have the option to join a holiday club programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the summer, Christmas and Easter holidays in 2021. We also increased the value of Healthy Start Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Parental Pay

Ellie Reeves:

[829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, further to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146798 on Paternity Leave, how many people received statutory shared parental pay in (a) Quarter 3 and (b) Quarter 4 of 2020-21.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Paul Scully:

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Pay was introduced in December 2014 for the parents of children due or adopted from 5 April 2015. The scheme enables eligible working parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year, where the mother does not intend to use her full maternity entitlements.

Information provided by employers to HMRC in respect of claims for Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) indicates that 4,100 individuals were in receipt of ShPP in Quarter 3 of 2020-21, and 3,300 individuals were in receipt of ShPP in Quarter 4 **(January and February only)** of 2020-21.

Please note that HMRC does not hold information which calculates the total duration of ShPP received by individual claimants. However, the following table sets out the number of individuals in receipt of ShPP in 2019-20 by the number of months in the year that they made a claim:

NUMBER OF MONTHS CLAIMED IN 2019-20 (SEE NOTE 4)

NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS

1	4,400
2	3,100
3	2,300
4	1,500
5	800
6	500
7	300
8	100
9	100

Please note:

1. The data collected uses HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) system and was extracted in May 2021. RTI is subject to revision or updates, and so there may be small fluctuations in figures reported, and these figures should not be considered “final”.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. The number of individuals in receipt of ShPP per quarter are based on the total number of individuals in that quarter irrespective of when the payment first started. Quarterly figures should not be added together to make a yearly count of individuals in receipt of ShPP due to double counting claimants from quarter to quarter.
4. “Number of months claimed” counts each month the same individual was in receipt of ShPP in a given tax year (2019-20). This should not be interpreted as the total duration of pay received. Where individuals are in receipt of pay that spans two financial years HMRC data can only count the period within a single year and where individuals have received pay spanning months, however briefly, will be recorded as two months.
5. This data represents individuals in receipt of Shared Parental Pay only, so those who take unpaid Shared Parental Leave are not included.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Pesticides

Daniel Zeichner:

[760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the rejection in February 2021 by the Health and Safety Executive of the use of Vydate 10G on carrot, parsnip, bulb onion, garlic and potato crops, for what reason emergency authorisation was given for the use of that pesticide on sugar beet crops in March 2021.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Victoria Prentis:

Emergency authorisation allows, in narrow circumstances, a short-term derogation from the normal requirements for pesticide authorisation. Emergency authorisation of a pesticide product for limited and controlled use may be granted in special circumstances where, strict regulatory requirements are met, and the authorisation appears necessary to control a danger that cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means. In assessing whether the requirements are met, the decision maker considers the benefit of granting an emergency authorisation and the potential harm from the proposed use of the product, taking into account relevant mitigation measures.

In the case of Vydate 10G, used to control nematodes, grower groups submitted applications earlier this year for emergency authorisation for use on a range of crops. **Each of these applications were considered separately against the legal requirements and on the basis of the available information on issues including the risk to the crop, the availability of alternative means of control and the benefits and risks of use.** The application for use on a small proportion of the sugar beet crop was granted, with conditions, as the requirements for emergency authorisation were considered to be met.

Daniel Zeichner:

[763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what criteria were met that led to his Department granting the emergency authorisation of Vydate 10G for use on sugar beet crops in 2021.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Victoria Prentis:

Emergency authorisation allows, in narrow circumstances, a short-term derogation from the normal requirements for pesticide authorisation. Emergency authorisation of a pesticide product for limited and controlled use may be granted in special circumstances where, strict regulatory requirements are met, and the authorisation appears necessary to control a danger that cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means. In assessing whether the requirements are met, the decision maker considers the benefit of granting an emergency authorisation and the potential harm from the proposed use of the product, taking into account relevant mitigation measures.

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WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Performance Targets for the Intellectual Property Office (an operating name of the Patent Office) for 2021-22

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation) (Amanda Solloway): [\[HCWS45\]](#)

Unleashing innovation and creativity will be at the heart of the post-pandemic recovery and support British businesses to build back better. The Government's Research and Development Roadmap sets clear objectives for increasing investment in research and becoming world-class at securing economic and social benefits; inspiring creators, entrepreneurs and start-ups; increasing the flow of capital into firms that are committed to research and development; attracting and retaining talented, diverse teams; making long term commitments to people, places and institutions and collaborating nationally and internationally to deliver world-leading innovation and creativity that achieves world-beating results.

Last year, communities and economies across the world faced unprecedented disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At a time of such devastation, we saw the best in British ingenuity. From our leading research institutions to schools and colleges, and from distilleries to Formula One teams, British innovators developed and manufactured life-saving sanitisers, vaccinations and ventilators. These technologies now offer a route out of the current pandemic. By enabling collaboration and incentivising investment, IP will play an important part in beating Covid-19 once and for all. We are already reaping the benefits of the IP framework through its impact in mobilising research and development of game-changing vaccines at record speed. Funding by the UK Government has been vital in the rapid development, approval and deployment of vaccines and licensing of IP will be critical in reaching global communities. We can also credit this success to the decades of investment in science and innovation and sharing of knowledge underpinned by the IP system.

The Intellectual Property Office's ambition is to be the best IP office in the world, by providing excellent IP services, a legislative and policy framework that is world leading and a brilliant place to work. They are transforming their ways of working, their services and the way they engage customers. Thanks to the resilience, creative thinking and team-work of their staff, the IPO stayed open for business throughout the pandemic and switched to digital delivery for many services. Now they need to build on that to help businesses recover and grow.

This year, they expect intellectual property rights applications to increase by around 25%. To respond to this demand they will grow the work force, and importantly build their culture to match their bold ambitions. They will invest in their service delivery to ensure they can uphold excellent customer satisfaction for the long term.

IP underpins economic growth by incentivising investment, safe-guarding assets and enabling the sharing of know-how in technologies like life sciences and artificial intelligence. IP will help enable Britain to forge an unbeatable competitive advantage, accelerate the transition to Net Zero energy, beat the pandemic, and drive up innovation and creativity to build back better.

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) Corporate Plan 2021-22 explains how through their stewardship of the IP system, the IPO will help the UK to become the most innovative and creative country in the world as an independent nation. They will do this through delivering excellent IP services, creating a world leading IP environment and attracting and retaining the best people by making the IPO a brilliant place to work.

As an Executive Agency and Trading Fund of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the IPO have set targets which are agreed by Ministers and laid before Parliament. I am glad that today I can inform the House that for 2020-21 the IPO's targets are:

- Customer: Average overall customer satisfaction with the IPO of 85% or more in Q4 2021-22.
- Future proofing the IP Framework: Consult on changes to patent and copyright law to meet the future challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence, and present recommendations to ministers by Q4.
- Efficiency: Delivering our services efficiently through continuously improving our systems, processes and way of working to make things better for our customers and our people. Our target is to achieve efficiencies worth at least 3.5% of our core operating costs.

The plan includes actions to help businesses recover and grow after the Covid-19 pandemic. The IPO's priorities reflect this and they will review them as the consequences of efforts to control the virus become clearer. They have the ability to adapt their finance and resource models according to emerging trends and they will do so through robust quarterly reforecasting. They will also work with BEIS and their other partner organisations to review their priorities regularly, ensuring they support wider government responses to the economic impact of the virus and seek to focus their efforts and resources where they will have the most significant impact driving the UK innovation and creative economy.

DEFENCE

■ The Commencement of the new Fleet Solid Support Competition

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[[HCWS47](#)]

Today I am pleased to be able to provide an update on our plans to take forward procurement of the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) Ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. The MOD's FSS programme is delivering three warships essential to the UK's Carrier-led Maritime Strike Group, while assuring value for money for the taxpayer.

Last year I said the new competition would be launched in Spring 2021, and today I'm pleased to announce that a Contract Notice has now been issued, inviting companies to register interest in participating in the tender for the design and build of FSS ships.

I am determined that all these ships will be integrated in the UK as well as keen to see British build playing a full or part role in the competition. The competition therefore seeks to maximise UK social value, balanced with the need to deliver value for money, while encouraging investment in domestic shipyards.

This is also an opportunity for British firms to work alongside international partners.

The competition consists of a two-phase process. Phase 1 is focused on the initial design maturity, with Phase 2 focused on the manufacture contract negotiation. Contract award is expected to be within two years, following approvals.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Fan-led Review of Football Governance

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Tourism (Nigel Huddleston):
[HCWS51]

This statement sets out the full membership of the advisory panel to support the work of the Honourable Member for Chatham and Aylesford, as she commences the fan-led review of football.

The panel features fan representation at its heart and includes former players, managers, current administrators, non-league, independent members and representatives of the women's game. The Chair and panel will now begin a series of roundtable meetings that will reach out to fans and governing bodies across the football pyramid to hear their views on the future of football.

Fans are at the heart of our national game and the Government is ensuring their safe return to stadia across the country. Fans will be at the centre of the review, with extensive engagement with the Premier League, Championship, women's football, League One and Two and Non-league, as well as community and diversity fan networks.

The Chair and panel will canvass fans' views on ownership, governance and financial flows within the game. In addition, they will assess the need for an independent football regulator charged with implementing regulation and compliance, and how that might work within the existing framework provided by the Football Association, Premier League and English Football League.

The panel announced reflects all parts of the game, and the review of football governance wants to hear that diversity reflected in the views it receives on how our national game can be changed for the better for all fans.

A copy of the membership of the panel will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Fan-Led Review of Football Governance Advisory Panel

The full panel is as follows:

Fans' representative - Kevin Miles (CEO, The Football Supporters' Association)

Former footballer - Clarke Carlisle

Commercial expertise - Dan Jones (Deloitte)

Football administration - Prof Denise Barrett-Baxendale (CEO, Everton FC)

Independent - Danny Finkelstein, independent member

Independent / regulation - David Mahoney (COO, England and Wales Cricket Board, formerly Ofcom)

Independent - Godric Smith, Director, Cambridge United

Women's Game - Dawn Airy, Chair WSL

Non-league Representation - James Tedford, formerly Secretary, Southport FC

Former manager - Roy Hodgson

HOME OFFICE

■ Law Enforcement Records

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): **[[HCWS49](#)]**

Further to my statement to the House on the 18 January ([here](#)) and a further written statement on 8 February ([HCWS774](#)), this is an update on recovery of the No Further Action records deleted from the Police National Computer (PNC) in error.

Today, I am confirming that the data that was wrongly deleted from the PNC, fingerprint and DNA databases has now been fully recovered. 100% of the deleted records has been recovered and returned to the affected databases.

Over 99% of the data deleted from the PNC was recovered within the previously announced timeline. The remaining records required manual insertion into the PNC which is a more time-consuming process. Intensive work has been undertaken with our colleagues at the Criminal Records Office (ACRO) over recent weeks and I can confirm that this work is now also complete.

I want to thank the National Police Chief's Council, ACRO and the engineers and members of staff across the Home Office who have worked around the clock to make this possible.

I know that members across this House have rightly been eager to understand the operational impact that this data deletion has had while the recovery effort has progressed.

To date, we are not aware of any law enforcement operations that were significantly adversely affected by this incident. However, further work is ongoing to help us understand the full impact now that the data has been fully restored, which is being led by the National Police Chief's Council.

It is important to reaffirm that no records of convictions were deleted as a result of this incident, and deletions only related to records in cases that occurred prior to 2015.

As set out previously, mitigations were put into place to minimise the impact of the deletion of the data - those mitigations have been effective.

Key amongst those was the ability of the police to continue to conduct simultaneous searches on other unaffected law enforcement systems such as the Police National Database. Alongside this, the Home Office and our suppliers worked to make the incorrectly deleted DNA profiles available to policing and to reinstate fingerprint records whilst the full capability was being restored.

As well as the data recovery exercise, we have also taken steps to provide additional assurances on the PNC system since the incident occurred. This includes bringing in extra personnel for quality control and ensuring extra checks are in place on all work being undertaken. The Home Office has engaged intensively with policing to strengthen checks on any future updates to law enforcement systems - this includes the development and introduction of new processes and operating models to bolster the checks to ensure an error like this one does not happen again.

The Home Secretary and I commissioned an independent review, led by an external panel chaired by Lord Hogan-Howe, to investigate how this happened and to ensure the necessary lessons are learned to avoid similar incidents in the future. We are extremely grateful to Lord Hogan-Howe and his team for their work.

In line with the commitment made when this review was commissioned, a summary of this review will today be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The report confirms the minimal impact that the incident has had on police investigations as well as the criminal justice system more widely and will enable us to address the operational and technical failures that led to this error.

The review sets out a wide range of recommendations for both the Home Office as well as the Police to address the underlying factors that led to this unacceptable incident. We have considered these recommendations very carefully and I can confirm both the Home Office and the Police have accepted all their recommendations in full and work is already underway to take the necessary steps to respond to the recommendations.

Work will now commence on phase 4 of the recovery effort, which will aim to delete data which should have been deleted but erroneously has remained on the PNC as a result of this incident. I will provide a further update to the House on this work in due course.

■ **New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Control**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[[HCWS46](#)]

On 31 December 2020, freedom of movement between the United Kingdom and the European Union ended. The UK's new points-based immigration system is now in place and receiving applications. This was a significant milestone which delivered on a key HM Government commitment to the British people to take back control of our borders and put in place an immigration system which works in the interests of our whole United Kingdom.

However, this only marked the beginning of a wider programme of change to radically transform the operation of our border and immigration system.

In March I set out our plans to fix our broken asylum system and build a fair, but also firm, system for dealing with humanitarian protection claims and illegal migration through this Government's New Plan for Immigration.

Today I am laying before the House a command paper (CP 441) setting out our New Plan for Immigration for legal migration and border control. Together both papers provide a complete picture of the Government's plan to take back control of our borders and immigration system.

Building on the success of the EU Settlement Scheme and the points-based system, over the next four years we will implement further reforms to bring more radical changes and benefits to the way all individuals cross the border and come to the UK. This will support the Plan for Growth and two strands of the Government's Build Back Better agenda; to Build Back Safer by securing the UK border and ensuring compliance with a new system of controlled immigration, and to Build Back Stronger by supporting the UK's domestic labour market and attracting the brightest and best global talent to the UK to live, work and study.

The strategy statement I have published today sets out our programme for 2021 and 2022. This includes: further reform to the points-based system, a new graduate visa, new routes to attract top talent to the UK, and a new international sportsperson route alongside further simplification of our Immigration Rules to streamline our systems and reduce complexity. We will also be improving the user experience by implementing digital solutions, removing paper from the process and reducing the need to attend application centres. This will lay the groundwork for the full transformation of the border and immigration system in the coming years.

It also outlines our vision for the border and immigration system beyond 2022, with this next phase of our programme being truly transformational for everyone using our systems and crossing the UK border, implementing major elements of HM Government's published 2025 UK Border Strategy.

We are moving away from a complex system reliant on people proving their rights through physical documents, sometimes decades old, to a streamlined system which is digital by default. Our goal is to achieve this by the end of 2024. This will make the system quicker, easier and in some cases safer for people applying to come to the UK and proving their rights when in the UK.

Through upstream transformation to our border and immigration system we will also improve our ability to know more about people before they reach the UK border. We will introduce an Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme as part of a wider universal permission to travel requirement for everyone wishing to travel to the UK (except British and Irish citizens). This will support us in our ambition to be global leaders in providing a streamlined and seamless customer experience.

This is an ambitious programme to deliver a world leading border and immigration system. The plans set out in the strategy statement are essential if we are to have a border and immigration system which will attract highly skilled people, whilst also strengthening the security of our United Kingdom.

■ **The policing of the Clapham Common vigil for Sarah Everard**

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS48\]](#)

On 13 March at Clapham Common, an unofficial vigil took place to mark the tragic death of Sarah Everard. Following the coverage of the policing of the vigil, the Home Secretary (and subsequently Mayor of London) asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Constabulary, Sir Tom Winsor, to conduct a bespoke inspection into the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) handling of the vigil. This was set in the context of the 'stay at home' Covid regulations in place at the time, which put in place temporary restrictions on gatherings of more than two people save for specific exemptions; to protect the NHS and prevent the spread of Covid-19. This included temporarily and proportionately reducing the opportunities for people to exercise their freedom of assembly as part of an organised protest.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published its report on 30 March. I am grateful to Sir Thomas Winsor and his team for conducting this review at speed.

The report sets out the context for the events of 13 March. Following the death of Sarah Everard, members of Reclaim These Streets proposed to organise a vigil close to where she was last seen. However, after a High Court judgment on 12 March refused an application by Reclaim These Streets, it was announced by the organisers that the vigil would not take place. Members of the public however still attended.

The report's main findings were that: the Inspectorate is satisfied that, on balance, the MPS' desire for consistency in policing mass gatherings justified its stance towards the vigil; there were three principles why MPS supporting a "Covid-friendly" event was not a realistic option; and the police's actions at the event were proportionate. While the vast majority of attendees were peaceful and respectful throughout the vigil, after 6pm the report found that the event changed and became far more like a rally with dense crowds and little or no social distancing.

The report concluded that the police's response to the events of the evening was proportionate, even in the face of severe provocations in the later stages of the event by a minority of those present. It also provided operational feedback for the Metropolitan Police Service to consider in relation to improving the communications between commanding officers and those on the ground.

The Government welcomes the findings from this report. Officers were policing the vigil in extremely difficult circumstances and the violence and abuse directed towards them by a minority of attendees was unacceptable. The police have a challenging job to do, regularly putting themselves at risk to ensure that the rules are followed, and that people

are kept safe. The Government will continue to support the police in carrying out their important work and learning the lessons from the policing of this event.

Finally, I would like to once more offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Sarah Everard.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Homes Update

Minister of State for Housing (Christopher Pincher):

[\[HCWS50\]](#)

On 1 April 2021 the Government published responses to two consultations: delivering First Homes and the new model for Shared Ownership. This statement sets out the Government's plans for the delivery of First Homes and our new model for Shared Ownership through the planning system.

This statement issues substantial changes to planning policy which will come into effect on 28 June 2021.

The issues covered in this statement include:

- The definition of a First Home
- Eligibility criteria for First Homes
- Setting developer contributions for First Homes
- The remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions
- Plans, development management and transitional arrangements
- Level of discount
- Exception sites
- Delivering Shared Ownership homes

Introduction

The Government is committed to supporting people to own their home and make home ownership a reality for households and families. Since spring 2010 almost 709,000 households have been helped by Government schemes, including Help to Buy and Right to Buy, and we are taking steps to increase the supply of new housing. The Government is undertaking the most ambitious reforms to our planning system since the Second World War, making it easier to build homes where they are most needed, and the stamp duty holiday (applying to the first £500,000 of property sales) has given a much-needed boost to the economy. Ensuring access to home ownership remains a key priority and challenge for this Government. However, rising prices, high deposits and difficulty accessing mortgage finance still mean that far too many people are denied the opportunity to own a home of their own. Polling shows that 87% of people would prefer to own their home given a free choice. Therefore, the Government is determined to ensure that there is an adequate supply and variety of options to help hard-working people onto the housing ladder across England.

First Homes

The Government first consulted on First Homes, the new scheme to provide homes for first-time buyers at a discount of a minimum of 30%, in February 2020. This consultation made proposals around both the design of First Homes and changes to the planning system to support their delivery.

We received nearly 800 responses to this first consultation. There was considerable support for our proposals for a minimum discount of 30% and strong support for proposals to develop a national standard model with discretion for local areas to set their own criteria. Many local authorities, housing developers and business organisations gave very helpful comments about how our proposed changes to planning policy could be introduced and we are very grateful for this. The Government published its consultation response on 6 August 2020, which is available [online](#). On the same day, the Government published a consultation, *Changes to the current planning system*, which included proposals on the detail of changes to planning policy to deliver First Homes. We received nearly 2,400 responses to this second consultation. The Government published its response to the First Homes part of that consultation on 1 April 2021, and a copy of that response will be placed in the Library of the House. It is also available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-first-homes-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

After careful consideration of all the responses to both these consultations, the Government is today setting out its plans for the delivery of First Homes, defining the product and changes to planning policy as set out below.

First Homes Criteria

From 28 June 2021, a home meeting the criteria of a First Home will also be considered to meet the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. The First Homes Criteria means:

- A First Home must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value; and,
- after the discount has been applied, the first sale of the home must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London).

Local authorities will be able to set a deeper minimum discount at either 40% or 50% and impose lower price caps, if they can demonstrate a need for this through evidence. However, the same level of discount as a percentage below market value must apply to the home each time it is sold in perpetuity (subject to certain specific exclusions), so that communities continue to benefit from the homes for years to come. The discount in perpetuity should be secured through a planning obligation. First Homes should, as a matter of course, comply with any other applicable planning policies and / or building regulations, for example those relating to space, accessibility, energy efficiency or carbon emissions. This includes avoiding the sale of homes as leasehold where this is not necessary.

In order to ensure that suitable mortgages are available for First Homes, local authorities should provide for a mortgage lender enforcing its security over a First Homes to be able to realise the full market value of the property, returning any surplus up to the value of the First Homes discount to the local authority.

First Homes Eligibility Criteria

First Homes must be prioritised for first-time buyers (as defined in paragraph 6 of schedule 6ZA of the Finance Act 2003 for the purposes of Stamp Duty Relief for first-time buyers) and not be sold to any household with a combined annual income in excess of £80,000 (or £90,000 in Greater London). Local authorities will be able to apply additional criteria at a local level. For example, they may wish to set a lower income cap, prioritise key workers (who also meet the first time buyer definition) and / or specify a particular local connection requirement based on work or current residency. Neighbourhood plans will also be able to apply these additional criteria at neighbourhood level. We do not intend to set out a national definition for key workers or local connections for the purposes of First Homes, but instead empower local authorities to take these decisions in the best interests of their areas and residents.

In recognition of the unique nature of their circumstances, members of the Armed Forces, the divorced or separated spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces, the spouse or civil partner of a deceased member of the Armed Forces (if their death was caused wholly or partly by their service) or veterans within five years of leaving the Armed Forces should be exempt from any local connection testing restrictions.

A person who can afford to purchase a First Home without a mortgage should not be eligible to purchase a First Home. As a deterrent against the use of First Homes for investment, all purchasers of First Homes must use a mortgage or home purchase plan (if required to comply with Islamic law) for at least 50% of the discounted purchase value.

If local authorities or neighbourhood planning groups choose to introduce their own eligibility restrictions, these will be time-limited to the first three months from the start date of marketing of the property. Upon expiry of the three-month period, any homes which have not been sold or reserved will revert to the national standard criteria set out above. This is to ensure that homes do not remain unsold if suitable buyers in the local area cannot be found.

To support developers and local authorities in using First Homes we are currently developing model section 106 obligations that can be used to secure First Homes at the planning stage. These will make it easier for developers to meet national requirements, for local authorities to consider imposing their own time-limited restrictions and will protect the interest of mortgage lenders by ensuring they can realise the full market value of the property in defined exceptional circumstances. These model obligations will also contain wording for a model title restriction, which will be recognised by HM Land Registry and will ensure the homes retain their discount in perpetuity.

We are clear that First Homes are intended to be used as a person's sole or primary residence and should not be used for investment or commercial gain. However, we also recognise that there are occasions when it may be necessary for owners of First Homes

to let out their property for short periods of time, especially in response to unexpected life events. Therefore, a First Homes owner can only rent out their home for a maximum period of two years, as long as the relevant local authority is notified. Recognising that certain circumstances require a unique response, local authorities should be willing to grant permissions to rent out for longer periods under the following circumstances: deployment elsewhere (for members of the Armed Forces); primary caring responsibilities for relative/friend; short job posting elsewhere; redundancy; domestic abuse; and relationship breakdown. This will not affect restrictions on letting a property prescribed by a mortgage lender and permission from them would likely also be required.

Changes to planning policy

In order to support the future development of First Homes, the Government is today also setting out changes to planning policy as set out above and below. These changes will come into effect from 28 June 2021.

Setting developer contributions for First Homes

A minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes. This is a national threshold which should be applied for England.

In accordance with paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework, affordable housing is expected to be delivered on-site unless off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified; and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.

Where cash contributions for affordable housing are secured instead of on-site units, a minimum of 25% of these contributions should be used to secure First Homes. Where a mixture of cash contributions towards affordable housing and on-site units are secured, 25% of the overall value of affordable housing contributions should be applied to First Homes.

Local authorities should already have affordable housing policies set out in their development plan, which will include the amounts of affordable housing to be sought, and the tenure mix of this housing. Paragraph 57 of the National Planning Policy Framework currently states that where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. Under the approach set out in this Written Ministerial Statement, therefore, it is necessary to define the criteria for policy compliance, under which a development is assumed to be viable.

Under the new system, a policy compliant planning application should seek to capture the same amount of value as would be captured under the local authority's up-to-date published policy. In addition to capturing the same amount of value towards affordable housing as the existing policy, where on-site affordable housing is required, a policy compliant application will have a minimum of 25% of affordable housing units on-site as First Homes.

The remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions

The Government recognises the importance of social rent as part of the affordable housing tenure mix. A local authority should prioritise securing their policy requirements on social rent, once they have secured the 25% First Homes requirement. Where other affordable housing units can be secured, these tenure-types should be secured in the relative proportions set out in the development plan.

If an application aligns with a local authority's up-to-date policy on cash contributions in lieu of on-site provision, then it will be a policy compliant application in that regard.

Local planning authorities should use the most appropriate method available to them to set out how these requirements impact on their current affordable housing tenure mix policies.

Exemptions from requirements to deliver affordable home ownership products

Paragraph 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that for major development involving the provision of housing, 10% of all homes on site should be affordable home ownership products, unless one of the exceptions applies. First Homes are an affordable home ownership product. Where specific developments are exempt from delivering affordable home ownership products under paragraph 64 of the Framework, they shall also be exempt from the requirement to deliver First Homes.

Plans, Development Management and Transitional Arrangements

Local plans and neighbourhood plans should take into account the new First Homes requirements from 28 June 2021. Local authorities may therefore need to review the tenure mix for the remainder of the affordable housing that they are seeking to secure. However, we also recognise that there will be a number of local plans and neighbourhood plans that have been prepared based on the existing National Planning Policy Framework and that have reached more advanced stages of the plan-making process. We do not intend that the evidence base for these should be re-opened, thus delaying the plan-making process. The following transitional arrangements will therefore apply.

Local plans and neighbourhood plans that have been submitted for Examination^[1] before 28 June 2021 are not required to reflect the First Homes policy requirements.

Additionally, local plans and neighbourhood plans that have reached publication stage^[2] by 28 June 2021 will also not be required to reflect the First Homes policy requirement as long as they are submitted for Examination before 28 December 2021. However, reflecting our desire to introduce First Homes requirements at the earliest possible opportunity, Planning Inspectors should consider through the Examination whether a requirement for an early update of the local plan might be appropriate.

Where local and neighbourhood plans are adopted under the aforementioned transitional arrangements, the First Homes requirements will also not need to be applied when considering planning applications in the plan area until such time as the requirements are introduced through a subsequent update.

Where local and neighbourhood plans do not benefit from the aforementioned transitional arrangements, the local planning authority should make clear how existing policies should

be interpreted in the light of First Homes requirements using the most appropriate tool available to them.

We also recognise that many developers will have been preparing planning applications under different assumptions. Across all local authorities, the new requirement for 25% First Homes will not apply to sites with full or outline planning permissions already in place or determined (or where a right to appeal against non-determination has arisen) before 28 December 2021 (or 28 March 2022 if there has been significant pre-application engagement), although local authorities should allow developers to introduce First Homes to the tenure mix if they wish to do so. This transitional allowance will also apply to permissions and applications for entry-level exception sites.

The Government will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these transitional arrangements in light of emerging economic circumstances.

Level of discount

The minimum discount for First Homes should be 30% from market value, which will be set by an independent registered valuer. The valuation should assume the home is sold as an open market dwelling without restrictions. Where evidence justifies it (either in the local or neighbourhood plan, an emerging policy or, where appropriate, a Supplementary Planning Document), the minimum discount in an area can be increased to 40% or 50%.

Where discounts of more than 30% are applied to First Homes, the requirement for a minimum of 25% of the affordable housing units secured through developer contributions to be First Homes will remain in place. The approach to delivering the remaining 75% of affordable housing is set out above.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Government has introduced new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations which allow the developers of First Homes to obtain an exemption from the requirement to pay CIL, in line with other affordable housing products. These regulations came into force on 16 November 2020.

Exception Sites

A key priority of this Government is to enable as many people as possible to enjoy the benefits of home ownership, and First Homes are a crucial way in which this will be achieved. In order to maximise the number of First Homes made available to those keen to get on the housing ladder, the Government is also seeking to deliver First Homes via exception sites. Exception sites are small sites brought forward outside of development plans in order to deliver affordable housing, and currently consist of rural exception sites and entry-level exception sites.

While the Government supports the mechanism of allowing land to come forward outside of the development plan to deliver much-needed homes via exception sites, the entry-level exception site policy has not delivered affordable housing to the extent originally envisaged. Following the consultation, the Government is replacing this policy with a 'First Homes exception sites' policy, in order to encourage First Homes-led developments on land that is not currently allocated for housing. Local authorities should support the

development of these First Homes exception sites, suitable for first-time buyers, unless the need for such homes is already being met within the local authority's area. Local connection criteria may be set where these can be supported by evidence of necessity and will not compromise site viability. First Homes exception sites should be on land which is not already allocated for housing and should:

- a) comprise First Homes (as defined in this Written Ministerial Statement)
- b) be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance in the National Planning Policy Framework[3], and comply with any local design policies and standards.

A small proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of First Homes without grant funding. Also, a small proportion of other affordable homes may be allowed on the sites where there is significant identified local need.

While the Government wants to ensure that home ownership is available to as many people as possible, we recognise that certain rural areas face particular challenges in terms of affordability, and that rural exception sites can be very effective in addressing the lack of affordable housing in these areas. As such, the Government has decided that in designated rural areas[4], which includes some of the more constrained and expensive regions of the country such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, rural exception sites will remain as the sole exception site which can come forward. Elsewhere, First Homes exception sites and rural exception sites can both come forward.

Delivering Shared Ownership homes

This Government believes Shared Ownership has a vital role to play in supporting people from all backgrounds to become homeowners. By purchasing a share of a property, aspiring homeowners can overcome the income and deposit barriers that can stand in their way. This is why the Government is making Shared Ownership work better by introducing a new model for Shared Ownership which will be delivered through grant funding and through the planning system.

On 28 August 2019, we ran a discussion paper to consult on several proposed changes to the Shared Ownership model. In the Government's response to the consultation, published in September 2020, we confirmed the outline of the new model of Shared Ownership and committed to set an expectation for Shared Ownership homes secured through the planning system to be based on the new model.

The [new model for Shared Ownership: technical consultation](#), which ran from 19 November to 17 December 2020, set out further details of the new model of Shared Ownership, including the proposal that we will expect all Shared Ownership homes delivered through obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to be based on the new model. We consulted on potential transitional arrangements.

We are today confirming that this expectation will come into effect from 28 June 2021. The principal changes to the Shared Ownership model are summarised as follows:

i) Minimum share to be purchased

The minimum share for initial Shared Ownership purchases will be lowered to 10% from the current 25%. The maximum share at initial purchase will remain unchanged at 75%.

ii) The purchase of further shares ('staircasing')

New shared owners will be able to staircase in 1% increments for 15 years enabling shared owners to purchase up to 15% through this route. This option will be accompanied by reduced fees. It will still be possible to staircase in larger increments with the minimum additional share purchase reduced from 10% to 5%. Shared owners wishing to staircase in 5% increments or more will have to pay the range of fees as currently, such as a valuation fee, legal and mortgage costs as appropriate.

iii) Shared ownership resales

The new Shared Ownership model will end the provider's resale nomination period at the four week point if they wish to pursue a sale on the open market.

iv) Responsibility for repairs and maintenance

The new shared ownership model introduces a new 10-year period during which the Shared Ownership Leaseholder will receive support from their landlord with the cost of repairs and maintenance in new build homes. Only after 10 years will the shared owner take on full responsibility for any repairs and maintenance costs. This 10-year period is in addition to any repairs or maintenance covered by the new build warranty to cover any works required that the warranty does not cover.

v) Shared Ownership lease term

All new leases must be issued with a minimum lease length term of 990 years. These longer leases will provide long term security for shared owners and save them from paying for multiple lease extensions.

We believe these reforms will make the scheme more consumer friendly, easier to access and fairer, leading to a better experience for a future generation of shared owners.

The Government response to the new model for Shared Ownership: technical consultation, that we published in April 2021, sets out further details on these changes. You can also consult the Homes England Capital Funding Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/capital-funding-guide/1-help-to-buy-shared-ownership>), or the GLA Capital Funding Guide for homes in London, for further guidance on how to implement Shared Ownership.

Later this month, Homes England will publish a model lease which can be used as a basis for leases under the new model of Shared Ownership.

We recognise that many developers will have been preparing planning applications under different assumptions. The new requirement for the new Shared Ownership model will not apply to sites with full or outline planning permissions already in place or determined (or where a right to appeal against non-determination has arisen) before 28 December 2021 (or 28 March 2022 if there has been significant pre-application engagement), although

local authorities should allow developers to introduce the new Shared Ownership model if they wish to do so.

The local and neighbourhood plan transitional arrangements set out above for First Homes also apply to the new requirement for the new Shared Ownership model.

[1] Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 for Neighbourhood Plans, and Regulation 22 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for Local Plans.

[2] Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 for Neighbourhood Plans, and Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for Local Plans.

[3] i.e. the areas referred to in footnote 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework. First Homes exception sites should not be permitted in National Parks (or within the Broads Authority), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, land designated as Green Belt, or areas designated as rural under s. 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

[4] As set out in Annexe 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework