



Daily Report

Thursday, 27 May 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 27 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:36 P.M., 27 May 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries	13
ATTORNEY GENERAL	6	■ Redundancy: Females	13
■ Attorney General: Correspondence	6	■ Satellite Communications	14
■ Criminal Proceedings	6	■ Space Debris: International Cooperation	14
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	CABINET OFFICE	15
■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency	6	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	15
■ Committee on Climate Change: Conflict of Interests	7	■ Elections	16
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	7	■ Prime Minister: Correspondence	16
■ Electric Vehicles: Vans	8	COP26	16
■ Electricity: Storage	8	■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Business	16
■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	9	DEFENCE	17
■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Finance	9	■ Armed Forces Day: Scotland	17
■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: International Cooperation	10	■ Armed Forces: Immigration	17
■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Research	10	■ Army	18
■ Innovation: Animal Experiments	11	■ Defence: Industry	18
■ Innovation: Investment	12	■ Ranger Regiment	18
■ Life Sciences: Animal Experiments	12	■ UK Space Command: Location	18
		DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	19
		■ Music: Internet	19
		■ Parkrun: Coronavirus	20

EDUCATION	20	■ Central African Republic: Violence	33
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	20	■ Colombia: Human Rights	33
■ Apprentices	21	■ Colombia: Police	34
■ Children in Care: Mental Health	21	■ Colombia: Police Brutality	34
■ Children in Care: Restraint Techniques	22	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	34
■ Education: Finance	23	■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Volcanoes	35
■ National Curriculum Tests: Coronavirus	23	■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus	36
■ Pupil Exclusions	23	■ Ethiopia: Human Rights	36
■ Schools: Complaints	24	■ India: Amphotericin B	37
■ Schools: Ventilation	24	■ India: Human Trafficking	37
■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus	25	■ India: Overseas Aid	38
■ Special Educational Needs: Standards	26	■ Indonesia: Homicide	38
■ Veterinary Medicine: Training	27	■ International Development Association	38
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	27	■ Iran: Detainees	39
■ Agricultural Products: Trade Agreements	27	■ Israel: Palestinians	39
■ Animal Welfare and Environmental Protection: Australia	28	■ Jordan: Droughts	40
■ Copernicus Programme: Finance	29	■ Latifa bint Mohammed Al-Maktoum	40
■ Crops: Waste	29	■ Mayra Zulfikar	41
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	30	■ Nepal: Coronavirus	41
■ Abu-Ali Abdul'Rehman	30	■ Pakistan: Christianity	42
■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations	30	■ Pakistan: Coronavirus	43
■ Africa and Asia: Food Supply	31	■ Research: Overseas Aid	43
■ Bangladesh: Rohingya	31	■ Small Charities Challenge Fund	44
		■ Sri Lanka: Community Policing	45
		■ Tigray: Armed Conflict	45
		■ Tigray: Overseas Aid	46
		■ West Africa: Food Supply	47

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	48	HOME OFFICE	59
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	48	■ British Nationality: Ceremonies	59
■ Children: Coronavirus	48	■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	60
■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing	48	■ Delivery Services: Fraud	61
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	49	■ Drugs: Misuse	62
■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	49	■ Immigration	62
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	50	■ Immigration: EU Nationals	62
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Correspondence	51	■ Migrants: Health Services	64
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Human Rights	51	■ Pets: Theft	64
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions	52	■ Social Services: Migrant Workers	65
■ Drugs and Medical Equipment: Northern Ireland	52	■ Travel: Fraud	65
■ Fragile X Syndrome	52	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	66
■ General Practitioners: York	53	■ Buildings: Insulation	66
■ Gyms: Protective Clothing	53	■ Housing Associations	67
■ Hospitals: Greater London	54	■ Housing: Disability	67
■ Ivermectin	54	■ Housing: Fire Prevention	68
■ Motor Neurone Disease	54	■ Housing: Insulation	68
■ NHS: Migrant Workers	55	■ Housing: Standards	68
■ NHS: Protective Clothing	55	■ Landlords: Croydon	69
■ NHS: Standards	55	■ Landlords: Licensing	69
■ Obesity	56	■ Levelling Up Fund	69
■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus	56	■ Local Government: Land	70
■ Pregnancy: Smoking	56	■ Regional Planning and Development: Consultation Papers	70
■ Prostate Cancer: Screening	57	■ Shared Ownership Schemes	71
■ Smoking	57	■ Towns Fund: Yorkshire and the Humber	71
■ Smoking: Health Services	57	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	71
■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus	58	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	71
■ Travel: Coronavirus	58		
■ Travel: Quarantine	59		

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership	72	■ Roll-on Roll-off Ships: Charging Points	83
■ Trade Agreements: Australia	73	■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions	83
■ Trade Agreements: New Zealand	73	■ Spaceflight: Climate Change	85
■ UK Trade with EU: Dispute Resolution	74	■ Taxis: Coronavirus	85
NORTHERN IRELAND	75	■ Trains: Hitachi	85
■ Castlereagh Foundation	75	■ Transport: Carbon Emissions	86
■ Lord Frost	75	■ Transport: Exhaust Emissions	86
■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland	75	■ Travel Restrictions: United Arab Emirates	86
TRANSPORT	76	■ Travel: Coronavirus	87
■ Bus Services: Franchises	76	■ West Midlands Rail Franchise: Rolling Stock	87
■ Driving Tests	77	TREASURY	88
■ Driving Tests: Herefordshire	77	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	88
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	78	■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties	89
■ Heathrow Express Railway Line: Rolling Stock	78	■ Bank Cards	89
■ Hitachi Rail: Finance	78	■ Broadband	91
■ Hydrogen: Infrastructure	79	■ Cash Dispensing: Fees and Charges	92
■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties	79	■ Cider: Taxation	93
■ Network Rail: Industrial Health and Safety	80	■ Corporation Tax	93
■ Network Rail: Land	80	■ Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation	94
■ Network Rail: Reorganisation	81	■ Financial Services	95
■ Network Rail: Safety	82	■ Infrastructure: Finance	95
■ Northwich Station: Safety	82	■ Mortgages: Government Assistance	96
■ Public Transport: Antisocial Behaviour	82	■ Net Zero Review	96
■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment	83	■ Taxation: Rebates	97
■ Railways: Safety	83	■ Tonnage Tax	97
		■ Treasury: Correspondence	97
		WORK AND PENSIONS	97
		■ Children: Maintenance	97

■ Children: Poverty	98	NORTHERN IRELAND	109
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence	103	■ Borders: Northern Ireland	109
■ Disability: Coronavirus	103	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	110
■ Employment: Young People	104	CABINET OFFICE	110
■ Food Poverty	104	■ Empowering British Citizens Overseas to Participate in our Democracy	110
■ Personal Independence Payment	105	DEFENCE	111
■ Social Security Benefits	105	■ Service Complaints Ombudsman's 2020 Annual Report on the Service Complaints System	111
■ Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse	106	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	111
■ Social Security Benefits: Refugees	106	■ Bovine TB	111
■ Universal Credit	106	TRANSPORT	113
■ Universal Credit: Housing	107	■ Draft Legislation: The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 2021	113
MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	108		
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	108		
■ Broadband: Southport	108		

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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Correspondence

Afzal Khan: [\[6451\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what proportion of correspondence sent by hon. Members to his Department received a substantive response within the service standard in each month of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence.

The Cabinet Office is currently compiling data on the timeliness of responses to Hon. and Rt Hon. members from Government Departments and Agencies. This data will be released, and made available to Members, in due course.

■ Criminal Proceedings

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[6191\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what proportion of criminal cases have been dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service where automatism has been used as a defence in each of the last three years.

Lucy Frazer:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not maintain a central record of any defence employed by defendants in criminal proceedings. This information could only be obtained by an examination of CPS case files, which would incur disproportionate cost.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency

Sir Oliver Heald: [\[4515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the newly launched Advanced Research and Invention Agency will support the UK's ambition to become a global scientific superpower and the work of the UK Innovation Corridor in emerging sectors such as Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing and R&D.

Amanda Solloway:

The Advance Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) will cement the UK's position as a science superpower, building on the UK's proud history of scientific excellence by seeking to fund transformational advances in science and technology – discoveries that create new technologies and new industries that drive our future

economy. ARIA will be equipped for this work by having minimal research bureaucracy and prioritising agility: it will move quickly and decisively to ensure the UK retains its competitive edge in R&D. We will appoint an exceptional and visionary leadership team and entrust them to set the research agenda on where and what to fund for ARIA.

■ Committee on Climate Change: Conflict of Interests

Tommy Sheppard:

[6341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of potential conflicts of interest of the members of the Committee on Climate Change.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS carries out thorough due diligence exercises on each new board member of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), prior to approving their appointment, to identify conflicts of interest so that they can be managed appropriately on appointment. As part of due diligence checks, the Government considers anything in the public domain related to potential members' conduct or professional capacity. In some cases, it will not be appropriate to offer a role if the conflict is too great.

All Committee members are required to recognise and disclose activities on an ongoing basis, that might give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The CCC secretariat will review each case to determine whether an individual needs to step down from the Committee to avoid an actual or perceived serious conflict of interest arising or to decide on how to manage whilst remaining in role.

The CCC's conflicts of interest policy, along with a register of interests for Committee members – both of which are annually updated – and the minutes of each Committee meeting are published in the Transparency section of the CCC's website at:

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/about/transparency/>.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

John Lamont:

[3990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish an update on the UK's covid-19 vaccine portfolio, including the number of doses secured with each manufacturer.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK Government has secured early access to 407 million vaccines doses through supply agreements with seven separate vaccine developers. This includes agreements with:

- Pfizer/BioNTech for 100 million doses
- University of Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses

- Novavax for 60 million doses
- Janssen for 30 million doses
- Valneva for 100 million doses

In addition, we announced a non-binding agreement in February 2021 with CureVac for 50 million doses and have a reservation agreement with GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses.

■ Electric Vehicles: Vans

John Spellar:

[3795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with industry on ensuring maximum production of electric vans in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government regularly engages with manufacturers and manufacturing trade associations on opportunities to support the growth and competitiveness of manufacturing sectors in the UK.

The Government consulted last year on bringing forward the end to the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans. We sought views on the phase out date, the definition of what should be phased out, barriers to achieving the proposals, the impact of the ambitions on different sectors of industry and society, and what measures were required by government and others to achieve the earlier phase out date.

As part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's ten point plan published in November 2020, we announced that we would phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. On 10 March, the Government published the full written outcome of the consultation including stakeholder views and the Government's response. These ambitions will be supported by an accompanying package of £2.8 billion, with up to £1 billion to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains, £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure and £582 million for plug in vehicle grants.

Between 2030 and 2035, any new cars and vans sold that emit from the tailpipe must have significant zero emission capability. This will be defined through consultation in the coming months.

■ Electricity: Storage

Graham Stringer:

[6196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the capital cost of seasonal electricity storage capacity.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

There are a range of technologies that could provide longer duration storage, including seasonal electricity storage. BEIS has published technical data and cost projections for electricity storage technologies that could be commercially deployed in the future, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/storage-cost-and-technical-assumptions-for-electricity-storage-technologies>. This report shows that the capital costs of the different technologies vary widely.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions**Helen Hayes:****[6385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on publishing a strategy on net zero.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Leading up to COP26 - in addition to ambitious plans across key sectors of the economy, including an Energy White Paper, Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Heat and Buildings Strategy - we will publish a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy. This will set out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK, and outline our path to hit our 2050 target.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Finance**Helen Hayes:****[6386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the value of an independent technology assessment body to inform investment decisions in technologies to deliver net zero.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We reference a wide range of analysis, both domestic and international to establish what, based on current understanding of technologies, are the high-level priorities on a sensible pathway to Net Zero. In particular, BEIS commissioned independent analysis through the Energy Innovation Needs Assessment (EINAs), which involved input from over 180 stakeholders. That analysis informs the prioritisation of government investment in low-carbon innovation, and is available on our website^[1]. We also benefit from private sector, independent challenge on our cross-Government Energy Innovation Board which will become the Net Zero Innovation Board, chaired by Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-innovation-needs-assessments>

Helen Hayes:**[6388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with international partners on shared investment in new net zero technologies.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK aims to be a global leader in green and net zero technologies, underpinned by our commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is supported by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and other key government plans, including the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy and Energy White Paper.

Our approach brings together ambitious policies and significant new public investment, while seeking to mobilise private investment. This has the potential to deliver up to an estimated £42 billion of private investment, from both domestic and international partners, by 2030 across energy, buildings, transport, innovation and the natural environment.

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy works closely with the Department for International Trade, and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, in supporting these investment opportunities, including through a wide range of meetings and events with international partners.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: International Cooperation**Helen Hayes:**[\[6389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what leadership role the UK Government is taking ahead of the G7 and COP26 to encourage international coordination and collaboration to support emerging technologies with the potential to contribute to achieving net zero.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

International collaboration to support innovation in emerging technologies is a key strand of work through the G7 and towards COP26, and was a theme of the UK Presidency's G7 Climate and Environment Ministerial on 20-21 May. Among other commitments, G7 Ministers welcomed the second phase of Mission Innovation and the third phase of the Clean Energy Ministerial, and launched the G7 Industrial Decarbonisation Agenda to support such work and plug any gaps in the international landscape. We will play a leadership role in Mission Innovation 2.0 which is launching global innovation missions in shipping, power and hydrogen on 2 June.

Under UK leadership, the G7 committed to increasing clean energy innovation investments to a level in line with our Net Zero ambition, and will design appropriate pull mechanisms to accelerate the scale-up of clean energy and net zero technologies across all G7 members and to support the clean energy transition in developing countries.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Research**Helen Hayes:**[\[6387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage investment in the research and development of technologies which have the potential to contribute to achieving net zero.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Net Zero Innovation Portfolio (NZIP) will spend £1bn over the next 4 years to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative low-carbon technologies, systems and business models in power, buildings and industry. It will focus on ten priority areas with the potential to contribute to Net Zero, including: floating offshore wind, nuclear advanced modular reactors, energy storage and flexibility; bioenergy; hydrogen; homes; direct air capture and advanced CCUS; industrial fuel switching; and disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence for energy.

■ Innovation: Animal Experiments**Grahame Morris:**[\[6262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with third sector organisations working to reduce and replace animal testing in developing the new Innovation Strategy.

Grahame Morris:[\[6263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the new Innovation Strategy will incentivise the (a) development and (b) uptake of non-animal research methods.

Amanda Solloway:

The use of animals in research is carefully regulated and remains important in ensuring new medicines and treatments are safe. At the same time, the Government believes that animals should only be used when there is no practicable alternative and it actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs, which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice and regulations on animal research. Across the UK, the NC3Rs has invested £71 million in research through grants to universities, and almost £27 million in contracts through its CRACK IT Challenges innovation scheme to UK and EU-based institutions, mainly focusing on new approaches for the safety assessment of pharmaceuticals and chemicals that reduce the use of animals.

In 'Build Back Better: our plan for growth' published alongside the Budget, the Government announced the publication of a new Innovation Strategy in the summer. We are currently working across government and with our Innovation Expert Group to develop the Strategy. The Strategy will outline how we look to achieve our ambitions in innovation and where we want to focus our efforts over the next decade. It will aim to set out the strategic objective and create the confidence for increased business investment in R&D and innovation.

■ Innovation: Investment

Sir Oliver Heald: [\[4514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to help ensure investment for projects in the UK Innovation Corridor; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

The R&D Places Strategy, to be published later this year, will ensure that research and innovation benefits the economy and society in nations, regions and local areas across the UK contributing to the Government's wider levelling up ambitions. We want to build on existing place-based funding initiatives and work with stakeholders to promote increased private investment across the UK to support promising research and innovation that drives local economic growth.

■ Life Sciences: Animal Experiments

Grahame Morris: [\[6260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with third sector organisations working to reduce and replace animal testing in developing plans to increase funding for the life sciences sector.

Grahame Morris: [\[6261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government's policy to increase funding for the life sciences sector will incentivise the (a) development and (b) uptake of non-animal research methods.

Amanda Solloway:

Overall Government spending on R&D in 2021/22 is £14.9 billion, its highest level in four decades. UK scientists will have access to more public funding than ever before and our investments confirm the Government's commitment to cementing the UK's status as a science superpower. The overall UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) budget for 2021/22 will be £7.9 billion, this represents a significant increase on UKRI's £7.3 billion budget in 2019/20. Our investment across multiple disciplines will be guided by expert researchers.

UKRI work with a variety of stakeholders across the community in the development and uptake of non-animal research methods. Cross-sector collaboration has been at the heart of the success of the work of the National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs) which is funded by UKRI, and their CRACK IT Challenges programme. NC3Rs partners with the third sector to offer collaborative awards with the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK to speed progress in uptake of the 3Rs (replacing, reducing and refining the use of animals in research) in heart disease and cancer research.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**

Colleen Fletcher:

[3897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to support the recovery of the automotive sector from the impact of the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The automotive sector is an important part of the Government's plans for green growth, levelling up across our country and driving emissions to net zero by 2050.

We are delivering a sustained and strategic programme of support for the automotive sector across the country, including Coventry and the West Midlands region to enable the research and development, manufacture and adoption of low and zero-emission technologies. In addition, we have extended the furlough scheme and introduced other measures including £300 billion in loans and guarantees, job support schemes, cuts to VAT and business rates relief to support the industry throughout this pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme had a high uptake of 60% within the sector, which remains available until September.

In late 2020, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced in his 10 Point Plan nearly £500 million of funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund over the next four years to support the development of UK supply chains for the large-scale production of electric vehicles, and for further EV research and development. This is part of a £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. The transition to zero emission vehicles will help the UK meet its climate change obligations. It will improve air quality in our towns and cities, support economic growth, and create new jobs in our industrial heartlands.

■ **Redundancy: Females**

Sarah Owen:

[6484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to strengthen legislation to protect (a) pregnant women and (b) women on maternity leave from redundancy.

Paul Scully:

The Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 currently give women on maternity leave priority over other employees who are also at risk of redundancy. Employers have an obligation to offer women on maternity leave a suitable alternative vacancy where one is available.

The Government has committed to extending this protection from redundancy so that it will start at the point the employee informs the employer that she is pregnant and will continue for six months after she has returned to work.

We have been clear that we will introduce these measures as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Satellite Communications

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[4670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has (a) made contingency plans and (b) undertaken any cross-government exercises to respond to a scenario where there is a significant deterioration in or complete loss of all satellite capability and the operational use of space.

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). 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.

The UK Space Agency is developing a comprehensive response framework that includes processes to follow for a range of incidents, including those that may cause deterioration in or complete loss of all satellite capability. We are continuing to mature our risk-specific plans.

In 2020 we ran our first UKSA-led cross-government discussion exercise which focussed on the risk of conjunctions and explored impacts such as significant loss of satellite capability. We are continuing to develop our exercising package and hope to exercise a wider range of scenarios, including a potential scenario that explores complete loss of all satellite capability, in due course.

■ Space Debris: International Cooperation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions the Government has had with (a) Government and inter-governmental space agencies and (b) Governments of countries with an active space programme on their efforts to support clean space and reduce the amount of human-made orbital debris.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government actively participates in multi-lateral intergovernmental fora, including the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Subcommittees and the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee. Within these forums, the Government continues to work collaboratively with its international partners to define best practice, develop associated guidelines and support initiatives to promote sustainability and limit the generation of orbital debris.

CABINET OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Bill Esterson:****[900590]**

What recent steps he has taken to help ensure value for money in public procurement.

Julia Lopez:

We are transforming the current procurement regime so that simpler procedures can drive increased competition and innovation, ultimately saving taxpayers' money.

We have also recently published Version 3 of the Outsourcing Playbook, rebranded as the Sourcing Playbook, alongside our new Consultancy Playbook. This suite of guidance will help government and industry work better together to deliver quality public services and value for money.

The Government Consulting Hub was also formally launched last week; a new team at the centre of Government providing expertise on management consultancy and ensuring we maximise value.

Daniel Zeichner:**[900593]**

What recent assessment the Government has made of the (a) viability and (b) value for money of the Verify scheme.

Julia Lopez:

Verify continues to work well, supporting 19 services. More than 8 million Verify accounts have been created, with over 2.3 million added since the start of the pandemic as citizens accessed critical online services.

Building on the lessons and experiences of Verify, and as we announced in last year's Spending Review, the Government Digital Service is collaborating with other departments - including the Department for Work and Pensions, HMRC and Home Office - to develop a new login and identity assurance system that will make it easier for more people to use online services safely. While this new system is being developed, users and connected services will continue to rely on GOV.UK Verify. The Government has therefore decided to extend the current Verify service, enabling new users to sign up until April 2022.

Rachel Hopkins:**[900603]**

What steps his Department is taking to improve democratic inclusion.

Julia Lopez:

We work with experts across sectors and provide funding to a number of initiatives to engage citizens in our democracy, make it more accessible and protect everyone's vote.

The introduction of online registration has resulted in record levels of people registering to vote and the Cabinet Office-chaired Accessibility of Elections Working Group works to enhance inclusiveness in our democracy.

Elections

Mr Peter Bone: [\[900591\]](#)

If he will bring forward proposals to abolish the Electoral Commission.

Christian Matheson: [\[900615\]](#)

What plans the Government has to review the scope of electoral law.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to keeping our elections secure and fit for the modern age. We keep electoral law, and the role and powers of the Electoral Commission, under review to ensure the effective operation of, and public confidence in, an electoral system that is secure, fair, modern and transparent.

Prime Minister: Correspondence

Afzal Khan: [\[6449\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of correspondence sent by hon. Members to the Prime Minister's office received a substantive response within the service standard in each month of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Afzal Khan: [\[6450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of correspondence sent by hon. Members to his Department received a substantive response within the service standard in each month of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence.

The Cabinet Office is currently compiling data on the timeliness of responses to Hon. and Rt Hon. members from Government Departments and Agencies. This data will be released, and made available to Members, in due course.

COP26**UN Climate Conference 2021: Business**

Sarah Owen: [\[6488\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how businesses and organisations in Luton North constituency can receive invitations to Investment COP on day two of the summit.

Alok Sharma:

The Investment COP 2021 is an official side event of COP26 which offers a forum for business and investment-driven solutions to climate change.

Though the UK COP26 Presidency does not manage the Investment COP, we look forward to showcasing leading green businesses in UK Government managed spaces at COP26. I continue to encourage all businesses to join the Race to Zero, which requires businesses to set net zero targets by 2050 and have credible action plans to get there. There is an SME Climate Hub to help support SMEs to join the Race to Zero, which businesses and organisations in Luton North can visit [here](#).

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces Day: Scotland

John Lamont:

[\[3987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to mark Armed Forces Day in Scotland.

Leo Docherty:

Armed Forces Day provides the opportunity for the nation as a whole to pay tribute to our British Armed Forces and its supporting community for their hard work, dedication and efforts in assuring the UK's safety and security. Armed Forces Week 2021, including Armed Forces Day itself, is led by Local Authorities and is supported by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), across the whole of the UK. The ability to host physical events this year is again impacted by the pandemic, which is the case across all the Devolved Administrations, but the MOD continues to provide support to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in helping them pay tribute to our collectively valued Armed Forces, Reservists, Veterans and Cadets.

■ Armed Forces: Immigration

Dan Jarvis:

[\[6298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral contribution of 22 April 2021, Official Report, column 1161, when the Government plans to launch the public consultation on visa settlement fees for non-UK service personnel.

Leo Docherty:

The Secretary of State for Defence and the Home Secretary launched the public consultation on settlement fees for non-UK Service personnel yesterday, 26 May 2021. A Written Statement HCWS57 was released to the House. The consultation will run for six weeks and will close on 7 July 2021.

Attachments:

1. Immigration Fees; Public Consultation [HCWS57.docx]

■ Army**John Healey:** [\[6189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Command Paper 411 entitled Defence in a competitive age, published March 2021, which infantry battalion will be deleted as part of his Department's defence plans.

James Heappey:

As the Secretary of State said in his statement to the House on 22 March, the new structures planned for the Army will require fewer units. Therefore, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment will be amalgamated with the 1st Battalion to form a new Boxer-mounted battalion.

■ Defence: Industry**Mark Pritchard:** [\[3821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the timetable for publication of the Land Industrial Strategy.

Jeremy Quin:

Work is ongoing on the Land Industrial Strategy within the Department before further engagement with industry over the summer months to refine the strategy ahead of publication.

■ Ranger Regiment**John Healey:** [\[6190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Command Paper 411 entitled Defence in a competitive age, published March 2021, which four battalions the new Ranger Regiment will be drawn from.

James Heappey:

As referred to in the Command Paper; Defence in a Competitive Age, the new Ranger Regiment will be aligned with the new Divisions of Infantry and initially seeded from the current Specialised Infantry Battalions: 1 SCOTS, 2 PWRR, 2 LANCS and 4 RIFLES.

■ UK Space Command: Location**John Healey:** [\[6187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the (a) national space operations centre and (b) space academy will be located.

Jeremy Quin:

Both the National Space Operations Centre and the Space Academy programmes are at an early stage of development. As both programmes mature, analysis will be undertaken against a range of factors to identify the future location for both entities, but no decisions have yet been made.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Music: Internet****Alison McGovern:****[R] [6276]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that artists receive a greater share of revenue from the streaming of their music.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises that it is important that artists are fairly remunerated for their work. We are aware of the concerns that have been raised recently about artists' revenue from music streaming.

We welcome the DCMS Select Committee inquiry into the economics of music streaming, and have provided evidence to inform the inquiry. We look forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations, which we will respond to.

The Government has funded a 12-month industry-led research project investigating the flow of money from streaming to creators which is due to report this summer. We will continue to encourage the ongoing dialogue between music creators, record labels, and streaming services on this issue.

Alison McGovern:**[R] [6277]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the 20 April 2021 letter to the Prime Minister signed by over 150 artists on ensuring that artists receive a greater share of revenue from the streaming of their music; and if he will meet with artists to discuss that letter.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government has not made a specific assessment of the implications of what was set out in the letter from artists to the Prime Minister, but we are considering the issues relating to music streaming more generally.

We welcome the DCMS Select Committee inquiry into the economics of music streaming, and have provided evidence to inform the inquiry. We look forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations, which we will respond to. We will also be happy to consider any meeting requests from interested stakeholders as appropriate.

The Government has funded a 12-month industry-led research project investigating the flow of money from streaming to creators which is due to report this summer. We will continue to encourage the ongoing dialogue between music creators, record labels, and streaming services on this issue.

Alison McGovern:

[R] [\[6278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure that the UK is a world leader in legislation on streaming and (b) increase the revenues artists receive from their streamed music.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises 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 artists' revenue from music streaming. The Government welcomes the DCMS Select Committee inquiry into the economics of music streaming, and we have provided evidence to inform the inquiry. We look forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations, which we will respond to.

We will continue to encourage the ongoing dialogue between music creators, record labels, and streaming services on this issue. The Government has funded a 12-month industry-led research project investigating the flow of money from streaming to creators which is due to report this summer.

■ **Parkrun: Coronavirus**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[6390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure Parkrun events can go ahead from 5 June 2021 as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

I refer my honourable colleague to the [answer](#) I gave to written parliamentary question 3831.

EDUCATION

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Jim Shannon:

[\[3868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of starting schools at an earlier time.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises that restrictions to the time spent in schools over an extended period have had a substantial impact on the education of children and young people. We are committed to helping pupils make up education lost due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

To address this challenge, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has committed to working with parents, teachers, and schools to develop a long-term plan to help schools support pupils to make up their education and wider enrichment over the course of this Parliament.

The Department is considering all options to address lost education, including time spent in schools, to ensure the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak is addressed as comprehensively as possible for all pupils. In doing so, we are mindful of the need to manage teacher workload and disruption in the short term, whilst also examining the benefits of change.

The Government has appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to oversee the long term plan. Sir Kevan will engage with parents, pupils and teachers to develop this proposal and review how evidence based interventions can be used to address the impact the COVID-19 outbreak has had on education. We will share further details in due course.

■ Apprentices

Alison McGovern: [6279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeships have been started since January 2021 to the latest available date for which data is available.

Alison McGovern: [6280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeships starts there have been by (a) level, (b) sector and (c) region since 1 January 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

In January and February 2021, reported to date, there have been 49,550 apprenticeship starts in England. The attached table contains breakdowns of these 49,550 starts by sector subject area and level.

The last publication of apprenticeship starts by region covers August 2020 to January 2021, reported to date, and can be found in the 'Geographical breakdowns' section of the 'Apprenticeships and traineeships' release: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21>.

The next update of apprenticeship starts by region will be published in July 2021.

Attachments:

1. 6279_6280_table [6279_6280_apprenticeship_starts_January_February_2021.xls]

■ Children in Care: Mental Health

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [6472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of restraint on the (a) mental and (b) physical health of children in care, particularly during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The department is clear that restraint that deliberately inflicts pain cannot be proportionate and should never be used on children in children's homes. The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 state under regulation 20(1) that the only purposes for which restraint can be used in a children's home are to prevent

injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person. In addition, restraint may be used on a child in a secure children's home for the purpose of preventing a child from absconding from the home.

Regulation 35(1) of the Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015 requires each home to prepare and implement a behaviour management policy. This policy should describe the home's approach to promoting positive behaviour and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in the home.

Ofsted regularly inspect all children's homes in England to ensure they are complying with their legal duties, which include detailing incidents of restraint. We have recently contacted all children's homes in England to remind them of their responsibilities regarding restraint. Together with Ofsted, we will act swiftly against anyone breaching these rules.

■ Children in Care: Restraint Techniques

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[6473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to tackle the impact of restraint during transportation on the (a) mental and (b) physical health of children in care.

Vicky Ford:

Responsibility for the welfare of children while transported is noted under Regulation 12 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. The registered person and the local authority overall have a responsibility to ensure that children are kept safe and their welfare is promoted.

Restraint should only be used in very limited circumstances and, under the Children's Home Regulations (2015), all incidents of restraint when a young person is cared for by a children's home must be recorded. When transport is arranged by the children's home, regulation 20(1) states that the only purposes for which restraint can be used in a children's home are to prevent injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person. In addition, restraint may be used on a child in a secure children's home for the purpose of preventing a child from absconding from the home.

If this was arranged by the local authority which had responsibility for the child, then the care of the child would fall to them.

When restraint involves the use of force, it must not be more than is necessary and should be applied in a way that is proportionate (i.e. the minimum amount of force required to avert injury or serious damage to property for the shortest possible time).

Ofsted regularly inspect all children's homes in England to ensure they are complying with their legal duties, which include detailing incidents of restraint. Should anyone breach these rules the department would expect Ofsted to take swift action.

■ Education: Finance

Jason McCartney:

[\[6258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 175810 on Education: Finance, if he will confirm the cost of using a national funding rate of £4,760 to calculate 16-19 funding allocations for 2020-21.

Gillian Keegan:

Modelling the cost of increasing the base rate to £4,760 for 16-19 funding allocations for 2020-21 would require consideration of various factors, such as, the forecast of expected student numbers across age ranges, the characteristics of those students, the courses undertaken, the effect of lagged funding and the impact of the policy change required. The department does not routinely make estimates of this kind.

■ National Curriculum Tests: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[\[6436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 1192, what plans he has to make changes to SATS tests in the 2020-21 academic year in terms of (a) content, and (b) the collation of results to facilitate their use as a diagnostic assessment of lost learning rather than as a test of progress; and whether he plans for those results to be used to rank schools' performance.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has no plans to make changes to the content of primary assessments planned to take place in the 2021/22 academic year. The purpose of the National Curriculum assessments is to determine pupil attainment in relation to the National Curriculum. They enable parents to understand the performance of their child with respect to national expectations.

Primary assessments are different from qualifications, where it is essential that we try to account for lost education given the importance of the outcomes for the next stages of education and employment. The assessments will help identify the impact on pupil attainment of lost time in education and, although not designed as fully diagnostic assessments, will support schools in planning the appropriate next steps for teaching. As a result, it would not be appropriate to change the content of primary assessments as this would provide only a partial picture of pupil attainment.

The Department is considering possible approaches to school accountability data in the 2021/22 academic year and plan to confirm details in due course.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Chi Onwurah:

[\[6288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how an excluded pupil's non-attendance is recorded; and whether that non-attendance contributes to a school's attendance figures.

Nick Gibb:

Where a pupil is suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made for a pupil at the time the attendance register is taken, the pupil will be recorded as absent (using attendance code E). This will be reflected in the school's attendance figures.

Alternative provision must be arranged from the sixth day of any suspension or permanent exclusion.

Schools: Complaints**Justin Madders:**[\[3928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many complaints relating to schools have been lodged from July 2020 to April 2021.

Nick Gibb:

Between 1 July 2020 and 30 April 2021, the Department received approximately 3,039 written complaints about schools. This total is made up of 1,714 complaints related to local authority maintained schools, 1,093 related to academies and free schools, and 232 related to independent schools.

The Department's National Helpline received 2,882 calls relating to complaints about schools between 25 August 2020, when the Department introduced new call handling software, and 30 April 2021. We no longer hold the data that predates 25 August 2020. There were 2,215 related to local authority maintained schools, 566 about academy and free schools, and 101 related to independent schools.

Schools: Ventilation**Luke Pollard:**[\[4696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to improve ventilation in schools.

Nick Gibb:

In 2018, the Department published Building Bulletin 101, which is guidance for school design on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality. This guidance sets out the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines and Air Quality Standards Regulation 2010 for indoor air quality.

The Department has worked closely with other Government departments, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as stakeholders across the sector, to ensure that our policy is based on the latest scientific and medical advice, to continue to develop comprehensive guidance based on the PHE-endorsed 'system of controls' and to understand the impact of these measures on staff, pupils and parents.

The PHE-endorsed 'system of controls' have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and continue to be the right measures to take. Current evidence suggests that the way to control COVID-19 is the same, even with the new variants. These

measures create a safer environment for children, young people, and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. PHE keeps all these controls under review, based on the latest evidence. Schools therefore need to continue to implement these controls to the fullest extent. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

The Department's guidance signposts further advice from the Health and Safety Executive on air conditioning and ventilation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[3835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic restrictions on families with children and young people who have SEND; what information he holds on the number and proportion of (a) children and young people with (i) SEND (ii) EHCPs who were not able to: (A) attend school, (B) access the internet and online learning opportunities, (C) access therapies and health treatments, D) access social care services and (b) families who have not able to access respite provision and support since the start of the pandemic; what plans he has to set out and implement a covid-19 recovery plan for disabled children and their families; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families is a priority for this government, and their educational, physical and mental wellbeing remains central to our cross-government response to the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why we kept schools open for vulnerable children, including those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), during periods of national lockdown and why we continued to allow families to access respite services and other social care support throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. We have encouraged local authorities to consider flexible and pragmatic options to deliver social care support including using direct payments and carrying out activities virtually.

The department collects daily data on the attendance of pupils with EHCPs and publishes this on a weekly basis here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The latest data shows that 87% of pupils with EHCPs in state-funded schools were in attendance on 20 May.

We are clear that education settings should continue to work collaboratively with families so that pupils and students with SEND can successfully access remote education when necessary. The department has made £4.84 million available for Oak

National Academy, including specialist content for pupils with SEND. Since the start of the spring term 2021, over 94 million Oak National Academy lessons have been viewed, including over 21,000 specialist lessons.

We know how important access to therapy services are for disabled children which is why we make it clear in our guidance that specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils and students with SEND should provide interventions as usual. The guidance can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

We do not collect data at a national level on the number or proportion of children and young people with SEND or EHCPs who can access the internet and online learning, therapies and health treatments or social care services.

The department will continue to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and is committed to helping all pupils, including those with SEND, make up for lost learning. We have already committed £1.7 billion to education recovery and Sir Kevan Collins in his role as the Education Recovery Commissioner is further considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils in greatest need. This includes prioritising the needs of those with SEND and EHCPs within our response.

■ Special Educational Needs: Standards

Emma Hardy: [6434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which local authorities have been required to produce an Accelerated Progress Plan as a result of a revisit by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspectors under the local area SEND inspection programme; and whether production of an Accelerated Progress Plan is a requirement for every local authority where those inspectors have found that insufficient progress has been made in addressing significant weaknesses previously identified.

Emma Hardy: [6435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether local area SEND accelerated progress plans are publicly available documents; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

Under the local area special educational and disability (SEND) inspection framework, all local authorities in England are required by the Department for Education to produce an action plan (often referred to as an Accelerated Progress Plan or APP) if inspectors have found that insufficient progress has been made against their Written Statement of Action.

The local authorities that have been required to produce an APP are the following: Bury, Dorset, Hartlepool, Kingston upon Hull, Lancashire, Medway, Oldham, Oxfordshire, Sefton, South Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Surrey, and Windsor and Maidenhead.

Local authorities are required by the department to publish their action plans locally (for example, on the local authority website), so that parents, carers, children and young people can understand the actions that they are taking to address concerns raised during SEND inspections. A formal progress review meeting will take place within at least 6 months of the revisit report being published. The key partners involved, including the Parent Carer Forum, will be invited to attend. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will not revisit unless directed by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education.

■ **Veterinary Medicine: Training**

John Spellar:

[3794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many vets graduated in the 2019-20 academic year; and how many veterinary students commenced courses in the 2020-21 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes data on students enrolled in higher education (HE) in the UK. Latest statistics refer to the 2019/20 academic year.

Data on students obtaining qualifications at UK HE providers are available by subject of study and level of qualification obtained in the 2019/20 academic year in Table 50 of HESA's 'Higher Education Student Data' pages, available here:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-50>.

In the 2019/20 academic year, there were 2,290 full-person-equivalent^[1] undergraduate and postgraduate qualifiers in veterinary sciences at UK HE providers.

Data covering students entering courses in the 2020/21 academic year will be published by HESA in January 2022. The latest available statistics on students entering courses by subject studied can be found in Table 52:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-52>.

In the 2019/20 academic year, there were 2,990 full-person-equivalent¹ undergraduate and postgraduate entrants to veterinary sciences at UK HE providers.

[1] Counts are on the basis of full-person-equivalents. Where a student is studying more than one subject, they are apportioned between the subjects that make up their course. Refers to "05 Veterinary sciences" under the Common Aggregation Hierarchy of subjects: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos/cah-about>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agricultural Products: Trade Agreements**

Luke Pollard:

[6466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice his Department has provided to the Department for International Trade on the methodology

for the assessment of whether the measures in trade agreements negotiated before the requirements of section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 come into force are consistent with the maintenance of UK levels of statutory protection for (a) human, animal or plant life or health, (b) animal welfare and (c) the environment.

Luke Pollard:

[\[6467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice his Department has provided to the Department for International Trade on the methodology for the assessment of whether the measures in trade agreements negotiated before the requirements of section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 come into force are consistent with minimising antibiotic use in animals.

Victoria Prentis:

In all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high animal welfare, environmental protection and food standards.

Prior to negotiations commencing, the Government will publish a scoping assessment of the broad impacts of new FTAs. Following the conclusion of all negotiations, a full impact assessment will be published prior to implementation. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will feed into this where appropriate.

This commitment is in addition to the usual parliamentary scrutiny process under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (CRaG) which will ensure the House has sufficient time to scrutinise the detail of any deal.

■ **Animal Welfare and Environmental Protection: Australia**

Luke Pollard:

[\[6465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on his Department's assessment of the (a) animal welfare and (b) environmental standards that apply in Australia.

Victoria Prentis:

All levels of my department, including the Secretary of State and I, have regular discussions with our colleagues at DIT on the UK's approach to different trade negotiations, including the ongoing negotiations with Australia. Discussions cover a range of issues including animal welfare and environmental considerations.

Our discussions are grounded in our commitment that the Government will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards in our trade deals, including with Australia. We have laid our negotiating objectives setting this out before the House and we will uphold these. Moreover, we have retained in law our existing standards of protection across these areas and our deal with Australia will not alter these.

■ Copernicus Programme: Finance

John Healey:

[\[6188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the UK's financial commitment is to the EU's Copernicus Earth programme in the (a) 2021-22 financial year and (b) each financial year to 2024-25.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government has welcomed the agreement in principle for the UK to continue to participate in the Copernicus component of the EU Space Programme as a third country for 2021-2027.

Formal participation will only begin once the Protocol I to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement is adopted.

Once this has taken place the UK's financial commitment will be reported in Defra's accounts.

■ Crops: Waste

Bill Wiggin:

[\[6204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he Department has made of the quantity of cider apple crops that were wasted in the 2020 harvest due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra produces annual estimates of horticultural crop production, including on cider apples and perry pears. These estimates include tonnage, value, and imports/exports, and allow the Government to monitor productivity and competitiveness within the industry, including supply and self-sufficiency. The latest available data is for 2019. These are available on gov.uk.

There are a number of reasons why crops may be unharvested, for example weather, pest and disease or a drop in demand. No estimates are made for the tonnage of cider apple crops left unharvested. As a result, no data is available to answer this question.

We have regular contact with stakeholders to understand live issues as they develop. For example, during the first set of national Coronavirus restrictions, we worked closely with the cider industry and the National Farmers' Union to assess the impact of the pandemic on the sector.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Abu-Ali Abdul'Rehman****Hilary Benn:****[6194]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make urgent representations to the Government of Pakistan to halt the planned execution of Mr Abdul Rehman scheduled for 25 May 2021.

Nigel Adams:

We understand that a stay of execution has been issued in Mr Rehman's case. We will continue to monitor the case closely.

It is our longstanding policy to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. The UK has raised at the highest level with the Government of Pakistan its concerns about specific cases and continues to urge Pakistan to ensure due process and adherence to international obligations.

■ **Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[3999]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with foreign counterparts on the (a) security and (b) stability implications of the US decision to withdraw its troops for Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

The withdrawal of its armed forces from Afghanistan was a decision made collectively by NATO Allies and partners. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) have led in defending the security of Afghanistan since the end of 2014. The UK, with the US and NATO Allies, will continue to provide assistance to the ANDSF as they increase their capabilities. The UK has worked with the Afghan authorities to strengthen state institutions for governance, rule of law and human rights. The Prime Minister discussed Afghanistan with US Secretary of State Blinken on 4 May. The Foreign Secretary discussed Afghanistan with NATO Allies on 14 April, as well as with Secretary Blinken on 3 May.

The UK remains committed to supporting Afghanistan on its path to a more peaceful and positive future. Only a negotiated and inclusive settlement will bring sustainable peace. The UK has offered strong diplomatic and military engagement to support efforts to build a sustainable peace process. We continue to make clear to all sides that any political settlement must protect the progress made in the country, including protection of rights for women and minority groups.

■ Africa and Asia: Food Supply

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[4073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure food security during the covid-19 pandemic in (a) Africa and (b) Asia.

James Duddridge:

Building on the Foreign Secretary's Call to Action and through our G7 Presidency, the UK secured the G7's first ever Compact to tackle the drivers of famine - protecting 34 million people at risk and addressing upward trend in humanitarian needs. G7-prioritised funding will alleviate extreme hunger in some of the worst conflict-hit places, including North-East Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen and Syria. It will ensure people have access to food, water and sanitation, and that their children have access to lifesaving malnutrition treatment and vaccinations. I have seen the importance of this work including during my visits to South Sudan (with UK Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs Nick Dyer) and Nigeria.

We have adapted development programmes in agriculture, food security and nutrition, to reduce the scale of the emergency; build resilience; and prepare recovery. Our Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness (CASA) programme helped food supply chains in Uganda, Malawi and Nepal remain functional, fast-tracked digital innovation, improved processing, storage, and transportation, and protected food security and nutrition. The UK-co-chaired multilateral Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) adapted its portfolio and committed its full balance to mitigating COVID-19 impacts, in line with strategic parameters through UK leadership. GAFSP also launched a call for a greener recovery. We are working with partners to strengthen global food security monitoring and analysis and to better understand what COVID-19 has done to food security.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya

Sir Mike Penning:

[3815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his officials have visited Rohingya refugees on the Bhasan Char silt island in the Bay of Bengal; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh participated in a visit to Bhasan Char on 3 April, along with heads of a number of diplomatic missions based in Dhaka. They were briefed by officials from the Government of Bangladesh and were given a tour of the island which included seeing the residential accommodation and multi-purpose centres built for the Rohingya refugees. We remain clear that the refugees need to relocate voluntarily, be safe on Bhasan Char, and have access to education and healthcare, including Covid-19 vaccinations as these become available. We welcome the UN's first appraisal visit to evaluate the safety and sustainability of life

on Bhasan Char but recognise that further conversations are needed between the Government of Bangladesh and the UN to discuss protection and technical issues in detail. The UK government is not funding operations on Bhasan Char.

Sir Mike Penning:

[3817]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the fire at the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is very concerned by the impact on Rohingya refugees of the large fire that took place on 22 March in the Kutapalong refugee camp. A UN-led joint needs assessment found that 48,300 people were directly affected, with over 10,000 households left without shelter. At least 11 refugees are thought to have died, with over 500 injured. The fire damaged distribution, nutrition and learning centres, water and sanitation infrastructure, and medical facilities. UK Aid provided food, water, sanitation, shelter, and support for medical and camp management teams who coordinated the response. UK Aid brought in an additional 10,000 tarpaulins for the rehabilitation of shelters and is supporting the rebuilding of healthcare facilities.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[6405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department conducted an impact assessment on the reduction in UK aid to the Rohingya in Bangladesh in 2021.

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. Although bilateral funding is reduced, every effort is being made to maintain these critical services. This is being coordinated closely with other donors, along with the consolidation of service provision 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, the Central Emergency Response Fund, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. UK funds also support the Rohingya through the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

■ Central African Republic: Violence

Jim Shannon:

[\[4603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of recent acts of violence against civilians in the Central African Republic.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is concerned about the volatile security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) following elections in December 2020. Since then, incursions by armed groups and clashes with state forces has led to significant population displacement and civilian casualties. Human rights violations by state forces, and abuses by armed groups, have risen significantly.

The UK has repeatedly called on all parties in CAR to cease violence, including through UN Security Council statements. At the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council on 22 March, the UK's International Human Rights Ambassador, Rita French, urged all sides to cease all attacks on civilians, humanitarian actors and peacekeeping personnel immediately, to respect human rights and to engage in political dialogue in good faith. We stand ready to agree appropriate measures to enforce this, including UN sanctions in line with Article 35 of the Peace Agreement. The UK also contributes approximately £40 million annually to the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSCA) which continues to provide security across the country. In March, the UK joined other Security Council members in approving a plan to reinforce MINUSCA with increased numbers of troops and police.

■ Colombia: Human Rights

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[6392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Colombia; and what relevant recent discussions he has had with his Colombian counterpart on that matter.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains concerned about reports of human rights violations in Colombia, and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since the recent protests began. We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and that the right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed.

Most recently, I spoke with then acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to express my concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of excessive use of force. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints thoroughly investigated.

■ Colombia: Police

Tony Lloyd: [\[4529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government's support for the transformation of the Colombian National Police includes a disestablishment from the Colombian Ministry of Defence as called for by human rights organisations in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The internal structures of the Colombian Government and state are a matter for that Government.

■ Colombia: Police Brutality

Tony Lloyd: [\[4528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make a statement in response to the reported human rights abuses committed by the national police during protests in Colombia in April and May 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The UK supports the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and the right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed. I reiterated this message via social media on 6 May, which followed up on similar public messaging from our Embassy in Bogotá on 4, 5, and 7 May.

Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since protests began. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to express my concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[6407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to increase the global production of covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to working with industry and international organisations to facilitate expanded manufacturing of affordable COVID-19 vaccines at scale. UK funding of £250 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), supported vaccine development partnerships and procurement for global vaccines access respectively. We welcome that COVAX has convened a Supply Chains and Manufacturing Taskforce to identify immediate and longer-term actions for increasing the volume and security of global vaccine supply.

Building vaccine manufacturing capacity is a long term, capital intensive, and high-risk endeavour. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is

working with the African Union and international partners, such as CEPI, Gavi, and the World Health Organisation (WHO), as well as development finance institutions and the private sector to catalyse investments for vaccine manufacturing in Africa. The UK contributed to the development of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine. AZ produces the vaccine at scale through global manufacturing partnerships, and provides it at a non-profit price to low and middle-income countries.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Volcanoes

Layla Moran:

[6441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide emergency aid funding in response to the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:

The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors in DRC. In response to the recent eruption of Mount Nyiragongo, UK-funded partners are already on the ground providing emergency support. The International Federation of the Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund is providing first aid, water, sanitation, hygiene, shelter and psychological support and working to restore family units. The International Committee of the Red Cross, one of our major humanitarian partners, is providing support for unaccompanied children and the UN Humanitarian Air Service is providing vital reconnaissance flights in the area. We are working closely with the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and our humanitarian partners to monitor the situation, assess the impact, and deliver further assistance if required.

Layla Moran:

[6442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether any UK nationals have been affected by the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:

The British Embassy in Kinshasa and the UK Office in Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo are in regular contact with the British community in Goma following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. FCDO Travel Advice has been updated and includes a contact number for any British Nationals that are concerned about their safety. British Nationals in Goma are advised to follow the guidance of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and to remain vigilant.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[6513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department has offered to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo.

James Duddridge:

We are working closely with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and our humanitarian partners to monitor the situation, assess the impact and coordinate the response. UK-funded partners are already on the ground providing emergency support. The International Federation of the Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund is providing first aid, water, sanitation, hygiene, shelter and psychological support and working to restore family units. ICRC, one of our major humanitarian partners, is providing support for unaccompanied children and the UN Humanitarian Air Service is providing vital reconnaissance flights in the area.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus**Navendu Mishra:**[\[4726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of reducing Official Development Assistance research funding on covid-19 research partnerships between the UK and low and middle income countries.

James Duddridge:

We have prioritised our aid to be more strategic, and remain a force for good across the world. The portfolio agreed by the Foreign Secretary will focus our investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference, and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money. The UK is one of the largest donors to the international COVID-19 response. UK expertise in science, research, and development has led to one of the first effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines. We have made £1.3billion of new public commitments to counter the health, humanitarian, and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, and to support the global effort to equitably distribute vaccines.

Scientific and technological innovation runs through every one of the seven priority themes for our ODA spend. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) research partnerships for COVID-19, including the development of vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics will be maintained. We will continue to use our aid budget to support research and development partnerships with developing countries.

■ Ethiopia: Human Rights**Sarah Champion:**[\[4609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the British Embassy in Ethiopia is resourced to quickly respond to concerns relating to human rights abuses in that country.

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.

Staffing at the British Embassy Addis Ababa was supplemented by three extra humanitarian staff in late 2020, but is now returning to pre-Pandemic levels. Tigray is one of the Embassy's top priorities and staff from across the Mission, from Political to Humanitarian, are working together to respond to the fast moving situation. Staff at the British Embassy in Addis Ababa are making frequent visits to the Tigray region and have heard first hand testimony from survivors. Further to this, preparations are underway to deploy expertise from the UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to the region, building on a specific protection mission to Shire, in the Tigray region, conducted by British Embassy staff.

■ **India: Amphotericin B**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[6426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on whether the UK has supplies of amphotericin B which it can provide to India.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary has not discussed supplies of amphotericin B with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The UK Government does not hold stockpiles of amphotericin B, therefore cannot directly assist. In line with the extensive scientific and medical collaboration already underway, on 25 May India's Chief Scientist held a virtual meeting with Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance. In this meeting, they discussed research insights as well as identifying and mitigating risks in relation to black fungus.

■ **India: Human Trafficking**

Jim Shannon:

[3870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish details on the new deal between Britain and India on tackling people smuggling.

Nigel Adams:

The Migration & Mobility Partnership signed between the UK and India this month is an ambitious Memorandum of Understanding designed to improve our mechanisms for tackling illegal migration, enhance our cooperation on tackling organised immigration crime, and improve mobility between our two countries.

The full text of the Memorandum of Understanding is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-and-mobility-partnership/mou-on-migration-and-mobility-partnership-between-india-and-the-united-kingdom.

■ India: Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:****[6404]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department will classify the medical support provided to India to help fight covid-19 as overseas development assistance.

Nigel Adams:

The UK was the first country to deliver life-saving medical support to India to help fight COVID-19. We sent three oxygen generating units, 1,200 ventilators and 495 oxygen concentrators, in response to the Indian Government's most urgent priorities.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is the official international standard used to measure aid flows to developing countries and is produced according to agreed definitions and methodologies overseen by the OECD DAC. 2021 UK ODA spend will be published as usual in FCDO's Statistics on International Development in 2022.

■ Indonesia: Homicide**Carla Lockhart:****[4746]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to engage with the Indonesian Government in response to the reported killing of four Christian men in the village of Kalimago in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, who were beheaded by Islamic extremists on the morning of 11 May 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The UK admires Indonesia's multi-faith, multi-ethnic democracy and supports the government's efforts to combat violent extremism, including the terrorist group that carried out these attacks in central Sulawesi. My thoughts are with the families of the victims. The Foreign Secretary signed a Memorandum of Understanding during his visit to Jakarta on 7 April to further strengthen our cooperation in countering regional and international terrorist threats.

Promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) is a core aspect of the British Embassy Jakarta's work. In February our Ambassador met the Minister of Religious Affairs to discuss our collaboration in support of Indonesia's strong tradition of religious diversity and tolerance.

■ International Development Association**Liam Byrne:****[3805]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to encourage his international counterparts to contribute to the twentieth replenishment of the International Development Association.

James Duddridge:

At a meeting of the World Bank Group's Development Committee in April, I welcomed the early replenishment of the International Development Association. The UK has consistently advocated for other donors to give their support to an early twentieth

replenishment of the International Development Association. We will continue to engage with partners in support of the replenishment ahead of the pledging session in December.

■ Iran: Detainees

Lisa Nandy:

[\[6275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the commitments to address arbitrary detention made in the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting Communiqué of 5 May 2021, what steps he plans to take with his G7 counterparts to secure the release of British dual-nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran, including (a) Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, (b) Anoosheh Ashoori and (c) Mehran Raoof.

James Cleverly:

We are in contact with a range of international partners including the G7 who share our deep concerns about the ongoing detention of arbitrarily detained foreign nationals, including dual British nationals, in Iran. We continue to raise the named individuals' cases at the most senior levels, and discuss them at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. Our Ambassador in Tehran regularly raises our dual national cases with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, most recently on 24 May.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Stephen Morgan:

[\[6437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the ceasefire negotiated between Israel and Palestine is durable.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[6438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to use the ceasefire negotiated between Israel and Palestine as a basis for progress on wider peace talks.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear, leaders in the region must now work to find a durable solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict that prevents terrorism, ends the cycle of violence, and delivers a sustainable and just peace based on a two state solution. We continue to fully support Egyptian and UN mediation efforts.

The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to deliver Palestinian self-determination and ensure Israel's status as a Jewish, democratic state.

Ministers and Ambassadors throughout the Middle East are also engaging regional partners, including Egypt, Jordan and Turkey, while we remain in close contact with the US administration and European allies.

Layla Moran:

[6444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 3134 on Arms Trade: Israel, if his Department will conduct an investigation to determine whether any arms exported under a UK export licence were used in reported attacks on Palestinian civilians in (a) Gaza and (b) the West Bank during the violence of April and May 2021.

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 export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework. 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.

■ **Jordan: Droughts**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[6516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in response to the drought being experienced in that country.

James Cleverly:

Jordan is a close and valued partner and we are providing significant support to Jordan's economic resilience and to meet the needs of its most vulnerable people. Since the start of the Syria crisis in 2011, the UK has spent over £500m to support Jordanian stability, including humanitarian aid and investment in education and job opportunities, for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.

We recognise the pressure of water scarcity in Jordan. The Prime Minister discussed the effects of climate change and efforts to protect biodiversity in the Middle East in his call with His Majesty King Abdullah on 13 April. Jordan is also a member of the Adaptation Action Coalition which works to build resilience to the effects of climate change.

■ **Latifa bint Mohammed Al-Maktoum**

Layla Moran:

[6443]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum has been released from house arrest in the United Arab Emirates.

James Cleverly:

We are aware that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has asked the UAE Mission in Geneva for further information and proof of life. We will be monitoring the outcome of this closely.

■ Mayra Zulfiqar**Jim Shannon:****[3871]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department has provided to the family of Mayra Zulfiqar who was murdered in Pakistan on 3 April 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The tragic circumstances of Ms Zulfiqar's death on 3 May 2021 were brought to the attention of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) by her family. Ms Zulfiqar was a Belgian national with residency in the UK prior to travelling to Pakistan. The FCDO is unable to offer consular assistance to nationals of another country, even if they have been legally living in the UK. The support that we can provide is set out in Support for British nationals abroad: A guide, available on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>). Consular staff shared information on bereavement abroad with Ms Zulfiqar's family and signposted them to the Belgian authorities for consular assistance. There is a Belgian Embassy in Islamabad that provides consular services. Ms Zulfiqar's family were also provided with advice on how to contact Victim Support, an organisation that can provide additional support to bereaved families who are resident in England and Wales.

■ Nepal: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:****[4604]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to provide assistance to Nepal during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is one of the leading donors to Covax, committing £548 million 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 27 May the UK sent a further package of support to Nepal to help the country's fight against coronavirus. This includes 260 ventilators and personal protective equipment. Two health experts will travel to Nepal on the flight and will work with the British Embassy to assess how the UK will support the government of Nepal in their response to the pandemic. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth has also spoken with the Nepalese Foreign Minister Gyawali, the Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, and identified a number of areas for possible further support.

Christine Jardine:

[6413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to relieve the covid-19 humanitarian situation in Nepal.

Nigel Adams:

On Thursday 27th May, the FCDO sent 260 ventilators and 2,000 visors (worth £550,000) in response to a request for medical supplies from the Government of Nepal. Moreover, since the beginning of the pandemic, British Embassy Kathmandu has helped Nepal respond to COVID-19 by reprioritising over £40 million of its aid budget. This support has included the construction of an oxygen plant in a Kathmandu hospital; technical advice to local government on managing the impact of COVID-19; water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to support around 300,000 people; safe spaces for women in isolation centres; cash and voucher assistance for the most vulnerable; and nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women. On 19 May Lord Ahmad discussed with Foreign Minister Gyawali how the UK could continue to support Nepal's fight against the second wave of COVID-19. The UK is also a leading donor to COVAX, having committed £548 million to the scheme. COVAX has allocated 2,000,000 vaccine doses to Nepal, of which 348,000 have already been delivered.

Navendu Mishra:

[6502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government has provided to Nepal to (a) help halt the spread of covid-19 and (b) roll out vaccines.

Nigel Adams:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the British Embassy in Kathmandu has helped Nepal respond to COVID-19 by reprioritising over £40 million of its aid budget. This support has included the construction of an oxygen plant in a Kathmandu hospital; technical advice to local government on managing the impact of COVID-19; water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to support around 300,000 people; safe spaces for women in isolation centres; cash and voucher assistance for the most vulnerable; and nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women. On 19 May, Lord Ahmad discussed with Foreign Minister Gyawali how the UK could continue to support Nepal's fight against the second wave of COVID-19. The UK is also a leading donor to COVAX, having committed £548 million to the scheme. COVAX has allocated 2,000,000 vaccine doses to Nepal, of which 348,000 have already been delivered.

■ Pakistan: Christianity

Dr Rupa Huq:

[6393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Pakistani counterpart on the reported mistreatment of Christian Pakistanis in Pakistan.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about reports of discrimination against the Christian community and other religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise these concerns at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan. On 23 March, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, discussed Freedom of Religion or Belief with Pakistan's Special Representative for Religious Harmony, Tahir Ashrafi. On 20 February, Lord Ahmad raised our concerns about the protection of minority religious communities with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari. We will continue to urge the government of Pakistan to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, regardless of their religion or belief.

■ Pakistan: Coronavirus**Sarah Champion:**[\[4611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic in Pakistan; and what (a) practical assistance and (b) expertise support the Government plans to provide to that country to support its response to the pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan throughout the pandemic. We have already provided £17 million of UK aid to help Pakistan fight COVID-19. This includes funding the World Health Organization (WHO) to build laboratory testing capacity through training and provision of equipment across Pakistan.

The UK is also supporting the equitable rollout of vaccines in Pakistan through COVAX, an international alliance co-led by Gavi, CEPI and WHO. The UK has contributed £548m to COVAX's Advance Market Commitment, which is helping to provide supply of 1 billion doses for up to 92 developing countries, including Pakistan, in 2021. The Prime Minister has confirmed that the UK will share the majority of any future COVID-19 vaccines from our supply that are surplus to domestic needs with COVAX.

■ Research: Overseas Aid**Navendu Mishra:**[\[4725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and (b) Global Challenges Research Fund projects that will be terminated as a result of budget reductions from UK Research and Innovation.

James Duddridge:

Following a thorough review, the FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate caused by COVID-19. The portfolio agreed by the Foreign Secretary will focus our investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money. While we recognise

some programmes will close, this will be done in a measured and responsible way, working closely with our delivery partners. FCDO is now working through what this means for individual research programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified.

As a result of the reduction in BEIS' ODA budget, all BEIS delivery partners have been asked to review planned ODA spend for 2021/22. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) have consulted grant-holders across more than 800 live projects across Global Challenges Research Fund grants and Hubs on how to handle the reduced allocations, and hope to communicate the results of this process by the end of May.

Navendu Mishra:

[4727]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to help ensure that project at (a) institutions and (b) academics that rely on Official Development Assistance funded research will continue after reductions to the UK's ODA budget.

Nigel Adams:

We have prioritised our aid to be more strategic and remain a force for good across the world. Following a thorough review, the FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate caused by COVID. FCDO will now work through what this means for individual research programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified

While we recognise some programmes will close, this will be done in a measured and responsible way, working closely with our partner research institutions and academics. We will return to spending 0.7 per cent as soon as the financial climate allows. All FCDO teams will now plan their work based on the budget that has been allocated to them. We will discuss specifics with each individual project. Budgets for 2022/23 and beyond will be determined through the spending review process later this year.

■ Small Charities Challenge Fund

Preet Kaur Gill:

[6406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of impact of cancelling rounds six, seven and eight of the Small Charities Challenge Fund on employment (a) in the UK and (b) overseas.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is facing the worst economic contraction in over 300 years, and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion. As announced last year, given the impact of this global pandemic on the economy and, as a result, the public finances, we will move to a target of spending 0.5% of GNI as ODA in 2021. This was a difficult – but temporary – decision.

FCDO will now working through what this means for individual programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified.

■ Sri Lanka: Community Policing

Kenny MacAskill:

[4044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2021 to Question 460 on Sri Lanka: Community Policing, what the criteria will be for resuming the UK's police training in Sri Lanka as covid-19 restrictions are eased; and whether the continued presence of Dilum Amunugama as Sri Lanka's Minister of Community Police Services will be a factor in those criteria.

Nigel Adams:

The UK's current police training in Sri Lanka has focused on prevention and investigation of Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and promoting gender equality and women's representation in the Sri Lankan police service. Due to Covid-19, many of the training activities have been paused, with the exception of work at the local level to respond to, and support, victims of sexual and gender-based violence and domestic violence.

All police training is subject to robust Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessments that analyse the potential human rights, international humanitarian law, political and reputational risks of any proposed assistance, to ensure that it supports our values and is consistent with our domestic and international human rights obligations. Any future training will be subject to OSJA review.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[6266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to report any evidence of sexual violence in Tigray to relevant international justice mechanisms.

James Duddridge:

The UK is appalled by reports of atrocities including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by different armed groups in Tigray. This is unacceptable. The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a communique on 5 May which condemned rape and sexual exploitation, and other forms of gender-based violence and called for all parties to cease hostilities immediately, ensure respect for human rights and international law and hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, accountable. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account.

We are working to promote justice for survivors of sexual violence, to provide support to survivors and children born of conflict related sexual violence and to prevent sexual violence from occurring. British Embassy staff conducted a specific protection

mission in Shire in Tigray on 4-7 April. It included the assessment of the current Gender-Based Violence response, specific emergency services provided in camps and the gaps that need to be filled. They interviewed staff and volunteers supporting survivors of sexual violence to identify essential activities required to address the immediate needs of the survivors as well as the accountability needs to ensure well-informed and effective assistance. We are currently identifying personnel from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts who can deploy to the region.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[6268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress has been made of the deployment of the UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative team of experts to Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK is appalled by reports of atrocities including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by different armed groups in Tigray. This is unacceptable. The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a communique on 5 May which condemned rape and sexual exploitation, and other forms of gender-based violence and called for all parties to cease hostilities immediately, ensure respect for human rights and international law and hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, accountable. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account.

We are working to promote justice for survivors of sexual violence, to provide support to survivors and children born of conflict related sexual violence and to prevent sexual violence from occurring. British Embassy staff conducted a specific protection mission in Shire in Tigray on 4-7 April. It included the assessment of the current Gender-Based Violence response, specific emergency services provided in camps and the gaps that need to be filled. They interviewed staff and volunteers supporting survivors of sexual violence to identify essential activities required to address the immediate needs of the survivors as well as the accountability needs to ensure well-informed and effective assistance. We are currently identifying personnel from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts who can deploy to the region.

■ Tigray: Overseas Aid

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[6265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance the UK has allocated for the current financial year to help victims of rape and torture in Tigray.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[6267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance has been allocated to programmes based in the Tigray; and for what purposes that funding has been allocated.

James Duddridge:

The UK provided £241 million of bilateral Official Development Assistance in 2020/21. The UK made the decision in November 2020 to pause financial aid payments to the Government of Ethiopia destined for Tigray but we continue to provide support to people in Tigray via UN and NGO partners. £22 million has been allocated to the humanitarian response in Tigray to support those in need.

UK-funded partners such as UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN's World Food Programme (WFP) and International Committee of the Red Cross are providing food, shelter, water and healthcare in challenging circumstances. The UK is in the process of allocating budgets for programmes this financial year. As we do this, we will continue to review and adapt to the context.

The UK is also supporting civil society partners in Tigray to deliver gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health response, which includes helping rape survivors. Final budgets are under review but we are also planning to support the documentation and investigation of such crimes.

■ **West Africa: Food Supply**

Patrick Grady:

[4623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to ensure access to humanitarian support for populations in West Africa that are experiencing chronic food insecurity as a result of (a) climate change, (b) the covid-19 pandemic and (c) conflict.

James Duddridge:

In West Africa, conflict is a significant driver of food insecurity. It is compounded by chronic poverty and climate change, and the impact of COVID-19 has made worse an already desperate situation for many people. As the Integrated Review makes clear, the UK will continue to prioritise humanitarian preparedness and response, especially food security and famine prevention.

In September 2020, the Foreign Secretary launched a Call to Action to Prevent Famine. Since then, the UK has pledged £180 million to tackle food insecurity and famine risk, providing aid to more than seven million vulnerable people in some of the world's most dangerous places, including in West Africa. In April I visited Nigeria and discussed the situation in the North East with humanitarian agencies, and international organisations and partners. The UK Government is providing a substantial package of assistance to North East Nigeria, worth £400 million over five years (2017-2022), including food assistance for up to 1.5 million people. In the Sahel, we are spending up to £163 million between 2019-21 to respond to food

insecurity and other acute humanitarian needs across five Sahelian countries - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jim Shannon:

[4601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NICE plans to broaden its application of the non-reference discount rate to the single technology appraisal pathway.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for its own methods and processes. NICE's standard methodology is to apply a discount rate of 3.5% but NICE's committees have flexibility to apply a non-reference discount rate of 1.5% in defined exceptional circumstances.

NICE is currently reviewing its methods and the processes it uses in the development of its technology appraisal recommendations. NICE expects to consult on the draft methods manual in summer, with implementation of the changes from early 2022.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[6398]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 822 on Children: Coronavirus, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the effect of parental stress and adversity on (a) social and (b) emotional outcomes of children.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Jonathan Ashworth:

[3879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a list of participating councils in the local test and trace scheme; what the (a) conditions and (b) timescales were for that pilot; and what the evaluation plan is for that scheme.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Test and Trace works closely with local authorities as a 'team of teams' to further improve the United Kingdom's response to COVID-19. A list of the participating councils is attached.

We are currently running two pilots. The 'Local-0 Pilot', where local authorities are provided positive cases to trace, bypassing the National Contact centre. There are 130 local authorities who participated. The pilot has been evaluated and the service

is currently being strengthened to make it available for all local authorities should they wish to participate and have the resources available.

The 'Non-Household Contacts Pilot(s)' is providing non-household contacts to local authorities, where the National Contact Centre have been unable to reach them. These pilots were with a very small number of local authorities but showed promising results. As such the pilots will be expanded to a wider group and evaluated further. The outcome of these will determine whether this is to be offered to local authorities as a standard service, for those who express interest in this and have the resource capacity to support it and maintain an agreed service standard.

Attachments:

1. Table [FORMATTED TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE PQ3879 attachment .docx]

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Bill Esterson:

[6269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable people have been shielding during the covid-19 outbreak; and what assessment he has made of the level of risk from covid-19 of hospitalisation or death for people in those groups who have been vaccinated.

Jo Churchill:

Since the inception of the Shielded Patient List (SPL) in March 2020, over 3.8 million individuals have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable and added to the list. The first iteration of the SPL contained around 870,000 individuals, which increased to around 2.3 million following additions by general practitioners and clinicians. An additional 1.5 million people were identified and added to the SPL in February 2021 following the COVID-19 Population Risk Assessment. Clinically vulnerable individuals have never been advised to shield as they only face a moderate risk from COVID-19.

No specific assessment has been made. Those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable would have differing levels risks of hospitalisation and death from COVID-19 following vaccination, subject to the individual circumstances of each person.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many requests the covid-19 quarantine exemptions team receives on average each day; what proportion of those requests relate to (a) seeing dying relatives and (b) funerals; whether requests for exemption are triaged based on urgency; and what the average time taken is to consider and decide requests.

Jo Churchill:

The average daily request for temporary exemptions is approximately 31 per day. The proportion of temporary exemptions relating to seeing dying relatives and

attending funerals is approximately 50% each. All cases are considered on their own merits and are not triaged in order of urgency.

Information on the average time for cases to be considered is not collected in the format requested.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[6514]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the £12 million of additional funding for self-isolation announced by his Department on 24 May 2021, how much of that funding will be allocated to (a) Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and (b) councils in the West Yorkshire region.

Jo Churchill:

Funding to support self-isolation pilots is not currently due to be allocated directly to Wakefield Metropolitan District Council or other councils in the West Yorkshire region. This pilot funding is in addition to the significant investment in supporting local outbreak management through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). Local authorities should use the COMF funding first before submitting a bid for pilot funding.

Of the £12 million funding allocated to support self-isolation pilots across areas in England with higher COVID-19 prevalence rates, £548,592 has been allocated to undertake a pilot which will be run across the whole of the Yorkshire and Humber region.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Stella Creasy:

[1312]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide the data on the number of (a) covid-19 vaccinations that have been administered and (b) people eligible for those vaccinations, by ethnicity, for each of the wards in Waltham Forest where available over the last five months.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 May 2021]: Data on vaccinations and population eligibility, including by ethnicity, is not centrally held at ward level.

NHS England publish weekly data for vaccinations in England, including vaccinations by ethnicity, at constituency and national level. This data can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

Damian Hinds:

[4578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the merits of prioritising immunocompromised individuals for the planned autumn booster covid-19 vaccine programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

To ensure ongoing protection for the United Kingdom population, particularly the most vulnerable, we are preparing for a potential booster vaccination programme. While we are planning for several potential scenarios, final decisions on the timing and scope of the booster programme will not be taken until later this year, in line with results from key clinical studies. This includes the OCTAVE study, which will examine the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in clinically at-risk groups, including patients with certain immunocompromised conditions. Any decision on a booster vaccination programme will be informed by independent advice from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation.

Zarah Sultana:[\[5272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the full easing of lockdown restrictions on 21 June 2021 on the health and wellbeing of people under 30 who have not been vaccinated.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 May 2021]: The Government does not carry out assessments of the impact of relaxing restrictions specifically on the health and wellbeing of people under 30 years old.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Correspondence**Andrea Leadsom:**[\[6281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve his Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Edward Argar:

In April 2021, the Department's central correspondence unit replied to 90.1% of correspondence from members of the public within 18 working days of receipt, achieving its target.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Human Rights**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[4693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to ensure that human rights are prioritised in his Department's (a) response to the covid-19 outbreak and (b) longer-term social care reforms.

Jo Churchill:

All Government policy is developed in a way that supports people's fundamental rights, such as those set out in the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Munira Wilson:** [\[6482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the cost of Deloitte's input to written answers for his Department are included in the calculation of the total cost of producing those written answers.

Jo Churchill:

The Department entered into a contract with Deloitte for the provision of a range of management consultancy services to support the National Testing Programme. The contract included a general clause providing for Deloitte to provide support in responding to Written Questions, Freedom of Information requests and media queries. While Deloitte consultants have on occasions provided support, they have not been directly responsible for drafting replies to any Written Questions. The Department has not made an estimate of these costs.

■ Drugs and Medical Equipment: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:** [\[6512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on access to medicines and equipment to Northern Ireland after the end of the grace period in December 2021.

Edward Argar:

The Department is working closely with the European Union, to resolve any outstanding issues relating to implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, including supply of medicines.

We are taking this forward at the Specialised Committee for the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and through official-level talks.

■ Fragile X Syndrome**Carla Lockhart:** [\[4743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support the Government is providing to people with fragile X syndrome.

Jo Churchill:

On 9 January 2021, the Government published the United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework, outlining four key priorities to improve the lives of those living with rare diseases such as fragile X syndrome. These include helping patients get a final diagnosis, increasing awareness of rare diseases among healthcare professionals, better coordination of care and improving access to specialist care, treatment and drugs. The Framework will be followed by nation-specific action plans, detailing how each nation of the UK will meet the shared priorities of the Framework. In addition, the NHS Long Term Plan sets out commitments for improving the health of people with a learning disability, including people with fragile X syndrome. Genomic testing

for fragile X syndrome is included in the National Genomic Test Directory and is available in England via the NHS Genomic Medicine Service.

■ General Practitioners: York

Julian Sturdy: [\[2956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure access to face-to-face GP appointments across the City of York area.

Julian Sturdy: [\[2957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of emergency covid-19 triage arrangements on access to GP appointments across the City of York area.

Jo Churchill:

General practice is open and has been throughout the pandemic. In March 2021 over half of all appointments were face to face. On 20 May 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published updated standard operating procedures for general practice in the context of COVID-19. A blended approach of both face to face and remote appointments should be available to patients according to clinical appropriateness. Patient preferences for face to face and remote care need to be respected unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary. Practice receptions should be clearly open, so patients without access to phones or online services are not disadvantaged. Practices are to review communications to ensure patients understand how to access general practitioner services.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have an independent evaluation underway to understand the impact for staff, patients and the wider health and care system of using digital tools in primary care and in particular the effectiveness of online consultation systems and triage approaches in general practice. NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group will also work with the Local Medical Committee to improve understanding of local general practice access issues.

■ Gyms: Protective Clothing

Sarah Olney: [\[5223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis is for the guidance issued his Department on the use of facemasks in gyms.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 May 2021]: There is some evidence that wearing face coverings while taking part in exercise may be harmful to health, especially for people who have underlying heart or lung conditions. The World Health Organization (WHO) has advised that people should not wear face coverings during strenuous physical activity. The WHO's advice 'Mask use in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance' is available at the following link:

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/337199/WHO-2019-nCov-IPC_Masks-2020.5-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

■ Hospitals: Greater London

Ms Diane Abbott:

[3789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the reduction in bed capacity at the proposed new hospital at Whipps Cross on bed capacity at (a) Homerton hospital and (b) other local hospitals.

Edward Argar:

The Whipps Cross redevelopment plans have continued to be tested with North East London Health and Care Partnership Integrated Care System as part of the development of the redevelopment's outline business case, to ensure the demand and capacity assumptions are aligned with both the local and wider system assumptions.

The new development does not impact bed capacity at Homerton Hospital or other local hospitals. The number of beds in any hospital is not fixed and the way in which the hospital is designed will give greater flexibility to respond to changes in operational pressures, with an appropriate number of beds. The new hospital will have more clinical space than the current hospital, with new clinical departments, increased diagnostic and day case capacity and more single rooms, improving patient experience, privacy and dignity.

■ Ivermectin

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[6163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of Ivermectin as a treatment for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Currently, ivermectin for oral use is not a licensed human medicine in the United Kingdom. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is aware that ivermectin, administered orally, is being studied for safety and efficacy in numerous clinical trials worldwide, including in the UK. While some studies have reported findings, other large studies are still on-going.

■ Motor Neurone Disease

Henry Smith:

[3840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support targeted research on motor neurone disease.

Helen Whately:

We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia and neurodegeneration. On 29 April, I hosted a roundtable event on boosting motor neurone disease research with the National Institute for Health Research Sheffield

Biomedical Research Centre. The event brought together researchers, charities, people with motor neurone disease and funders. We will be working closely with these stakeholders over the coming months to consider ways forward for this vital area of research.

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Sarah Owen:

[\[6485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 4046 dated 24 May 2021, if he will publish any data his Department holds on the policy of refunding the Immigration Health Surcharge for overseas workers.

Edward Argar:

The Department is unable to publish data relating to the operation of the scheme as this information is not currently centrally validated. Partners are responsible for collecting information on the operation of the policy, which is used to maintain an effective service and the Department of Health and Social Care and Home Office will continue to consider the most effective way of ensuring data transparency.

■ **NHS: Protective Clothing**

Bill Esterson:

[\[6270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units of personal protective equipment his Department has sourced from factories in Malaysia since January 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Under personal protective equipment (PPE) contracts held directly by the Department, 760,981,000 surgical and examination gloves have been sourced from factories in Malaysia since January 2020. No other types of PPE are sourced from Malaysian factories.

■ **NHS: Standards**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[6326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of his policy proposals outlined in the White Paper entitled Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all, published on 11 February 2021, on the future of the NHS Constitution.

Edward Argar:

The NHS Constitution aims to safeguard the enduring principles and values of the National Health Service. It also empowers the public, patients and staff to help improve the care provided by setting out existing legal rights and the pledges that the NHS has made towards them. The Constitution brings together these rights in one place, but it does not create or replace them.

Officials are working through policy and legislative changes, including those in the white paper, to identify where and when updates may be required in future to the NHS Constitution and handbook.

■ Obesity

Zarah Sultana:

[\[4717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's Tackling Obesity Strategy will tackle poverty as an underlying cause of obesity.

Jo Churchill:

'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity, taking forward actions from previous chapters of the Childhood Obesity Plan. This includes our ambition to halve childhood obesity and significantly reduce the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030 and sets out measures to get the nation fit and healthy, prevention against COVID-19 and protect the National Health Service.

■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[3885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he had with NHS England on enacting regulation 61 of the The National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: The Department is in regular discussions with NHS England and NHS Improvement over the provision of services. On 27 March 2020, directions were issued on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to enable Regulation 61 of the National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013. It has been regularly reviewed and extended during the pandemic. Currently the directions are in place until 30 June 2021.

Regulation 61 allows NHS England and NHS Improvement to commission a dispensing doctor to provide pharmaceutical services to patients to whom the dispensing doctor is not otherwise entitled to provide pharmaceutical services during an emergency. Exercise of this function is an operational decision for regional offices, taking into account local circumstances.

■ Pregnancy: Smoking

Alex Cunningham:

[\[6287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the forthcoming Tobacco Control Plan for England, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial incentives in maternal smoking cessation pathways.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is currently assessing the potential merits of providing financial incentives for pregnant women as part of the proposals for a new Tobacco Control Plan, due to be published later this year.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening**Alex Norris:**[\[4689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding he has allocated to support the roll out of rapid diagnostic pathways in prostate cancer across England in 2021.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 May 2021]: The information is not held in the format requested.

In 2020/21, £121 million has been allocated in funding for cancer and £198 million in 2021/2022, including for the development of rapid diagnostic centres.

■ Smoking**Alex Cunningham:**[\[6286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the forthcoming Tobacco Control Plan for England, if he will make it his policy to increase funding for related mass media campaigns to at least 2008 levels.

Jo Churchill:

The Government remains committed to funding a programme of targeted evidence-based marketing campaigns to help people quit the use of tobacco. We will publish a new Tobacco Control Plan later this year to outline our proposals to deliver a smoke free country by 2030.

■ Smoking: Health Services**Alex Cunningham:**[\[6285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Royal College of Physicians' report, Smoking and health 2021: a coming of age for tobacco control?, published in 29 April 2021, recommendation to provide smoking cessation services on an opt-out basis to all smokers at any point of contact with the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to delivering National Health Service-funded tobacco treatment services to all inpatients, pregnant women and people accessing long term mental health and learning disability services; which are expected to be opt-out services.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Chris Grayling:** [2201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Oman and the UAE are on the red list for travel with lower levels of covid-19 infection than European and North American countries on the amber list.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 20 May 2021]: Decisions to place countries on the 'red list' are taken by the Government informed by evidence including the Joint Biosecurity Centre's risks assessments alongside wider public health factors.

We are unable to provide information on the decisions on specific countries as this relates to the on-going development of Government policy. However, further information on the data informing international travel risk assessments is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-informing-international-travel-traffic-light-risk-assessments>

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Janet Daby:** [3154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reimbursing workers who are required to travel abroad for work the cost of fees for covid-19 tests upon their return to work.

Jo Churchill:

There is currently no exemption from purchasing tests under the international travel testing regime for individuals who are traveling abroad for work.

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 travel testing. NHS Test and Trace tests are available at the market mid-point.

We offer deferred payment plans and hardship support for people who cannot afford to pay for the cost of managed quarantine and testing up front. In some circumstances this may be available to those who are not in receipt of income related benefits.

Julian Sturdy: [3847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the number of covid-19 infections attributed to international travel during the summer of 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not made an assessment.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Dan Jarvis:

[3875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to people trying to secure accommodation through the covid-19 hotel quarantine booking portal in response to increased demand for accommodation as a result of the increased size of the red list country list.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: In addition to the web portal, Corporate Travel Management (CTM) have a large international call centre which is able to assist guests to make their booking. The call centre is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and has multilingual capability. The capacity of the call centre is increased whenever there is a new addition to the 'red list'. In addition to the regular call centre capability CTM have set up a separate call centre based in India with a local number to assist guests to book their hotel package.

HOME OFFICE

■ British Nationality: Ceremonies

Navendu Mishra:

[4056]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of suspending the requirement to attend a citizenship ceremony during the outbreak of covid-19.

Kevin Foster:

The citizenship ceremony is an important part of becoming a British citizen. Citizenship ceremonies have now resumed with reduced capacity due to social distancing measures in line with government guidelines. Local Authorities are also conducting virtual ceremonies where possible.

The usual deadline for a person to attend a ceremony within three months of their application being approved has been extended to six months. Advice regarding COVID-19 impacts on Citizenship ceremonies is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/citizenship-ceremonies>.

There is discretion to waive the requirements to make the oath and pledge and attend a ceremony in the special circumstances of an individual case.

Navendu Mishra:

[4057]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of citizenship ceremonies that have been delayed in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Stockport constituency since March 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Over 206 local authorities across the UK are responsible for planning and conducting Citizenship ceremonies within each local authority area.

Information is not held by the Home Office on the number of ceremonies which have been scheduled or completed by local authorities.

Navendu Mishra: [\[4058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of increases in the waiting time for citizenship ceremonies on applicants.

Kevin Foster:

The usual deadline for a person to attend a ceremony within three months of their application being approved has been extended to six months. The majority of those applying for British citizenship (naturalisation applicants) will be settled in the UK, and so already able to access public services on this basis.

In addition, there is discretion to waive the requirements to make the oath, pledge and to attend a ceremony in the special circumstances where a person needs to acquire citizenship quickly for a compelling reason.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Bill Esterson: [\[6535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many allegations of modern slavery in supply chains she has received in respect of the supply of personal protective equipment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

We do not hold data on the number of allegations made about modern slavery in the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), but the prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any sector or company is immune from these risks, including PPE suppliers.

Through the landmark 'Transparency in Supply Chains' provision in the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the UK became the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery in their operations and global supply chains.

The Home Office works across Government to develop best-practice to prevent modern slavery in public procurement. We supported the Cabinet Office to produce internal guidance reminding departments of the key steps they should be taking to mitigate modern slavery risks in COVID-related procurements.

The Home Office, with support from DHSC and NHS Supply Chain, commissioned the ethical trade consultancy, Impactt, to develop tailored guidance for buyers and suppliers of PPE on best practice approaches to preventing modern slavery in supply chains. As part of this project, Impactt delivered training workshops with PPE manufacturers and resellers to support them implement the guidance.

■ Delivery Services: Fraud

Conor McGinn:

[6344]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have fallen victim to scammers purporting to be part of the delivery or courier industry since March 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects data on the number of fraud offences recorded by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) but cases relating to delivery or courier fraud are not separately identifiable.

Conor McGinn:

[6345]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to (a) reduce incidences and (b) raise awareness of delivery text scams.

Kevin Foster:

Fraudsters are sophisticated and will exploit any vulnerabilities they can, especially as more of us find ourselves at home and online.

We are working hard to tackle fraud. As part of the 2020 Spending Review, the Government committed a further £63m to the Home Office to tackle economic crime, including fraud. This is in addition to the funding the Home Office commits each year to the National Economic Crime Centre in the NCA, and police forces, including over £15m each year to the City of London Police as the national lead force for fraud.

The Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit (DCPCU), a specialist unit which was set up last year in collaboration with City of London Police, the Metropolitan Police and UK Finance, recently made 8 arrests as part of an investigation in Royal Mail text scams (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-57226704>).

However, we recognise there is still more to do, and are working closely with DCMS, the telecommunication industry, regulators and consumer groups to tackle fraud and close those vulnerabilities (e.g., like the ability to 'spoof' the number of a legitimate organisation) criminals too easily exploit in order to protect the public.

We are also raising awareness among the public to help them protect themselves.

Royal Mail has issued guidance on how to spot fake emails and communications and what to do if you have received one. More information can be found on the Royal Mail's website: <https://www.royalmail.com/help/scam-examples>.

Action Fraud issued an alert on delivery scams on 23 December last year (found here: <https://www.actionfraudalert.co.uk/da/357020/Scam%20warning%20-%20Fake%20DPD%20emails%20and%20texts.html>).

We continue to encourage the public to forward suspicious text messages to 7726 (which is free of charge) and anyone who has been a targeted by a scam to report it. Action Fraud is the national reporting service for all victims of fraud and cybercrime and can be contacted by phone on 0300 123 2040 or through their website: http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Crispin Blunt:

[R] [\[6165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs entitled Reducing opioid-related deaths in the UK, published in December 2016, which cited research findings that drug consumption clinics reduce injecting risk behaviours and overdose fatalities and save more money than they cost, on what basis she has decided not to introduce a legal framework for the provision of those clinics; and what assessment she has made of the compatibility of that decision with aims of the Drugs Strategy 2017 to reduce the harms of drugs as part of a balanced approach to tackling drug misuse.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has no plans to change the law on drug consumption rooms. While the UK Government continues to support a range of evidence-based approaches to reduce the health-related harms of drug misuse, we must not do anything that encourages the consumption of drugs. Our policy on drugs is clear – we must prevent drug use in our communities and support people through treatment and recovery. In order to ensure we do all we can to tackle the harms drug misuse causes, Dame Carol Black is leading an independent review, part two of which focuses on treatment and recovery support for people substance misuse problems.

■ Immigration

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[3026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she consulted current asylum accommodation or asylum advice contractors prior to and in respect of the New Plan for Immigration being published on 24 March 2021.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: The Government undertook a comprehensive consultation and engagement process on the New Plan for Immigration when the proposals were published, and providers of accommodation and advice services for asylum seekers have the opportunity to submit their views, in the same way as others. The consultation closed on the 6 May and we will carefully consider the outcome. Providers will be involved in the work to implement any changes.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Julian Sturdy:

[\[3849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has investigated the cause of the error whereby British citizens have incorrectly received letters urging them to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme; and whether the relevant databases have been updated to prevent that error from occurring again.

Kevin Foster:

The Government is using every possible channel to encourage everyone who is eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to apply.

The Home Office is currently working with HMRC and DWP to encourage EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who receive benefits to apply to the EUSS if they have yet to do so. Letters are being sent out to encourage recipients to apply to the EUSS to protect their existing rights in the UK before the deadline of 30 June 2021.

In trying to reach as many people as possible, there may be a small number of instances where these letters are sent to recipients who are naturalised as a British citizen. The letter may also be received by a small number of individuals who have already applied to the EUSS, for example because they applied after the initial exercise with DWP or HMRC was completed, but before the letter was sent out. The letter makes clear anyone who is a British citizen or already has EUSS status does not need to take any action.

As of 30 April 2021, 4.9m grants of EUSS status have been made. The Home Office urges anyone eligible for the EUSS to apply before the 30 June deadline to ensure their rights are protected following the end of the grace period.

Chi Onwurah:

[6289]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with (a) local authorities, (b) charities and (c) community groups to ensure European citizens in hard to reach communities are aware of the June 2021 deadline for applying for settled status for every member of their family.

Kevin Foster:

Since the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) opened in March 2019, the Home Office has undertaken a broad range of communications and stakeholder engagement activity to encourage EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members to apply for and obtain status. This has included targeted stakeholder engagement to reach hard to reach and vulnerable communities.

We are committed to making sure everybody eligible for the EUSS can apply, including those who are vulnerable or need extra support. We have awarded £22 million of funding to a network of now 72 charities and community organisations across the UK, to ensure important information and assistance gets through to those who are hardest to reach, and no one is left behind by the June 2021 deadline. These organisations have helped more than 250,000 vulnerable people to apply to the EUSS already.

Guidance on how to apply and details of the support available to applicants is available through the EU Settlement Resolution Centre (SRC), which is open seven days a week to provide assistance over the telephone and by email, and the SRC also provides a direct line for organisations, charities, social workers, and local authorities working with vulnerable groups.

The Home Office has been working very closely with organisations in local government to help deliver regular EUSS communications to vulnerable and hard to reach EU citizens.

Other government departments such as the Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Work and Pensions and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office are utilising their own networks engaging vulnerable EU citizens and helping to provide support for other organisations to promote EUSS.

The Home Office has also specifically engaged with gatekeeper organisations who work closely with vulnerable, harder to reach audiences including older people, children, and those in care to ensure as many citizens as possible apply to EUSS by the deadline. It has developed a suite of assets and resources for EU citizens including translated leaflets about the Settlement Scheme in all 26 EU languages, and Welsh, which are freely available on GOV.UK.

A comprehensive, multi-million-pound EUSS advertising campaign has increased awareness of the need to apply to EUSS for over two years, targeting EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their families.

As of 30 April 2021, 4.9m grants of status had been made. The Home Office urges anyone eligible for the EUSS to apply before the 30 June deadline to ensure their rights are protected following the end of the grace period.

■ Migrants: Health Services

Sarah Owen:

[\[6486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the number of overseas health workers who have been refunded the Immigration Health Surcharge since the Prime Minister announced that policy in May 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Since the Prime Minister's announcement last year, the Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care have worked together continuously to ensure overseas health workers are refunded the Immigration Health Surcharge.

■ Pets: Theft

Dan Jarvis:

[\[6302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on increasing the penalty for people who are convicted of pet theft.

Kit Malthouse:

Following discussions between myself (the Minister for Crime and Policing), the Home Secretary, and ministerial colleagues in the Ministry of Justice and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Government, Pet Theft Taskforce will:

- Work with police, law enforcement, and experts to understand and tackle pet theft.
- Consider the issue from end to end, including causes, prevention, reporting, enforcement and prosecution.

- Make clear and timely recommendations on ways to reduce pet theft.

Further information about the Pet Theft Taskforce, including its full terms of reference, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/taskforce-launched-to-investigate-reported-rise-in-pet-thefts>

■ Social Services: Migrant Workers

Caroline Lucas:

[3838]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to expand the list of professions eligible for the fee-free one-year visa extension during the covid-19 outbreak to include care workers; what recent discussions she has had with representatives of care workers on the exclusion of that workforce from that list; what estimate she has made of the number of care workers so affected; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Government recognises the vital contribution overseas NHS, health and social care workers have and continue to make in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The introduction of the Health and Care visa last August made it quicker and cheaper for regulated health and care professionals – including Senior Care Workers - and their dependents to secure their visa.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has extended the visas of over 10,000 key, frontline regulated health and care professionals, and their eligible family members.

The Department of Health and Social Care regularly meet with the Health and Social Care sector and we will keep the free extension offer under review.

■ Travel: Fraud

Conor McGinn:

[6342]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many reported instances of fraud committed by fake travel operators there were in each year since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects quarterly data on the number of reports of fraud made to Action Fraud and that have been recorded as criminal offences by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB). This data is published as official statistics by the Office for National Statistics on a quarterly basis and is available from June 2015 to December 2020 in table A5 below:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/criminallandandwalesappendixtables>.

It is not possible to distinguish how many reports of fraud committed by fake travel operators were recorded as these could fall under the various fraud types, such as

'Time share and holiday fraud', 'Ticket fraud' and 'Other fraud' depending on the circumstances.

Conor McGinn:

[6343]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with (a) social media companies and (b) online accommodation booking platforms on tackling holiday and travel related fraud since the recent easing of international travel restrictions.

Kit Malthouse:

Fraudsters will use any hook to commit these crimes and COVID-19 has been no exception. We have seen criminals exploiting people's unease and fear of the pandemic through opportunistically selling bogus PPE, running phishing campaigns impersonating government departments, and even vaccine fraud.

As restrictions begin to ease, it is important that we continue to remain vigilant to any risks and vulnerabilities. That is why we are engaging with the private sector to discuss the threat from online fraud and the need to prevent fraud and protect the public on these platforms.

As set out in our Economic Crime Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-plan-2019-to-2022>), we are clear that a public-private partnership is essential in tackling fraud. Government, industry, law enforcement, regulators and consumer groups are in regular conversation with the aim of protecting the public from fraud. This includes developing some voluntary charters of the actions that certain industries, including online platforms, will take to prevent fraud.

The Government will build on this work through our Fraud Action Plan, an ambitious approach grounded in prevention, education, effective enforcement and regulatory reforms that will be published after the Spending Review.

We continue to encourage anyone who has been targeted by fraud to report it. Action Fraud is the central police reporting point for all victims of fraud and can be contacted by phone on 0300 123 2040 or through their website: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>. This information is being used by the City of London Police alongside crime reports to identify, disrupt and stop fraudsters.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Insulation

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[6199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has plans to provide support for people who are experiencing mental health problems as a result of financial hardship due to the costs of remedial works to unsafe cladding on their building not covered by Government funding.

Christopher Pincher:

MHCLG has regular engagement with leaseholder groups and recognises the effect on residents living in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding. That is why the Government is investing over £5 billion to remediate high rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding.

Mental health is one of the Government's top priorities and we are working across Government to ensure that all people, regardless of their residential situation, get the help and support they need. Where residents of buildings fitted with flammable cladding need mental health support, they should make contact with their GP to discuss these issues so they may be referred to mental health services as appropriate. In addition, we are working with the NHS, Public Health England and MIND, to provide a toolkit, signposting all residents to key services to help those concerned about their mental health and financial situation.

Housing Associations**Mark Pritchard:**[\[4573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to allow housing associations to increase their property portfolio by diversifying their streams of private capital funding.

Christopher Pincher:

In recent years, we have seen increasing levels of total investment by housing associations in new supply across a range of tenures (£13.7 billion in 2019-20, up 13 per cent on the previous year). We are keen to see new players in this market, and for housing associations to explore new funding streams to support the supply of new affordable homes.

Housing: Disability**Navendu Mishra:**[\[4730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish the findings of his Department's consultation entitled Raising accessibility standards for new homes.

Navendu Mishra:[\[4731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answers of 24 November 2020 to Questions 115838 and 115839 on Buildings: Disability and Housing: Construction, whether he plans to amend building regulations to require (a) all new homes to be accessible and adaptable as a minimum standard and (b) 10 per cent of new homes to be accessible for wheelchair users.

Christopher Pincher:

We are currently considering responses to the consultation on raising accessibility standards for new homes, and will be publishing a Government response setting out next steps.

Housing: Fire Prevention**Mr Nicholas Brown:**[\[6198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what provision his Department plans to put in place for people that wish to rely on the new guidance from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors but have already had their External Wall System 1 Form rejected.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 is not a Government form nor a legal requirement. It was created by industry to help with mortgage valuations for flats in blocks with cladding. MHCLG estimates that if lenders which use the EWS1 process follow the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) guidance, nearly 500,000 flat owners will not need an EWS1 form.

Most major lenders, representing roughly 80% of the mortgage market, have said that they have adopted the RICS guidance, asking for EWS1 forms on a smaller cohort of buildings, or that they already take a markedly less risk-averse approach.

The requirement for and use of the EWS1 form is determined by the lending policies of banks and building societies. An EWS1 form remains as valid information for five years.

Housing: Insulation**Mr Nicholas Brown:**[\[6197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 April 2021, HCWS913 on Building Safety Monthly Update, when his Department plans to publish details of the finance scheme for leaseholders in buildings between 11 and 18 metres that will ensure that those leaseholders do not have to pay more than £50 a month for cladding removal; and when that scheme will become operational.

Christopher Pincher:

Public safety is our first priority and we are working to ensure unsafe cladding is remediated as swiftly as possible. We will publish further details of the finance scheme as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Housing: Standards**Navendu Mishra:**[\[6503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will commit to ensuring that upon completion of the review of the Decent Homes Standard local authorities and housing associations will be allocated funding to undertake improvements required as a result of that review.

Eddie Hughes:

The Social Housing White Paper committed to review the Decent Homes Standard to consider if it should be updated. The Review is in two stages, with the first step

considering the case for change. If the evidence demonstrates that we need to revise the Standard, we will consider the strategic, economic and management case for new criteria as a second stage of the review.

■ **Landlords: Croydon**

Steve Reed:

[\[6306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to decide whether to approve the renewal of the Croydon Council landlord licensing scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

We have received the application for the renewal of the Croydon Council landlord licencing scheme.

The application is currently being assessed and we will update on the outcome shortly.

■ **Landlords: Licensing**

Steve Reed:

[\[6305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities have requested approval from his Department for the extension of their landlord licensing scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department has not received any renewal applications in 2021.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

Jessica Morden:

[\[6220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if Ministers of his Department will publish (a) written guidance and (b) discussions on the role and rules for hon. Members sponsoring bids in the Levelling Up Fund.

Jessica Morden:

[\[6221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if Ministers of his Department will publish (a) written guidance and (b) discussions on the role and rules for hon. Members sponsoring bids in the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Levelling Up Fund prospectus published at Budget provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22. This includes guidance on the process for submitting bids, the types of projects eligible for funding, and how bids will be assessed. Further detail on this process was made available subsequently via both a technical note and a frequently asked questions document, the former of which specifically discusses the role of MPs in the bidding process.

The Government recognises the important role of MPs in championing the interests of their constituents, and taking on a positive role in prioritising bids and helping broker local consensus within their communities. We expect bidding authorities to consult local MPs as part of submitting bids for the Levelling Up Fund, and support and engagement from local stakeholders and local MPs will be considered as part of the strategic fit assessment; however, such support from local MPs is not a necessary condition for a successful bid.

As part of the bidding process, MPs have the option of providing formal written support for one bid which they see as a priority. The lead authority must submit that letter of priority support along with their application, and a bid may have priority support from multiple MPs and local stakeholders. In addition to formally backing one bid, MPs may also want to support any or all schemes that would have a benefit to their constituencies as part of the wider stakeholder input process. Individual MPs should not provide a letter offering their priority support to more than one bid. Information on the role of MPs in future bidding rounds of the Fund will be confirmed after funding has been announced for bids from the first funding round.

There are no plans to publish further guidance on the role of MPs in supporting Levelling Up Fund bids.

■ **Local Government: Land**

Mark Pritchard:

[3827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to remove potential conflicts of interest where a local authority owns land which is subject to a planning application and/or is directly or indirectly a residential developer.

Christopher Pincher:

There are already safeguards in place to ensure that decisions on local authorities' own applications for planning permission are taken properly. Applications cannot be decided by a committee or officer responsible for the management of any land or buildings to which the application relates. They must be determined under the same legal principles as any other planning application and publicised in the same way. In reaching their decisions, authorities must take into account the views of statutory consultees and relevant objections by local residents.

■ **Regional Planning and Development: Consultation Papers**

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [6299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason his Department does not plan to publish a White Paper on devolution and local recovery.

Luke Hall:

Levelling up all areas of the country remains at the centre of Government's agenda, empowering our regions by devolving money, resources and control away from

Westminster. Our plans for strengthening local accountable leadership will now be included in the Levelling Up White Paper which will be published in the Autumn.

■ Shared Ownership Schemes

Dan Jarvis:

[\[6301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the viability of introducing a UK-wide shared ownership rescue scheme to allow homeowners to part-buy and part-rent a home; and if he will make an assessment of the effect of such a scheme on the number of (a) homeowners in negative equity and (b) home repossessions.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government continually monitors the housing market, consults with the lending industry, and examines policy options for assisting homeowners. Arrears and repossessions remain near to historically low levels. The Government has no current plans to introduce a United Kingdom wide rescue scheme which will allow owner occupiers to part-buy and part-rent their existing home.

■ Towns Fund: Yorkshire and the Humber

John Healey:

[\[6184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2021 to Question 61, which were the three towns in Yorkshire and the Humber that Ministers decided not to invite to bid for funding under the Towns Fund.

Luke Hall:

Officials made a number of recommendations for ministers' consideration. The selection process was robust, comprehensive and fair and it is right that where judgments were required, these were made by ministers.

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will support even more places across the UK to transform and future-proof their town centres and highstreets, by investing in infrastructure to improve everyday life.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jim Shannon:

[\[3869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that surplus fees applied to goods from EU based companies are published clearly at the time of purchase.

Greg Hands:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has appointed my noble Friend Lord Frost as Minister of State for the Cabinet Office where he will lead the United Kingdom's institutional and strategic relationship with the European Union.

Now that the United Kingdom has left the EU's Single Market and Customs Union, the customs processes and procedures previously applied to goods being moved between the United Kingdom and the non-EU countries now also apply to movements between Great Britain and the EU. This can mean that customs duty and Value Added Tax are due at time of import

To understand if and what duties will apply on import, traders can use the United Kingdom Global Online Tariff. There may be additional fees charged by shipping and customs agents. However, that is a commercial matter, and such charges will need to be discussed with them.

Peter Dowd:[\[3907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many Chinese companies are currently involved in the UK-China partnership on smart cities.

Graham Stuart:

The UK-China partnership on Smart Cities is not an on-going programme and no companies are currently involved. The partnership was a component of a ministerial delegation in August 2018. Accompanying me were UK companies, experts, civic leaders and officials to the Fourth China Smart City International Expo in Shenzhen with a view to promoting opportunities for international trade between the UK and China.

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership**Anthony Mangnall:**[\[3164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the potential of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership to help influence future global trade standards.

Greg Hands:

Joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will see the UK secure its place in a network of countries committed to free trade as part of the rules-based international system. Accession will demonstrate the UK's place as a nation that champions the removal of barriers in world trade.

CPTPP is designed for expansion, meaning that its rules have the potential to become even further established across key economies in the Asia-Pacific region. This will allow the UK to play a key role in shaping standards for an ambitious agreement that has the potential to increase in global prominence over time.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Carla Lockhart:

[\[4749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect on the UK agri-food industry of a tariff-free free trade deal with Australia.

Greg Hands:

The UK stands to gain from a trade agreement with Australia. The Government will secure reductions in tariffs on UK exports to Australia, saving UK businesses millions of pounds. For example, elimination of 5% tariffs on whisky could bolster Northern Irish Whiskey exports to Australia.

Any deals the Government signs will include protections for the agricultural sector and will not undercut UK farmers or compromise the UK's high standards.

The Government carried out preliminary scoping assessments for each FTA negotiation, including Australia, which can be found on the Government's website. A full impact assessment will be published prior to implementation.

■ Trade Agreements: New Zealand

Emily Thornberry:

[\[6213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to Box 4 of her Department's report, UK-New Zealand free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published on 17 June 2020, whether the modelling of Scenario 2 in that report assumes the elimination of all tariffs on bovine meat and sheep meat.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[6214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the modelling of Scenario 2 set out in her Department's report, UK-Australia free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published 17 June 2020, assumes the elimination of all tariffs on bovine meat and sheep meat.

Greg Hands:

The scoping assessments published back in June 2020 for Australia and New Zealand assessed the potential impacts of a deal in advance of negotiations, under various illustrative scenarios.

Modelling for scenario 2 in these documents assumes the elimination of all tariffs, including those on bovine meat and sheep meat.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[6215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to table 5 of her Department's report, UK-New Zealand free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published on 17 June 2020, what the exact long run percentage change in Gross Value Added is for (a) agriculture and (b) semi-processed food under (a) scenario 1 and (b) scenario 2.

Emily Thornberry:[\[6216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to table 6 of her Department's report, UK-Australia free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published on 17 June 2020, what the exact long run percentage change in Gross Value Added is for (a) agriculture and (b) semi-processed food under (a) scenario 1 and (b) scenario 2.

Emily Thornberry:[\[6217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to table 11 of her Department's report, UK-New Zealand free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published on 17 June 2020, what the exact long run percentage change in employment is for (a) agriculture and (b) semi-processed food under (a) scenario 1 and (b) scenario 2.

Emily Thornberry:[\[6218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to table 12 of her Department's report, UK-Australia free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published on 17 June 2020, what the exact long run percentage change in employment is for (a) agriculture and (b) semi-processed food under (a) scenario 1 and (b) scenario 2.

Greg Hands:

The scoping assessments published back in June 2020 for Australia and New Zealand assessed the potential impacts of a deal in advance of negotiations, under various illustrative scenarios.

The assessments include estimates of the long-run impacts on gross value added (GVA) and employment for various sectors. The sector estimates are subject to a high degree of uncertainty. They are therefore presented as ranges, rather than point estimates, to reflect the lack of precision for these estimates.

■ UK Trade with EU: Dispute Resolution

Gareth Thomas:[\[2869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how the Government records access disputes between UK exporters and the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:[\[2870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many market access disputes for exporters to the European Market have been recorded since 1 January 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

Market access barriers between the United Kingdom and other trading partners, including the EU, are recorded on the Digital Market Access Service (DMAS), an internal digital platform used by government officials to support efforts to remove barriers for British businesses where it is possible to do so.

Barriers are recorded on DMAS when an issue is raised by a company or identified by Post or officials in other government departments. Official statistics, including data

showing a breakdown of recorded barriers in overseas regions during the 2020 – 2021 financial year will be published in the coming weeks.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Castlereagh Foundation**

Carla Lockhart: [\[4751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 153426, on Ethnic Groups: Northern Ireland, what the timescale is for the creation of the Castlereagh Foundation.

Mr Robin Walker:

The New Decade, New Approach agreement included a commitment to provide funding to establish the Castlereagh Foundation to support academic research through universities and other partners to explore identity and the shifting patterns of social identity in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has announced he will appoint an Advisory Committee which will support the UK Government to identify appropriate delivery partners to establish the Castlereagh Foundation and take the work forward at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Lord Frost**

Carla Lockhart: [\[4752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many meetings he has held with Lord Frost since his appointment on the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland holds regular meetings with Lord Frost on matters relating to the NI Protocol. These meetings have also included engagements with EU representatives, Northern Irish businesses and politicians across Parliament.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

Simon Hoare: [\[6384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his letter to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of 7 October 2020, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals for a longer-lasting regime to define Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has introduced significant and robust protections as part of the UK Internal Market Act. This enables “qualifying” goods to continue to be placed on the whole UK market and prohibits checks and controls as goods move from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK. To ensure these measures were in place from 1 January

and to avoid disruption, this approach provides protection to all goods in free circulation in Northern Ireland.

The Government is developing a longer-lasting regime in discussion with Northern Ireland business. As we have done more broadly, it is right to take sensible, practical steps to phase in our approach in a way that is supported by business.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Franchises

Rachael Maskell: [\[6356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria need to be met to demonstrate that a Local Transport Authority can develop a franchising assessment rapidly enough to avoid having to implement an Enhanced Partnership Scheme to retain access to funding beyond April 2022.

Rachael Maskell: [\[6357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a Local Transport Authority, that indicates it wishes to pursue franchising in the long-term and releases a notice of intent to prepare a franchising proposal before the end of June 2021, should release a notice of intent to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Scheme, to allow it time to establish that scheme ahead of the April 2022 deadline (a) simultaneously or (b) after the June deadline.

Rachael Maskell: [\[6358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in the event that a Local Transport Authority is pursuing franchising in the long-term but is implementing an Enhanced Partnership Scheme in the meantime to retain access to key funding streams beyond April 2022, whether their bus service improvement plan should investigate the (a) franchising or (b) partnership improvement option.

Rachael Maskell: [\[6360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a Local Transport Authority that wishes to pursue franchising can also remain eligible for the Government's £3 billion transformational funding stream beyond June 2021.

Rachael Maskell: [\[6361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a Local Transport Authority that has issued a statement of intent to franchise may subsequently switch to pursuing an Enhanced Partnership scheme in the event that it is deemed necessary.

Rachel Maclean:

On 17 May, the Government published guidance on Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). As the guidance sets out, only Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) currently have powers to implement bus franchising, so only they can issue a statutory notice by 30 June that they wish to pursue franchising. Where a Local

Transport Authority (LTA) is not an MCA and wishes to pursue franchising, it should publish a statutory notice that it intends to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan by 30 June and seek franchising powers from the Department for Transport in parallel. The process of granting the LTA franchising powers requires secondary legislation, so the LTA should pursue an Enhanced Partnership by April 2022.

As set out in the National Bus Strategy and the BSIP guidance, the Government will grant franchising powers to any LTA which has the capability and resources to do so; and that this will deliver better service improvements for passengers. The Department's guidance on franchising sets out a five-part process for developing a franchising assessment. We expect local transport authorities that have issued a notice of intent to pursue franchising, and are pursuing it as their only option, to be actively following the franchising assessment process to be eligible for future funding.

Local authorities that are pursuing franchising can switch to an enhanced partnership at any time. However, they must issue a notice of intent to pursue an enhanced partnership if they have not already done so.

BSIPs set out the vision for delivering the step-change in bus services that is required by the National Bus Strategy. It does not need to explain whether it will use franchising or enhanced partnerships to deliver BSIP ambitions.

■ Driving Tests

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[6429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the user experience of booking a driving practical test; and whether he plans to introduce a feature to allow users to see (a) what appointments are available and (b) the next available appointment across a number of locations.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is in the early stages of work to modernise the practical driving test booking service. This will include a review of the end-to-end user experience.

The DVSA's current booking service is already designed with flexibility in mind, so users can manage available options during the booking process. Users can check practical driving test availability by using the post code search facility. This will display the nearest four test centres and earliest dates available. That function allows the user to widen their search if there are no suitable test dates available at their first choice.

■ Driving Tests: Herefordshire

Bill Wiggin:

[4543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the timeliness of the next available date for a practical driving test for a (a) car, (b) HGV, (c) motorcycle and (d) tractor in Herefordshire.

Rachel Maclean:

As at 17 May 2021, the next available date to take a practical driving test in Herefordshire is: (a) 9 weeks for car (b) 3 weeks for HGV (c) 1 week for motorcycle (no motorcycle provision in Herefordshire but Worcester, Gloucester and Shrewsbury are all 1 week) (d) 12 weeks for tractor.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Justin Madders:**[\[3925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many domestic chargepoints there are in (a) Ellesmere Port and (b) the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

As of 1 April 2021, there were a total of 213 domestic charging devices funded by the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) and the preceding Domestic Recharge Scheme (DRS) in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

As of 1 April 2021, there were a total of 177,063 domestic charging devices funded by the EVHS and DRS in the UK.

■ Heathrow Express Railway Line: Rolling Stock**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**[\[7251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the previously deployed Heathrow Express Class 332 units will be re-deployed for use elsewhere on the UK rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Class 332 Heathrow Express units were privately owned by Heathrow Airport Holdings Limited and the Department understands that these units have now been disposed of by their owner.

■ Hitachi Rail: Finance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**[\[6416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding from the public has been paid to Hitachi Rail UK Ltd in each of the last five years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Hitachi Rail UK are a significant supplier to the UK Rail Industry. The Government works in partnership with the private sector in the provision of trains for operation in the UK railway through the Rolling Stock Leasing Companies, and (in the case of the DfT procured Inter City Express fleets), Agility Trains. We do not hold data on what proportion of those lease and availability payments made by train operators to these partners ultimately flow to Hitachi Rail UK.

■ Hydrogen: Infrastructure

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[6192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support businesses with vehicle fleets that are investing in environmentally-sustainable hydrogen infrastructure.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[6193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and (b) other Cabinet colleagues on supporting businesses with vehicle fleets to invest in environmentally sustainable hydrogen infrastructure.

Rachel Maclean:

Hydrogen is likely to be fundamental to achieving the full decarbonisation of UK transport. This is why we are supporting its development and use today through a number of measures.

On 30 March the Department launched the Zero Emission Buses Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme which will provide up to £120 million for zero emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them. The scheme could support the introduction of up to 500 zero emission buses and associated infrastructure. Local transport authorities will be able to apply for funding for hydrogen fuel cell buses or battery electric buses depending on which technology is best suited to their local area.

The Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan announced £20m this year in planning for zero emission road freight trials which will support UK industry to develop cost-effective, zero-emission HGVs and their refuelling infrastructure in the UK.

The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) is providing support to increase the uptake of fuel cell electric vehicles and expand hydrogen refuelling infrastructure. Our £23m Hydrogen for Transport Programme is funding the deployment of around 300 hydrogen vehicles, 8 new refuelling stations and upgrades to 5 existing stations. We have also been supporting public and private sector fleets to become early adopters through the £2m FCEV Fleet Support Scheme.

■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Carla Lockhart:

[\[4754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many cars were seized and destroyed for non-payment of road tax in each of the last three years.

Rachel Maclean:

In the last three financial years, 159,192 vehicles have been seized and 42,177 vehicles have been destroyed for non-payment of vehicle excise duty. The table below shows the figures for the last three financial years.

	VEHICLES SEIZED	VEHICLES DESTROYED
2020/21	24,660	7,109
2019/20	68,991	18,566
2018/19	65,541	16,502

■ Network Rail: Industrial Health and Safety

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[6421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what changes were made by Network Rail to the relationship between the Technical Authority and the Regions in assuring health and safety throughout Network Rail's devolved Functions and Regions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of Network Rail's Putting Passengers First reorganisation changes to Network Rail's Technical Authority allowed some assurance and functional audit roles to be devolved to the regions and closer to frontline teams. The Technical Authority retains the accountability for the functional audit plan and each Region retains its own responsibility to deliver the auditing work agreed as part of that functional audit plan.

■ Network Rail: Land

Rachael Maskell: [\[4637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much land Network Rail disposed of between January 2017 and December 2020; and how much revenue was generated from those land sales.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail joined the cross-Government Public Sector Land for Housing Programme in April 2015 after it became a public sector body in 2014. Due to the complexities in how disposals are scored, it is difficult to provide the information over the time period you have requested. We can, however, readily provide information over four financial years – 2016/17 to 2019/20. Over this period, Network Rail has contracted to sell land capable of accommodating 8,180 homes and has generated a gross value of £237m. As well as these 'business as usual' disposals, Network Rail has also disposed of a long term interest in the majority of its Arches portfolio raising in excess £1.3bn in receipts from the disposal of a 250 year lease in over 5,000 tenanted spaces around the country in February 2019. The revenue made from these disposals forms part of the income which is reinvested in the railways.

Rachael Maskell: [\[4638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Network Rail holds a record of the (a) number, (b) size and (c) tenure type of housing units delivered on public land disposed of by Network Rail.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network rail hold records of (a) number of housing units but not (b) size or (c) tenure as this information is not always available at the point of sale.

Rachael Maskell:[\[4639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to land sold by Network Rail with outline planning consent between May 2010 and April 2021, how many new housing units were included in those consent broken down by the number of (a) affordable houses and (b) homes available for social rent.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail joined the cross-Government Public Sector Land for Housing Programme in April 2015 after it became a public sector body in 2014. Between April 2015 and March 2020, Network Rail disposed land for 9282 housing units. Although the Public Sector Land Programme was paused in April last year due to the Covid pandemic, Network Rail has continued to work to release any surplus land towards housing. In the last year, it has released land for a further 537 units taking the total to over 9819 housing units since 2015. In addition to this, Network Rail has unlocked tens of thousands of housing units by releasing key strips of land or granting rights over land through shared value.

Network Rail do not have a break-down of affordable homes or homes for social rent – this information is not always available at the point of sale.

■ Network Rail: Reorganisation**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[6419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) objectives and (b) outcomes were from Network Rail's Putting Passengers First reorganisation.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail's Putting Passengers First programme was implemented to ensure that the organisation is best structured to deliver the highest level of service to passengers and freight customers. The programme specifically looked to:

- Ensure Network Rail is on the side of passengers and freight users
- Ensure Network Rail is easy to engage with and is an efficient and dependable partner
- Ensure Network Rail is a company people are proud to work for
- Ensure Network Rail is instinctively recognised as an industry leader

Network Rail now operates through five regions allowing key decisions to be made closer to the frontline.

■ Network Rail: Safety

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[6420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the vacancy level within certain functions at Network Rail at which a safety risk begins to be presented to passengers and staff using the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail is under a statutory duty to ensure the safe operation of the rail network in Great Britain. Under the Framework Agreement between Network Rail and DfT, Network Rail is required to manage its workforce to ensure that it is adequately staffed in order to fulfil its legal obligations. Where Network Rail identifies a post as safety critical it must be occupied either by a substantive post holder, by secondment or be the subject of active recruitment. All key safety posts must have nominated deputies.

■ Northwich Station: Safety

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[6424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the cause of the roof collapse at Northwich railway station; when the station will reopen; what the cost is of the damage, what the timescale is for fully repairing the roof; and what assessment he has made of the risk to services passing through the station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

An investigation is being carried out by Northern, Network Rail and the Office of Rail and Road and this work is still ongoing. Engineers have inspected the building and trains have been cleared to use the station which reopened two days later. The operator is working with Network Rail to review temporary facilities and a proposed new station building. The costs of this incident are currently unknown.

■ Public Transport: Antisocial Behaviour

Colleen Fletcher: [\[3899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour on public transport in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime wherever it occurs in the transport system. The transport industry, local authorities, the police and others are already investing in, and undertaking wide-ranging initiatives to improve the personal security of public transport passengers and staff and to keep our public transport systems as low crime environments.

■ **Railway Stations: Visual Impairment**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[6515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that train stations in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire are fully equipped with tactile paving along platform edges.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have asked Network Rail to develop a programme to aim to install platform edge tactile strips on every platform in Great Britain.

I will make a further announcement in due course.

■ **Railways: Safety**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[7242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Office of Rail and Road's 2020 annual safety report into the rail industry, whether Network Rail has spent any money on consultant services in connection with meeting the requirements of safety legislation in the financial year 2020-21.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Safety of the rail network is the operational responsibility of Network Rail, which is regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). Network Rail has invested significantly in meeting its health and safety requirements during 2020-21, including through the £70m fund for improving track worker safety announced in 2019. It has not spent money on consultancy services during this period in relation to the ORR's 2020 annual safety report.

■ **Roll-on Roll-off Ships: Charging Points**

Mike Kane:

[\[6307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the availability of shore side electric recharging facilities for roll-on roll-off ferries in the Port of Dover; and how far that port is to the nearest grid connection of sufficient capacity to support those facilities.

Robert Courts:

The Department has made no assessment of the availability of shore side electric recharging facilities for roll-on roll-off ferries in the Port of Dover and of its related grid requirements.

■ **Shipping: Exhaust Emissions**

Mike Kane:

[\[6309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many times the Clean Maritime Council has met since October 2018 to date; and if he will list its membership.

Robert Courts:

The department regularly engages with the Clean Maritime Council on all matters that concern them, including reducing the sector's emissions. The Council has met eight times since October 2018, including four times in the past six months since December 2020. Meetings were temporarily paused in 2020 due to Covid-19 but were resumed virtually at the end of the year.

The organisations represented on the Clean Maritime Council include the British Ports Association, Clean Cargo Working Group, Engie, IMarEST, ING, Innovate UK, Maritime Enterprise Working Group, Maritime London, ORE Catapult, Red Funnel, Smart Green Shipping Alliance, Strathclyde University/MarRI-UK, University College London, UK Chamber of Shipping, UK Major Ports Group as well as the Department for Transport, the Maritime Coastguard Agency, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Mike Kane:[\[6310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will list the issues discussed at the last meeting of the Clean Maritime Council.

Robert Courts:

The department regularly engages with the Clean Maritime Council on all matters concerning maritime decarbonisation. The Council last met on 19 May 2021 and the agenda included a discussion on the recent announcement to include International Aviation and Shipping emissions in the Sixth Carbon Budget, as well as future domestic policy priorities including the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Officials also gave a brief update on the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition.

Mike Kane:[\[6311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on implementing the Clean Maritime Plan.

Robert Courts:

The Department has made good progress in implementing the Clean Maritime Plan. As set out in the plan, clean maritime innovation in the UK has been supported with a round of Research and Development grants and a Clean Maritime Innovation call, and a consultation on how the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation could be used to encourage the uptake of low carbon fuels in the maritime sector was launched. A Clean Maritime Award was established to celebrate leaders in the field of emissions reduction, a study to identify and support potential UK zero emission shipping clusters was undertaken and the Maritime Future Technologies team within the Maritime & Coastguard Agency was launched. This year, a Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition, which build on the commitments set out in the Clean Maritime Plan was launched.

■ **Spaceflight: Climate Change**

John Healey:

[\[6186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether legal agreements have been signed by private sector partners to help ensure UK rocket launches are consistent with climate change emissions reduction targets.

Rachel Maclean:

All applicants for a launch or spaceport licence under the Space Industry Act 2018 are required to submit an assessment of environmental effects. The spaceflight regulator will take account of these assessments and the Government's environmental objectives when deciding licence applications and setting licence conditions. The Government will set environmental objectives for the regulator, including minimising emissions contributing to climate change resulting from spaceflight activities.

■ **Taxis: Coronavirus**

Justin Madders:

[\[3927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the accessibility of the covid-19 business support measures for taxi and private hire drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The majority of taxi and PHV drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

Drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles may also be eligible for other sources of support, including locally administered grant funding. An online support finder tool has been made available to help businesses and self-employed workers determine what support is available to them.

■ **Trains: Hitachi**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[6415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he will use a different risk assessment for Hitachi Intercity Class 800 series trains that have already been welded; and whether risk assessments will take into account that some cracks may not be visible.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We expect Hitachi to work with train operators, and the independent ORR (Office of Road and Rail) to ensure that trains are able to operate safely and to assess and refine risk assessments as the future repair program develops.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[6417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the introduction of new Hitachi-made trains onto the UK rail network will be delayed as a result of faults within the Intercity Class 800 series trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We expect Hitachi to take lessons learnt from this incident into future orders and expect Hitachi to deliver trains on time and to the quality and reliability contracted.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[7241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average age is of Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series fleet (a) that operate on the UK rail network and (b) that are affected by cracking.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The average age of the Class 800 fleet is 2.5 years. Engineers are undertaking detailed root cause analysis of the fleet to determine if the cracks are linked to the age of the fleet, and mileage operated

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions**Mike Kane:**[\[6308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to publish the Transport Decarbonisation Plan before the summer 2021 Parliamentary recess.

Rachel Maclean:

Our Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set an ambitious pathway to end UK transport's carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest and we intend to publish it shortly.

■ Transport: Exhaust Emissions**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[7314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to lower the amount of carbon dioxide emitted as a result of transport in the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

Our Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set an ambitious pathway to end UK transport's carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest and we intend to publish it shortly.

■ Travel Restrictions: United Arab Emirates**Mr Nicholas Brown:**[\[6200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department used to inform its decision to put the United Arab Emirates on covid-19 red list for travel.

Robert Courts:

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.

The decision to add the United Arab Emirates to the red list on 28 January was made by the Government, following analysis of the variant of concern first identified in South Africa and its strong travel connections to South Africa.

As with all our coronavirus measures, the Government keeps the red list under constant review and our priority remains to protect the health of the UK public.

A summary of the JBC methodology has been published on GOV.UK, alongside key data that supports ministers' decisions.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Nickie Aiken:

[6469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of exempting parents who are separated and whose children live abroad from international travel quarantine restrictions, to allow such working parents to visit their children without the need to take a considerable amount of annual leave.

Robert Courts:

International travel is now governed by a new traffic light system. Health measures at the border, after arrival, will vary depending on whether travelling from a green, amber or red country. The decision to implement additional border measures is in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of COVID-19 variants of concern identified in those countries. There are a range of border measures in place to protect the UK from the importation of coronavirus and variants of concern (VoCs). These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under constant review.

We have made enormous progress this year in tackling the pandemic across Britain. That progress has been hard won and it is important that we don't risk undermining it now. International travel is vital. It connects families who have been kept apart, boosts businesses and underpins the UK economy. It is absolutely essential that any steps we take now, lay the groundwork for a sustainable return to travel, as the situation improves globally.

The government has however put in place measures to reduce the impact of border measures on families. For arrivals who have not been in a red-list country in the previous 10 days children are required to self-isolate, however they can do so in the family home and may also move between family homes during that period of isolation. For managed quarantine facilities, family groups will be able to quarantine together as long as the hotel is able to accommodate them. This includes couples and parents with children.

■ **West Midlands Rail Franchise: Rolling Stock**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[7249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress is being made on the (a) delivery and (b) rollout of West Midlands Trains' (i) Class 196 CAF Civity diesel multiple units and (ii) Class 730 Bombardier Avenra electric multiple units.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Class 196 and Class 730 units are currently being built and tested by their respective manufacturers with introduction of the Class 196 units expected to begin later in 2021 and the Class 730 units in 2022.

TREASURY■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Jim Shannon:**[\[3866\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC uses real time information to close down tax avoidance schemes.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC identify new avoidance schemes and the promoters behind those schemes using a range of data and intelligence, including real time information from PAYE systems.

HMRC actively monitor the avoidance market and when they find a scheme act quickly to disrupt the scheme promoter's business. HMRC challenge schemes and promoters using their full range of powers, including the Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Schemes (DOTAS) and Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes (POTAS) rules.

Jim Shannon:[\[3867\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many promoters and operators of schemes now subject to the Loan Charge have been prosecuted for promoting and operating these schemes to date.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 29 April 2021 to UIN 187240.

Peter Dowd:[\[4620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the work of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

John Glen:

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has functioned effectively since its establishment in 2016, supporting sustainable development in Asia by investing under globally accepted standards and following multilateral governance practices established by existing multilateral development banks (MDBs).

The AIIB has a large global membership of 103 approved members, including five of the G7 with whom the UK collaborates closely as shareholders.

As of May 2021, it has approved 123 investment projects worth USD 24.66 billion in 28 client countries, with USD 8.2 billion of this supporting Covid-19 recovery. The AIIB invested USD 1.2 billion as climate finance in 2020.

The UK supports the AIIB's green ambitions, noting that its 2030 Corporate Strategy has set a 50% climate finance target for 2025, the highest among MDBs with a UK shareholding, and also commits the Bank to Paris alignment.

Over half of the AIIB's investments to date have been co-financed with peer MDBs, predominately the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

Peter Dowd:

[\[4621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of how much UK property and infrastructure is owned by China State Development and Investment Corporation.

John Glen:

HMG does not routinely monitor cumulative investment activity from specific companies. Foreign investment supports UK jobs and productivity. As set out in *Build Back Better: our plan for growth* alongside the Budget in March, the Government is committed to ensuring that the UK continues to be one of the top destinations in the world for investment. The National Security and Investment Act will give the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy the power to call in acquisitions of control over qualifying entities or assets to assess whether they give rise to national security concerns.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties**

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[3856\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish his response to the Alcohol Duty Review; and what representations has he received from small cider makers as part of that review.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury is analysing the responses provided following the Alcohol Duty Review Call for Evidence. This included responses from small cider makers, and their views are being considered as part of the evidence base. Further information about the Review will be set out in due course.

■ **Bank Cards**

Sarah Olney:

[\[5228\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of a £100 operational contactless card limit on (a) retail industry losses and (b) violence and abuse against retail staff.

Sarah Olney:

[\[5229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the level of consumer and retail industry support for an increase of the operational contactless card limit to £100 on 15 October 2021.

Sarah Olney: [5230]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received from industry on increasing the contactless card limit in 2021; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The legal contactless payment limits are set by Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) through regulator rules, specifically the Strong Customer Authentication technical standards. Following a public consultation and with Treasury approval, as required by the Payment Services Regulations, the FCA increased the legal single contactless payment limit to £100 on 3 March 2021.

Any changes to operational contactless limits up to the new legal limits are at the discretion of payment service providers; the Government understands that industry is preparing to implement new higher operational contactless limits before the end of the year and welcomes payment service providers and retailers working together to that end.

Other jurisdictions, including Australia, Canada and the US, have all recently increased their contactless limits to over £100 in their equivalent currencies and I understand the changes in those countries have been positive as consumers and businesses realise the benefits from these new limits.

Ministers routinely meet with and receive representations from a range of private sector stakeholders. Transparency releases are published on a quarterly basis and are publicly available on GOV.UK.

Sarah Olney: [5231]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment has he made of the impact on (a) merchants and (b) consumers of the fees levied on businesses for accepting payment card transactions.

Sarah Olney: [5232]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact on (a) merchants and (b) consumers of the payment card scheme fee increases since 2014.

Sarah Olney: [5233]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment the Government has made of the effectiveness of the Payment Systems Regulator's existing powers to regulate payment card scheme fees in the UK.

Sarah Olney: [5234]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he made of the impact on (a) merchants and (b) consumers of the payment card interchange fee increases announced by Visa and Mastercard as a result of the UK leaving the EU.

Sarah Olney: [5235]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government has taken in response to the joint call of business organisations the British Retail Consortium, British

Independent Retailers Association, Association of Convenience Stores, Federation of Small Business and UK Hospitality last year to tackle excessive card costs.

John Glen:

The Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) was established in 2015 with statutory objectives to promote competition, innovation and the interests of service users in payment systems, including card payment systems, with powers of supervision and enforcement in support of these objectives.

With regards to the cost of card payments, the PSR is currently carrying out a market review into card acquiring services. Its review is examining how effectively competition is working in the provision of these services, including looking at the fees businesses pay, such as card scheme and interchange fees, and the quality of service they receive. The interim findings were published on the 15 September. The report found that the supply of these services worked well for the largest merchants with annual card turnover above £50 million, but that small and medium-sized merchants and large merchants with annual card turnover up to £50m could make savings by shopping around or negotiating with their current supplier. The PSR is now consulting on the contents of its interim report and has engaged with relevant parties on proposals to help merchants get a better deal on their acquiring services. The Government looks forward to the final report later this year.

With regards to interchange fees, the Government has legislated to ensure that these fees remain capped for UK domestic card transactions, where both the card issuer and acquirer are located in the UK, through the Interchange Fee (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The levels of UK interchange fee caps are at the same levels as before the end of the Transition Period. Any changes in cross-border interchange fees between the UK and EU, as between the UK and other third countries, are a result of commercial decisions by card schemes.

The Government regularly engages with the PSR and other interested parties on these and other issues relating to the regulation of payment systems.

■ **Broadband**

Esther McVey:

[\[3852\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Centre for Economics and Business Research report, How covid-driven digital change could transform the UK economy, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting full fibre deployment from business rates tax to help meet the Government's 2025 target for fibre broadband.

Jesse Norman:

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. 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 it is investing £5bn to ensure those living in hard-to-reach areas get gigabit connectivity.

The Government is providing 100 per cent business rates relief for new full-fibre infrastructure for a five-year period from 1 April 2017. Telecoms providers are also significant beneficiaries of the £3.6 billion transitional relief scheme. A fundamental review of business rates was announced by the Chancellor at last year's Budget. A call for evidence was published in July 2020 to seek stakeholders' views on all elements of the business rates system including reliefs, and the Government is currently considering its responses. The final report will be published in the Autumn.

■ Cash Dispensing: Fees and Charges

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[6201]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that cash machines in deprived areas are free to use.

John Glen:

LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has commitments to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs and is held to account against these commitments by the Payment Systems Regulator.

Specifically, LINK has committed to protect free-to-use ATMs more than one kilometre away from the next nearest free ATM or Post Office, and free access to cash on high streets (where there is a cluster of five or more retailers) that do not have a free-to-use ATM or a Post Office counter within one kilometre. Furthermore, LINK's members have made £5 million available to fund ATMs at the request of communities with poor access to cash.

More broadly, the Government recognises that cash is important to the daily lives of millions of people across the UK, and has therefore committed to legislating to protect access to cash for those who need it and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term.

The Government made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021, and has announced that it will consult this summer on further legislative proposals for protecting cash for the long term.

Sarah Owen:

[6487]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce legislation to protect free access to cash for people in (a) the Luton North constituency and (b) the UK.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash is important to the daily lives of millions of people across the UK, and has committed to legislating to protect access to cash for those who need it and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term.

In line with this commitment, the Government published a Call for Evidence last year, which sought views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system.

Since then, the Government has made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021. These changes will come into effect in late June of this year. The Government's view is that cashback without a purchase has the potential to be a valuable facility to cash users, and to play an important role in the UK's cash infrastructure.

In addition, the Government has recently announced that it will consult this summer on further legislative proposals for protecting cash for the long term.

■ Cider: Taxation

Bill Wiggin: [6205]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of revenue from cider.

Bill Wiggin: [6206]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of revenue from cider that will accrue to the public purse over the next five years.

Kemi Badenoch:

Forecasts of the revenues from taxes and duties are provided by the OBR as part of their Economic and Fiscal Outlook series. Alcohol duties are also kept under review and the impact of a change to cider duty is considered at each fiscal event, including its effects on the economy.

Details of the revenue from cider duty are published regularly by HMRC in their Alcohol Bulletin, which is available on the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/alcohol-bulletin>

To support businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has introduced a very significant package of assistance, worth billions, including extensions to the furlough scheme, COVID-19 loan schemes and grant support. Specific support has also been introduced to support cider makers, through a freeze on cider duty announced at Budget 2021. This means cider duty has been frozen in five of the previous six Budgets.

■ Corporation Tax

James Murray: [6497]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether negotiators acting on behalf of the Government at meetings of the Steering Group of the Inclusive Framework on base erosion and profit shifting as part of the OECD/ G20 international tax negotiations held in

the week of in the week commencing 17 May 2021 were instructed to support a global corporate minimum tax rate for large multinational firms of (a) 21 per cent, (b) 15 per cent and (c) any other rate.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[6498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to President Biden's proposed fiscal policies, if he will support a global corporation tax plan.

Jesse Norman:

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.

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 needed to ensure that large digital businesses pay more tax in the UK, commensurate with their economic activities.

The final agreement is still subject to international negotiation and it would not be appropriate for the Government to provide a detailed commentary on its approach to these discussions.

■ **Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation**

Deidre Brock: [\[5202\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the methodology used for the calculation of payments under the Equitable Life Payment Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Deidre Brock: [\[5203\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the retention and maintenance of the data his Department requires to make further payments to Equitable Life policyholders.

Deidre Brock: [\[5204\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had (a) with Cabinet colleagues and (b) with his officials on compensation and support for people affected by the Equitable Life scandal.

John Glen:

I refer the Honourable Member for Edinburgh North and Leith to the answer I gave on 17 May 2021.

■ Financial Services

Philip Davies:

[\[6237\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it remains the Government's policy to ensure that the UK remains the most competitive place to do financial services in the world.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to ensuring the UK's financial services sector continues to remain global and competitive.

In a statement to the House of Commons in November, the Chancellor set out the Government's vision for the UK's financial services sector. This vision is of a sector that is more open; more technologically advanced; and a world-leader in the use of green finance, serving the communities and citizens of this country.

Since November, the Financial Services Act has been passed, which delivered a broad range of measures that significantly advanced these objectives.

■ Infrastructure: Finance

Sir Oliver Heald:

[\[4513\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the announcement in the 2021 Budget of £100 billion of funding for infrastructure, how that funding will be allocated across the South East region to (a) transport projects, such as East West Rail and the West Anglia mainline, (b) the roll out of high speed broadband and 5G and (c) other services to support the long-term growth of that region and places within the UK Innovation Corridor.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has committed to increase investment in infrastructure for the benefit of the whole of the UK. As part of this, we will invest £760 million to deliver the next phase of East West Rail, reinstating direct rail services between Bicester and Bletchley and creating 1500 skilled jobs. Local areas in the South East will also benefit from the Government's landmark £5bn commitment to support the rollout of gigabit connectivity in the hardest to reach parts of the country and our ambition for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. Furthermore, in 21-22 we are investing £14.6 billion in research and innovation grants and facilities across the UK, backing the priorities set out in the UK Government's Research and Development Roadmap. The Government welcomes any endeavour that aims to support innovation and 'build back better', including the initiatives of the Innovation Corridor to link opportunities in the South East.

■ Mortgages: Government Assistance

Dan Jarvis:

[6300]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has plans to support mortgage prisoners who are in negative equity paying high interest rates and wish to sell their properties.

John Glen:

The Government has undertaken significant work to understand the circumstances of borrowers whose mortgages are held by inactive firms, and it has worked with the FCA to create additional options for these borrowers, including through the introduction of a Modified Affordability Assessment which allows mortgage lenders to waive the normal affordability checks for borrowers with inactive firms who meet certain criteria, such as not wishing to borrow more.

During the recent passage of the Financial Services Act, I announced that the Treasury will work with the FCA on a review of their existing data to provide further detail on the characteristics of borrowers who have mortgages with inactive firms and are unable to switch, despite being up to date with payments. The FCA will also review the effect of its recent interventions to remove regulatory barriers to switching for mortgage prisoners and will report on this by the end of November. This will include borrowers who may be in negative equity. The Treasury will use the results of this review to establish whether there are any further possible solutions that can be found for these borrowers that are practical and proportionate.

■ Net Zero Review

Pat McFadden:

[3830]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Treasury Committee report, Net Zero and the Future of Green Finance, published on 22 April 2021, what plans he has to ensure that there is a (a) clear timetable and (b) legislative pathway to deliver a UK taxonomy ahead of COP26 in November 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

In November 2020, the Chancellor announced that the UK would implement a Green Taxonomy to create a common understanding of which economic activities are environmentally sustainable, improving understanding of the impact of firms' activities and investments on the environment.

The Government is required to make Technical Screening Criteria (TSC) via secondary legislation for climate change mitigation, and climate change adaptation no later than 1 January 2023. These TSC will be subject to appropriate, open consultation prior to making.

■ Taxation: Rebates

Justin Madders:

[\[3930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many overpaid tax refunds have been refunded within three weeks in the most recent period for which figures are available; and what the average refund time is.

Jesse Norman:

Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Tonnage Tax

Simon Fell:

[\[4703\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with relevant stakeholders on a refresh to the tonnage tax regime.

Kemi Badenoch:

As with all taxes, the Government keeps the tonnage tax regime under review and regularly engages with relevant stakeholders. Any changes to the tax system are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

■ Treasury: Correspondence

Afzal Khan:

[\[6461\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of correspondence sent by hon. Members to his Department received a substantive response within the service standard in each month of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence.

The Cabinet Office is currently compiling data on the timeliness of responses to Hon. and Rt Hon. members from Government Departments and Agencies. This data will be released, and made available to Members, in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Children: Maintenance

Munira Wilson:

[\[6483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of amending the policy on changes in child maintenance payments to remove or reduce the 25 per cent threshold for in-year reviews that would allow the paying parent to request a review as soon as changes in their income make the existing level of payments unaffordable.

Guy Opperman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given to [4706](#) on 25th May.

■ **Children: Poverty****Kim Johnson:****[4736]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the levels of child poverty in (a) England, and (b) Liverpool, Riverside constituency in the latest period for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to tackling poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to support the most vulnerable including through spending an additional £7.4billion to strengthen the welfare system, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112 billion in 2020/21. Additionally, in December 2020 we introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, providing funding to Local Authorities in England to enable them to support people with food and essential utility bills during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. Data for Liverpool is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the levels of children who are in low income in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>, "children-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables" in table 4.16ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in table 4.22ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

In the three years to 2019/20, the absolute child poverty rate, before housing costs, in England was 18%, down 3 percentage points since the three years to 2009/10.

The Department now publishes supplementary official statistics on the number of children in low income families at constituency level. Children in Low Income Families data is published annually.

In 2019/20 the absolute levels of child poverty in Liverpool, Riverside was 25%. The latest figures on the number of children who are in low income in Liverpool, Riverside and in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>.

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable.

Kim Johnson:

[\[4737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the £20 uplift in Universal Credit on levels of child poverty in (a) England, and (b) Liverpool, Riverside constituency.

Ian Lavery:

[\[5195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the £20 uplift in universal credit on levels of child poverty in (a) England and (b) Wansbeck.

Ben Lake:

[\[5251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the £20 uplift in universal credit on levels of child poverty in (a) Wales and (b) Ceredigion.

Stephen Timms:

[\[6168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the £20 uplift in universal credit on levels of child poverty in (a) England and (b) East Ham constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[6212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the £20 uplift in Universal Credit on levels of child poverty in (a) the Kingston upon Hull North constituency and (b) England.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

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 until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

As the economy recovers, our ambition is to help people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. We are investing over £30 billion in our ambitious Plan for Jobs which is already delivering for people of all ages right across the country.

Ian Lavery:

[\[5196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the level of child poverty in (a) England and (b) Wansbeck.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to tackling poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to support the most vulnerable including through spending an additional £7.4billion to strengthen the welfare system, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112 billion in 2020/21. Additionally, in December 2020 we introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, providing funding to Local Authorities in England to enable them to support people with food and essential utility bills during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. Data for Wansbeck is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the levels of children who are in low income in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>, "children-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables" in table 4.16ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in table 4.22ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

In the three years to 2019/20, the absolute child poverty rate, before housing costs, in England was 18%, down 3 percentage points since the three years to 2009/10.

The Department now publishes supplementary official statistics on the number of children in low income families at constituency level. Children in Low Income Families data is published annually.

In 2019/20 the absolute levels of child poverty, before housing costs, in Wansbeck was 22%. The latest figures on the number of children who are in low income in Wansbeck and in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>.

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable.

Ben Lake:**[5250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the level of child poverty in (a) Wales and (b) Ceredigion.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to tackling poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to support the most vulnerable including through spending an additional £7.4billion to strengthen the welfare system, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112 billion in 2020/21. Additionally, in December 2020 we introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, providing funding to Local Authorities in England to enable them to support people

with food and essential utility bills during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. Data for Ceredigion is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the levels of children who are in low income in Wales, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>, "children-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables" in table 4.16ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in table 4.22ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

In the three years to 2019/20 the absolute levels of child poverty, before housing costs, for Wales, was 16%, down 8 percentage points since the three years to 2009/10

The Department now publishes supplementary official statistics on the number of children in low income families at constituency level. Children in Low Income Families data is published annually.

In 2019/20 the absolute levels of child poverty, before housing costs, in Ceredigion was 16%. The latest figures on the number of children who are in low income in Ceredigion and in Wales covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>.

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable.

Stephen Timms:

[6167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the level of child poverty in (a) England and (b) East Ham constituency.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to tackling poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to support the most vulnerable including through spending an additional £7.4billion to strengthen the welfare system, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112 billion in 2020/21. Additionally, in December 2020 we introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, providing funding to Local Authorities in England to enable them to support people with food and essential utility bills during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. Data for East Ham is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the levels of children who are in low income in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>, “children-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables” in table 4.16ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in table 4.22ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

In the three years to 2019/20, the absolute child poverty rate, before housing costs, in England was 18%, down 3 percentage points since the three years to 2009/10.

The Department now publishes supplementary official statistics on the number of children in low income families at constituency level. Children in Low Income Families data is published annually.

In 2019/20 the absolute levels of child poverty, before housing costs, in East Ham was 22%. The latest figures on the number of children who are in low income in East Ham and in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[6211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the levels of child poverty in (a) the Kingston upon Hull North constituency and (b) England.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to tackling poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to support the most vulnerable including through spending an additional £7.4billion to strengthen the welfare system, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112 billion in 2020/21. Additionally, in December 2020 we introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, providing funding to Local Authorities in England to enable them to support people with food and essential utility bills during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income are published annually in the “Households Below Average Income” publication. Data for Kingston upon Hull North is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the levels of children who are in low income in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>, “children-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables” in table 4.16ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in table 4.22ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

In the three years to 2019/20, the absolute child poverty rate, before housing costs, in England was 18%, down 3 percentage points since the three years to 2009/10

The Department now publishes supplementary official statistics on the number of children in low income families at constituency level. Children in Low Income Families data is published annually.

In 2019/20 the absolute levels of child poverty, before housing costs, in Kingston upon Hull North was 26%. The latest figures on the number of children who are in low income in Kingston upon Hull North and in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>.

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence

Afzal Khan:

[6457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of correspondence sent by hon. Members to her Department received a substantive response within the service standard in each month of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence.

The Cabinet Office is currently compiling data on the timeliness of responses to Hon. and Rt Hon. members from Government Departments and Agencies. This data will be released, and made available to Members, in due course.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Vicky Foxcroft:

[7227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has to measure the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Disability Unit is working with the Office for National Statistics to improve our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people.

The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people, and those with health conditions, continues to be monitored across Government using a range of sources including regular engagement with disabled people and disability stakeholders to ensure the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to COVID-19.

We are learning as much as we can, as quickly as we can about this virus, who it affects and how best to keep everyone safe from it and protect those who may be more vulnerable than others.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[7228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional support the Government will provide to disabled people to support them to recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. We are ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to employment support, disability benefits, financial support, as well as accessible communications and updated guidance.

We are actively working on policies to prevent health related job losses, and provide specific employment support for disabled people out of work. We are helping disabled people stay in work and enter work through initiatives like Access to Work and Disability Confident and employment programmes like the Work and Health Programme, and Intensive Personalised Employment Support.

■ Employment: Young People

Stuart Anderson:

[\[4032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many youth employability coaches will be based in the City of Wolverhampton.

Mims Davies:

We do not publish YEC numbers by area, but I can confirm that Wolverhampton does have Youth Employability Coach representation within its Jobcentres.

Youth Employability Coaches are providing flexible support to young people with significant complex needs and barriers to help them move into employment and offering six weeks of in-work support when they start work. This support is one element of the DWP Youth Offer, alongside the Youth Employment Programme and Youth Hubs designed to support young people enter the labour market.

■ Food Poverty

Zarah Sultana:

[\[4722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on steps taken in response to the Trussell Trust's State of Hunger report, published on 12 May 2021.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 25 May 2021]: This Government has long-championed the principle that the best and most sustainable way to tackle poverty is by supporting people to move into and to progress in work wherever possible. Before the pandemic, this approach had seen record levels of employment, the strongest growth in household

incomes for almost 20 years, and 1.3 million fewer people, including 300,000 children, in absolute poverty, after housing costs compared with 2010.

Throughout the pandemic, Government departments have worked together to deliver support to help people cope with its the financial effects including, for example, on the Covid Winter Support Package. Part of this package included the Covid Winter Grant and Covid Local Support Grant, together totalling £269m administered by local authorities to help the most vulnerable stay warm and well fed, with the principal focus on children.

The Holiday Activities and Food Fund, which provides healthy meals, enriching activities and nutritional education, as well as signposting families to wider local support, has received £220m of funding for the major school holidays in 2021.

As we recover from the pandemic, Departments will continue to work together to deliver a number of key cross-cutting outcomes linked to the 2020 Spending Review. These outcomes include addressing poverty through enabling progression into work and increasing financial resilience. DWP is leading this work in collaboration with other Departments including, in particular, HMT, DfE, MHCLG and Defra.

■ **Personal Independence Payment**

Drew Hendry:

[6346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the average waiting time for a decision on whether an award should be made in the case of a new Personal Independence Payment application; and what assessment she has made of acceptability of that waiting time.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Hon member to the answer I gave on 24 May 2021 to Question [UIN3035](#).

■ **Social Security Benefits**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the annual cost to the public purse is of retaining the benefit cap; and whether that figure includes (a) police costs in responding to domestic abuse reports, (b) local authority costs for temporary housing, (c) the administration costs of Discretionary Housing Payments and (d) additional costs on other public services.

Mims Davies:

This information is not readily available, and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[4667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the benefit cap on the ability of families affected by that cap to afford to food, heating, clothing and personal care items.

Mims Davies:

The Department published its evaluation of the original benefit cap levels “Benefit cap: Analysis of Outcomes of capped claimants” in December 2014. This included in-depth interviews with people affected by the benefit cap, about the impact of the benefit cap on their income and wellbeing.

The evaluation can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-cap-evaluation>

■ Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [4666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the joint briefing from Shelter and Women's Aid entitled The Benefit Cap and Domestic Abuse, published May 2021, what assessment she has made of the effect of the benefit cap on people fleeing domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls.

Mims Davies:

I refer the Hon Member to my response given to PQ [1171](#).

■ Social Security Benefits: Refugees

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [4668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the benefit cap on levels of demand on refugees.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

Domestic abuse survivors living in refuges provided by not-for-profit organisations can apply for help with their housing costs through Housing Benefit. During this time, their Housing Benefit is exempt from the Benefit Cap.

Housing Benefit claimants living in refuges can also apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment to help with the cost of moving into settled accommodation.

■ Universal Credit

Jonathan Reynolds: [6282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effects on trends in the level of fraud and error of paying childcare costs in arrears through the universal credit payments system.

Will Quince:

DWP asks claimants to provide key documentation at the beginning of a Universal Credit childcare claim, which allows the Department to validate childcare from the outset. After the initial costs have been verified, the claimant must continue to report – and where appropriate verify – the childcare costs they pay. Transaction risking helps ensure that changes are being reported correctly.

Our recently published Fraud and Error estimates show that 'child care' related overpayments and underpayments in Universal Credit remain very low.

■ **Universal Credit: Housing**

Ms Karen Buck:

[6181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the number of universal credit claims in the private rented sector with housing entitlement (a) where Local Housing Allowance does not cover rent and and (b) which are subject to deductions for (i) universal credit advances, (ii) universal credit overpayments and (iii) tax credit overpayments for the most recent period for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

a) The information on Local Housing Allowance relative to rent is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>. Guidance for users is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

b) In February 2021 for those claims in the private rented sector with housing entitlement there were:

- i) 488,000 claims with a Universal Credit Advance Deduction
- ii) 99,000 claims with a Universal Credit Overpayment Deduction
- iii) 179,000 claims with a Tax Credit Overpayment Deduction

Notes:

- 1) Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.
- 2) The Universal Credit Overpayments and Tax Credit Overpayments figures do not include deductions due to fraud.
- 3) Figures are only available up to February 2021 to correspond with the latest UC Official Statistics.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband: Southport

Damien Moore:

[3136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to increase broadband speeds in Southport.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 26 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Matt Warman:

The Government is working with mobile operators and suppliers to build an open, flexible, and diverse telecoms supply market, following the recommendations of the Diversification Taskforce, published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The Taskforce recommendations are helping to guide our approach delivering the Diversification strategy, including its central pillar of attracting new suppliers. The Government is designing a programme of targeted R&D to level the playing field for smaller suppliers, and we continue to consider all options.

Suppliers are themselves taking positive steps to support this agenda and a number of smaller suppliers have already announced new research facilities in the UK.

The government is committed to delivering lightning-fast, reliable broadband to everyone in the UK. 'Project Gigabit' is ambitious, challenging and central to how we build back better. Our plan - to stimulate investment, bust barriers and drive competition - is working. We are on track for one of the fastest rollouts in Europe and for 60% of all households to have access to gigabit speeds by the end of the year. It is a huge leap forward from 2019, when it was 9%.

We are backing Project Gigabit with £5 billion so hard to reach communities are not left out - starting to level up now, not waiting for the end of the commercial rollout, and building on the half a million rural homes and businesses already given coverage through our support.

As part of Project Gigabit we are funding up to £210 million worth of vouchers over the next three years to help with the costs of installing gigabit to people's doorsteps and up to £110 million to connect up to 7,000 rural public buildings such as GP surgeries, libraries and schools. All premises not covered through these measures or through commercial coverage will be in scope for new Project Gigabit contracts.

According to Thinkbroadband

(<http://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E14000958>) 99.61% of premises in Southport currently has access to superfast broadband - up from 23% in 2011. On top of this, 19% also have access to Gigabit speeds. So far, 9 gigabit

connection vouchers have been issued in the Southport area with a value of £19,600. Eligibility of other premises for vouchers can be checked at <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

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. **The UK and EU were able to use the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee on 26 March to take stock of outstanding issues. Lord Frost and Vice President Šefčovič, and their respective teams, remain in close contact as we move forward.** 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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Empowering British Citizens Overseas to Participate in our Democracy

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith): [\[HCWS62\]](#)

As we move to the new chapter in our nation's history and embrace the global opportunities it presents, we must ensure that the voices of our citizens across the world are heard. As committed to in the Government's 2019 manifesto, we will be bringing forward measures in the upcoming Elections Bill to scrap the arbitrary 15-year limit on the voting rights of British expatriates and make it easier for more British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections.

Delivering Votes for Life

In an increasingly global and connected world, modern technology and accessible air travel has strengthened the ability of our expatriates to retain deep ties to the United Kingdom. Many still have family here, a lifetime of hard work in the UK behind them and some will have even fought for our country. What's more, decisions made in the UK Parliament on foreign policy, defence, immigration, pensions and trade deals directly affect British citizens who live overseas. It is therefore right that they have a say in General Elections and are well supported to do so.

Currently, to register as an overseas elector, British citizens need to have been registered to vote in UK Parliamentary elections in the UK within the last 15 years. This arbitrary and anachronistic time limit will be removed in changes to be brought forward in the Elections Bill, enabling British citizens who were previously registered or resident in the UK to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, no matter how long ago they left.

Being previously registered to vote or having previous residence in the UK denotes a strong degree of connection to the UK and so this extension of voting rights sets a sensible boundary for the overseas franchise while maintaining consistency with the existing system.

Improving participation for British citizens living overseas

The registration period for overseas electors will be extended from one year to up to three years and changes will be made to enable electors to reapply or refresh their absent vote arrangements (as appropriate) at the same time as renewing their registration. This will make it easier for them to remain on the register with an absent vote arrangement in place ahead of elections.

Improvements will also be made to the registration process. Changes to the current identity verification processes for overseas electors will bring this part of the registration process in line with the process for domestic electors and make it easier for overseas electors to have their identity verified. We will also put in place clear rules regarding the address under which an overseas elector may register, ensuring that the individual

continues to have a demonstrable connection to a UK address. This will also have the advantage of maximising continuity with the existing registration system, which electors and administrators are familiar with.

Together, these changes will help to ensure that overseas electors are able to participate in our democracy and provide extra assurance for them to have an appropriate absent vote arrangement in place ahead of elections.

Ensuring British citizens can have their say

The Government's Elections Bill will place British citizens' participation at the heart of our democracy and its broad range of measures give voters the confidence to have their say in a truly Global Britain - no matter how, or where, they choose to cast their votes.

In addition to opening our democracy to British citizens living overseas, the Elections Bill will also: improve access to voting for electors with disabilities; tackle electoral fraud by post, proxy, in polling stations or through intimidation and undue influence; prevent foreign interference by hostile actors; and increase transparency and accountability within our elections.

DEFENCE

■ **Service Complaints Ombudsman's 2020 Annual Report on the Service Complaints System**

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty):

[\[HCWS60\]](#)

I am pleased to lay before Parliament today the Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2020 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Service complaints system.

This report is published by Mariette Hughes – her first as Ombudsman - and covers the fifth year of operation of the reformed Service complaints system and the work of her office in 2020.

The findings of the Report will now be considered fully by the Ministry of Defence, and a formal response to the Ombudsman will follow once that work is complete.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Bovine TB**

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):
[\[HCWS59\]](#)

I am updating the House on today's publication of the Government's response to a consultation and call for views on a range of proposals to help eradicate bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in England by 2038. This is a step towards some of the key priorities

that this Government set out in response to Charles Godfray's independent review of our bTB eradication strategy in March 2020.

BTB is one of the most difficult and intractable animal health challenges that England faces today. In the last year, over 27,000 cattle in England were compulsorily slaughtered to tackle the disease. This causes devastation and distress for hard-working farmers and rural communities and is damaging our reputation as world leaders in high standards of animal health and welfare. Tackling bTB in England is costing taxpayers over £100 million each year.

The bTB eradication strategy, published in 2014, is making progress, with sustained reductions in the number of new cases and proportion of cattle affected by the disease in the highest incidence areas. However, to achieve bTB free status for England by 2038, we need to build on this momentum.

The consultation focused on proposals to transition away from the current badger control policy and improve diagnostic testing to root out bTB more effectively. Badger culling is one of the most contentious and divisive policies within our bTB eradication strategy and our latest consultation has continued to attract scrutiny.

We should continue to proceed with the transition to non-lethal wildlife controls as set out in the consultation and striking a timely balance for this transition will be crucial. Current policy enables four-years of intensive culling in defined areas, with scope for a further five years of supplementary culling. I intend to stop issuing intensive cull licences for new areas post 2022 and enable any new licences issued from 2021 to be cut short if the Chief Veterinary Officer considers this acceptable based on the evidence available at the time. Supplementary cull licences will be limited to two years and no further such licences will be issued in any areas in which supplementary culling has previously been licensed. We will develop a monitoring system to track the badger population and disease in badgers in former culling areas to monitor any trends. This data will be published, thus supporting any future decision making.

The consultation also put forward proposals for targeted changes to our cattle testing policy to ensure we root out the disease in herds with sustained problems, whilst further helping to protect low risk bTB areas. I am committed to introducing these policy changes as soon as is practicable. The parallel call for views included longer term options for further changes and improvements to bTB testing, supporting responsible cattle movements and rewarding low risk cattle purchasing behaviour. It also discussed ways we can continue to adapt how we pay compensation or indeed, reward farmers for "best practice". We are considering the evidence submitted through consultation responses to determine next steps here.

I am committed to accelerating work to deliver a deployable cattle vaccine by 2025. This will be a powerful additional tool in the fight against bTB and will support the staged transition away from culling in ways which will help to protect gains made and ensure incremental progress continues to be made towards disease eradication. Field trials are expected to commence in June.

There is no single solution to the scourge of bTB and we must continue to deploy a range of policy interventions. New industry initiatives, such as the CHECS TB entry-level membership, have launched. The successor to the TB Advisory Service will also provide the practical help many herd owners need.

Working together, I have full confidence that we can continue to turn the tide on this terrible disease and achieve our long-term objective of eradicating it in England by 2038.

TRANSPORT

■ **Draft Legislation: The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 2021**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):

[\[HCWS61\]](#)

I have today published as a draft the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 and an accompanying draft Explanatory Memorandum. The draft Regulations amend the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) Regulations 2008 (SI 2008/2924) to implement international air pollution standards - agreed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) - for the control of pollutant air emissions from ships.

The draft Regulations implement several air quality measures to control sulphur and nitrogen oxide (SO_x and NO_x) emissions from ships. These are contained in Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). The measures are already in force for shipping internationally, but the measures must also be incorporated into our domestic legislation to enable them to be enforced effectively. Most notably, to discourage non-compliance by foreign flagged vessels in UK waters, which would be detrimental to public health and the environment in UK coastal areas.

The draft Regulations apply the global 0.5% sulphur limit on marine fuel used by UK flagged ships operating outside European waters and prohibit ships from carrying high sulphur fuel in their fuel tanks to help compliance in international waters. They also apply the stricter NO_x Tier III limit on new ships operating in “the North Sea Emission Control Area” (including the English Channel) which came into force internationally this year. The draft Regulations also enable certain revisions to MARPOL Annex VI to be implemented more rapidly using the ambulatory reference power in section 306A of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

The draft Regulations are being published 28 days before they are due to be laid for approval by each House of Parliament. This is required under paragraph 14 of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 because part of the text in the 2008 Regulations which the draft Regulations amend includes amendments previously made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. The amendments to the 2008 Regulations which were introduced under the European Communities Act were made by the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/895) and the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships)

and Motor Fuel (Composition and Content) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3076). Further details are contained in the Annex to the draft Explanatory Memorandum.

The draft Regulations complement the Government's ambition to tackle all sources of air pollution, making our air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy as set out in the Clean Air Strategy 2019. In July 2019, the Government published the Clean Maritime Plan to address both air quality pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. The Plan sets out an ambitious path to the transition to zero emission shipping supporting the achievement of the legislative target for the UK to reach net zero emissions across the economy by 2050. The plan outlines Government's ambitions that by 2025 all new vessels for use in UK waters are being designed with zero emissions capabilities, and that by 2035 zero emission marine fuel infrastructure (bunkering) is widely available across the UK.

The draft Regulations, the accompanying draft Explanatory Memorandum and the Impact Assessment can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).