



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:29 P.M., 09 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ AEA Group: Pensions

**Martyn Day:**

[\[41040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the Government's potential role in the collapse of the AEA Technology pension scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The State cannot be held liable for the value of private sector pension schemes. Affected individuals are covered by Pension Protection Fund compensation arrangements. This has not changed.

#### ■ Animal Experiments

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[38430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether she plans to (a) review and (b) decrease the use of (i) rats and (ii) other live animals in testing procedures.

**Amanda Solloway:**

In the UK, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 regulates the use of animals in science and the regulator only authorises the use of animals in science where there are no alternatives and only to the minimum degree needed to meet the scientific research objectives and gain the benefit from the research.

The Government is committed to supporting the development of new approaches and technologies such as computer models and complex cell cultures that reduce the use of laboratory animals. This is primarily delivered by the NC3Rs which has made awards of over £100M for research and innovation to find alternatives which either replace or reduce the use of animals or improve their welfare.

#### ■ Animal Experiments: Dogs

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[38431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps she has taken to reduce the use of dogs for research purposes.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The NC3Rs has recently launched a £2.6 million call for the development of a virtual dog for assessing the safety of new medicines during drug development. The call is part of the NC3Rs CRACK IT Challenges competition and aims to build virtual canine tissues and organs using advanced computational and mathematical modelling approaches, ultimately to help replace the use of dogs. The Challenge builds on an international project led by the NC3Rs that has demonstrated that there are

opportunities to use one rather than the standard two species for some studies in drug development.

## ■ Business: Coronavirus

**Owen Thompson:** [\[42003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance the Government has issued to (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme private lenders on borrowers seeking to refinance or restructure their debt.

**Paul Scully:**

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme are delegated schemes, so it is for lenders to manage relationships with their borrowers. Lenders are expected to follow their normal commercial process when assessing restructure/refinance requests.

## ■ Certification Quality Marks

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[38133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on extending the UK grace periods for products labelled with the CE mark, but not the new UKCA mark, beyond January 2022; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

Since the new UKCA regime was announced, we have worked closely with industry to help them meet their new obligations under the UK's goods regime. We are aware businesses continue to feel the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has made adapting to the new regime more challenging.

Our priority is to support industry and ensure the continued circulation of safe and compliant products on the UK market. Therefore, in order to further support businesses in adapting to the new goods regime, we will introduce legislation which will allow CE-marked goods to continue to be placed on the GB market (England, Scotland, and Wales) for a further year until 1 January 2023.

We appreciate all businesses' efforts in preparing for the UKCA mark so far and strongly encourage them to continue preparing for the new UKCA mark as soon as possible.

## ■ Companies House

**Damien Moore:** [\[41205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to reform the powers and role of Companies House.



**Paul Scully:**

The Corporate Transparency and Register Reform consultation, published in May 2019, outlined plans for the reform of Companies House. These far-reaching reforms include identity verification of company directors and those who control companies; an expansion in the powers of Companies House to query and challenge information submitted to the register; and improving the processes for suppressing personal information from the register in instances where it is no longer relevant or presents a potential threat to the safety of individuals. This consultation received 1,320 responses and in September 2020, the Government published its response.

Please see the below links to the 2019 Corporate Transparency and Register Reform consultation and to the Department's response:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/819994/Corporate\\_transparency\\_and\\_register\\_reform.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819994/Corporate_transparency_and_register_reform.pdf) ;

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925059/corporate-transparency-register-reform-government-response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925059/corporate-transparency-register-reform-government-response.pdf).

Following this consultation, the Department published, in December 2020, three further consultations, which set out further details of the Government's reform proposals. These consultations included 'Corporate transparency and register reform: implementing the ban on corporate directors'; 'Corporate transparency and register reform: improving the quality and value of financial information on the UK companies register'; and 'Corporate transparency and register reform: powers of the registrar'.

Please see the links to these consultations below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/corporate-transparency-and-register-reform-implementing-the-ban-on-corporate-directors> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/corporate-transparency-and-register-reform-powers-of-the-registrar> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/corporate-transparency-and-register-reform-improving-the-quality-and-value-of-financial-information-on-the-uk-companies-register>.

The Government will respond to these consultations in due course and plans to legislate when Parliamentary time allows.

**■ Companies: Ownership****Emily Thornberry:****[40766]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure the full disclosure of Ultimate Beneficial Owner status for all UK-registered businesses.

**Paul Scully:**

In June 2016, the People with Significant Control (PSC) register and regulations were introduced with the aim of delivering greater transparency around the ownership of UK corporate entities. Over 99% of entities have complied with their PSC filing requirements. The register is widely used, has a positive economic effect and contributes to the fight against the abuse of corporate structures.

Between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2021, 210 criminal proceedings were issued against companies and directors in connection with failure to comply with PSC requirements. 119 directors and 91 companies have been convicted.

In October 2019, BEIS published a statutory post-implementation review of the PSC regulations which stressed the importance of ensuring the reliability of the PSC register information. With that in mind, the Government has made clear that it will legislate when Parliamentary time allows to require identity verification of PSCs a part of a broader programme targeted at further improving corporate transparency.

**■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Protective Clothing****Philip Davies:**[\[38199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Amanda Solloway:**

In line with Government guidelines and the Department's risk assessment staff in BEIS offices are not required to wear face coverings but do have individual discretion to wear one should they wish to do so. It is the responsibility of individual employers to undertake a risk assessment and advise on the need for additional mitigations to be put in place within their buildings.

BEIS sponsors 5 Executive Agencies and 23 arm's length bodies (Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Non-Ministerial Departments). They have organisational independence to set their own policies regarding the use of face covering which considers the risk assessment, the devolved administrations guidance and legislation that impacts on their location and operational need.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries****John Spellar:**[\[40587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps is he taking to encourage the purchase of fleets of e-vans from British manufacturers.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Government has provided over £100m in funding through the Plug-in Van Grant (PIVG) since its launch in 2012, supporting the purchase of over 15,000 ultra-low emission vans and trucks, the majority of which are zero emission vehicles. Demand for zero emission vans rose substantially in 2020, with increased interest from

commercial fleets, and we expect this trend to continue as more models are brought to market and supply increases.

More widely, the Government welcomes action to accelerate the development of British made electric vehicles and an announcement from the Electric Vehicle Fleet Accelerator Group, made up of seven major UK companies who have pledged to buy 70,000 British made electric vans by 2030. As part of the 10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution, nearly £500 million of funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund will be made available in the next four years to invest in capital and R&D projects to build an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain. This funding is the first part of the up to £1 billion committed by the Government to ensure that the UK takes advantage of this once in a generation opportunity.

## ■ Employment

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[41299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the draft Employment Bill will be published; and if he will reconsider the potential merits of introducing a pilot scheme on neonatal leave and pay as recommended by the Petitions Committee in its report, The impact of Covid-19 on maternity and parental leave, published 6 July 2020.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that all workers can participate and progress in the labour market and building back better as we recover from COVID-19.

We will bring forward the Employment Bill in due course, and in the meantime we will continue to take necessary action to support businesses and protect jobs.

## ■ Explosions: Lebanon

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[40767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take additional steps to ensure full transparency of any UK-registered entities linked to the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[40768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on the involvement of any UK-registered entities in the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020.

**Paul Scully:**

The UK Government's Insolvency Service has undertaken enquiries into a UK registered company with linkages to the Beirut port explosion and, where appropriate, has engaged with the Lebanese authorities. Matters surrounding the explosion remain the subject of ongoing investigation in the Lebanon and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further, nor to address specific questions on the matter, pending the outcome of any actions by the authorities there.

## ■ Flexible Working

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[37546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his planned timetable is for the consultation on flexible working; and what publications will be published by his Department's Flexible Working Taskforce.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has committed to consult on whether flexible working can be made the default unless employers have good reasons not to. The consultation will be launched in due course.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[37553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to modernise flexible working legislation.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government's manifesto included a commitment to encourage flexible working and to consult on whether flexible working can be made the default unless employers have good reasons not to. We will issue this consultation in due course.

**Zarah Sultana:** [\[41331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of giving workers the right to flexible working from the first day of employment.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government's manifesto included a commitment to encourage flexible working and to consult on whether flexible working can be made the default unless employers have good reasons not to. We will issue this consultation in due course.

## ■ Fraud

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[43398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people (a) signed up to and (b) have been actively involved with the National Trading Standards' Friends Against Scams initiative in the past twelve months.

**Paul Scully:**

The National Trading Standards Annual Report (2020-21) states that between April 2020 and March 2021, 324,296 'Friends' have signed up and pledged their action as part of the initiative, which has recently celebrated its fourth anniversary. This brought the total number of 'Friends' to 738,440 by the end of March 2021. The initiative gained an additional 292 'SCAMchampions', who drive the initiative forward for example by running in person awareness sessions to recruit 'Friends', bringing the total to 2,088. The initiative also gained 5 'SCAMBassadors', who are MPs and senior officials who use their influence to raise the profile of the work and highlight scams at

a national level, bring that total to 211. A further 31 national and local organisations have pledged their support to the initiative across the UK, bring that total to 269. Finally, an additional 400 'Scam Marshals' have signed up, who are former targets of scams who help to fight back using their own experiences, bringing that total to 1920.

#### ■ **Future Fund: Research**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[38257]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the £375 million budget of the Future Fund: Breakthrough counts towards the Government's target of investing 2.4 per cent of GDP on research and development; what estimate he has made of the proportion of that Fund that will be invested in life science businesses; and if he will set a target for investment in that sector.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Future Fund: Breakthrough will encourage private investors to co-invest with government in high-growth, innovative firms.

The fund will provide equity funding to innovative, R&D-intensive UK companies operating in breakthrough technology sectors, including life sciences. The process of securing Future Fund: Breakthrough funding is demand-led: lead investors must apply to the Fund on behalf of the company seeking investment. There are no ringfences for particular sectors.

#### ■ **Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme: Listed Buildings**

**Craig Mackinlay:**

**[42057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been released under the Green Home Grants Local Authority Delivery Scheme to listed buildings.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* BEIS does not hold data on the number of listed homes upgraded. Reporting focuses on the number of properties upgraded and measures installed rather than property characteristics.

#### ■ **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

**Alan Brown:**

**[41985]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 July 2021 to Question 21213 on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, whether delays to the publication of the Hydrogen Strategy and the Heat and Buildings Strategy will affect the timescales for the publication of the Net Zero Strategy; and if he will make a statement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* The Government plans to publish a Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP that will set out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy and outline our path to meet net zero by 2050.

The Government published the Hydrogen Strategy on 17 August 2021 and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-hydrogen-strategy>.

■ **Heating****Alan Brown:****[41984]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons publication of the Heat and Buildings Strategy has been delayed until after the Parliamentary summer recess; what the timescales are for the completion of the remaining work required for the publication of that strategy; and if he will make a statement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course. The strategy will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings, as well as our approach to the key strategic decisions needed to achieve a mass transition to low-carbon heat.

**Kevin Hollinrake:****[42002]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the Heat and Buildings Strategy.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course. The strategy will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings, as well as our approach to the key strategic decisions needed to achieve a mass transition to low-carbon heat.

■ **Heating: Housing****Jonathan Edwards:****[41813]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using biofuel heating oil to decarbonise off gas grid dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* As set out in the 2020 Energy White Paper, the Department will consult later this year on new regulations to phase out fossil fuel heating in off-grid homes, businesses, and public buildings.

We recognise that liquid biofuels may play a role in future off-gas-grid decarbonisation, particularly for properties that are not suitable for a heat pump. However, further evidence is needed to consider what role these biofuels could play. The Department will publish a new Biomass Strategy in 2022, which will review the

amount of sustainable biomass available to the UK, including liquid biofuels, and how this could be best used across the economy to achieve our net zero target. It will also assess the UK's current biomass sustainability standards, which are some of the most stringent in the world, to see where and how we can improve them even further.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[37520]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reducing the level of (a) duty on drinks and (b) VAT on food in pubs and restaurants to help support the recovery of those businesses from the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

All alcohol duties will be frozen across the board for the second year running saving drinkers £1.7 billion.

At the Budget we extended the 5 per cent reduced rate of VAT for a further six months until the end of September. Even then, the rate will only increase to 12.5 per cent for a further 6 months and will not return to the normal 20 per cent rate until April 2022. That means, across last year and this, a tax cut of over £7 billion.

## ■ Innovate UK: Grants

**Daniel Zeichner:**

**[40931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a list of Innovate UK funding competition winners for 2021 by combined authority area.

**Amanda Solloway:**

All Innovate UK (IUK) funded projects are listed in the transparency data published on the GOV.UK website. This includes postcode, Region, LEP, and Local Authority information. Details of funded projects can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/innovate-uk-funded-projects>.

## ■ Innovation and Research: Finance

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[40830]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the accessibility of grants to research and development companies that have faced financial losses during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is aware of the pressures on business caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and has sought to protect R&D intensive businesses throughout the crisis, so they can continue to develop new innovative products and help power the UK's recovery.



In April 2020, we announced a £1.25 billion package to help innovative firms through the pandemic. The comprehensive package included £750 million of targeted grant and loan support, delivered by Innovate UK, for small and medium sized businesses focusing on research and development.

■ **Intellectual Property: Writers**

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[40897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will take steps to ensure that the concerns of authors are included in his Department's work on the UK's future regime for the exhaustion of intellectual property rights, after the closure of the current open consultation.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Officials at the Intellectual Property Office (an executive agency of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy), which is responsible for policy development on the UK's IP exhaustion regime have met with representatives of the UK book industry, including authors, to discuss the issues arising from this open consultation.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[40898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent representations his Department has received from (a) members of the public and (b) the publishing sector on the save our books campaign; and if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of those representations.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is currently consulting on the UK's future exhaustion of IP rights regime and has received responses from a variety of respondents.

The consultation on this matter is still ongoing and once the consultation has closed, the Department will assess information arising from that consultation so that a decision may be made.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[40899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the consultation entitled the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime, published by the Intellectual Property Office on 21 July 2021, what impact assessment his Department has conducted of the potential effect on the (a) UK publishing industry and (b) UK authors of the potential introduction of an international exhaustion framework for copyright.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The consultation on the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime is open and the Government welcomes all interested parties to contribute to the consultation prior to the closing date of 31 August. An impact assessment was published alongside the consultation which will be updated.



## ■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Bottles

**Drew Hendry:**

**[41970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department have had with the Federation of Petroleum Suppliers on (a) the availability of supply of LPG bottles for off-grid domestic customers in winter 2021-22 and (b) prioritising that supply in the provision of LPG bottles.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* The Department is in frequent contact with Liquid Gas UK, the trade association for the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industry in the UK. Every year, BEIS works closely with industry to monitor the LPG and heating oil supply position over winter and to proactively take steps to mitigate any risks that may affect distribution to customers and essential services.

In these discussions, Liquid Gas UK reported that demand for cylinders reached unprecedented levels this year, while lead times for importing new cylinders have been significantly lengthened due to increased global steel demand and volatile shipping markets. The industry expects the demand for cylinders from the UK leisure and tourism sectors to decline as the summer holiday season comes to an end and this to ease the pressure. Their members are offering solutions such as cylinder swaps and alternative sizes where possible for consumers affected.

In 2018 Liquid Gas UK published a 'Customer Charter', which requires its member companies to adhere to a set of common principles. These include 'Cold Weather Priority Delivery' so that at times of restricted supply the industry will seek to ensure that priority groups do not run out of energy, particularly those who are aged 75 or older, chronically ill, or registered disabled. I would encourage eligible customers to make sure that they are registered with their suppliers' schemes under this Charter to help ensure that they go into winter with an adequate stock of LPG or identify at an early opportunity when they might need a further delivery.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

**Wera Hobhouse:**

**[38376]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July to Question 31509, which pyrotechnics bodies are in discussions with UKAS.

**Paul Scully:**

While we are aware that pyrotechnics bodies are currently engaging with UKAS, and are in the process of getting accredited, we cannot share any information about those individual bodies due to commercial sensitivities.

We are working closely with the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ensure that a pyrotechnics conformity assessment body is accredited as soon as possible. We will provide an update as soon as a pyrotechnics body has been appointed by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

In order to further support businesses in adapting to the new goods regime, we will introduce legislation which will allow CE-marked goods to continue to be placed on the GB market (England, Scotland, and Wales) for a further year until 1 January 2023.

#### ■ **Motor Vehicles: Waste Disposal**

**Zarah Sultana:** [\[41316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a dedicated scrapping system for diesel and petrol vehicles ahead of the transition towards zero emission vehicles by 2030.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Government is investing £2.8 billion to support the transition to zero emission vehicles, including to support the uptake of zero and ultra low emission cars, vans, trucks, motorcycles, taxis and buses, as well funding to support charge point infrastructure at homes, workplaces, on residential streets and across the wider roads network, to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car.

#### ■ **National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research**

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[38429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) receives its core funding from the MRC and BBSRC which are part of UK Research and Innovation. Core funding is reviewed every five years as part of the assessment of the impact of the NC3Rs and the quality of its work. The review includes robust international peer review and assessment by an independent expert committee.

#### ■ **New Businesses: Manufacturing Industries**

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[41272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support start-ups in the manufacturing sector.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Government is committed to supporting UK manufacturing businesses, including start-ups and recognises the vital role they play in the UK economy, by driving innovation, exports, job creation and productivity growth.

We are committed to supporting manufacturers to take advantage of innovative technology and we recently announced [£8 million in new government funding for the Made Smarter Adoption programme to help Small and Medium Sized Enterprises \(SMEs\)](#) increase productivity, competitiveness and drive up efficiency by adopting industrial digital technology, building on the success of our Made Smarter North West Pilot.

The Government's business support schemes have been put in place to help eligible businesses to get through the pandemic, from all regions and backgrounds. Information on these schemes and other resources is available via the free Business Support Helpline.

The Start Up Loans Company, part of the Government-owned British Business Bank, provides loans and pre- and post-application support to new entrepreneurs, including a year of free business mentoring for successful applicants. Since 2012, over 86,000 Start Up Loans worth over £769 million have been issued to new entrepreneurs. We are also investing £147 million through the Made Smarter Innovation programme to help forward-thinking UK manufacturers create new, green products and processes, slash carbon emissions, drive up productivity and create thousands of highly skilled new jobs across the country.

#### ■ **Newport Wafer Fab: Nexperia**

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[38260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) Nexperia and (b) Wingtech has engaged with the Government on a voluntary basis on whether their purchase of Newport Wafer Fab would fall within the scope of the National Security and Investment Bill.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government does not comment on the detail of commercial transactions.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[40879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is providing to the National Security Adviser's review of the projected takeover of Newport Wafer Fab; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that there is appropriate Government scrutiny of similar cases in future.

**Paul Scully:**

The National Security Adviser's review is ongoing, drawing on expertise from across Government as necessary.

The Government has recently strengthened its powers to scrutinise investments for their implications for national security through the National Security and Investment Act which will come into force in January 2022.

**■ Nuclear Power: Thorium****Dr Rupa Huq:****[42048]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of using thorium fuels for energy production.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* Research and development on thorium and related technologies in the UK remains active, including Research Council grants to UK universities to explore thorium-fuelled reactor systems and fuel cycle processes. The UK Government plans to continue in a similar approach to support future R&D into the use of thorium as reactor fuel.

**■ Offshore Industry: Labour Mobility****Alex Cunningham:****[43510]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to develop an internationally recognised Offshore Energy Passport for offshore workers that will facilitate job-mobility between offshore renewable and extractive industries.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The offshore wind sector is leading work to facilitate job-mobility between industries as part of the Offshore Wind Sector Deal People & Skills workstream. The release of a Joint Statement on Collaboration in 2020 reflects an active commitment to create good working practice and mutual recognition of standards across sectors. Industry have developed Merit Assessment, a system which allows for existing training, qualifications and certification to be converted to an industry recognised Global Wind Organisations qualification.

Industry is in the advanced stages of forming an agreement between offshore wind and oil and gas stakeholders committing them to work collaboratively for the benefit of the workforce across sectors and to avoid duplication of training where possible. Moreover, industry is in the final stages of developing a Wind Energy Access Portal which will provide the knowledge necessary for workers to transition to the offshore renewable industry with minimum friction.

**Alex Cunningham:****[43511]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last discussed an Offshore Energy Passport for workers in the oil and gas industry with (a) employers, (b) trade unions and (c) training standards bodies.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

I met with a Skills Body for the energy workforce, Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organisation, in March to discuss re-skilling and future skills needs. OPITO is engaging with the oil and gas and offshore wind industries through the Energy Skills Alliance to address cross-industry priorities.

The offshore wind sector has, as part of the Sector Deal, committed to cross-industry collaboration to support workers transitioning between the oil & gas and offshore renewables sectors. This is being led by the Offshore Wind Industry Council.

## ■ Offshore Structures: Electrification

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[43507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress the Offshore Implementation Group has made on tackling the regulatory and legislative barriers to offshore electrification; and if he will list the organisations included in that group.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

A Government and Regulators Electrification Group has been established with the purpose of addressing barriers to electrification at a level of ambition consistent with Carbon Budget 6 and the North Sea Transition Deal. To date the group has been attended by representatives from across the Department, as well as The Health and Safety Executive, The Crown Estate, Crown Estate Scotland, Marine Scotland, Ofgem and the Oil and Gas Authority, membership is kept under review to ensure we are able to address the strategic barriers to electrification.

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[43508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made on (a) public and (b) private funding for electrification of offshore oil and gas installations on the UK Continental Shelf in order to reduce emissions from oil and gas production in line with the targets to 2030 contained in the North Sea Transition Deal.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Through the North Sea Transition Deal, we committed to identifying potential funding opportunities for early-stage offshore electrification studies and are making good progress on this. We continue to work with regulators and industry on addressing strategic barriers to electrification of offshore oil and gas installations.

## ■ Overseas Workers: Coronavirus

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[40602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of policies put in place by UK businesses in respect of covid-19 secure working conditions for their staff operating overseas, including outsourced operations.

**Paul Scully:**

UK businesses operating overseas are required to follow the legal obligations and guidance set out by the government in the jurisdictions that the business is operating. We expect that UK businesses have and will continue to take steps to protect their employees and others from the risks of COVID-19, both at home and overseas.

**■ Post Offices: ICT****Gareth Thomas:** [\[40580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many subpostmasters were (a) dismissed, (b) prosecuted, (c) convicted and (d) received a prison sentence in each year since the Horizon computer system was installed and where evidence generated, at least in part, through Horizon was a factor in decisions; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

Over the years Horizon recorded shortfalls in cash which Post Office Ltd alleged were caused by sub-postmasters, leading to dismissals, recovery of losses and in some instances criminal prosecutions. Post Office informed the Court of Appeal in March 2021 that it had prosecuted 736 postmasters. Other prosecuting bodies also carried out prosecutions of postmasters.

As part of the ongoing criminal convictions appeals process in which the Post Office is engaged, the Courts will be examining whether Horizon evidence was essential to a conviction. It is therefore not for Government to comment on how many of these convictions may have been related to Horizon data.

**Peter Grant:** [\[41966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many current and former postmasters were (a) contacted and (b) unable to be traced by the Post Office in response to the opening of the Historical Shortfall Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

There were 27127 letters sent to current and former postmasters notifying them of the scheme.

Additionally, on the 4 May 2020 Post Office Ltd commenced a sustained paid for media campaign, which was used to highlight the scheme's existence to postmasters in addition to the mailing campaign. This media campaign was covered in over 400 National, Regional and Local newspapers.

**■ Post Offices: Rural Areas****Beth Winter:** [\[38457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to prevent rural post office closures.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone in the country can access essential services via the Post Office conveniently and locally. The Government continues to safeguard the Post Office network and protect existing rural services through the access criteria that Government sets.

## ■ Postal Services: Universal Service Obligation

**Mike Wood:**

[\[38285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is Government policy to maintain the Universal Service Obligation for Royal Mail, including the obligation to deliver mail six days a week.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government remains committed to ensuring that the universal service obligation remains affordable and accessible to all users, and that it is financially sustainable in the longer-term. We have no plans to change the obligation to deliver mail six days a week.

## ■ Public Houses: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[37519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the financial challenges faced by pubs.

**Paul Scully:**

The Department regularly meets with representatives from across the hospitality sector to discuss how it can recover and build back from the pandemic and we regularly review financial and economic impacts data for sectors. We have provided an unprecedented support package of £352 billion, including grants, loans, business rates relief, VAT cuts and the job retention scheme, which hospitality businesses have access to. We have published a new Hospitality Strategy: Reopening, Recovery, Resilience to ensure England's pubs, bars, restaurants and other hospitality venues can thrive long-term. We are also working on new rules to ringfence COVID-19 commercial rent arrears and guide tenants and landlords to agree repayment plans.

## ■ Qualifications: EU Countries

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[37350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the agreements reached for the recognition of UK professional qualifications in the EU by equivalent regulators; and if he will make a statement.

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[38129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made through the available pathways included in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement to increase and enhance the mutual recognition of professional qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

In the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), the UK and the EU agreed a framework under which regulatory and professional bodies from both territories may



enter into arrangements for the recognition of professional qualifications for regulated professions covering the UK and all 27 EU Member States.

Such arrangements will be implemented on a profession-by-profession basis and depend upon cooperation from both sides. Once an arrangement is adopted under the framework in the TCA, UK professionals will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition of their professional qualifications within EU Member States.

## ■ Research: Coronavirus

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[40831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of support available for research and development companies that are defined as an undertaking in difficulty due to losses as a result to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Amanda Solloway:**

In order to be eligible for the Government's Covid-19 debt schemes, businesses previously had to demonstrate that they were not an 'undertaking in difficulty' as of 31 December 2019. These requirements stem from EU state aid law.

In September 2020 the Government took advantage of increased flexibility in the Temporary Framework, allowing more businesses to gain eligibility for Government support – including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS). The new measures allowed for the assessment to be made at the date of application for the schemes.

A total of 182,196 businesses in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities sector, which includes a significant proportion of R&D businesses, have received over £1.72bn worth of support through these schemes. The Recovery Loan Scheme, which launched in April 2021, enables UK businesses to access loans and other kinds of finance up to £10 million per business as they grow and recover from the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic. The scheme is open to R&D companies that are defined as an 'undertaking in difficulty', so long as the business is outside the scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

This unprecedented package of support comes in addition to £14.9 billion of investment that we have committed to research and development in 2021/22, which puts UK Government R&D spending at its highest level in four decades.

## ■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

**Bob Seely:**

[\[38413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses that are owed significant rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.



**Paul Scully:**

The Government will introduce legislation to support the orderly resolution of rental payments accrued by commercial tenants affected by the pandemic. The legislation will ringfence rent debt accrued during the pandemic by businesses affected by enforced closures. The legislation will also set out a process of binding arbitration to be undertaken between landlords and tenants. This is to be used as a last resort after bilateral negotiations have been undertaken and only where landlords and tenants cannot otherwise come to a resolution.

**■ Takeovers: Private Equity****Patrick Grady:**[\[37497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the takeover of strategically significant UK-based companies by private equity firms on the national interest.

**Paul Scully:**

The UK is open for business and we welcome investment in our economy. The details of mergers and takeovers are primarily a commercial matter for the parties concerned. However, the Government acknowledges that there are instances when such transactions might result in broader concerns. This is why there is an established process for considering whether there are specific public interest reasons for Ministers to intervene in mergers under the Enterprise Act 2002. These include matters relating to national security, financial stability, media plurality and public health emergencies. The Government has recently strengthened those powers through the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

**■ Trade Union Act 2016****Andy McDonald:**[\[41881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to respond to the observation in June 2019 by the International Labour Organization's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations that the impact of sections 16 to 20 of the Trade Union Act 2016 should be reviewed with relevant social partners.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government undertook a consultation ('Trade Union Act 2016: Consultation on the Certification Officer's enforcement powers') which gave relevant stakeholders the opportunity to comment on proposals. The Government's response was published earlier this year.

The planned reforms will make the Certification Officer a more effective regulator, with powers and funding more in line with similar bodies. This proper and fair regulation, which is fully compliant with international obligations, will enhance transparency and improve standards for the benefit of union members and the wider public.

**■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans****Alex Cunningham:****[43509]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the local content target in the Offshore Wind Sector Deal applies to offshore wind turbines installed to reduce emissions from oil and gas production on the UK Continental Shelf.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK Government, and the Oil and Gas Authority, consider the development of the industrial supply chain as a key priority. The objectives of the Sector Deal apply to the offshore wind sector as a whole.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ General Elections: Finance****Dan Carden:****[43648]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the UK parliamentary general election spending limit.

**Chloe Smith:**

As I announced in my [written ministerial statement](#) on 3 December 2020, it is the Government's intention to review party and candidate spending limits for all polls within the legislative competence of the UK Government, other than local council elections in England which were uprated last year, with a view to uprating them in line with inflation since they were originally set. This will create a baseline for regular and consistent reviews of all limits in future.

In some cases, there has been a significant gap since the last time spending limits were raised - some, including those for political parties at UK parliamentary elections, haven't changed since 2000. This impacts campaigning ability given inflationary costs of printing and communication, which is vital for parties and candidates to communicate their views with voters. Election spending limits are fixed in absolute terms. By updating for inflation, the limits remain in line with the original intent of Parliament when they were introduced.

**■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse****Alex Davies-Jones:****[43699]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths have been attributed to nitrous oxide use in each year since 2010.

**Chloe Smith:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ43699 [UKSA final response to PQ43699.pdf]

**DEFENCE****■ Afghanistan: Armed Conflict****Dan Jarvis:**[\[43522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government has plans to award an Operational Service Medal Afghanistan to members of the Armed Forces who served on Operation Pitting but who are ineligible for that award because they have not completed 30 days continuous service.

**Leo Docherty:**

Medallic recognition for the evacuation in Afghanistan will be considered in due course. The current qualifying length of service is 30 days and any decision to change that will take lengthy consideration.

Medals or awards for individual acts of bravery or leadership are separate to the length of deployment criteria and are therefore considered based on a citation by citation basis.

**■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the UK military has taken during the process of withdrawal from Afghanistan to ensure the safety of locally employed contractors (LEC).

**James Heappey:**

The last UK forces have now left Afghanistan, however more than one thousand Armed Forces personnel, diplomats and civil servants were present in Kabul for the duration of Operation PITTING, enabling the UK to evacuate many thousands of eligible personnel on over 100 RAF flights.

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) remains open for those who were employed by HMG in Afghanistan, and for those eligible we will facilitate relocation, from third countries if possible.

**■ Afghanistan: Immigration****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has for the evacuation of Afghans and their families who helped UK and allied forces; and if he will make a statement to the House on that matter.

**James Heappey:**

The Government continues to be strongly committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to current and former locally employed staff in Afghanistan. We have worked round the

clock over the past few weeks to airlift people out of Afghanistan. This has been the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War consisting of UK nationals, Afghans who have worked for us, others who we have identified as especially vulnerable because of their ties to the UK and third country nationals.

Our Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy (ARAP) is one of the most generous in the world. Our commitment to those who are eligible under the ARAP, and the process to deliver it, is not time-limited and will endure.

Following on from the departure of UK Forces from Afghanistan, we are working with international partners on establishing potential routes for those eligible for ARAP to get to the UK, and will continue to do all we can to support British Nationals and those Afghans who have supported us, putting pressure on the Taliban to allow safe passage.

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[41339]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of people who have qualified for relocation under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme up to 18 August 2021.

**James Heappey:**

Operation PITTING saw the evacuation of many thousands of people from Afghanistan, beginning on 17 August and concluding on 28 August.

Prior to Operation PITTING, an estimated 2,000 Afghans eligible for relocation under the ARAP scheme were welcomed to the UK since the launch of the scheme in April 2021.

**John Healey:**

**[43388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications were received up to the period 1 April 2021 to 31 July 2021; and how many of those applications were subsequently rejected.

**James Heappey:**

From the 1 April 2021 to 31 July 2021 approximately 6,500 completed, credible applications for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) were received.

Following rigorous security and employment checks, eligibility decisions were made and approximately 3,500 applicants were rejected as a result of employment history, security concerns, and other complex factors.

**Lisa Nandy:**

**[43502]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan nationals who have been approved for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy remain in Afghanistan.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[43523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people eligible for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy are in Afghanistan as at 6 September 2021.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[43650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applicants that had been accepted under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy were not evacuated as part of Operation Pitting.

**James Heappey:**

Regrettably we have not been able to evacuate all those we want to, despite the huge efforts that have been made. We have identified 311 individuals and their families who are eligible for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and were called forward for evacuation under Operation Pitting, but have not yet arrived in the UK. We are working hard to contact all of those individuals to confirm their status. Some have already made their way to third countries.

The nature of the security situation in Afghanistan, and our responsibility to keep our people safe, meant that we were not able to evacuate everyone we wanted to. We are continuing to work as hard as we can to relocate more people and are looking at all possible avenues to facilitate relocation, from third countries if possible, for those ARAP eligible people who have not arrived in the UK.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[43651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applicants who had applied to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy but had not yet received a decision were not evacuated as part of Operation Pitting.

**James Heappey:**

Everyone coming to the UK on evacuation flights from Afghanistan was subject to rigorous security checks to make sure that the UK's national security is protected. Our focus was on evacuating as many as possible who had been found eligible and, as a result, only those who had been found eligible were called forward.

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) for those who worked with the UK in Afghanistan is not time-limited and will endure. We continue to work flat out to process all outstanding applications.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[43652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will confirm that (a) applicants who have previously applied to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy do not need to reapply and (b) the timing of their application did not affect whether they were prioritised under the triage system.

**James Heappey:**

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) remains open and our commitment to those who worked alongside UK forces in Afghanistan is ongoing. We

continue to receive a large quantity of enquiries and applications and have plans in place to work through the backlog of correspondence to ensure they are all responded to in the most appropriate way. All previous applications will be processed as swiftly as possible.

Prioritisation of cases is done according to the individual's status, and the potential threat they face, and not by when they were received.

## ■ Afghanistan: Interpreters

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[43649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of interpreters working for the British armed forces were successfully evacuated from Afghanistan as part of Operation Pitting.

**James Heappey:**

Under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), more than 7,000 current and former Locally Employed Staff (LES) have now been relocated to the UK, with around 5,000 of these being evacuated during Operation Pitting.

The ARAP scheme is not time-limited and will endure, remaining open to all who risked their lives supporting the UK's mission in Afghanistan and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for their support, including interpreters.

In May 2021, the ARAP scheme was expanded so that contracted interpreters who supported military operations were eligible for relocation by default. The UK Government agreed that contracted interpreters working in public facing roles at our Embassy in Kabul should therefore also be eligible.

## ■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

**Jim Shannon:** [\[37470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how long his Department plans for the RAF to continue to be deployed in Afghanistan after military troops are withdrawn.

**James Heappey:**

RAF assets have all now been withdrawn from Afghanistan.

## ■ Ajax Vehicles

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[40692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of which other armoured fighting vehicles in the global market have similar characteristics to the Ajax AFV.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Ajax is expected to deliver a first in class capability from what will be a fully digitalised platform. We remain committed to the programme. However, Defence regularly monitors what AFV capabilities are available in the Global Market.

**Ajax Vehicles: Procurement****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[37375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who has been the Senior Responsible Owner of the Ajax armoured vehicle programme to date.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Since the Main Gate Business Case baseline approval in 2014 there have been three Senior Responsible Owners for the Armoured Cavalry 25 (AC25) programme. Prior to this, from 2010 (when Main Gate Business Case 1 was signed) to 2013, there were a further two SROs. This was when Ajax was part of firstly the Future Rapid Effect System (FRES) programme and then the wider Mounted Close Combat (MCC) portfolio.

APRIL 2019 – CURRENT	MAJOR GENERAL SIMON HAMILTON (SRO AC25)
November 2015 – April 2019	Major General Mark Gaunt (SRO AC25)
October 2013 – November 2015	Major General Nick Pope (SRO MCC and then SRO AC25)
November 2011 - October 2013	Maj Gen Bruce Brealey (SRO MCC)
November 2008 – November 2011	Brig Mike Riddell-Webster (SRO FRES then SRO MCC)

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[37376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what liquidated damages clauses are contained in the contract with General Dynamics for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Terms and Conditions of the contract with General Dynamics for the Ajax programme are commercially sensitive and legally confidential. I am therefore withholding this information from public release as its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

**Nick Smith:**[\[38228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on the Ajax programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to the written ministerial statement HCWS260 laid before this House on Monday 6 September 2021.

**Attachments:**

1. HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

**Nick Smith:**

**[38232]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the full complement of Ajax vehicles is expected to be delivered to the Army.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to HCWS260, the written statement I laid in this House on Monday 6 September which provided a comprehensive update on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme.

**Attachments:**

1. HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

**Mr Mark Francois:**

**[43407]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what traffic light colour rating was assigned to the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme in the recent Infrastructure Projects Authority Annual Report on Major Projects 2020-21.

**Jeremy Quin:**

To accompany the publication of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority Annual Report on the 15 July 2021, the MOD has published Delivery Confidence Assessments for the majority of our major programmes on the Government Major Project Portfolio. These can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2021>

The Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) has a Delivery Confidence Assessment of red.

It is important to note that Delivery Confidence Assessments are not a comprehensive reflection of project performance but reflect the Senior Responsible Owner's view of the Programme's likelihood of success at a specific snapshot in time if issues and risks are left unaddressed.

## ■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing

**Mr Mark Francois:**

**[37374]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Armed Forces personnel have been injured whilst participating in the Ajax trials programme as of 21 July 2021.

**Nick Smith:**

**[38230]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel suffered injury or illness as a result of testing Ajax vehicles; and how many and what proportion of those personnel are receiving ongoing treatment.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I take the right hon. and Hon. Member's questions as being in relation to the recent reports of noise and vibration identified in the ongoing Ajax demonstration phase. As



such I would refer you to HCWS260, the comprehensive written statement I laid before this House on Monday 6 September.

**Attachments:**

1. HCWS260 - Armoured Calvary Programme (Ajax) [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

■ **BOWMAN Combat Radio System**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[40636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on which platforms the Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6 is being installed.

**Jeremy Quin:**

BCIP 5.6 is currently installed on 14,816 Army and Navy platforms. There are 2,990 platforms that are planned to have their current BCIP builds enhanced or to be fitted new. The Army's new vehicle fleets, AJAX and BOXER, will have BCIP 5.6 fits and Challenger 3 will have an enhancement. The Army's Multi Role Vehicle-Protected is planned to have a BCIP 5.6 fit. These figures may change as a result of the Integrated Review.

■ **Defence: Procurement**

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[43408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the definition of a red rating is in the Infrastructure Projects Authority traffic light rating system.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The IPA 2020-21 Annual Report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2021>

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[43409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the 36 Ministry of Defence programmes audited in the Infrastructure Projects Authority 2020-21 Annual Report, published on 15 July 2021, how many programmes were rated (a) red, (b) red/amber, (c) amber, (d) amber/green and (e) green; and if he will make a statement.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The IPA 2020-21 Annual Report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2021>

■ **Guided Weapons: Procurement**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[41707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when an invitation to tender will be published on the procurement of an interim surface-to-surface guided weapon (SSGW).

**Jeremy Quin:**

An Invitation to Tender for a Surface to Surface Guided Weapon system has not yet been released. We continue to scope options for the Royal Navy's next surface to surface guided weapon system, alongside wider lethality requirements, to allow us to deliver on the commitments outlined in the Integrated Review. No final decisions have yet been made.

■ **Hercules Aircraft****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[41717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the currently planned out of service date is for the C130J Hercules, following the Integrated Review.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Following the Integrated Review, on current planning the RAF Hercules C-130J will go out of service in 2023.

■ **Immigration: Afghanistan****Alan Brown:**[\[40999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghanistan citizens eligible for expedited relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy are still resident in Afghanistan.

**James Heappey:**

Regrettably we have not been able to evacuate all those we want to, despite the huge efforts that have been made. We always cautioned that the nature of the security situation in Afghanistan and our responsibility to keep our people safe meant that we would not be able to evacuate everyone we wanted to.

Our commitment to those who supported our mission in Afghanistan continues. Our message to those people to whom we have made a commitment is clear: that commitment to you is enduring.

Following on from the departure of UK Forces from Afghanistan, we are working with international partners on establishing potential routes for those eligible for ARAP to get to the UK, and will continue to do all we can to support British Nationals and those Afghans who have supported us, putting pressure on the Taliban to allow safe passage.

**Alan Brown:**[\[41000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to identify and assist Afghanistan citizens who are eligible for expedited relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy who are still resident in Afghanistan and yet to apply to that scheme; and if she will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

Our commitment to Afghanistan, and those who supported our mission there, continues. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme is one of

the most generous in the world, and the process to deliver it is not time-limited and will endure. The Government is working to facilitate the continued relocation of those who are eligible and we will work with international partners on establishing potential routes for those eligible for ARAP to get to the UK. We will continue to do all we can to support those Afghans who have supported us, and we are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan.

**Alan Brown:**

**[41001]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of Afghans who may have assisted the UK but were employed by a sub-contractor who may be eligible for expedited relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy; and if he will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) has seen thousands of eligible persons relocated to the UK, including British nationals and their families, Afghan former UK staff and their families, and many highly vulnerable Afghan people.

We owe a debt of gratitude to those who risked their lives working alongside UK forces in Afghanistan and believe that nobody's life should be put at risk because they supported the UK Government in Afghanistan, whether direct employees of HMG, sub-contractors or otherwise.

In May 2021, the ARAP scheme was extended so that contracted interpreters who supported military operations were eligible for relocations. The UK Government agreed that contracted interpreters working in public-facing roles at our Embassy in Kabul should therefore also be eligible.

Those who are not covered by ARAP or otherwise entitled to remain in the UK may fall under the new Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). The Home Office is working quickly to establish the details of the ACRS which will provide protection for those identified as most at risk. The Government has committed to take around 5,000 refugees in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years, making this one of the most comprehensive resettlement schemes the UK has ever established.

## ■ **Merlin Helicopters**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

**[40645]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many flying hours each of his Department's Merlin HM2 helicopters have undertaken.

**James Heappey:**

Since the declaration of Merlin HM Mk2 Initial Operating Capability on 20 June 2014, the fleet has achieved 40,778 flying hours as of 31 July 2021.

## ■ Merlin Helicopters: Training

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[40652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Merlin (a) pilots and (b) observers are in the training system.

**James Heappey:**

There are currently 46 pilots and 36 observers in the training pipeline for Merlin HM Mk2 helicopters.

## ■ Military Aid

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[43436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many overseas requests for military training and other capacity building assistance to be provided in the UK were (a) approved and (b) declined by his Department in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**James Heappey:**

Requests for training and assistance may be made through a variety of means and there is no record of the number of such requests.

Information on the number of students attending training is set out in the MOD Annual Report & Accounts which can found at the link here: [MOD Annual Report & Accounts](#)

The number of training & capacity building activities delivered in the UK each year is set out in the table below. The information reflects the number of activities rather than the number of participants.

FINANCIAL YEAR	NO. OF ACTIVITIES
2015/16	641
2016/17	621
2017/18	633
2018/19	604
2019/20	476
2020/21	160

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[43437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments were completed by his Department in relation to (a) requests for capacity-building support and (b) case-specific assistance in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[43438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by his Department in relation to requests for capacity-building support concluded that the requests should be considered (a) low risk, (b) medium risk or (c) high risk in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[43439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by his Department in relation to requests for capacity-building support were the subject of consultation with Ministers in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[43447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by his Department in relation to requests for case-specific assistance concluded that the requests should be considered (a) low risk, (b) medium risk or (c) high risk in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[43448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by his Department in relation to requests for case-specific assistance were the subject of consultation with Ministers in (a) 2015-16, (b) 2016-17, (c) 2017-18, (d) 2018-19, (e) 2019-20 and (f) 2020-21.

**James Heappey:**

In line with HMG's Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) guidance, all MOD security and justice assistance programmes are required to assess and mitigate potential risks from UK activity. A decision must be made at an appropriate level as to whether proposed activity should begin, and whether existing activity should continue. Also in line with the OSJA guidance, annual reviews of these programmes assess risks and mitigations are also undertaken. Authority for activity underpinned by OSJA assessments is made at different levels according to the risk, from defence personnel in-country to Ministers.

The FCDO's Human Rights and Democracy reports provides an estimate of the number of new OSJA assessments completed across government during the financial year (FY). These are:

FY 2020-2021	625 ASSESSMENTS
FY 2019-2020	650 assessments
FY 2018-2019	1278 assessments
FY 2017-2018	580 assessments

The full OSJA guidance and regional breakdowns of the estimated OSJA totals are publicly available on the government's website.

The MOD does not hold a record centrally of the number of times a MOD Minister were consulted on OSJA cases or the number of times a Minister decided relevant assistance should be provided.

#### ■ **Military Aid: Influenza**

**John Healey:** [\[43386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has put plans in place to utilise the armed forces to ensure the timely delivery of seasonal flu vaccines to GPs in the event that the shortage of HGV drivers continues.

**James Heappey:**

The provision of vaccines around the UK is the responsibility of the Department for Health and Social Care, Defence has not been asked to provide support to the vaccination programme this winter. The Armed Forces can provide support to the civil authorities at their request where a situation goes beyond the capacity and/or capability of local authorities and other agencies under the Military Aid to Civil Authorities process.

#### ■ **Ministry of Defence: Food**

**Philip Dunne:** [\[40778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to encourage procurement of British produce within meals available for staff of his Department since 1 January 2021.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Under the terms of existing Ministry of Defence (MOD) contracts, the procurement of British produce within meals is the responsibility of the MODs contractor. All produce sourced must meet the mandated government buying standards for food and catering services. MOD works collaboratively with its suppliers, who assure us they buy British produce where practicable.

#### ■ **Navy: Deployment**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[40643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who the Senior Responsible Owner is of the Carrier Strike Group.

**James Heappey:**

The Senior Responsible Owner for the Carrier Strike Group 2021 deployment is the Director General for Security Policy, Dominic Wilson.

## ■ Red Arrows: Hawk Aircraft

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[41714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned out of service date is for the Hawk T1 aircraft used by the Red Arrows.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[41715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the options are for a new aircraft to replace the Hawk T1 aircraft which is in service with the Red Arrows.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The planned out-of-service date for Hawk T1 with the Red Arrows remains 2030, and a decision on a replacement aircraft will not be taken for at least two more years.

## ■ Shipbuilding

**John Healey:** [\[43387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plan to publish the refresh of the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

**Jeremy Quin:**

We will publish the Refresh to the National Shipbuilding Strategy later this year.

## ■ Type 23 Frigates

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[40707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 36545 on Type 23 Frigates, with reference to the eight Type 23 frigates described as operationally available, how many were (a) ships on deployment and (b) ships generating for deployment.

**Jeremy Quin:**

To maintain our operational security, the figures provided in the answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 36545 cannot be broken down to the level of detail requested.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[41727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the current out of service date is for the last of the Type 23 frigates to leave the Royal Navy.

**Jeremy Quin:**

On current plans, the last Type 23 frigate will transition out of service in 2035.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Arts: EU Countries**

**Ms Harriet Harman:** [\[43372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Guidance on working, performing, and touring in Europe, if his Department will publish the sources of information used to support the guidance on visa/work permits.

**Ms Harriet Harman:** [\[43373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress he has made on the bilateral negotiations with EU member states that do not offer visa and work permit free touring provisions for UK musicians working in the EU.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[44446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to support touring musicians in Newport West to continue to work in Europe.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

This government recognises the importance of the UK's creative and cultural industries, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. We want musicians and performers to be able to tour abroad easily.

In order to support this, our focus is now on bilateral engagement with Member States, who are principally responsible for deciding the rules governing what work UK visitors can undertake in the EU. This is why we have spoken to every Member State. From those extensive discussions, 19 out of 27 Member States have confirmed that UK musicians and performers do not require visas or work permits for some short term touring. Travellers should always check what requirements they need to fulfil with the EU Member State they are travelling to, and that is why we are working closely with Member States to ensure their guidance is clear and accessible.

We have also developed sector specific ' [landing pages](#) ' for GOV.UK, aimed at the creative sectors, which will allow cultural and creative professionals to easily locate and access guidance that is relevant to them. From these pages, general [business traveller summaries](#) can be accessed, which provide enhanced guidance on EU Member State immigration systems for GOV.UK, and include sector-specific rules that feature on Member State websites.

We are now actively engaging with those remaining EU Member States that do not allow visas or work permit free touring, and calling on them to align their arrangements with the UK's generous rules, which allow creative professionals to tour here easily. Formal approaches have been made, DCMS ministers will be actively involved, and we are working closely with the sector to amplify each other's lobbying efforts.

We recognise challenges remain around touring, and we are continuing to work closely with the industry. We want to ensure that as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted,



touring can resume and our world-leading creative and cultural artists can continue to travel widely, learning their craft, growing their audiences and showing the best of British creativity to the world.

## ■ Charities: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[37512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps to help ensure that charities have sufficient resources to respond to isolation in the context of increased covid-19 infections.

**Matt Warman:**

Government recognises the huge contribution of charities in the national effort against coronavirus. It has provided a multi-billion-pound package of support for Britain's charities to continue their vital services, including for those self-isolating.

My Department has awarded nearly £7 million in grant funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP), a partnership of sector organisations established in 2017 to respond to domestic emergencies. The grant includes over £1.5 million for onward grants to over 200 local grassroots organisations. The current grant runs to March 2022 and is in part in recognition of the VCSEP's and voluntary sector's work to help people who need to self-isolate.

My Department works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on the NHS Volunteer Responders scheme, which continues to provide support to those who are isolated at home. We have also been working with DHSC and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop the Self Isolation Practical Support Framework, which supports local authorities to collaborate with the voluntary and community sector to support people who are self-isolating.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[37513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional support his Department is making available to charities over the summer for young people who have had their education disrupted due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Matt Warman:**

The government fully recognises the difficulties Covid-19 has imposed on charities and in particular those charities that support young people and has taken a number of actions to mitigate these.

On 8 April 2020 the Chancellor announced a £750 million funding package for charities. This included £360 million of targeted funding for charities unable to furlough their staff due to the provision of vital services. In addition, part of this package included an open fund aimed at smaller charities and social enterprises working with vulnerable people affected by the crisis in England delivered through the National Lottery Community Fund.

One example is the £16.5m Youth Covid-19 Support Fund established by my department. This fund supported 551 grassroots youth clubs, uniformed youth

groups, and national youth and umbrella organisations, helping to mitigate the impact of lost income during the winter period due to the coronavirus pandemic and ensure that services providing vital support to young people remain open.

In addition, the National Citizen Service continues to provide adventures away from home and skills for life and work for tens of thousands of young people every year. It has an established network of c.120 suppliers, more than three quarters of which are charities. It directly and indirectly supports c.10,000 youth sector jobs and provides vital support to young people. This summer, that has included two-week programmes focused on life skills, employability, and social action alongside the Changemaker programme, where young people volunteer in their local communities.

With specific regard to disrupted education, out-of-school settings, such as youth clubs, supplementary schools and extracurricular clubs – including those that are charities – can currently offer provision to all children, without restriction on the reasons for which they may attend. It is the government's priority that these providers can continue to deliver face-to-face, high quality activities and tuition to all children and young people.

These settings have continued to be open throughout the pandemic, for vulnerable children and children of critical workers in particular; and we have provided updated [guidance for these settings](#) to support them to operate as safely as possible.

#### ■ Charity Commission: Public Appointments

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[37521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to announce the appointment of the new Chair of the Charity Commission.

**Matt Warman:**

DCMS are in the process of appointing a new Chair to the Charity Commission board, which is being run in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The preferred candidate will attend a pre-appointment hearing in front of the DCMS Select Committee.

Ian Karet is the interim Chair of the Commission until 26th December or until a new Chair is appointed.

#### ■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Listed Buildings

**Tim Loughton:** [\[43369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

'Heritage asset' is a broad term used in planning policy. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for the statutory heritage protection system, including the designation of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and

Protected Wreck Sites. Details of these assets can be found online in the National Heritage List for England, hosted by Historic England on behalf of the Secretary of State.

The circa 400,000 Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Protected Wreck Sites in England or UK territorial waters adjacent to England have intrinsic value to our cultural heritage. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) does not collect or collate data on the value (property value) or income data for these sites.

DCMS and its arms length bodies produce data on the economic impact of the heritage sector; this is published within DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates and Historic England's Heritage Economic Estimate Indicators. DCMS's Culture and Heritage Capital Programme is looking to develop broader measures of value for heritage assets.

## ■ Ethnic Groups: Equality

**Rachael Maskell:**

[43562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the findings of the Charity Commission's investigation into the Runnymede Trust's analysis of the report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, the Sewell Report.

**Matt Warman:**

Where concerns are raised that a charity is acting outside of its charitable purposes, it is right that such concerns are considered by the Charity Commission as the independent registrar and regulator of charities in England and Wales.

The Charity Commission has concluded its compliance case involving the Runnymede Trust, and a statement can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-concludes-compliance-case-involving-the-runnymede-trust>

## ■ Small Businesses: Cybercrime

**Chi Onwurah:**

[38258]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28185, for what reason the Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2021 did not publish data on micro and small businesses for questions relating to the Cyber Essentials Scheme as it had in previous years.

**Matt Warman:**

When we published the [Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2021](#) we purposely focused on the impact of additional guidance issued by NCSC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: guidance on [home working](#) and [video conferencing services](#); and guidance on [moving business online](#), as we considered these to be the priority topics of interest at that time. As a result, we did not publish the data on awareness of Cyber Essentials for micro and small businesses.

Overall for businesses in 2021, 14% of businesses were aware of Cyber Essentials, in line with 2020 (13%). The figures on micro and small businesses from the 2021 Survey followed the same trend as previous years. As in previous years, awareness of Cyber Essentials was lower for micro (12%) and small (22%) businesses than medium (45%) and large businesses (50%).

## ■ Sports Competitors: EU Countries

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[38304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure professional athletes training and competing regularly in Europe are not penalised by the need to obtain visas for each nation they intend to operate in as a result of the 90 in 180 days within the EU visa rules.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The EU agreed in 2019 that UK nationals would be able to travel visa-free to the Schengen Area for short-term visits (up to 90 days in 180) for a limited number of activities, including attending sporting and cultural events, tourism and short-term study. For those undertaking longer-term stays (exceeding the 90 days limit) a visa and/or work permit may be required. It is up to the individual (including professional athletes) to check the rules of each country they intend to travel to ahead of time, in case they need to apply for a visa, work permit, or provide other documentation.

## EDUCATION

## ■ Arts: Secondary Education

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[43435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the arts premium for secondary schools will be included in the upcoming Spending Review.

**Nick Gibb:**

Due to the focus on new priorities as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, the arts premium is now subject to this year's Spending Review.

Between 2016 and 2021, the Department has spent over £620 million on a diverse range of music and cultural education programmes. This includes Music Education Hubs, the Music and Dance Scheme and cultural education programmes such as Saturday art and design clubs, the National Youth Dance Company, and the British Film Institute's Film Academy programme.

## ■ Department for Education: Listed Buildings

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[43368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department does not have properties classified as heritage assets.

■ **Disability: Finance**

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[\[43669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that the next Comprehensive Spending Review allocates adequate funding for disabled children's social care to allow every local authority to provide the support services that every disabled child needs.

**Vicky Ford:**

Funding for local authorities' services, including disabled children's social care, is unringfenced, allowing local authorities flexibility to spend according to local needs and priorities.

In the 2021-22 financial year, councils have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including a £1.7 billion grant for social care. The government has also provided an additional £6 billion of funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including those on services for disabled children.

The department will continue to work hard across government ahead of the next Spending Review to ensure children and young people are at the heart of this government's priorities.

■ **Mathematics: Higher Education**

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[41614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to help promote the study of mathematics at universities.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Universities are autonomous bodies, independent from government, and they have control over decisions about who to admit to their courses.

The department funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme which aims to increase participation and attainment in level 3 mathematics through targeted support ensuring students in all 16-19 state funded schools and colleges can access AS and A level maths and AS and A level further mathematics and helping them study these subjects to a higher level.

We are working with universities and academy trusts to establish a specialist maths school in each region (and a total of 11 nationally). These aim to prepare more of our most mathematically able students to succeed in maths disciplines at top universities. They also deliver outreach work with teachers and students in schools in their surrounding areas to increase maths A level participation and attainment.

We strongly believe effective careers guidance and advice is key to supporting young people in their education and career choices, to undertake learning and develop skills in the areas employers are looking for.

The government's Careers Strategy sets out a long-term plan to build a world class careers system to achieve this ambition. We are increasing the information available to students to ensure they can make informed choices about what and where to study. The delivery of the Careers Strategy also ensures that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) encounters, such as with employers and apprenticeships, are built into school career programmes.

## ■ Music: Curriculum

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[43434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of falling numbers of GCSE and A-level music entries on the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum.

**Nick Gibb:**

Music education is a statutory subject from ages 5 to 14 in the National Curriculum, and pupils have an entitlement to study at least one arts subject at Key Stage 4 in maintained schools.

The proportion of pupils in state-funded schools in England taking at least one arts GCSE since 2010 has fluctuated across years, but has remained broadly stable.

It is up to individual schools and colleges to decide which A level courses to offer, and as part of that they may wish to work together with other providers in the area to combine resources and maximise their offers.

In March 2021, the Department published the Model Music Curriculum, a detailed non-statutory music curriculum for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, developed by an independent panel of experts and musicians, with the aim to refresh music lessons with rich and diverse content.

The teaching of a broad and ambitious music curriculum will form a key part of the refreshed National Plan for Music Education.

## ■ Music: Education

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[43433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what timeline is for the development and delivery of the new National Plan for Music Education.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people have access to a good quality music education.

On 6 August 2021, the Department announced plans to work with a panel of experts from across the music education sector to develop a refreshed National Plan for

Music Education. This will shape the future of music education, and follows the publication of the non-statutory Model Music Curriculum for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 on 26 March 2021.

The Department also published our music education consultation report, which will help to inform the refreshed National Plan. The plan will be published early next year. The timeline for the delivery will be published as part of the National Plan.

## ■ National School Breakfast Programme

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[42200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to monitor and publish data on the average (a) food orders by schools supported through the National School Breakfast Programme and (b) proportion of students on roll that take up the offer of breakfast provision in the 2021-22 academic year.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government is committed to continuing support for school breakfast clubs and we are investing up to £24 million to continue our national programme for the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas meaning that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing and readiness to learn.

The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas. Throughout the contract we will be working with our provider, Family Action, to monitor different aspects of the programme including the ordering patterns from schools, participation rates among children, and the benefits the programme is having on pupils who are attending. We will consider the best opportunities to share information on the programme as it progresses.

## ■ Schools: Ventilation

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[41079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance issued by his Department entitled Schools COVID-19 operational guidance, what options his Department is investigating to help improve ventilation in school settings; and what steps his Department has taken to implement those ventilation improvements in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

On 21 August, the Department announced that carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) monitors will be provided to all state-funded nurseries, schools, and further education colleges from September. Backed by £25 million of government funding, the new monitors will enable staff to act quickly where ventilation is poor and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working. The programme will provide nurseries, schools, and further education colleges with sufficient monitors to take representative



readings from across the indoor spaces in their estate. It is expected that monitors will confirm that, in most cases, existing ventilation is sufficient.

The majority of monitors will become available over the autumn term, with special schools and alternative provision prioritised to receive their full allocation from September given their higher than average numbers of vulnerable pupils.

The Department will also shortly provide new guidance on how to better manage ventilation, including how using CO<sub>2</sub> monitors can help.

The Government has also launched a trial of air purifiers in 30 schools in Bradford, which is designed to assess the technology in education settings and whether they could reduce the risk of transmission.

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[43680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of classrooms had ventilation equipment in place on the first day of the autumn term 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

Health and safety law states that employers, including schools, colleges, and nurseries, must make sure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air in enclosed areas of the workplace. This has not changed during the COVID-19 outbreak. This can be provided by natural means, mechanical ventilation, or a combination of both. Most schools, colleges, and nurseries are likely to have adequate ventilation already, including those that were built or refurbished using 'Building Bulletin 101: Guidelines on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality in schools'.

From 6 September, the Department for Education started to dispatch CO<sub>2</sub> monitors to schools, colleges, and nurseries. The monitors will allow schools, colleges, and nurseries to assess how well ventilated spaces are and to encourage them to take action to improve ventilation where necessary. The Department has committed to supplying around 300,000 CO<sub>2</sub> monitors to schools, colleges, and nurseries across England in the autumn term.

## ■ Students: Mental Health Services

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[43692]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of the National Student Survey that 42 per cent of students felt enough was being done to help them, what steps he is taking to tackle mental health challenges in colleges and universities.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The past year and a half has been an incredibly difficult time for our students and I recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Higher education (HE) providers are autonomous bodies, independent from government and have a responsibility to support students with mental health conditions. They are not only experts in their student population but also best placed to identify the needs of their particular student body.

While it is for HE providers to determine what welfare and counselling services they need to provide to their students to offer that support, the government is proactive in promoting good practice in this area. I have engaged with universities on this issue and have written to Vice Chancellors on numerous occasions, outlining that student welfare should remain a priority. I have also convened a working group of representatives from the higher education and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, which has been funded by up to £3 million by the OfS. Student Space is a mental health and wellbeing platform providing a range of valuable resources dedicated to students. I am delighted to confirm that the OfS will continue to provide funding to Student Space into the start of the next academic year, which will mean that students can continue to receive this expert advice and support.

Furthermore, we asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through reforms to the Strategic Priorities Grant funding, to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard to reach students.

My hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, and I have convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group to drive action to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities. The group has focused on supporting mental wellbeing as children and young people return to education settings and to provide enhanced support for transitions between education settings in this new academic year. Our Youth Mental Health Ambassador, Dr Alex George, who has been appointed to advise the government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools, colleges, and universities, is a member of the group.

As part of our Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, the government has provided an additional £13 million to ensure young adults aged 18 to 25, including university students, are supported with tailored mental health services, helping bridge the gap between children's and adult services. This will support a cohort which has historically faced a 'cliff-edge' in support and is being especially impacted by COVID-19 with a rising prevalence of mental health problems and changes to the economy and labour market.

My department is continuing to work with our counterparts in the Department for Health and Social Care, as well as with stakeholders in the HE sector through the Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce Subgroup, and the Mental Health in Education Action Group to ensure that the wellbeing of our students remains a priority.

**■ Teachers: Coronavirus****Daisy Cooper:**[\[43681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy that pregnant teachers can choose to be medically suspended at 28 weeks gestation to protect them from potential harm while covid-19 is a significant workplace risk.

**Nick Gibb:**

There is a long standing requirement for employers to put in place measures to ensure workplace safety where a significant health and safety risk is identified for a new or expectant mother. Pregnant staff and their employers should follow the advice set out in our operational guidance, and in the Department of Health and Social Care and the Health and Safety Executive COVID-19 advice for pregnant employees.

The COVID-19 advice for pregnant employees provides recommendations for pregnant women beyond 28 weeks and those who have underlying health conditions that may place them at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19, where a more precautionary approach is recommended.

If employers cannot put the necessary control measures in place, such as workplace adjustments or working from home, they should suspend the pregnant worker on paid leave. This is in line with normal requirements under regulation 16(3) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The Department would expect employers to manage this at a local level.

**■ Vocational Education: Bradford South****Judith Cummins:**[\[43543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on outcomes for students in the Bradford South constituency of his Department's proposed reductions to funding for (a) BTEC and (b) Applied General Qualifications; and what steps he is taking to help ensure that students in that constituency are not disadvantaged by those changes in education funding.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Employers are facing a skills shortage that we must act to address. It is vital in a fast moving and high-tech economy that technical education closes the gap between what people study and the needs of employers. This is why we are introducing over 20 T Levels, developed with 250 leading employers, and reviewing the wider post-16 qualifications system at level 3 and below.

The department's plans for reform of level 3 qualifications were published on 14 July 2021. We will continue to fund high quality qualifications that can be taken alongside or as alternatives to T Levels and A levels where there is a clear need for skills and knowledge that T Levels and A levels cannot provide. The future landscape may include some Pearson BTECs and/or qualifications similar to current Applied General qualifications, provided they meet new quality criteria for funding approval.

The impact assessment published alongside the consultation response recognised that some students may find it more difficult to achieve level 3 qualifications in future. However, the assessment stated that the changes will generally be positive as students will have access to higher quality qualifications in the future, including new T Levels. This will put students in a stronger position to progress onto further study or skilled employment. The assessment acknowledged that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to take qualifications that could have their funding approval removed. These students should gain the most from these changes because they are the most likely to be taking qualifications that do not deliver the skills employers need. We are committed to ensuring that T Levels are accessible to all young people and have introduced flexibilities for students with special educational needs and disabilities. The T Level Transition Programme will support young people who are not yet ready to progress to a T Level but have the potential to succeed on it after some further preparation.

All qualifications will need to meet new quality criteria to be approved for funding in future. Technical qualifications will need to be approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) to be considered for funding approval. For academic qualifications, the department will set criteria to ensure all qualifications approved for funding are necessary alongside A levels. Ofqual will provide advice about quality to both the Institute and the department. This will ensure that all qualifications are high quality and provide the skills needed to support progression either into skilled employment or further study.

Alongside our reforms to level 3 qualifications, the department wants to improve study at level 2 and below, which has been neglected for too long. Improving level 2 and below is key to making sure that every student has a clear progression route, whether that is to high quality level 3 qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships, or directly into skilled employment at level 2. The department is considering feedback to the call for evidence, which ran from 10 November 2020 to 14 February 2021, and there will be consultation on reform proposals later this year.

## ■ Vocational Education: Disadvantaged

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[43544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure students from low socio-economic backgrounds can progress to university following the removal of BTEC courses.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Employers are facing a skills shortage that we must act to address. It is vital in a fast moving and high-tech economy that technical education closes the gap between what people study and the needs of employers. This is why we are introducing over 20 T Levels, developed with 250 leading employers, and reviewing the wider post-16 qualifications system at level 3 and below. The department's plans for reform of level 3 qualifications were published on 14 July 2021. We will continue to fund high quality qualifications that can be taken alongside or as alternatives to T Levels and A levels

where there is a clear need for skills and knowledge that T Levels and A levels cannot provide. This may include some Pearson BTECs provided they meet new quality criteria for funding approval.

The impact assessment published alongside the consultation response acknowledged that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to take qualifications that could have their funding approval removed. However, it stated that these students should gain the most from these changes because they are the most likely to be taking qualifications that do not deliver the skills employers need and will have access to higher quality qualifications in future.

We are strengthening progression pathways, creating clearly defined academic and technical routes with qualifications leading to further study, and/or skilled employment. This clarity of purpose will provide all students, including those from lower income and disadvantaged backgrounds, with a range of good options and allow them to see more easily how their study will help them to progress. For students progressing to higher education, A levels provide excellent preparation, either on their own or alongside other high-quality academic qualifications. Removing many qualifications that overlap with A levels and streamlining the system to a smaller number of high-quality qualifications will provide greater clarity for students, higher education institutions and employers and will give confidence that every option is high quality and will support progression.

Alongside our reforms to level 3 qualifications, we want to improve study at level 2 and below, which has been neglected for too long. Getting level 2 and below right is key to making sure that students have clear lines of sight to level 3, apprenticeships, traineeships, and for some, directly into other employment. We are considering feedback to the call for evidence which ran from 10 November to 14 February and will consult on proposals for reform later this year.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Air Pollution

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[43374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to meet commitments under the 25 Year Environment Plan and Clean Air Strategy on tackling air pollution indoors.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We are working with the Department of Health and Social Care who have overall oversight of indoor air quality policy.

We have made significant progress in delivering our commitments in the Clean Air Strategy to reduce emissions of particulate matter from domestic solid fuel burning, which contribute to indoor air pollution. On 1 May 2021 new legislation came into force that restricts the sale of the most polluting fuels used in domestic burning. In addition, new emission standards for solid fuel appliances will also come into force

from January 2022, ensuring only the cleanest new stoves are available to enter the market for sale.

These measures are supported by an information campaign aimed at educating people about burning better and reducing harmful emissions, with campaign materials found at [Burn better: Making changes for cleaner air - Defra, UK](#). We are also aware that new fuels, such as coffee and olive logs, are entering the market and while the government wants to encourage innovation, customers need to be certain that these products are safe. That is why we will be reviewing these fuels with a view to setting any relevant standards.

We are also working on building our evidence base to support DHSC and ensure that any further future interventions are appropriately targeted and effective. Defra's Air Quality Expert Group, with support from members of DHSC's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution, are producing a report on indoor air quality, focusing on fine particulate matter and volatile organic compounds as the air pollutants which are prevalent in indoor environments.

**Geraint Davies:**

**[43375]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the objective set out in the Government's Clean Air Strategy 2019 on ensuring that consumers are armed with reliable information enabling them to make informed choices to protect themselves, what steps his Department plans to take to meet that objective.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is committed to making sure that the best possible advice on pollution is available to the public to enable them to make informed choices to protect their health.

Defra makes air pollution information available through a range of channels, such as the UK-Air website and more recently working with Global Action Plan to deliver the Clean Air Hub.

We also provide information to a network of charities when air pollution levels are forecast to be elevated to ensure information reaches the most vulnerable.

A fundamental component of communicating air quality information is the Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI), which gives advice, based on the level of pollution that is in the forecast and being measured. Defra, Public Health England and DHSC are working with the chairs of the Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG) and the Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) to establish an expert group update the DAQI and system for providing air quality information in the light of accumulated new evidence and experience.

Defra is also undertaking a fundamental review of the UK-AIR website to improve the functionality and user experience. This project will identify a structure for disseminating information on air quality that reflects the needs and preferences of the key user groups and stakeholders that use the site.



**■ Environment Agency: Finance****David Warburton:** [43619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of doubling the annual grant-in-aid allocated to the Environment Agency for environment and business activities in the upcoming comprehensive spending review.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Discussions on the future funding of the Environment Agency will take place as part of the Spending Review process. We are in the middle of this process and cannot pre-empt the outcome.

**■ Horses: Animal Breeding****Kenny MacAskil:** [43683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government Response to the e-petition entitled Introduce national limits on horse breeding, published on 4 August 2021, what steps his Department is taking to monitoring the numbers of foals being born; when that monitoring commenced; for which breeds that monitoring is being conducted; and if his Department will publish those data from that monitoring.

**Victoria Prentis:**

To promote responsible ownership, there is clear guidance available to educate and remind horse owners of their responsibilities to provide for the welfare needs of their animal. The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids makes clear that you should consider buying or rehoming a youngster before taking the decision to breed. The foal's individual future must also be considered before breeding from your equine, and the code highlights the UK's overpopulation problem at the time of publication. The Code can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/700200/horses-welfare-codes-of-practice-april2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/700200/horses-welfare-codes-of-practice-april2018.pdf)

Further information on responsible breeding is available to the public, including World Horse Welfare's "Need to Breed" initiative which can be found here:

<https://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/advice/management/do-you-need-to-breed>.

The Government considers that key the issue at stake here is how well equines are cared for after they have been born, and existing protections address this. We continue to engage closely with key stakeholders in the equine sector about these issues. The Government currently has no plans to monitor more closely the number of foals being born.

**Kenny MacAskil:** [43684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government Response to the e-petition entitled Introduce national limits on horse breeding, published on 4 August 2021, what estimate his Department has made of the



number of equine sanctuaries and rescue centres that are operating in Great Britain; how many and what proportion of those centres his Department has been in communication with; how often his Department has communicated with them in the last three years; and when that communication began and what form it took.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We continue to have close engagement with the equine sector to support our positive action to protect and improve the welfare of animals.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had regular contact with equine stakeholders such as World Horse Welfare and the British Horse Council to assess the health of the sector.

A group of animal welfare charities released a report titled “Britain’s Horse Problem” in December 2020 which raised a number of issues including overbreeding. Recommendations from the report include the need for responsible ownership of equines as well as the enhanced promotion of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids. We continue to engage with the sector on the issues presented in the report. The Code of Practice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-horses-ponies-donkeys-and-their-hybrids>

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare demonstrates our commitment to a brighter future for animals both at home and abroad. Our reform programme includes pursuing the licensing of animal sanctuaries and rescue and rehoming centres including for horses. This mirrors a recommendation from “Britain’s Horse Problem”. Defra has been engaging with rescue and rehoming organisations to understand their views and the possible impacts of regulating the sector. Any proposals to bring forward licensing regulations will be subject to a consultation.

■ **Phosphates: Pollution**

**David Warburton:** [43615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the Environment Agency has sufficient funding and resources to manage phosphate pollution in (a) Somerset and (b) England.

**David Warburton:** [43616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the health of England's rivers of reductions in funding allocated to the Environment Agency since 2010.

**David Warburton:** [43620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of funding reductions to the Environment Agency over the last 10 years on the level of phosphates in Somerset.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The water environment faces multiple pressures, including from population growth and climate change. Improving our water environment will be challenging and requires a combined effort of government, industry, businesses and civil society. The Government and its agencies, including the Environment Agency, are taking action. We are committed to our goal of delivering clean and plentiful water, as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Defra and its agencies received a £1 billion increase in overall funding at the 2020 spending review so we can do more to tackle climate change and protect our environment for future generations. Discussions are underway about the allocation of funding through the upcoming spending review to support delivery of the government's environmental priorities.

In addition, from 2020 to 2025 water companies are investing £7.1 billion to protect and improve the water environment. This includes £600 million of additional funding for the environment enabled through the Government and regulators' Green Recovery scheme.

The Government is aware of the impact of phosphate and other pollutants on the degradation of waterbodies in Somerset and nationally. We are working closely with Natural England and the Environment Agency (EA) to provide the tools to address this problem. I have also been working with MHCLG on the nutrient pollution taskforce, which meets every four to six weeks, to ensure action is coordinated and joined up.

Regulations, including the Farming Rules for Water, are in place to protect the water environment from diffuse agricultural pollution.

We have increased agricultural inspections in Somerset and other affected areas to address phosphate pollution at source by recently allocating the EA an additional £1.2 million to significantly increase the number of inspectors visiting farmers. We have also escalated our efforts to help farmers take voluntary action beyond regulatory requirements to reduce water pollution by expanding the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme - jointly run by Natural England, EA and Defra - to operate across the whole of England.

**■ Phosphates: Pollution Control****David Warburton:****[43617]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent enforcement activity the Environment Agency has undertaken to help control the release of phosphates from the agricultural sector in the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar catchment area.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We are increasing agricultural inspections in Somerset and other affected areas, which will help address phosphate pollution at source, by recently allocating the Environment Agency (EA) an additional £1.2 million to significantly increase the

number of inspectors visiting farmers. We have also escalated our efforts to help farmers take voluntary action beyond regulatory requirements to reduce water pollution by expanding the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme - jointly run by Natural England, EA and Defra - to operate across the whole of England.

**David Warburton:**

[\[43618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the speed of investment in sewage water treatment by Wessex Water to reduce phosphorous discharge.

**Rebecca Pow:**

To address water company derived phosphates, the Environment Agency sets limits based on achieving statutory objectives. Improvements to treatment works or through changes to land use are planned on a 5 year cycle of asset improvements with the water companies. Wessex Water is expecting to invest up to £57m across Somerset to achieve phosphate removal targets by 2024.

In addition to regulatory requirements, the EA is working with Wessex Water to trial nature-based solutions such as wetlands and woodlands as part of the government's green recovery initiative. This involves rewarding landowners and farmers for land use changes that will significantly reduce phosphate releases.

There is more to be done to reduce phosphorous discharge from sewage water treatment. The Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat, which is currently out for consultation, outlines the government's ambition for Ofwat to drive water companies to be more ambitious in their environmental planning and delivery to contribute towards our environmental goals and enhance the quality of the water environment.

We have also introduced the requirement for at least one legally binding water target in the Environment Bill. This target will complement existing regulations and legislation, moving us closer to achieving our goal of clean and plentiful water set out in Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan.

**David Warburton:**

[\[43621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress the Government's task force on nutrient pollution has made on tackling phosphate pollution, including that which prevents local authorities from granting planning permission.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The task force on nutrient pollution meets every 4 to 6 weeks and brings together Defra, Natural England, Environment Agency and MHCLG to develop strategic solutions to the phosphate and wider nutrient pollution issues. We want to enable much needed development whilst at the same time protecting and enhancing the environment.

Environment Agency and Natural England are working in partnership to understand the causes of pollution within areas, and ways of addressing them. They report back regularly to the task force on progress.

Natural England has already developed several tools which enable local authorities to understand possible mitigations that can be put in place. Natural England works closely with affected local authorities to support them to develop workable solutions.

Planning Advisory Service have also organised a number of virtual “lessons learnt” events on nutrient pollution during July for local authority planners. Natural England, the Environment Agency and Defra attended and shared good practice.

## ■ Reservoirs: Kent

**Damian Collins:**

[\[43489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the Inspecting Engineers recommendations relating to vegetation management on the Mill Leese embankment, made in the section 10 report, and section 12 statement, as set out in the Reservoirs Act 1975, following their most recent inspection of the Mill Leese Flood Storage Area at Saltwood in Kent.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In accordance with Reservoirs Act 1975 (Capacity, Registration, Prescribed Forms, etc) (England) Regulations 2013 (SI 2013/1677) and subsequent guidance produced by the UK Reservoir Safety Liaison Group (the National Protocol for the Handling, Transmission and Storage of Reservoir Information and Flood Maps), we are unable to publish the full content of the section 10 report and section 12 statement. I recognise the level of local interest in this matter, and the Environment Agency (EA) will disclose information regarding the planned works that it considers will be of benefit to interested members of the public.

The EA has heard from the community that redacted documents are unhelpful and do not contribute to building trust and cooperation. The EA will be visiting the site in mid-September and intends to openly communicate the legally required work proposed for the site.

## ■ Supermarkets: Trolleys

**Steve Reed:**

[\[43531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of shopping trolleys abandoned in each (a) upper tier local authority and (b) lower tier local authority in each of the last five years.

**Steve Reed:**

[\[43532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish data held by his Department on the amount spent by (a) upper and (b) lower tier local authorities on seizing, storing and disposing of abandoned shopping trolleys in each of the last five years.

**Steve Reed:**

[\[43533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the environmental impact of abandoned shopping trolleys.

**Steve Reed:**

**[43534]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of motor vehicles abandoned in (a) lower tier local authority areas and (b) upper tier local authority areas in each of the last five years.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra do not hold any data from the last five years on the number of shopping trolleys or motor vehicles abandoned nor the amount spent by local authorities on seizing, storing and disposing of abandoned shopping trolleys.

Local authorities have powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to seize, store and dispose of abandoned shopping and luggage trolleys. They can also recover costs from the owners of the trolleys.

Local authorities may agree schemes with local businesses to make sure they collect their trolleys. The local authority cannot claim any costs associated with removing, storing or disposing of trolleys if the trolley owners are part of such a scheme.

Defra has not made an assessment of the environmental impact of abandoned shopping trolleys.

The Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 (RDAA) places a duty on councils to remove vehicles that are abandoned on any land in the open air, including private land, and council officers may legally enter land to investigate and remove abandoned vehicles.

Authorities do not have to remove an abandoned vehicle if the cost of moving it to the nearest highway is unreasonably high. It is for councils to determine whether any particular vehicle has been abandoned, and whether it is subject to their duty to remove it.

The Government has published guidance on councils' powers for removing abandoned trolleys and responsibilities for removing abandoned vehicles, which is available at gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/removing-abandoned-shopping-trolleys-council-powers> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/abandoned-vehicles-council-responsibilities>

## ■ Tuna: Fishing Catches

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

**[43456]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to which fisheries his Department has allocated the 48 tonne bluefin tuna quota set out under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement; and where those fisheries are located.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK's quota of bluefin tuna for 2021 has not been allocated to any specific sector of the UK fishing industry this year. A proportion has been reserved to account for any incidental bycatch in commercial fisheries targeting other species, in line with requirements of ICCAT (International Commission for the conservation of Atlantic Tunas) of which the UK is a member, and a further proportion has been reserved to

account for any incidental mortality arising from scientific catch and release tagging programmes.

■ **Waste Disposal: Large Goods Vehicles**

**Kerry McCarthy:**

**[43413]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of heavy goods vehicle driver shortages on local authority bin collections.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is in regular contact with the waste sector and local authorities to ensure we have up to date information about current waste collection vehicle staffing levels.

We are aware of some current impacts that heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver shortages are having on local authority bin collections. We continue to work with the Department for Transport and the other departments involved to consider all the available options.

The Government has already taken action on HGV driver shortages, including ramping up vocational test capacity so 3,000 practical tests are available each week. The Government has also confirmed funding of up to £7,000 per apprenticeship for people undertaking lorry driver training, extended driver hours and temporarily eased restrictions on delivery curfews.

The Government is working with industry and supporting job seekers to take roles in the profession. As part of this, there are increased incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice across the economy as we recover from the pandemic. Employers will receive £3,000 for new apprentices of any age who join their organisation from 1 April to 30 September 2021.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**

■ **Afghanistan: Adam Smith International**

**Tommy Sheppard:**

**[41953]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many payments have been made to Adam Smith International for work in Afghanistan in each year since 2010; what the amount of each of those payments was; and what services were provided in return for those payments.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* FCDO's consultancy spend with Adam Smith International (ASI) for work in Afghanistan from 2011 -2017 was £53.9 million.

There have not been any contracts with ASI for Afghanistan since 2017.

## ■ Afghanistan: Bilateral Aid

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[43629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £286 million allocated in aid to Afghanistan in 2021 will be spent (a) bilaterally and (b) through multilateral institutions.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are working with a number of partners, including the UN, to reallocate our funding (both bilaterally and multilaterally) to continue life-saving humanitarian assistance.

## ■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[43501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of British nationals wishing to return to the UK who (a) remain in Afghanistan and (b) have registered their presence as remaining in Afghanistan with his Department.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have worked tirelessly to safely evacuate the overwhelming majority of British Nationals and Afghans who worked for us. We have asked all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to register their presence with us and are working to verify those who have responded. That process is ongoing. We continue to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to. The situation is very fluid and numbers are changing all the time and so it is hard to give an exact figure on how many are left.

## ■ Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[41805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support is available to (a) Chevening students and (b) Chevening students with dependents; whether Chevening students can access support under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* We are urgently working to establish the details of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will provide protection for Afghan citizens identified as most at risk. Its aim is to help those most at risk, including women and girls, and any Afghan people that were called forward for evacuation in recent days, but who were sadly unable to evacuate before ceasing operations in Afghanistan. All who come to our country through this safe and legal route will receive not a five year visa, but indefinite leave to remain and our support will include free English courses for adults, and 300 university scholarships.



We will shortly be writing to local authorities and the Devolved Administrations with details on funding for extra school places and long-term accommodation across the UK.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[43504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Chevening scholars wishing to exit Afghanistan remain in that country; and what plans his Department has to assist their exit from Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. This includes around 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others. All these figures include dependants.

Our priority now is securing safe passage out of the country for all British Nationals and eligible Afghans who wish to leave. We are working through our diplomatic channels to that end, and the Taliban have given assurances that they will provide safe passage for foreign nationals and those eligible Afghans who wish to leave.

#### ■ **Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals**

**Joanna Cherry:**

[\[41932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many local roles were advertised and/or recruited by the British Embassy in Afghanistan in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* In 2019, 7 vacancies were advertised; in 2020, 6 vacancies were advertised; and finally in 2021 - 1 vacancy was advertised by the British Embassy in Afghanistan.

#### ■ **Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid**

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[43524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what humanitarian support his Department is providing to Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand with the people of Afghanistan to support a more stable, peaceful future for the country. Following our announcement of 18 August, total UK aid to Afghanistan this year is now £286 million, one of our largest bilateral programmes. As part of this, on 3 September we announced £30 million of life-saving aid to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries to help those who choose to leave Afghanistan as part of the Government's efforts to support regional stability. £10 million will be made available immediately to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters to be despatched to the Afghan borders as well as setting up sanitation and hygiene facilities. A further £20 million will be allocated to countries



that experience a significant increase in refugees to support reception and registration facilities and provide essential services and supplies.

#### ■ **Afghanistan: Overseas Aid**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[43628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £286 million allocated in aid to Afghanistan in 2021 has been dispersed as of 6 September 2021; and what his timetable is for any remaining aid to be dispersed.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have dispersed £21 million humanitarian funding this financial year. We are working with partners, operating inside Afghanistan and across regional neighbours, to reallocate our remaining funding for this financial year.

#### ■ **Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[43474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he or officials in his Department conducted (a) impact assessments, (b) policy predictions, (c) humanitarian response planning and (d) emergency contingency planning when (i) the US Government under Donald Trump announced the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and (ii) President Joe Biden reaffirmed that commitment.

**Nigel Adams:**

Following President Biden's 14 April announcement, and NATO's 15 April decision to withdraw troops, we worked intensively with the US, both on military and civilian channels to ensure an orderly and co-ordinated withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan.

#### ■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[43473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many refugees from Afghanistan his Department has processed since the beginning of August 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. That includes: over 8,000 British Nationals, close to 5,000 Afghans who loyally served the UK, along with their dependents, and around 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others. All these figures include dependants.

This is in addition to the 2,000 people we brought to the UK between April and August under the ARAP scheme.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[43503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Afghan nationals who are eligible for relocation to the UK remain in Afghanistan; and what methodology he used to estimate that number.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have worked tirelessly to safely evacuate the overwhelming majority of British Nationals and Afghans who worked for us. We have asked all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to register their presence with us and are working to verify those who have responded. That process is ongoing. We continue to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to. The situation is very fluid and numbers are changing all the time and so it is hard to give an exact figure on how many are eligible for relocation.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[43505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that British nationals and non-British nationals who are eligible for relocation to the UK who remain in Afghanistan are able to safely cross borders into neighbouring states.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand by our commitment to support those who have worked for us, and to take all remaining eligible cases. We are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan and any engagement with them will emphasise this first and foremost. We have been in frequent contact with neighbouring countries and Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT) have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan. An RDT also deployed to Dubai to help those in transit.

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[43540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department can confirm the current whereabouts of the Afghans who guarded the British Embassy in Kabul; and when they will arrive in the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand by our commitment to support those who have worked for us, and to take all remaining eligible cases. Securing their safe passage out of the country is an immediate priority. We are working through our diplomatic channels to that end. We have brought 2,000 people to the UK between April and August under the ARAP scheme. We have been clear that the Taliban must allow safe passage for those who want to leave.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[43561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he is having with his US counterpart with regards to individuals currently in Afghanistan who have been given a priority 2 designation by the US Department of State

and who also served the British armed forces on the management of their application to come to the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are in close contact with our US counterparts to ensure all eligible cases are given the support they require. We stand by our commitment to support those who have worked for us, and to accept all remaining eligible cases. Securing their safe passage out of the country is an immediate priority.

■ **Afghanistan: Taliban**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[43475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has assessed the impact of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan on achieving (a) gender equality goals and (b) sustainable development goals and (c) democratic participation.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Prime Minister has said, we will judge this regime based on the choices it makes, and by its actions rather than by its words, especially the rights of girls to receive an education. Any relationship with a future Taliban Government would need to be calibrated according to their respect for fundamental rights for women and girls.

We likewise expect the new regime to stick by the country's commitments to the sustainable development goals, as well as to other international commitments under the UN framework, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

■ **Arab States: Israel**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[43429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the likelihood of further diplomatic normalisation between Israel and Arab nations.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan. These are historic steps which see the normalisation of relations between friends of the UK. We also welcome the suspension of plans for Israeli annexation of the West Bank - a move the UK has opposed - as it would have been counterproductive to securing peace in the region.

Restoring cooperation is an important and constructive step towards peace, and shows both sides are willing to put the needs and security of both Israelis and Palestinians first. We need to build on this momentum through further dialogue and compromise to move towards a two state solution and a lasting solution to the conflict. The United Kingdom will continue to work towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

**■ Asia and Iran: Overseas Aid****Neil Coyle:**[\[43539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much each of the countries neighbouring Afghanistan will receive in Official Development Assistance in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022 as part of the UK aid uplift announced following the Taliban takeover.

**Nigel Adams:**

On 3 September FCDO announced £30 million in additional humanitarian funding to assist the regional response to the surge in refugees. £10 million was immediately made available to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters, sanitation and hygiene facilities to be erected at the Afghanistan border. The remaining £20 million of funding is flexible to rapidly scale up the response to hosting communities in affected countries if a mass movement of population takes place.

**■ Asia and Iran: Refugees****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[43627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Government's announcement on refugee support funding for countries neighbouring Afghanistan, published on 3 September 2021, how much and what proportion of the £30 million of announced funding will be provided to (a) Pakistan, (b) Tajikistan, (c) Uzbekistan, (d) Iran and (e) Turkmenistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

On 3 September FCDO announced £30 million additional humanitarian funding to assist the regional response to the surge in refugees. £10 million was immediately made available to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters, sanitation and hygiene facilities to be erected at the Afghanistan border. The remaining £20 million of funding is flexible to allow for rapid scale up of the response to hosting communities in affected countries if a mass movement of population takes place.

**■ Asia: Diplomatic Service****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[41961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates during the month of August 2021 he spoke to HM Ambassadors to Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on September 6th, he visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary has also had telephone conversations with the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September, the Tajik Foreign Minister, on 2 September,

and with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 27 and 25 August. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on 3 September, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on the same day. They held discussions with counterparts on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities. Throughout this crisis the Foreign Secretary had received advice that draws on a range of inputs from HM Ambassadors to Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

## ■ **Brazil: Democracy**

**Catherine West:**

[\[43611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of recent reports of threats to democracy in Brazil; and whether he has made representations to his Brazilian counterpart on those reports.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK values its relationship with Brazil, including our bilateral partnerships on climate, trade, security, and development. We are aware of the demonstrations in Brazil, including against the Supreme Court. These protests are ongoing, and we continue to monitor the situation closely. We are also following discussions on the electoral system, and the role of institutions in both Houses of Congress and the Courts.

The UK is clear on the importance of accountable democratic institutions, the rule of law, and the safeguarding of human rights. We continue to engage with the Brazilian government, political parties, and civil society organisations on this basis .

## ■ **Brazil: Rainforests**

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

[\[38152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the May 2020 letter from UK companies including Tesco, Asda, Sainsburys and Burger King to Brazilian Deputies and Senators expressing concern at the rapid destruction of the Amazon, what representations he has made to his Brazilian counterpart on halting deforestation in that country.

**Wendy Morton:**

In June, the Foreign Secretary spoke with the Brazilian Foreign Minister about Brazil's climate commitments, including on illegal deforestation. In August, COP26 Conference President Designate, Alok Sharma met key stakeholders in Brazil to reinforce the need for action on deforestation and climate change. At COP26 in November, we plan to agree a game-changing global roadmap of actions, reducing deforestation and promoting sustainable development to put the world on a path to truly sustainable supply chains. As COP26 approaches, we will continue to engage with our Brazilian partners on deforestation and climate change.

We are also working to secure important subnational and private sector commitments. Four Brazilian states have now made formal net-zero pledges, including Pará, which has Brazil's highest deforestation rate. Four other states have applied to join the Race to Zero, and almost 50% of Brazil's economy and half its emissions will be covered by pledges to reach net zero by 2050.

## ■ Cyprus: Peace Negotiations

**Martin Vickers:**

[\[38239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to stop provocation by Turkey by (a) opening the fenced off town of Famagusta/Varosha and (b) ensuring that a solution for Cyprus is achieved as soon as possible.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK remains committed to supporting the UN process to reach a Cyprus Settlement, which is in the interests of Cyprus and regional stability. The UK is deeply concerned about the announcement made during the visit of President Erdogan to Cyprus on 19-20 July 2021 regarding the reopening and resettlement of an area constituting 3.4% of the fenced-off area of Varosha.

We strongly support the 23 July UN Security Council Presidential Statement which condemned the announcement. The UK strongly supports the relevant Security Council Resolutions covering the issue of Varosha. The announcement runs contrary to UN Security Council resolutions and to the Security Council Presidential Statement of 8 October 2020 which called for Turkey to halt and reverse its actions in Varosha.

## ■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

**Chris Law:**

[\[40945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of malnutrition in developing countries on (a) immunity from covid-19 and (b) developing severe illness as a result of that disease.

**Wendy Morton:**

Nutrition plays a critical role in the immune response to a range of infectious diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, and measles. Though there isn't strong evidence for the impact of malnutrition on the immune response to COVID-19 in developing countries, the UK Government is maintaining close attention to emerging research on these links.

There is strong evidence that obesity increases the risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19, including in developing countries. The available evidence does not suggest that individuals with undernutrition in developing countries are at higher risk of severe illness as a result of COVID-19, but we are tracking the emerging evidence on this question closely.

**Chris Law:**

[\[40946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the potential effect of UK nutrition aid programmes on immunity from covid-19.

**Wendy Morton:**

Nutrition plays a critical role in the immune response to a range of infectious diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, and measles. We do not have strong evidence for the impact of malnutrition on the immune response to COVID-19 in developing countries.

The department will continue to review this evidence.

**Chris Law:**

[\[40947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the potential effect of reductions in nutrition aid funding on immunity from covid 19.

**Wendy Morton:**

The FCDO development budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate driven by COVID. Officials considered impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities and people from other protected groups, when developing advice to Ministers.

The available evidence does not suggest that individuals with undernutrition in developing countries are at higher risk of severe illness as a result of COVID-19, but we are tracking the emerging evidence on this question closely.

**Craig Williams:**

[\[40974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of donating cold chain equipment alongside the donation of 20 million doses of covid-19 vaccines committed bilaterally to countries in need.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK will donate 100 million vaccine doses over the next year, with 80% to go to COVAX. As of 9 August, the UK has donated 10.3 million doses, of which 4 million have been given bilaterally. We are aware of the challenges associated with storing and distributing COVID-19 vaccines, particularly in hard-to-reach communities. Resilient supply chains are essential, and cold chain equipment can bring capacity to this critical global challenge.

The UK's direct funding on COVID-19 vaccines has focused on vaccine development and procurement. For delivery, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) has been engaging Multilateral Development Banks to make funds available to countries as part of a combined \$29 billion COVID-19 financing envelope that can support vaccine procurement. Gavi has also raised \$775 million to support vaccine delivery. The FCDO is also active in the UNICEF-convened Country Readiness and Delivery Working Group to drive coordination across donor and international



organisation delivery programming. We are specifically engaging through our humanitarian networks to ensure that delivery planning and financing addresses the challenges of delivery in fragile environments.

## ■ Developing Countries: Nutrition

**Chris Law:** [\[40948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to add nutrition indicators to (a) health and (b) economic development overseas development aid programmes.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK is continuing to promote inclusion of nutrition objectives in different sectors to support efforts to address malnutrition. We are currently developing new guidance on how our agriculture, economic development and social protection programmes can be designed to improve nutrition outcomes and how we can most effectively monitor the nutrition outcomes of these programmes.

The UK worked with other donors to promote the adoption of the new nutrition policy marker by the OECD. The UK's 2019 aid spend data that was published recently included the nutrition policy marker for the first time. The use of this policy marker presents a significant improvement in the accountability of aid spending.

**Chris Law:** [\[40949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the potential effect of reductions in nutrition aid funding on food-associated greenhouse gas emissions.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK recognises the important links between climate change and nutrition, and will continue our work on food systems in order to deliver gains for nutrition, as well as for climate and the environment. Although no specific impact assessment has been undertaken on the potential effect of reductions in nutrition aid funding on food-associated greenhouse gas emissions, the UK commitment to climate action continues, including the COP26 presidency and our international climate finance spending commitment.

## ■ Developing Countries: Water

**Feryal Clark:** [\[41360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2021 to Question 34078 on Overseas Aid: Water, which of the UK-funded clean water projects will have funding reduced or ceased as a result of the UK official overseas aid budget being reduced from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent.



**Wendy Morton:**

The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has required the UK government to make the difficult decision to temporarily reduce Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI. Global Health, which encompasses water, sanitation and hygiene remains a priority for the UK.

Yearly UK bilateral ODA spend on Water Supply and Sanitation can be found in the respective annual Statistics on International Development publications:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>.

The statistics for 2020 will be published by the end of this year.

**■ Dominic Raab: Telephones****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:****[41958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will provide a full copy of his call logs for 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th of August 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on September 6th, he visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary has also had telephone conversations with the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September, the Tajik Foreign Minister, on 2 September, and with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 27 and 25 August. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on 3 September, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on the same day. They held discussions with counterparts on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

**■ Ebrahim Raisi****Andrew Gwynne:****[43427]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the election of Ebrahim Raisi as president of Iran.

**James Cleverly:**

The Foreign Secretary most recently engaged with his Israeli counterpart Minister of Foreign Affairs and Alternate Prime Minister Yair Lapid on 29 July. We regularly discuss regional issues with international partners, and continue to support the security of our allies. Following the Iranian Presidential elections in June, we have called on the new President to set Iran on a different course, including putting an end to its destabilising activity in the region.

## ■ Egypt: Human Rights

**Rushanara Ali:** [\[38264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the extent of human rights abuses under the current Egyptian regime.

**James Cleverly:**

Egypt remains a human rights priority country for the UK and we want to see more political progress and better protection of human rights in Egypt. This includes implementation of the rights guaranteed by Egypt's constitution. These rights and freedoms are essential for Egypt's long-term stability. We regularly raise our human rights concerns with the Egyptian authorities, both privately and in forums such as the UN Human Rights Council. We have raised our concerns at the highest level, including in the Prime Minister's call with President Sisi in March 2021.

## ■ Famagusta: Property Rights

**Martin Vickers:** [\[38240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps British citizens of Cyprus origin can take to safeguard their properties in Famagusta.

**Wendy Morton:**

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the Immovable Property Commission established in the north provides an effective remedy for local property issues related to the Cyprus Problem. It is for individuals to decide whether to approach the IPC. The relevant documentation can be found on the IPC website.

## ■ Famagusta: Tourism

**Martin Vickers:** [\[38238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take in response to the opening of the uninhabited town of Famagusta to tourists by the Turkish Cypriot Authorities under the guidance of Turkey, contrary to the UN resolutions 550 and 789.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK is deeply concerned about the announcement made during the visit of President Erdogan to Cyprus on 19-20 July 2021 regarding the reopening and resettlement of an area constituting 3.4% of the fenced-off area of Varosha. We strongly support the 23 July UN Security Council Presidential Statement which condemned the announcement. The UK strongly supports the relevant Security Council Resolutions covering the issue of Varosha. The announcement runs contrary to UN Security Council resolutions and to the Security Council Presidential Statement of 8 October 2020 which called for Turkey to halt and reverse its actions in Varosha.

The UK has also been clear in calling for all sides to avoid any actions or statements that could damage the prospects for a Settlement. The issue of Varosha underlines the importance of reaching a comprehensive Cyprus Settlement.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: GardaWorld**

**Jamie Stone:**

[42066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what was the length of the contract held between his Department and the security firm GardaWorld; whether that contract contained a break clause in the event of an Embassy closing; and how much that contract was worth.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* The details of this contract can be found on a public government website called 'Contract Finder' where all government contracts are published. The Afghan security contract is listed there:  
<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/e357f108-8202-4739-975b-8679dc828da4?origin=SearchResults&p=1>. The annual cost is a division of the public domain figure by the length of contract.

**Jamie Stone:**

[42067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what arrangements were included in the contract held between his Department and the security firm GardaWorld for the payment of contracted staff once the British Embassy in Afghanistan was demobilised.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* FCDO are currently working with Gardaworld to manage the dynamic situation in Afghanistan through contract variations and serving the appropriate notice period as outlined within contract. This will include reimbursement for services received up to the date of termination or variation with reasonable liabilities met that are not covered by relevant liability(i.e. insurance) provisions and may arise as a consequence of such termination or variation to contract.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**

**Chris Law:**

[40944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) full-time, (b) part-time and (c) full-time equivalent staff are employed in each of his Department's offices in the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

FCDO UK regional presence and working pattern staffing data is published in scope of Civil Service Statistics.

**Iran: Hezbollah****Bob Blackman:**[\[37437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's (a) financial, (b) material and (c) military support for Kataib Hezbollah.

**James Cleverly:**

We have long been clear about our concerns over Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups. We continue to support the security of our allies, including through our close defence partnerships across the Middle East and by working to strengthen institutions and build capacity in more vulnerable countries, including in Iraq. The Foreign Secretary recently visited Iraq to commit UK support for Iraqi efforts to tackle armed groups and militias seeking to escalate regional tensions.

**Iran: Iraq****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[38252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's (a) financial, (b) material and (c) military support for the Popular Mobilisation Forces in Iraq.

**James Cleverly:**

We have long been clear about our concerns over Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups. We continue to support the security of our allies, including through our close defence partnerships across the Middle East and by working to strengthen institutions and build capacity in more vulnerable countries, including in Iraq. The Foreign Secretary recently visited Iraq to commit UK support for Iraqi efforts to tackle armed groups and militias seeking to escalate regional tensions.

**Iran: Prisoners****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[41091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is pursuing an independent prisoner swap arrangement for British national hostages in Iran separately from the US.

**James Cleverly:**

Securing the immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran is a top priority. The Foreign Secretary has repeatedly pressed for this, as have our Ambassadors in Tehran. We do not accept any of our dual nationals being used as diplomatic leverage. All decisions we take in these cases are based on what we believe will be in the best interests for these detained British nationals.

## ■ Iran: Terrorism

**Robert Largan:**

[\[38471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK Government is taking to curtail Iran's destabilising activities through its proxy network of terror groups across the Middle East and North Africa.

**James Cleverly:**

We regularly raise Iran's destabilising role in the region at UN Security Council. We continue to support the security of our allies, including through our close defence partnerships across the Middle East and by working to strengthen institutions and build capacity in more vulnerable countries, including in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon.

We currently have over 200 EU sanctions listings in place against Iran, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in its entirety. We continue to support the enforcement of UN prohibitions on the proliferation of weapons to non-state actors in the region, including to Lebanese Hizballah (UNSCR 2216), Iraqi militia groups (UNSCR 1546) and the Houthis in Yemen (UNSCR 1701). The EU arms embargo on Iran remains in place as do UN ballistic missile restrictions on Iran. We are committed to working with regional partners, the E3 and the US to find a sustainable solution to Iranian proliferation to non-state actors in the region.

**Brendan Clarke-Smith:**

[\[41287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's (a) financial, (b) material and (c) military support for international terror groups.

**James Cleverly:**

We have long been clear about our concerns over Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups, including Hizballah in Lebanon and Syria, militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen. We regularly raise Iran's destabilising role in the region at UN Security Council. We continue to support the security of our allies, including through our close defence partnerships across the Middle East and by working to strengthen institutions and build capacity in more vulnerable countries, including in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon.

## ■ Israel: Palestinians

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[43430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the research study undertaken for the Department for International Development entitled, Value for money investment in people to people programming in Israel and Palestine, whether his Department has taken steps to conduct the further research using programme budgets and evaluations recommended on page 27 of that report.

**James Cleverly:**

We are taking forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development "Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine". We firmly believe a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. That is why we support steps to increase understanding and dialogue between the parties that can help create the conditions for meaningful negotiations. We will continue to fund peacebuilding projects focused on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and have increased our focus on monitoring and evaluation within these projects.

**Members: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:**[\[38187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire dated 21 May 2021 on protests in Colombia, reference ZA56570.

**Wendy Morton:**

This letter was responded to on 27 August 2021.

**Middle East: Piracy****Neil Coyle:**[\[40921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle piracy and the disruption of commercial shipping routes in the Middle East and (b) establish proof in instances when piracy is suspected of being sponsored by the Iranian regime.

**James Cleverly:**

The Integrated Review outlines Her Majesty's Government's intention to contribute to maritime security, including tackling piracy and upholding the essential principle of freedom of navigation, in accordance with international law and our commitment to the Rules Based International System.

The UK is committed to assuring the safety of shipping in the Middle East region, including through the Strait of Hormuz. The UK is a member of the International Maritime Security Construct which addresses the threat in the region by providing reassurance to commercial shipping and deterring further threats.

The UK condemned the attack on the MV Mercer Street at the UN Security Council on 6 August and the Defence Secretary condemned Iran's actions at a UNSC debate on maritime security on 9 August.

## ■ Military Aid

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[43440]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments have been logged with his Department by (a) the Ministry of Defence, (b) the Home Office and (c) other departments and agencies in relation to overseas requests for capacity-building assistance in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Overseas Security and Justice Assistance Guidance sets out which human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) risks must be considered prior to providing justice or security sector assistance. It specifies that an assessment must be made of the potential impact of any proposed assistance on those risks, as well as on reputational or political risk, prior to the provision of any assistance. The Guidance applies to both case specific assistance and broader, often longer term capacity building assistance. While the FCDO is responsible for updating and maintaining the Guidance, responsibility for completing and filing the assessment sits with the department or agency delivering the assistance. An estimate of the number of OSJAs completed each year is published in the Annual Human Rights Report.

## ■ Montenegro: Orthodox Church

**Catherine West:**

**[43610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of recent tensions toward the Serbian Orthodox church in Montenegro.

**Wendy Morton:**

Our Embassy in Podgorica closely monitored the events surrounding the inauguration of the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan of Montenegro, and the Littoral in Cetinje, Montenegro. Alongside likeminded partners, we issued a statement on 5 September strongly condemning all forms of violence, and calling for all involved to de-escalate tensions and establish a democratic, inclusive, and constructive dialogue, while respecting religious freedoms, freedom of expression, and freedom to peaceful assembly, as well as the need for individuals to be held to account for their actions.

## ■ Nicaragua: Elections

**Catherine West:**

**[43612]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the announcement of prosecution of presidential candidates in Nicaragua; and whether the Government has made representations to the (a) the Nicaraguan Government and (b) regional partners and allies of that nation on the need for free and fair elections.



**Wendy Morton:**

The UK is deeply concerned about the unacceptable steps taken by the Nicaraguan authorities in preventing opposition candidates, parties, and activists from taking part in November's presidential elections. The detention and harassment of opposition figures represent further anti-democratic developments in Nicaragua at the behest of President Daniel Ortega. The arrests violate the guarantees in Nicaragua's constitution, and deprive the people of Nicaragua of the right to choose their political leaders and parliamentary representatives freely.

Bilaterally, we have raised our concerns in both London and Managua. In July, our non-Resident Ambassador to Nicaragua condemned the detention of opposition politicians when he met the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister. FCDO Ministers and officials also regularly collaborate with our regional partners and allies on the concerning developments in Nicaragua. On 15 June, as a Permanent Observer to the Organisation of American States (OAS), the UK voiced its support for the OAS' resolution condemning the arrests of leading opposition figures, and calling for free and fair elections. On 22 June, we were one of 59 countries to issue a joint statement on Nicaragua at the Human Rights Council. We will continue to work closely with our partners as Nicaragua approaches the November Presidential elections, calling on the authorities in Nicaragua to uphold the rights of all Nicaraguan voters to exercise their right to vote freely, safely, and without interference; to ensure that all political parties, their chosen candidates, and their supporters can campaign freely and safely in advance of this year's elections; and to ensure that journalists and the media are allowed to operate impartially, and without restriction.

**■ Overseas Aid****Layla Moran:**[\[41194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide compensation to provisional grantees under the Small Charities Challenge Fund and Community Partnership Fund whose funding was withdrawn as a result of reductions in the aid budget.

**Wendy Morton:**

As is standard practice across the sector, there are no plans to compensate applicants who applied for grants under round 6 of the Small Charities Challenge Fund or for community partnership grants under round 4 of UK Aid Direct.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[41288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, where funding for official development assistance that was allocated to the European Commission Directorate for Development prior to the UK's departure from the EU has been allocated to since the UK's departure from the EU.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK continues to contribute to EU development programmes (ODA) under the 2014-2020 EU Budget and for the European Development Fund (EDF), as part of the

wider financial settlement in the Withdrawal Agreement. The total UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) through the EU as committed in the Withdrawal Agreement was just over £1.5bn in 2020 and the FCDO estimates that it will be around £1.4bn in 2021 and then gradually decline over the coming years, depending on the speed of EU implementation.

As a third country, the UK will not be contributing to the new 2021-27 EU Budget, including external action. The level of ODA resources no longer provided to the EU budget in support of EU development programmes will become gradually more significant over time. Future Spending Reviews will determine how these ODA resources are prioritised.

## ■ Russia: Press Freedom

**Catherine West:**

[\[43613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the freedom of the press in Russia.

**Wendy Morton:**

Russia is a FCDO human rights priority country and we remain concerned that political freedoms in Russia are becoming increasingly constrained. The Russian state has a poor record of respecting freedom of expression, and enjoys a near monopoly over Russian language media across the post-Soviet space, which it uses to spread disinformation. Laws on 'foreign agents' and 'undesirable organisations' have been used to target journalists and independent media.

We believe that the interests of the Russian people would be best served by strong institutions, such as an independent judiciary and a free press, together with a safe political space for dissenting views to be heard and free and fair elections, in accordance with the international obligations to which Russia has committed itself.

Impunity for attacks on journalists in Russia remains a major problem. Journalists who seek to uncover issues like corruption are often faced with threats, violence and harassment.

We continue to urge the Russian authorities to fully investigate these cases and ensure the safety of all activists and journalists.

## ■ South East Asia: Conditions of Employment

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[38168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the compliance with the International Labour Organisation Declaration of (a) Brunei, (b) Cambodia, (c) Indonesia, (d) Laos, (e) Malaysia, (f) Myanmar, (g) the Philippines, (h) Singapore, (i) Thailand and (j) Vietnam.

**Nigel Adams:**

The United Kingdom engages with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on country compliance with international labour standards actively as a permanent

member of the ILO Governing Body and International Labour Conference. The Committee on the Application of Standards is integral to the ILO's supervisory system and the UK encourages all countries to abide high labour standards.

## ■ Spain: Coronavirus

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

[\[38150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Spanish counterpart on the challenges faced in obtaining entry to Spain by some people who have recently recovered from covid-19 and still have residual traces of that disease in their system and who, despite being no longer infectious, cannot obtain a negative PCR test result.

**Wendy Morton:**

The FCDO is in regular contact with the Spanish authorities about their COVID-19 entry requirements, and to ensure that any changes are reflected in our Travel Advice. If a traveller has proof of vaccination, the Spanish Government does not require a negative COVID-19 test for entry from the UK. Only arrivals to Spain from the UK (aged 12 years and older) who do not have proof of vaccination must present on entry a negative COVID-19 test. Spain is responsible for setting its entry requirements to protect public health. As stated on our Travel Advice, certificates of recovery are not currently accepted for arrivals to Spain from the UK.

## ■ Spain: Travel Restrictions

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[40597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether holidaymakers from the UK are able to enter Spain in the event that they are fully vaccinated with one of the covid-19 vaccines licensed for use in the UK.

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[40598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether UK citizens are able to enter Spain in the event that they have received two doses of the Covishield Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured in India.

**Wendy Morton:**

In addition to a pre-travel declaration form, the Spanish Government requires all arrivals to Spain from the UK to present on entry either documentation certifying that they have undertaken a COVID-19 nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT - e.g. PCR, TMA, LAMP or NEAR) within 72 hours prior to arrival in Spain and tested negative, or proof of being fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to arrival in Spain with a vaccine authorised by the European Medicines Agency or by the World Health Organisation (WHO). All AstraZeneca vaccines given in the UK are the same product and appear on the UK's COVID-19 vaccination record as Vaxzevria, which has been approved by both the European Medicines Agency as well as our own medicines regulators - no batches of Covishield have been administered in the UK. Spain will accept the UK's COVID-19 vaccination record. The NHS appointment card from vaccination centres is

not designed to be used as proof of vaccination and should not be used to demonstrate vaccine status.

## ■ Syria: Security

**Gavin Robinson:**

[\[43536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the current security situation in Daraa Al-Balad, Syria.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK strongly condemns the brutal violence inflicted by the regime on the city of Daraa al-Balad, particularly the assault launched after the agreement of a ceasefire on 1 September and the ongoing deaths of civilians, including children. We remain alarmed by the continued humanitarian crisis and we call on all parties to avoid further death and displacement and adhere to the ceasefire, which resumed on 6 September. We further call for the regime and its backers to urgently grant humanitarian access to the UN and humanitarian actors for civilians trapped in Daraa, and we urge that the UN work to ensure effective provision of basic life-saving items such as food, water and medical assistance which remains in short supply there.

## ■ Turkey: Fires

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[41199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken in offering assistance and aid to Turkey in respect of the wildfires in that country.

**Wendy Morton:**

At the outset of the wildfires we offered our sympathy and support to the Turkish Government. The Foreign Secretary and I were in direct contact with our Turkish counterparts and our Embassy in Turkey held urgent discussions with Turkish disaster relief authorities. Although Turkey had sought fire-fighting aircraft, which regrettably we could not supply with sufficient water capacity, we were able to offer other technical support and capacity building expertise. The Turkish Government appreciated our support but confirmed they no longer needed such assistance. Our offer still stands.

## ■ Turkey: Kurds

**John McDonnell:**

[\[40581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of the attack and murder of a Kurdish family on 30 July 2021 in the Konya region of Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

**Wendy Morton:**

The murder in July of seven members of the Dedeoğulları family was shocking and deeply saddening. I understand that there were several arrests in the days following the murders, and that police investigations are continuing. We also note claims in the Turkish media that the attack was racially motivated. We expect the Turkish authorities to conduct a rigorous investigation into the killings.

**John McDonnell:**[\[40584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent reports that the Turkish Government is seeking to shut down the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

**Wendy Morton:**

We have made it clear to Turkey that we expect the government to undertake any legal processes or actions against opposition parties, as well as human rights defenders and journalists, fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. We are aware that the Turkish Government is seeking to ban the People's Democratic Party (HDP). Our Embassy meets regularly with the HDP leadership, as it does with other opposition parties, to discuss their concerns, including the arrests of HDP MPs. We will continue to engage closely with Turkey, including at Ministerial level, to insist that it fulfils its international legal obligations to secure the human rights of all people, regardless of their legitimate political affiliations, particularly in the areas of freedom of expression and assembly, press freedom and the treatment of detainees. We will hold Turkey to account using established international mechanisms, and look for opportunities to raise these issues with our international partners.

**John McDonnell:**[\[40585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his counterpart in the Turkish Government to help prevent the further escalation of Turkish alleged persecution and inciting of violence against Kurdish people in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK continues to follow closely the situations in northern Iraq and Syria. We reiterate the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security and protect civilians. The UK respects Iraqi sovereignty and acknowledges Turkey's security concerns regarding the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), a proscribed terrorist group. We believe Turkey has a legitimate right to defend itself against the PKK, whose attacks we condemn as we condemn all terrorism. In Turkey, we continue to urge an end to PKK violence and a return to a peace process. As in any conflict, civilian casualties should be avoided and human rights fully protected. In Syria, we welcome the fact that the ceasefires in north-east and north-west Syria broadly continue to hold, and we continue to call on all sides in the Syrian conflict to abide by their obligations under international law.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Business Travel: Quarantine

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[31402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure that UK citizens who are required to quarantine in a hotel after a business trip to an amber list country under covid-19 travel restrictions have access to adequate work-from-home facilities.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 15 July 2021]:* Arrivals from 'amber list' countries can currently quarantine in their own accommodation.

From 19 July, arrivals from 'amber list' countries who have been fully vaccinated by a National Health Service administered vaccine will not have to quarantine. The guidance on safe working states that employers and employees should discuss their working arrangements and employers should take every possible step to facilitate their employees working from home, including providing suitable IT and equipment to enable remote working.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[31403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing UK citizens returning from business trips in amber list countries during covid-19 travel restrictions to quarantine at home.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 15 July 2021]:* Arrivals from 'amber list' countries must quarantine in their own accommodation for a period of 10 days and take a polymerase chain reaction test on or before day two and before or after day eight, with the option to end quarantine early on day five, following a negative test result.

### ■ Carers

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[14074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to (a) recognise the importance of the role of unpaid carers and (b) provide adequate resources to local authorities to support unpaid family carers, including with information, advice and access to respite breaks.

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[14075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the June 2020 finding of Carers UK that 4.5 million people have taken on caring responsibilities following the outbreak of covid-19, what plans his Department has to provide (a) funding, (b) support and (c) advice services to those people.

**Helen Whately:**

The Care Act 2014 introduced new rights for carers including an assessment of and support for their needs where eligible by their local authority. We have provided over £11.6 million to a number of charities to support carers and guidance tailored their needs.

We are working with local authorities, in collaboration with Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure, where possible, the safe resumption of day services and other forms of respite care. The Department has provided £1.35 billion to adult social care services through the Infection Control Fund, which has been used to support the reopening of day and respite services. In addition, we have provided over £2 billion this year to the Better Care Fund which local authorities can access to fund social care services in their areas, including respite services.

**■ Coronavirus: Quarantine****Daisy Cooper:****[35899]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidence used to inform his decision to remove the requirement from 16 August 2021 for people who have received both doses of a covid-19 vaccine to self-isolate when they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

Several studies of vaccine effectiveness have been conducted in the UK which indicate that a single dose of either vaccine is between 55% and 70% effective against symptomatic disease, with higher levels of protection against severe disease including hospitalisation and death. Additional protection is seen after a second dose

Public Health England (PHE) publishes weekly COVID-19 vaccine surveillance reports;. The reports include the latest evidence on vaccine effectiveness against different outcomes, and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report>

This published data informed the decision to exempt fully vaccinated contacts from self-isolation from 16 August. The press notice published by the Department, setting out the reasons for this policy, can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/self-isolation-to-be-eased-for-fully-vaccinated-adults-in-step-4>

**■ Coronavirus: Screening****Theresa Villiers:****[43419]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that providers of covid-19 PCR tests listed on the Government's website are reputable operators providing acceptable levels of customer service.



**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[43420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the customer service provided by Atruchecks, a company listed on the Government's website as a covid-19 PCR test provider.

**Jo Churchill:**

The service standards of all private providers, including Atruchecks, are subject to continuous assessment. Organisations may be removed if they are found to be non-compliant with the minimum standards, fail to meet their accreditation deadlines where applicable or have been raised as a possible public safeguarding risk. For day two and day eight testing, the Government closely monitors the performance, including delivery and testing services, of private providers to ensure they deliver a high quality service to customers. Providers providing inadequate services receive a five-day warning to demonstrate they have rectified their service, and if not, are removed from the GOV.UK list. Private providers may be reinstated to the list once they have undertaken corrective action and provided the Department with such evidence.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Travel**

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[43526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders to help ensure that people who received doses of the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine produced in India are able to demonstrate their vaccination status when travelling overseas.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Government continues to liaise with international partners and other organisations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Health Organization, to support the work on certification to ensure that global travel is unhindered and supported by a common approach.

All doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in India and administered in the United Kingdom are the same product, under the same authorisation as all other AstraZeneca vaccine doses deployed in the UK, now known commercially Vaxzevria. They appear on the NHS COVID Pass as such, which has been available for international travel since May. Decisions on which vaccines countries will accept at their borders are for respective Governments and we continue to actively engage with these countries to ensure all AstraZeneca doses administered in the UK, including those manufactured in India, are recognised.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Ian Mearns:**

[\[43491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the data and evidential basis which supports the decision of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to authorise administration of a covid-19 vaccine to people aged 16 and 17.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice on vaccination of those aged 16 to 17 years old was published on 4 August 2021. The statement sets out the basis for the advice and includes references to supporting evidence and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jcvi-statement-august-2021-covid-19-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-17-years>

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Listed Buildings**

**Tim Loughton:****[43370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department has, since 2018, owned a number of properties adjacent to the Barts Royal London Hospital Site, which are vacant or being vacated and held for redevelopment as a life science cluster. Of these, three properties are classified as heritage assets detailed in the following table along with the most recent estimate of the value of those properties where available and any annual income derived from those properties:

HERITAGE STATUS	ASSET	BOOK VALUE	INCOME
Listed	34 Mount Terrace, London E1	£620,000	NIL
Within a conservation area	Former Outpatients Department, Stepney Way, E1	Part of larger plot - not individually valued	NIL
Within a conservation area	Ambrose King Centre, Turner Street, E1	Part of larger plot - not individually valued	£251,875 per year

■ **Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services**

**Helen Hayes:****[42042]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve waiting times for children and young people to be referred for urgent and routine eating disorder treatment.

**Helen Hayes:****[42043]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the change in the number of children and young people referred for eating disorder

treatments during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to tackle the causes of such referrals.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The number of children and young people entering urgent treatment for an eating disorder increased by 73% in financial year 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 according to NHS England data. We have created the first waiting time standard for children and young people eating disorder services so to ensure that 95% of children with an eating disorder will receive treatment within one week for urgent cases and within four weeks for routine cases. While performance has been affected due to increased demand, in quarter 1 of 2021/22, 61% of young people who started treatment for an urgent case were seen within one week, and 72.7% of young people who started treatment for routine care were seen within four weeks.

We are investing an additional £79 million in 2021/22 to significantly expand children's mental health services, including allowing 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also announced a further £40 million in 2021/22 to address the pandemic's impact on children and young people's mental health, including eating disorders.

The Government is funding an eating disorder study via the National Institute for Health Research jointly led with Kings College London and eating disorder charity, Beat. The study aims to better understand what may lead to an eating disorder as well as how best we provide more effective treatment. UK Research and Innovation has recently announced an extra £3.8 million on a research project on eating disorders to inform prevention and early intervention in young people.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes**

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[34607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to implement the recommendation from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health to make the route to medicinal licensing fit-for- purpose to allow e-cigarettes to be authorised for NHS prescription.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for the regulation of medicines in the United Kingdom. They continue to provide scientific and regulatory advice to applicants who wish to licence an e-cigarette medicinal product. The MHRA is in the process of updating their guidance which will further support potential applicants to meet the standards of quality and efficacy expected. The guidance will be published by the end of August.

## ■ Endometriosis: Health Services

**Daisy Cooper:** [41295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of women who have lost their fertility as a result of delays to accessing endometriosis services during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have no plans to make an estimate.

A call for evidence was launched to inform the priorities, content and actions of England's first Women's Health Strategy with questions on gynaecological conditions including endometriosis. Analysis of the evidence gathered is underway and we aim to publish the Women's Health Strategy later this year.

## ■ Health and Care Bill

**Alex Norris:** [43642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish an impact assessment for the Health and Care Bill.

**Edward Argar:**

The Health and Care Bill impact assessments have been reviewed by the Regulatory Policy Committee and will be published imminently.

## ■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [42150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has given to hospitals on testing people who have received a positive covid-19 test result within 90 days.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* Public Health England (PHE) has published guidance on investigation and management of suspected COVID-19 infections that states if people present with new symptoms within 90 days of full recovery of a previous COVID-19 episode, they should be suspected to have COVID-19 until tests consider otherwise. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-investigation-and-management-of-suspected-sars-cov-2-reinfections/investigation-and-management-of-suspected-sars-cov-2-reinfections-a-guide-for-clinicians-and-infection-specialists>

PHE has also published guidance for staff and managers in health and social care settings that considers in general, immunocompetent people should not be polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tested if they had a previous positive PCR test in the 90 days prior but that if they do get a test, if people are asymptomatic, a risk assessment should be undertaken to consider whether they are likely to have COVID-19 again. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings>

## ■ In Vitro Fertilisation

**Jane Stevenson:**

[42134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure all NHS trusts provide three full cycles of IVF for women under 40, as recommended by NICE guidelines.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* The Government expects clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to commission fertility services in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidelines, to ensure equitable access across England. We are aware that some individual CCGs set additional non-clinical criteria outside NICE's fertility guidelines. We have undertaken an internal review of this issue and are currently considering options to address these variations.

## ■ Lung Diseases: Transplant Surgery

**Rachael Maskell:**

[37505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received a successful lung transplant since March 2020; and what proportion of those people have cystic fibrosis.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* Data from NHS Blood and Transplant shows that from March 2020 to July 2021, 123 lung transplants took place in the United Kingdom. Of those, 14 patients had cystic fibrosis.

## ■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus

**Julian Sturdy:**

[40878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to update the guidance entitled Supporting pregnant women using maternity services during the coronavirus pandemic following the lifting of covid-19 restrictions on 19 July 2021.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Health and care settings will continue to maintain appropriate infection prevention and control processes. Related guidance will be kept under review and updated based on the latest clinical evidence where appropriate. Supporting pregnant women using maternity services during the coronavirus pandemic: Actions for NHS providers', will continue be aligned with the guidance on infection prevention and control.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

**Justin Madders:**

[\[41913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current waiting time from assessment to receiving therapy is for mental health services in (a) England and (b) Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The data is not held in the format requested as a national access and waiting times standard for National Health Service mental health services has not yet been defined.

On 22 July, NHS England and NHS Improvement announced consultation on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards, which have been piloted by mental health providers in collaboration with acute NHS trusts, and are backed by clinical and patient representatives. The consultation closed on 1 September. The responses will now be analysed, and a recommendation made to Government in due course.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Young People

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[41997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendation by Mind, Young Minds, Youth Access, the Children's Society and the Children and the Young People's Mental Health Coalition for the Government to fund a network of mental health support hubs for young people across England.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* While no formal assessment has been made, the Government is exploring the model of early access of support for children and young people's mental health with stakeholders.

## ■ NHS: Resignations

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[43380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect on the number of NHS staff planning to leave the UK to care for their adult dependents living abroad of the change in the level of dependent visa applications granted on the first attempt.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department has not made a specific assessment. Information on the number of staff leaving for this reason is not collected centrally.

## ■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[43700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many instances of neurological damage due to nitrous oxide use have been reported in each year since 2015.

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[43701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many instances of (a) B12 deficiency and (b) anaemia have been attributed to nitrous oxide use in each year since 2015.

**Jo Churchill:**

The information requested is not collected centrally.

## ■ Oral Tobacco

**Adam Afriyie:** [\[40811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will undertake a comparative assessment of the scientific evidence on the impact on health of (a) the use of smokeless tobacco products, such as Swedish snus and (b) smoking as part of the Tobacco and Related Products Review.

**Jo Churchill:**

A comparative assessment of the scientific evidence on the impact on health of the use of smokeless tobacco products, such as Swedish snus, and smoking, is out of the scope of the Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. The purpose of the PIR is to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the legislation in achieving its objectives along with any unintended consequences that may have occurred.

## ■ Prostate Cancer: Diagnosis

**Bob Blackman:** [\[41823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the latest statistics published in NHS England's Monthly Provider Based Data and Summaries, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of referrals for suspected prostate cancer; and if he will make a statement.

**Bob Blackman:** [\[41825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made of the implications for his policies of data set out in NHS England's Monthly Provider Based Data and Summaries, published in May 2021, on the length of the waiting time for patients to be diagnosed with and treated for prostate cancer; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

No formal assessment has been made.



**■ Public Expenditure: Disability****Grahame Morris:** [\[41818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Disabled Children's Partnerships Left Behind report, published on 16 July 2021, what plans he has to provide ring-fenced additional funding for disabled children's physiotherapy and other therapies in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* Further details on the next Spending Review will be set out in due course.

**■ Royal Berkshire Hospital: Hydrotherapy****Anneliese Dodds:** [\[34575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure patients continue to receive specialist hydrotherapy in the event that the hydrotherapy pool at Royal Berkshire Hospital is closed.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 21 July 2021]:* Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) ran a 12-week public consultation to seek views on the future provision of hydrotherapy services in Berkshire West. At present, the CCG no longer routinely commission the service. However, specialist hydrotherapy services will remain available via an Individual Funding Request for certain clinical circumstances.

**■ Transplant Surgery: Coronavirus****Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[37535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the additional risks posed by covid-19 to people in receipt of a solid organ transplant.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Blood and Transplant and transplant centres are carefully managing organ donation and transplant services. Transplants will only take place if it is safe and appropriate to do so, with transplant clinicians assessing individual cases in the current situation. As transplant patients are immunosuppressed, any risks must be minimised. Potential organ donors are tested for COVID-19 and if positive, they are not able to donate. Potential recipients are also tested when they are admitted for a possible transplant.

**■ Travel: Quarantine****Sarah Owen:** [\[32526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 14225 on Travel: Quarantine, what assessment he has made of the

effectiveness of the Government's managed hotel quarantine policy in preventing the delta variant of covid-19 from entering the UK.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 July 2021]:* We are monitoring of the effectiveness of the Managed Quarantine Service with regular testing and genomic sequencing to determine which variants have been prevented from entering the United Kingdom, including the Delta variant. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' Environmental Modelling Group Transmission sub-group is currently reviewing the evidence on the risk of transmission in hotels which will be published by autumn 2021.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum

**Anne McLaughlin:**

**[41945]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 4,561 persons by (a) sex and (b) nationality received a Notice of Intent in the period 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021.

**Anne McLaughlin:**

**[41946]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 4,561 persons who received a Notice of Intent in the period 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021 have been moved into the substantive asylum process and had their claim registered.

**Kevin Foster:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail inadmissibility decisions made and can be found online at:

[How many people do we grant asylum or protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to)

A breakdown of these figures into nationality and gender is not currently available.

Quarterly statistics relating to the period between June and September 2021 are due to be published on 25 November. We are working to bring data in respect of the six month long-stop in line with current reporting and hope to publish this information in the same timeframe.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

### ■ Asylum: Afghanistan

**Anne McLaughlin:**

**[41948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to institute an expedited asylum decisions process for Afghan nationals who have applied for asylum in the UK whose claim is (a) still outstanding or (b) subject to further review; and if she will make a statement.

**Kevin Foster:**

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations.

All asylum claims are considered on a case by case basis and in line with published policy.

We are currently reviewing the country situation and will issue updated country policy and information notes shortly for Afghanistan, which reflect revised assessments of risk of persecution. We have therefore temporarily paused asylum decision making for Afghan nationals to ensure our decision makers are only considering claimants' protection needs in the light of relevant and up-to-date country information.

All asylum appeals from Afghan nationals will be reviewed ahead of any hearing to look at the individual claim in light of the changed country situation, current guidance and any further information submitted by the claimant, to assess whether the decision to refuse is still appropriate.

No one who is found to be at risk of persecution or serious harm in Afghanistan will be expected to return there. Enforced returns of those who have been refused asylum and have exhausted all rights of appeal are currently paused.

**Anne McLaughlin:**[\[41949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is her policy that (a) no Afghan nationals in the UK asylum procedure shall be returned to Afghanistan and (b) no Afghans on asylum support will be subject to negative cessations decisions or evictions.

**Chris Philp:**

Enforced returns to Afghanistan have been paused.

Afghan nationals who have an asylum claim or appeal that has not yet been decided are eligible to receive support under section 95 of the 1999 Act if they would otherwise be destitute. Furthermore, failed asylum seekers may be supported under section 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (1999 Act) if they would otherwise be destitute and meet other conditions set out in the Immigration and Asylum (Provision of Accommodation to Failed Asylum-

Failed asylum seekers who consider that they would be at risk of harm on return to Afghanistan because of the recent changes in the country are able to lodge further asylum submissions and would therefore be eligible to receive support under Regulation 3(2)(e) of the 2005 Regulations, subject to meeting the destitution criteria.

There are no plans to change the policy so that Afghans may not be evicted from accommodation provided under section 95 or 4(2) in any circumstances. Like others supported under the provisions, their support may be discontinued in a number of circumstances, including where it appears they are no longer destitute, where they are no longer living in the accommodation provided to them and where they are granted refugee status and therefore become eligible to take up employment or apply for mainstream benefits.

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[41956]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people of Afghan nationality have claimed asylum in the UK in each year since 2001.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications lodged in the UK are published in table Asy\_D01 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#), breakdowns by year and nationality are available. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest published statistics relate to data up to the end of June 2021. Additionally, the Home Office publishes further data on asylum and resettlement in the [asylum and resettlement summary tables](#). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

#### ■ **Asylum: Finance**

**Anne McLaughlin:**

[41947]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under what circumstances and asylum support provision persons issued with a Notice of Intent are being supported.

**Kevin Foster:**

An asylum seeker who receives a "notice of intent" stating their asylum claim may be treated as inadmissible, is eligible to receive support under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 if they would otherwise be destitute.

#### ■ **Domestic Abuse: Greater London**

**Helen Hayes:**

[43593]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Metropolitan Police's use of (a) pre-charge bail conditions, (b) arrest for breach of non-molestation orders, (c) Domestic Violence Protection Notices and (d) restraining orders in cases of domestic violence and abuse.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Domestic abuse is an abhorrent crime and this Government fully recognises the devastating impact it can have on victims. This Government is committed to taking action to keep all victims of domestic abuse safe, working in partnership with police forces across England and Wales, including the Metropolitan Police.

##### **a) Pre-charge bail**

The Government commissioned a public consultation in early 2020 which looked at the wider use of pre-charge bail. In their recent super-complaint response, HMICFRS considered information from 37 forces, including the Metropolitan Police, and drew broad recommendations about pre-charge bail conditions and their use. The

Government is making changes to the pre-charge bail system through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and will consider what further analysis is needed once these reforms have been embedded.

### **b) Arrest for breach of Non-Molestation Orders (NMOs)**

In their super-complaint response, HMICFRS identified that police forces across England and Wales have a good understanding of NMOs, though there is scope for improvement of NMO usage across the criminal justice system. The Home Office does not publish arrest data for breaches of NMOs but collates this information and will further explore its quality and coverage to assess whether more detailed statistics can be published.

### **c) Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs)**

Effective use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders is extremely important. The Government has made a commitment in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to launch new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders, to support the police and courts in acting earlier and more effectively to protect victims.

HMICFRS collects data on domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs) and domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs). DVPN and DVPO data is published as part of the ONS Domestic Abuse Annual Publication. Not all forces can provide HMICFRS a full picture of their DVPN or DVPO usage, and for those that do there are issues of comparability and consistency.

The number of DVPNs and DVPOs published to year ending March 2019 and March 2018 can be found here:

2018/19 - [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](#) , Table 2

2017/18 - [Domestic abuse in England and Wales - Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](#) , Table 25

You will see that the Metropolitan Police along with forces across the country are making use of DVPNs. The Metropolitan Police specifically increased the number of DVPNs granted from the year ending March 2018 to 2019.

### **d) Restraining orders**

The Home Office does not hold force-level data on restraining orders.

The effective implementation of restraining orders requires the collective cooperation of police, prosecutors, and the courts. Like all legislative measures, the Government continues to keep the law under review and where there is evidence of a significant problem, that is to say that the law is not working, then the Government will investigate any serious concerns and seek to make any change considered necessary to ensure the law works in practice.

## ■ Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[41669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons publicly-funded schools are not part of the Home Office list of institutions licensed to sponsor migrants under the Student route of the points-based system while exceptions are available for independent schools; and if she will review this policy.

**Kevin Foster:**

State-funded schools are funded by UK taxpayers for the purpose of educating individuals with a statutory right to education in the UK.

The Government considers it right those children who are entitled to live in the UK (and whose families are entitled to work, access services and benefits and pay tax in the UK) are the children who should be educated by state-funded schools.

It would therefore not be appropriate for these schools to hold a student sponsor licence to sponsor international students, as the cost of the education provided to such students recruited from overseas would fall on the UK taxpayer.

## ■ Fireworks: Antisocial Behaviour

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[43685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to introduce tougher penalties for the anti-social use of fireworks.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously. There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that controls the sale, availability and use of fireworks, as well as setting a curfew and noise limit. Enforcement powers exist for local authorities to take action when fireworks are unsafe, sold illegally, or misused.

Local authorities and the police have powers to tackle the misuse of fireworks, where it arises. This includes a range of flexible tools and powers available to local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act'). Local areas decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the circumstances and specific local concerns.

## ■ Immigration: Afghanistan

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[43525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support (a) locally employed staff from Afghanistan, (b) Afghan National Security Forces personnel and (c) their dependants with regularising their immigration status.

**Victoria Atkins:**

All those evacuated from Afghanistan should already have a valid immigration status, granted either pre-departure or on arrival at the border.

We announced on 1 September that all those eligible for the ARAP will be qualify for immediate settlement (indefinite leave to enter or remain). Those already in the UK with temporary status can apply, free of charge, to convert their status to indefinite leave to remain.

Those who qualify under the new ACRS will also be offered ILR

**Sarah Champion:** [43527]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what eligibility criteria will her Department apply to (a) family members and (b) dependents seeking to enter the United Kingdom via the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The eligibility criteria for family members and dependants seeking to accompany those relocating under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy are set out in paragraphs 276BE1-276BL1 of the Immigration Rules:

[Immigration Rules part 7: other categories - Immigration Rules - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules-part-7-other-categories)

There is additional published guidance for those family members who do not qualify under the Immigration Rules:

[Additional guidance on the eligibility of additional family members under the Afghan locally employed staff relocation schemes \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules-part-7-other-categories)

## ■ Immigration: EU Nationals

**Mr Clive Betts:** [41643]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of EU Settlement Scheme Family Permits missed the 30 June 2021 deadline; and what proportion of those that missed that deadline were due to departmental delay.

**Kevin Foster:**

There is no deadline for applications for an EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) family permit by eligible family members wishing to join an EEA or Swiss citizen with EUSS status who was resident in the UK by the end of the transition period. They can continue to apply for an EUSS family permit after 30 June 2021.

**Helen Hayes:** [42026]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents in Dulwich and West Norwood constituency applied to the EU Settlement Scheme before it closed on the 30 June 2021; and how many of those applicants were granted (a) settled and (b) pre-settled status through the scheme.

**Helen Hayes:** [42027]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents applied to the EU Settlement Scheme before it closed on 30 June 2021 in (a) Lambeth, (b)



Southwark and (c) London; and how many of those applications were granted (i) settled and (ii) pre-settled status through the scheme.

**Helen Hayes:**

[42028]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the proportion of eligible people in the cohort aged 65 and above who have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office publishes data on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) in the '[EU Settlement Scheme statistics](#)'.

The latest published information on EUSS applications received and applications concluded to 31 March 2021, by Local Authority can be found in tables EUSS\_LA\_01, EUSS\_LA\_02 and EUSS\_LA\_03 available at: [EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

These tables, updated to 30 June 2021, will be published on 16 September 2021.

Published EUSS figures refer specifically to applications made to the EUSS and cannot be directly compared with estimates of the resident population of EU/EEA nationals in the UK.

The published figures include non-EEA national family members, Irish nationals and eligible EEA nationals not resident in the UK, none of whom are usually included in estimates of the resident EU/EEA population.

Furthermore, the population estimates do not take account of people's migration intentions and will include people who have come to the UK for a range of purposes, including some who have no intention to settle in the UK.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a blog on 2 July 2021, further discussing the differences and their plans for future population estimates:

[Are there really 6m EU citizens living in the UK? | National Statistical \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

The Office for National Statistics are currently transforming their population and migration statistics to put administrative data at the core of what they do. The latest information on their work programme and longer term plans to transform migration and population statistics was published on 16 April 2021:

[Population and migration statistics system transformation – overview - Office for National Statistics](#)

## ■ Migrant Workers: Education and Health Services

**Rob Roberts:**

[43687]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications were made for indefinite leave to remain in the UK using one of the occupation codes from the Skilled Worker visa: eligible healthcare and education jobs list in each of the last five years.

**Rob Roberts:** [43688]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications have been made for indefinite leave to remain in the UK using one of the occupation codes from the Skilled Worker visa: eligible healthcare and education jobs list in 2021 to date.

**Rob Roberts:** [43689]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications were made for UK citizenship using one of the occupation codes from the Skilled Worker visa: eligible healthcare and education jobs list in each of the last five years.

**Rob Roberts:** [43690]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been made for UK citizenship using one of the occupation codes from the Skilled Worker visa: eligible healthcare and education jobs list in 2021 to date.

**Kevin Foster:**

The requirements to qualify for Indefinite Leave to Remain as a skilled worker can be found at

Immigration Rules Appendix Skilled Worker - Immigration Rules - Guidance - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Details on the numbers of applications can be found at

Migration statistics - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

No data is recorded on the specific occupation to fully answer your questions.

The requirements for naturalisation as a British citizen are set out in The British Nationality Act 1981 in Schedule 1 [British Nationality Act 1981 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

Although some of the requirements are around an applicant's immigration status and length of residence, there is no requirement to have achieved such status via a particular immigration route and, so, no specific data is recorded which could answer your question.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Wind Power

**Karl Turner:** [43492]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the updated guidance on Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 published on 2 July 2021, which operational offshore wind projects are in scope of that concession.

**Karl Turner:** [43493]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had since 1 January 2021 with representatives of the offshore wind industry on the extension of the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 to 1 July 2022.

**Karl Turner:** [43494]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 has been extended until 1 July 2022.

**Karl Turner:** [43495]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the offshore wind industry's efforts to regularise employment on construction and maintenance projects in UK territorial waters since the introduction of the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017.

**Karl Turner:** [43496]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Ministerial colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on labour shortages in the offshore wind sector since 1 January 2016.

**Kevin Foster:**

The concession allows the employment of foreign nationals who are joining vessels engaged in the construction and maintenance of offshore wind projects in UK territorial waters.

The information about the concession is published online at:

[Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017: July 2021 update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017-july-2021-update)

The Home Office regularly reviews its policies and regularly undertakes engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

I frequently engage with colleagues across Government, including those in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a wide range of issues, including the operation of the immigration system.

Additionally, the Government has no plans to publish information on individual companies.

## ■ Nitrous Oxide: Public Order Offences

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [43702]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been charged with public order offences related to nitrous oxide use in each year since 2015 in (a) England and (b) Wales.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office collects data on police recorded crime including public order offences. These are published quarterly by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The latest figures, for the year ending March 2021, can be accessed here:

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

However, these data do not identify whether or not the offence was related to nitrous oxide.

## ■ Passports

**Theresa Villiers:** [43418]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle delays in responding to passport renewal applications.

**Kevin Foster:**

Since April, Her Majesty's Passport Office has been advising its customers to allow up to 10 weeks to receive their passport, which will help to ensure British travellers continue to receive their passport in good time for when they are able to travel, including in the periods of the very highest demand.

Information about the typical processing times for applications completed in the previous week can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-passport-office/about-our-services#processing-times-in-the-uk>

HM Passport Office have a range of tried and tested contingency arrangements available, including the flexing of resources from across the Home Office and other government departments, while continuing to explore new options to maximise its ability to cope with an unprecedented demand as international travel opens up.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Dr Julian Lewis:** [43365]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it a condition of awarding government contracts to commercial providers of accommodation for refugees from Afghanistan that full compensation be paid to festival organisers whose events are cancelled at short notice by those accommodation providers which sign alternative contracts with her Department.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Home Office is unable to provide comment on the contractual arrangements in place between providers of accommodation and other parties. It is understood that in many cases compensation payments are offered to those affected but this has to be an agreement between the accommodation provider and the affected parties

**Sarah Champion:** [43529]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department will publish the full eligibility criteria for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Victoria Atkins:**

On 6 September, the Prime Minister gave an update on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will provide a safe and legal route for up to

20,000 Afghans in the region over the coming years, with 5,000 in the first year – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

Under this scheme we will work with the United Nations and aid agencies to identify those we should help, as we have done in respect of those who fled the war in Syria. We will also include those who have contributed to civil society or face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example, because of their role in standing up for democracy and human rights, or because of their gender, sexuality or religion. Those arriving through the ACRS will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain, allowing them to benefit from full rights and entitlements and providing them with the certainty and stability they need to build their life here.

We are working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[43694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of (a) Hindus, (b) Sikhs and (c) Hazara people that have been evacuated to the UK from Afghanistan following recent evacuation efforts in that country.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Home Office is prioritising finding accommodation for the thousands of people who were evacuated and are leaving managed quarantine settings. Analysis of demographics will follow in due course.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ **Buildings: Fire Prevention**

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[43538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department's Consolidated Advice Note, Building safety advice for building owners, including fire doors, published in January 2020 will be updated to ensure that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) can update its own guidance on challenging defective building works for the purpose of fire safety rectifications post-Grenfell; and when the updated RICS position will be implemented.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government made clear in its 21 July statement ([HCWS 228](#)), its intention to retire the Consolidated Advice Note. RICS have committed to consider the impact of the Government's statement on their guidance for valuers and we are encouraging them to complete that process as soon as possible.

### ■ **Constituencies: Reviews**

**Steve Reed:**

[\[43530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his plans to create new unitary councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and

Somerset announced in July 2021, whether he has asked the Boundary Commission to undertake boundary reviews before May 2022 local elections.

**Luke Hall:**

Following the July announcement we now intend to seek Parliamentary approval to the structural changes orders giving effect to the unitary decisions. These orders will include provision for transitional arrangements, including for elections in May 2022 to the future unitary councils and for the electoral arrangements for those elections. As we are drawing up this provision we are engaging with councils in the three areas and will carefully consider any views they express.

Our expectation is that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will carry out a full electoral review for each new unitary council and put in place electoral arrangements to apply to the second elections to the those councils which are intended for May 2027.

■ **Coronavirus: Ventilation**

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[43377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of how the planning process can support the creation of properly ventilated indoor environments.

**Christopher Pincher:**

There are strong protections in place in national planning policy to safeguard people from unacceptable risks from air pollution. These will be material considerations for a local council when determining a planning application, as will the planning concerns of the local community.

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that planning policies and decisions should aim to promote healthy places, including by identifying opportunities to improve air quality. The planning guidance which supports the National Planning Policy Framework sets out further detail on how new development should take account of risks relating to air quality, including by using appropriate means of filtration and ventilation.

It is through the Part F of the Building Regulations that we set the minimum ventilation standards for new buildings or when work is done to an existing building. In the Government's Clean Air Strategy 2019, we committed to consulting on changes to standards in Part F (ventilation) of the Building Regulations. These consultations took place in the form of the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard consultations. We have reviewed the ventilation standards of the Building Regulations for new homes using the latest scientific evidence from Public Health England (PHE), details of which can be found in the Future Homes Standard consultation response.

We also consulted on ventilation standards for non-domestic buildings and for existing homes, the details of which can be found in the Future Buildings Standard consultation. The Future Buildings Standard consultation was launched on 19

January 2021 and closed on 13 April 2021. We will carefully consider the responses we receive in advance of regulating later this year.

## ■ Council Tax

**Grahame Morris:** [43488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to replace Council Tax with a Proportional Property Tax.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government does not have any plans to replace council tax with a proportional property tax, but keeps all taxes under review.

## ■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Listed Buildings

**Tim Loughton:** [43366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is advised on the management of designated heritage assets in its portfolio by Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit. Further details can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/advice-for-government-historic-estates/>

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government does not collect or collate data on the value (property value) or income data for these assets.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Arms Trade: Export Controls

**Emily Thornberry:** [43452]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when her Department next plans to review the (a) contents, (b) application and (c) nomenclature of the Consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria, last updated on 24 March 2014.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The Government keeps export licence control policy under regular review. Any change to the export licence assessment criteria will be announced to Parliament.



## ■ Exports

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[38482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 21 June 2021 to Question 15453, what progress she has made on introducing a world-leading certified UK environmental, social and governance standards scheme to label British goods and services for international export.

**Greg Hands:**

The United Kingdom continues to explore the role of eco-labelling and other forms of consumer information to support positive environmental outcomes. We are currently seeking powers through the Environment Bill that will enable us to establish mandatory labelling schemes relating to environmental impacts, where appropriate.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Prison Officers: Retirement

**Dan Carden:** [\[43646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of raising the retirement age of prison officers to 68 on the (a) recruitment, (b) retention, (c) safety and (d) morale of prison officers.

**Dan Carden:** [\[43647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of the current retirement age of 68 for prison officers on prison officer pensions.

**Alex Chalk:**

We highly value our hardworking prison staff and offer access to medical professionals and an employee assistance programme to ensure continued physical and mental wellbeing. There are currently no plans for Cabinet Office to review the retirement age of prison officers within the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

### ■ Prisons: Drugs

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[43399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many drug finds in prisons there have been in the (a) two year before and (b) two years since the launch of the National Prison Drug Strategy in April 2019.

**Alex Chalk:**

Data on drugs finds are published online in the HMPPS Annual Digests. Although the data does not cover the precise period detailed in the question each Digest provides data for a 12-month time period up to March for a given year. From this data it is possible to calculate how many drug finds in prisons there have been in the two years before 1 April and the two years following 1 April 2019 (inclusive).

In August 2019, the Government committed to invest £100 million in prison security in an ambitious new Security Investment Programme. One of the aims of the Programme was to reduce the quantity of illicit items, including drugs, entering the prison estate.

Since then, we have seen the installation of 73 X-ray body scanners, with over 9000 positive indications. This has included contraband being retrieved, for example in one case 10.5g of cocaine with an estimated prison value of £4000 was recovered. The roll out of Enhanced Gate Security (EGS), based on the measures used in airport screening, has resulted in hundreds of illicit items prevented from entering prisons.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Scottish Government

**Ian Murray:**

[\[41815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what representations he has received from Scottish Government Ministers by (a) email, (b) letter and (c) other means of communication on matters which are reserved to the UK Government since August 2020.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

In the time period outlined, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has received 11 letters (attached to emails) from Scottish Ministers in relation to reserved matters.

The Department is unable to provide information on other means of communication.

### ■ Scottish Government: Expenditure

**Ian Murray:**

[\[41816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of funding from the public purse spent by the Scottish Government on reserved areas, including (a) overseas offices, (b) the constitution and (c) work undertaken by civil servants on reserved areas in the most recent period for which figures are available.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

The International Relations reservation set out in the Scotland Act 1998 is clear that the United Kingdom Government is responsible for international relations. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) promotes the international interests of the United Kingdom and all its constituent parts. The UK Government recognises that the devolved administrations will have an interest in international policy making in relation to devolved matters and also in obligations touching on devolved matters that the UK may agree as a result of concluding international agreements (including UN Conventions). Such work is conducted by the Scottish Government, including from a number of overseas offices, which are usually co-located with British overseas missions.

The UK Government has been very clear that our immediate responsibility must be the economic recovery from the consequences of the pandemic, supporting people back into work and building back better.

In accordance with the Statement of Funding Policy and the Scottish Fiscal Framework, the Scottish Government is not required to set out its spending decisions to the UK Parliament. The Scottish Parliament, its MSPs, the committees and independent bodies, such as Audit Scotland, scrutinise the Scottish Government's spending decisions.

In addition, the Scottish Government published this year's National Statistics on public spending in Scotland - *Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland* - on 18 August 2021, including estimates of public sector expenditure by organisation and type of spend.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Department for Transport: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

[\[38204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department for Transport, its departmental agencies and related bodies are following the relevant guidance for each location and are undertaking all mitigations identified in each building's risk assessment. All organisations fully support individuals who choose to wear a face covering in the workplace.

### ■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Correspondence

**Ian Murray:**

[\[43482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the backlog of correspondence at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency on correspondents; what strategy is in place to clear that backlog; what discretion will be in place for people who have been affected by the backlog; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays for customers alongside

a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements. The current increased demand for the DVLA's services has also contributed to delays with paper applications.

The DVLA understands the impact that delays can have on people's everyday lives and is working as quickly as possible to process applications and return people's documentation to them.

The DVLA continues to explore opportunities to reduce the backlog. The DVLA has introduced additional online services and recruited additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to house more staff to work predominantly on driver's medical casework and queries. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

## ■ Driving Licences

**Sarah Olney:**

**[38367]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to provide further support to the DVLA to reduce the backlog of expired driving licences that are awaiting for renewal; and if he will further extend expired driving licences until that backlog has been reduced.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) online services are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their driving licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application for a driving licence. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. Ongoing industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union is leading to delays for customers who make paper applications.

The DVLA continues to look into opportunities to reduce the backlog and Ministers regularly review progress. The DVLA has been developing additional new online services and recruiting additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to house more staff to work predominantly on driver's medical casework and queries. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

Currently, paper applications are likely to take between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example, if medical investigations are needed as part of a driving licence application. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

All driving licences that expired between 1 February and 31 December 2020 were extended for 11 months to help drivers at the height of the pandemic. There are no plans to introduce any further extension to driving licences.

■ **Driving Licences: Applications**

**Bill Wiggin:** [\[43400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the DVLA investigation team asks for the colour of the envelope that applications were sent to them in.

**Bill Wiggin:** [\[43401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA would prefer applications to be sent to them in a particular colour envelope.

**Bill Wiggin:** [\[43402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the colour of an envelope an application is sent to the DVLA in effects the speed with which it is dealt with.

**Bill Wiggin:** [\[43403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA has left any applications unopened as a result of the colour of the envelope they were sent in.

**Bill Wiggin:** [\[43404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps an applicant should take in response to a DVLA request for the colour of an envelope an application was sent in, in the event that they cannot recall that colour.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and is unable to confirm the initial receipt of an individual application unless it has been sent by one of Royal Mail's tracked services. For urgent cases where the application was not sent using one of these tracked mail services, DVLA officials will request further information in order to help locate the application. The information requested can include the type of application, the date it was sent, the postcode it was sent to and the type of envelope used, including the colour if applicable.

Information about the colour of the envelope is requested purely to help officials identify an application quickly and has no bearing on speed of processing. The DVLA process applications in the order in which they are received. No applications are left unopened specifically due to the colour of the envelope and the DVLA has no preference as to envelope colour.

If an applicant does not recall the colour of the envelope, the DVLA will attempt to locate the application using the other information available.

**Judith Cummins:**

**[43542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason (a) there have been delays in excess of six months for provisional licence and driving licence renewal applications to be processed and (b) applicants have been unable to contact the DVLA by phone during this period; and what steps he is taking to tackle those issues.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays for customers, alongside a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements. The current increased demand for the DVLA's services has also contributed to delays with paper applications.

Paper driving licence applications are currently taking between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The DVLA continues to explore opportunities to reduce turnaround times and has been developing additional new online services and recruiting additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to accommodate more staff to work predominantly on driver's medical casework and queries. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

The DVLA has a number of communication channels for applicants to seek updates on their applications. As well as the contact centre's telephone enquiry lines there are also email and webchat services available via GOV.UK. The DVLA's contact centre has introduced extended opening hours and increased remote working with some staff handling email, webchat, social media and more recently telephone customer contacts remotely.

## ■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

**[41678]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to improve the electric vehicle charging network in the West Midlands.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department is committed to ensuring consumers have reliable access to a comprehensive vehicle charging network so that they can easily and conveniently charge their vehicles wherever they live and travel. The Government has committed

£1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure, targeting support on rapid charge points on motorways and major roads to dash any anxiety around long journeys, and installing more on-street charge points near homes and workplaces to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car.

The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) is available to all UK local authorities and provides public chargepoints for residents without access to private parking. The ORCS has so far delivered 430 chargepoints in the West Midlands with funding in place for a further 73. This year, a further £20 million is available under the scheme to ensure more local authorities and residents can benefit. Government also committed at Spending Review 2020 a further £90 million to fund local EV charging infrastructure, to support the roll out of larger, on-street charging schemes in England.

In addition, the Workplace Charging Scheme, open to small and medium size enterprises and the charity sector has provided another 1,772 sockets with Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme and its predecessors seeing the delivery of another 17,141 domestic chargepoints, across the region.

#### ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

**Paula Barker:**

[\[41376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the viability of bringing forward phase 2a of HS2 between Birmingham and Manchester; and whether that project is on schedule to be completed on time.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

On 16 June, the Government published an update on recently approved revised delivery arrangements for HS2 Phase 2a, between the West Midlands and Crewe, predicated on a delivery into service range of 2030 to 2034. These arrangements will be formalised at the next fiscal event, expected to be later in 2021.

#### ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Biodiversity

**Tim Farron:**

[\[41786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to ensure that HS2 Phase 2b delivers a net gain in biodiversity; and how that net gain will be quantified.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

In June 2021, the government announced its commitment that HS2 will aim to deliver a net gain in biodiversity for the HS2 Crewe-Manchester phase, going beyond the existing target to deliver no net loss of biodiversity.

HS2 Ltd reports to DfT on quantification of biodiversity delivery. HS2 Ltd is employing a Defra metric-based approach ('the HS2 Metric'). This metric was last updated in 2020 for Phase 2b to capture the functionality incorporated in the latest Defra biodiversity metric tool at the time (Biodiversity Metric 2.0).



## ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Speed Limits

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[41344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to increase the speed of HS2 trains when they use the existing railway network to ensure that they match the journey times of Pendolinos in operation.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

No decisions have been made relating to the maximum speed of rolling stock on the West Coast Main Line after the completion of HS2.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[43414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of drivers waiting for large goods vehicle tests.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[43415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35560 on Large Goods Vehicle Drivers, how many (a) Driver Certificate of Professional Competence and (b) large goods vehicle driving tests were conducted and passed between April 2021 and September 2021.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[43416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the current number of large goods vehicle driving tests conducted weekly by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.

**Rachel Maclean:**

In line with the Statistics and Regulations Service 2007, The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is expected to officially publish statistics covering April 2021 to June 2021 on or around 23 September 2021. The DVSA will also publish statistics covering July 2021 to September 2021 on or around 23 December 2021.

As of 6 September 2021, the DVSA has an eight-week waiting time for vocational driving tests and four weeks for Driver CPC. Large goods vehicle tests are those falling under the driving licence category C. The DVSA currently has 19,962 Category C vocational practical driving and 1,488 category C CPC test appointments booked from 6 September 2021 onwards.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Hitchin

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[41165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to protect constituents in Hitchin from inappropriate and dangerous HGV movements on residential streets.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government takes all necessary steps to protect everyone on our roads through road safety laws. We expect all motorists, including those driving HGVs or travelling

for work, to respect and comply with those laws. The Police take all necessary steps to enforce the law, ensuring the safety of all road users and residents in local areas.

Local highway authorities have a range of powers to manage their local networks, including powers to make Traffic Regulation Orders which can impose width and height restrictions and set rules around which types of vehicles can use which roads.

### ■ **Motor Vehicles: Noise**

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[43432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to restrict noise pollution created by modified exhaust pipes on (a) cars and (b) motorbikes.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government takes the impact of traffic noise on health, wellbeing and the natural environment seriously. Vehicles are required to meet strict noise limits before being placed on the market and police have powers to act if they suspect an exhaust has been modified to increase noise.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August the Department published research into enforcement against excessive noise pollution from vehicles using acoustic cameras. Preliminary indications are that the technology has the potential to identify excessively noisy vehicles, however, there are still difficulties in measuring noise in uncontrolled environments. Further research is being commissioned to address these challenges.

### ■ **Parking: Pedestrian Areas**

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[38418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps have been taken to tackle pavement parking.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department carried out a public consultation on this which closed on 22 November 2020. We have been carefully considering the 15,000 responses which have been received and will publish the consultation response in the autumn.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[41007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to prohibit pavement parking.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We have been carefully considering the response to our pavement parking public consultation and the results will inform our policy decisions. We will publish the consultation response in the autumn.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[41009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) disabled people and (b) visually impaired people on pavement parking.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department carried out a public consultation on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem, which ran from 31 August 2020 to 22 November 2020. Members of the public, including many who identified as having mobility or vision impairments, and organisations including those representing people with disabilities, participated. The consultation received over 15,000 responses. The Department has been carefully analysing the consultation responses and will publish the findings in the autumn.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[41010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to prohibit pavement parking.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We have been carefully considering the 15,000 responses to our recent pavement parking consultation and the results will inform future policy decisions. We will publish the consultation response in the autumn.

**■ Parking: York****Rachael Maskell:**[\[41008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the prevalence of pavement parking in York.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department carried out a public consultation on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem, which ran from 31 August 2020 to 22 November 2020. Local authorities in England were invited to take part in the consultation, which included questions about pavement parking in their area and York Council provided a response. The Department has been carefully analysing the consultation responses and will publish the findings in the autumn.

**■ Public Transport: Season Tickets****Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[41679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to roll out flexible ticketing in the East and West Midlands to encourage passengers to use public transport.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

We have introduced new flexible season rail tickets across England this year, including the East and West Midlands. Tickets were launched on the 21 June and became available for use on the 28 June.

We are also working with local authorities and the bus and technology sectors on establishing a model for multi-operator bus ticketing and on further developing existing smart card ticketing offers.

**Rail Review****Giles Watling:** [\[903280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to implement the policies set out in the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Transformation of our railways has begun, and passengers are already benefiting, including through the introduction of new flexi season tickets.

**Railways****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[38390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Integrated Rail Plan; and if he will make a statement.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

We intend to publish the Integrated Rail Plan soon. Given the long-term significance of the IRP, it is important that Government carefully considers the priorities and evidence from metro mayors, council leaders, and representatives from the North and Midlands as well as the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment, ahead of setting out our plans.

**Railways: West Midlands****Mr Andrew Mitchell:** [\[41677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the economic impact of the Midlands Rail Hub project.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail submitted the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for Midlands Rail Hub in August 2019, it was assessed in line with the HMT Green Book and approved by Ministers.

The next stage is the development of the Outline Business Case which is being progressed by Network Rail with input from Midlands Connect, the Department expects to receive initial reports in 2022.

**Rolling Stock: Procurement****Jim McMahon:** [\[43623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 36717 on Rolling Stock: Procurement, what authority was responsible for ensuring that train operating companies met the (a) financial, (b) performance and (c) other terms of their rail franchise agreements between 2010 and 2021.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department for Transport is responsible for the management of rail contracts, including ensuring that financial, operational and other terms are adhered to.

## ■ Transport

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[903284\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to help (a) decarbonise transport and (b) encourage active travel.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is investing a record £2 billion to increase levels of active travel, a key part of the world-leading Transport Decarbonisation Plan we published this Summer.

## ■ Transport for the North: Contracts

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[37563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2021 to Question 15357, whether Transport for the North will be able to work with Great British Railways (GBR) to appoint a public sector operator to run TransPennine Express (TPE) and Northern passenger services when GBR is established.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Under the Williams-Shapps plan for rail, GBR will contract with private sector operators to deliver passengers services. We intend keep the best elements of the private sector that have helped drive growth with new contracts for passenger operators with strong incentives to run high-quality services. However, the ability to appoint a public sector operator will be retained and adapted so that interventions can be made in the interests of passengers and taxpayers if this is required, although it is our intention that services will be run by the private sector.

## ■ Transport: Environment Protection

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[38322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing funding for sustainable forms of transport to encourage more polluting vehicles to be removed from the roads.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Our recently published Transport Decarbonisation Plan set out the actions we will take to decarbonise private and commercial road vehicles, as well as increasing the share of trips taken by public transport, cycling and walking. This includes a £2 billion package of funding over five years for cycling and walking, £3 billion of transformative funding to level up bus services across England, tens of billions of pounds in enhancements and renewals of the rail network, and a £2.8 billion package of measures to support our ambitious phase out dates for the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans. More sustainable journeys will deliver carbon reductions, as well as air quality, noise and congestion, which will be complemented by significant improvements in public health and wellbeing.

**■ Travel Restrictions: South Africa****Sir Alan Campbell:**[\[41673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Government will urgently review the status of South Africa on its traffic light covid-19 travel list.

**Robert Courts:**

At the most recent review on 26 August, it was decided that South Africa would remain on the red list as South Africa continues to present a high public health risk to the UK from variants of concern.

All classification changes have been decided by ministers, informed by the latest data and analysis by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and wider public health considerations. The country allocations are reviewed on a regular basis and the Government will not hesitate to take action where a country's epidemiological picture changes.

**■ Travel: Coronavirus****Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[38149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with officials in the Department for Health and Social Care on the challenges faced by people who have recently fully recovered from covid-19 who are unable to obtain a negative PCR test as a result of having residual traces of covid-19 in their system despite being no longer infectious.

**Robert Courts:**

Guidance on Gov.uk in relation to pre-departure testing to travel to the UK states that, if people have recently recovered from COVID but are no longer infectious, they should use a lateral flow device (LFD) that meets the minimum performance standards. LFD tests have a lower sensitivity than PCR or LAMP tests, so are less likely to return a positive result from a historic infection. All passengers are currently required to take a PCR test on arrival in the UK, so that positive results can be genomically sequenced.

We continue to work across Government to review testing measures in place, with the next checkpoint review taking place shortly.

**■ Urban Areas: Access****Rachael Maskell:**[\[38321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has assessed evidence from other European countries to support effective policy making to support disabled people to access urban centres and simultaneously reducing car use in those areas.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

In the Inclusive Transport Strategy published in July 2018, the Department made a commitment to revise its guidance on accessible street design. We envisage that this

guidance on 'Inclusive Mobility' will be published by the end of the year. The revisions to the guidance are based on research published by the Department in 2018 and 2020.

We are also revising the Manual for Streets, our key piece of design guidance on street design, and an updated version will be published next year. The work will consider the recommendations of research that was jointly commissioned by the Department and Transport Scotland on inclusive street design, which included reviewing evidence from UK, European and global research studies.

The Department and its researchers take account of a wide range of information from the UK and overseas in its policy making.

## TREASURY

### ■ Bank Cards

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[43397\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will hold urgent discussions with credit card companies on the possible increased potential for theft if companies proceed with plans to increase the contactless limit from £45 to £100 in October 2021.

**John Glen:**

At the 2021 Spring Budget the Chancellor announced changes to increase the legal single contactless payment limit from £45 to £100, and the cumulative transaction limit from £130 to £300. The legal contactless payment limits are set by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) through the Strong Customer Authentication rules, and the FCA has the power to amend these limits subject to public consultation and Treasury approval.

In line with this process, and prior to the Budget announcement, the FCA publicly consulted on increasing contactless limits. In making this decision, the FCA considered the risks to customers, including the impacts on fraud, alongside the benefits. When the limits were last raised in Spring 2020 from £30 to £45, there was no significant recorded increase in fraud levels.

The Government looks forward to the implementation of the new higher limits by industry in October, bringing benefits to consumers and businesses across the UK by making it easier than ever to pay safely and securely.

### ■ Bank Services: Charities

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[43479\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help ensure that banks continue to provide banking facilities for charities and community groups without imposing unaffordable charges.



**John Glen:**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been unprecedented demand for banking services, this accompanied with working restrictions due to social distancing has meant banks have faced significant capacity pressures which has limited their ability to meet demand for bank accounts, among other things.

Banks continue to work hard to meet this demand. Ultimately, the decisions about what products are offered and to whom remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies. Similarly, decisions concerning the pricing of products, including account charges, are also commercial decisions for these institutions. While I recognise the important role of the third sector, I hope you can appreciate that it would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in these decisions.

**Banks: British Nationals Abroad****Hilary Benn:**[\[40608\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on UK citizens living overseas who do not have a UK mobile phone number of increased security measures by UK banks that require the possession of such a number.

**John Glen:**

Regulatory rules, known as Strong Customer Authentication (SCA), apply to UK banks and other UK payment service providers. These rules aim to improve security and reduce fraud by ensuring that the person requesting access to a payment account, or trying to make a payment, is either the payer or someone to whom they have given consent.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the SCA rules, and has the power to amend them, subject to Treasury approval. The SCA rules do not require a UK mobile phone number to apply authentication, and the FCA has stated in published guidance that they encourage firms to consider the impact of their SCA solutions on different groups of customers as part of the design process.

**Banks: Tax Havens****Catherine West:**[\[43614\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he had with his European counterparts on the use of tax havens by European banks.

**Jesse Norman:**

It has been a longstanding UK priority to achieve a two-pillar solution to the challenges that digitisation creates for the international tax rules.

This includes the introduction of rules that will require large multinational groups, including those in the banking and wider financial services sector, to pay a minimum level of tax on the profit they realise in each jurisdiction in which they operate.

The Government is delighted that the G20 and over 130 members of the OECD Inclusive Framework have come together to endorse this solution and the UK will continue discussions with its global partners over the coming months as it looks towards finalising the plan for implementation.

## ■ Business: Urban Areas

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[38442\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to support high street businesses to recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

To support high street businesses in response to the pandemic, the Government provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England. This meant eligible properties paid no business rates for 15 months from 1 April 2020 and, thanks to the new 66% capped relief which took effect on 1 July 2021, over 90% of eligible businesses are estimated to see a 75% reduction in their business rates bill across this entire financial year to next April.

The Prime Minister also launched a strategy for the high street in July to transform town centres into vibrant places to live, work and visit. Derelict buildings will be transformed, streets will be cleaned up, and communities across the UK will be given the chance to own their local pubs, theatres, sports grounds and corner shops. 15 Town Deals worth £335 million to revitalise towns across England were also confirmed.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Fraud

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[43396\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls were made to the helpline established to report instances of potential fraud regarding the furlough scheme in the last twelve months; and how many of those calls related to cases in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

**Jesse Norman:**

There are two hotlines that the public can use to contact HMRC to report potential fraud. The first (0800 788 887) is a dedicated HMRC line and the second, the COVID Fraud Hotline (0800 587 5030) is a Government line, in conjunction with Crimestoppers, which was launched in October 2020.

HMRC are unable to provide the breakdown requested within the timeframe given to respond. However, HMRC are able to provide the total number of calls received about the furlough scheme over the last 12 months from 01/09/2020 to 31/08/2021:

HOTLINE	CALLS RECEIVED
Crimestoppers	73
HMRC line	19681

HOTLINE	CALLS RECEIVED
TOTAL	19754

#### ■ Delivery Services: VAT

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[43417\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) waiving and (b) reducing the VAT rate levied on delivered goods that are transported by electric-cargo bike.

**Jesse Norman:**

The VAT rate levied on goods is the same irrespective of how they are supplied to the final consumer. Introducing variable rates dependent on transport mode would cause unnecessary complexity for businesses and consumers, and the Government has no current plans to review this.

#### ■ Non-domestic Rates: Certification

**Stephen Timms:** [\[43381\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2021 to Question 31282 on Non-domestic Rating (Telecommunications Infrastructure Relief) (England) Regulations, on what dates the (a) first and (b) tenth of those 71 certificates was issued.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) issued the first certificate on 30 September 2019, and the tenth certificate on 8 September 2020.

#### ■ Public Houses: Non-domestic Rates

**Zarah Sultana:** [\[41326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing lower business rates for pubs and breweries in response to the economic conditions as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

In response to the pandemic, the Government provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England, including pubs. This meant eligible properties paid no business rates for 15 months from 1 April 2020, and thanks to the new 66% capped relief which took effect on 1 July 2021, over 90% of eligible businesses are estimated to see a 75% reduction in their business rates bill across this entire financial year to next April.

In addition, the Government is providing £1.5 billion of additional support to businesses that have not already received business rates relief. This new relief will

be awarded through funding for Local Authorities, taking into account the economic impact COVID-19 has had on specific sectors.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[43693\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much financial support the Government has made available to local authorities for supporting refugees arriving from (a) Afghanistan and (b) other countries as a result of the security situation in Afghanistan.

**Steve Barclay:**

The government has announced the Afghanistan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable Afghans in its first year, potentially rising to 20,000 over the long term. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) for those who worked with the UK in Afghanistan also remains open. More detail on funding for local authorities to support those eligible for both schemes will be announced shortly.

In addition to the Afghan schemes, the Home Office also delivers the UK Resettlement Scheme which resettles vulnerable refugees from a range of regions of conflict and instability.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[41258\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the role of economic policy in regional development.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government's levelling up agenda aims to spread opportunity and investment across every region and nation of the UK. We are delivering this pledge by boosting jobs, wages and prospects for all communities.

At the Budget, the Government announced additional funding for skills and job support, 8 Freeports that will be national hubs for trade, innovation and commerce and the launch of the first round of the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund, to invest in local infrastructure and support economic recovery.

Furthermore, in light of Covid-19, the Government has introduced unprecedented support for businesses, households and workers, and local economies across the UK – protecting jobs and livelihoods against the current economic crisis. As of 14 July 2021, there have been 11.6 million unique jobs supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) since its inception, including 472,800 jobs in Wales. A total of 1.3 million employers have made a claim through the CJRS since it started in March 2020, totalling £67.4 billion in claims.

## ■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

**Dan Carden:**

[\[43645\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to provide support for property buyers who agreed sales ahead of the end of the stamp duty freeze and who will not complete sales until after the end of that freeze due to waiting for the completion of building surveys.

**Jesse Norman:**

The SDLT threshold for all purchases of property, except purchases by first time buyers, will be £125,000 from 1 October 2021. The SDLT threshold is £300,000 for first time buyers who purchase a property for £500,000 or below.

In March 2021, the Chancellor extended the period in which the £500,000 SDLT threshold applies to 30 June 2021. This was designed to ensure that transactions that were unable to be completed by the original 31 March 2021 deadline because of delays in the sector would still receive the relief.

The SDLT threshold then stepped down to £250,000 on 1 July 2021 to transition the market back to the standard rate. The standard SDLT threshold will return to £125,000 on 1 October 2021.

## ■ Treasury: Remote Working

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[43498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the mean proportion is of officials of his Department physically working in their office as opposed to working from home or elsewhere whose office is in (a) Darlington and (b) London, on each day in each of the last three months.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Our offices are open and the majority of HMT staff have worked in our offices at some point over the last 3 months. We do not have separate breakdowns for new offices.

## ■ Treasury: Staff

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[43497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many jobs his Department has moved from his Department's premises in central London to Treasury North in Darlington as at 3 September 2021.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[43499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many roles have been moved out of central London by his Department in the last (a) six and (b) three months; and how many of those roles have been filled by staff (i) of his Department who previously filled that same role when it was located in central London, (ii) who previously worked for his Department in other roles and (iii) who have not previously worked for his Department.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

There will be at least 750 roles based at the Darlington economic campus, with the Treasury expecting to provide 200 – 300 of these. The Treasury's workforce in Darlington will be made up of existing staff who voluntarily relocate from London in their existing roles and people who are recruited directly to the campus. An expression of interest process is open for existing Treasury staff who wish to move, and relocations are taking place on a gradual basis. Almost all Treasury roles are now being advertised as available in Darlington, and we have begun recruitment campaigns exclusively for Darlington based Treasury roles. We are working at pace to establish the campus as quickly as possible and will publish details of relocations and recruitment in HMT's 21/22 annual report and accounts.

**WALES****■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[42116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment he has made of the Government's preparedness for the COP26 summit and its potential impact on (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales.

**Simon Hart:**

The UK Government is working intensively with countries, businesses and civil society organisations around the world to secure our path to global net zero emissions by 2050 and deliver a safe, secure, sustainable and inclusive COP26. The UK set the tone for the level of ambition we invite all countries to rise to when earlier this year we announced our commitment to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

Climate change does not recognise territorial borders. The summit aims to mobilise countries to bring down global emissions, improve air quality, reduce pollution and protect and restore natural ecosystems globally. These benefits would be felt by citizens and communities in Newport, Wales and beyond.

COP26 is also an opportunity to showcase the breadth of engagement in climate action across the UK. All parts of the UK will have important roles to play in ensuring the summit's success and will benefit from the collective momentum generated by COP26. We are working with the Welsh Government to ensure an inclusive and ambitious summit for the whole UK. We are grateful to those organisations from Wales that applied to have a physical presence at the summit in the UK-managed Green Zone, about which we hope to make an announcement in due course. Welsh communities have also taken part in the Together for Our Planet and Race to Zero campaigns and engaged with the COP26 Schools Pack.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Access to Work Programme**

**Ed Davey:** [\[43384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time is for beneficiaries to receive Access to Work Payments in each of the last (a) 12 months and (b) five years; and if she will make a statement.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The average length of time for beneficiaries to receive Access to Work Payments in each of the last (a) 12 months and (b) five years is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence**

**Drew Hendry:** [\[43554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional steps she will take to improve response times to personal independence payment inquiries from hon. Members.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Department aims to provide substantive replies to inquiries from hon. Members within 20 working days. Where issues are complex substantive replies may take longer.

**■ Disability: Finance**

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[43672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on establishing an Extra Costs Taskforce.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.

Officials are currently developing proposals for the taskforce and its terms of reference and membership. Insight from disabled people and organisations will inform the development of the Taskforce.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[43673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to ensure a wide range of disabled people and their families are involved in the Extra Costs Taskforce; and if she will make it her policy to work with disability charities and organisations to ensure as many experiences as possible are included.



**Justin Tomlinson:**

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.

Officials are currently developing proposals for the taskforce and its terms of reference and membership. Insight from disabled people and organisations will inform the development of the Taskforce.

**■ Employment****Peter Aldous:**[\[43500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Department for Education's Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth White Paper, published in January 2021, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that people move into good quality employment; and what relationship officials in her Department has with the Department for Education's Skills and Productivity Board.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department works closely with Department for Education and others, including the Skills Productivity Board, to understand current and future skills shortages. Our DWP Train and Progress initiative expands claimants' access to training, with new offers under the Lifetime Skills Guarantee such as the Skills Bootcamps, ensuring they gain new skills and obtain good jobs.

**■ Employment: Disability****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[43124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Government will launch its consultation on workforce reporting on disability for large employers.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July, the Cabinet Office will consult later this year on workforce reporting on disability for large employers, exploring voluntary and mandated workplace transparency, before publishing next steps.

**■ Kickstart Scheme****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[43670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling disabled people over the age of 24 to access the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

The Kickstart Scheme is a COVID19 response to support young people aged between 16 and 24 years who are at risk of long term unemployment. All young people on Universal Credit including those with a disability can take up the offer of a Kickstart Scheme job.

Kickstart is a part of the government's Plan for Jobs. Young jobseekers with a disability have a number of different routes and support offers available to them alongside Kickstart, including Access to Work, dedicated Disability Employment Advisors, and opportunities through the Work and Health programme.

**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[43671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people in receipt of contracted provision such as the Work and Health Programme to transfer to the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

The Kickstart scheme is part of the wider package available for young people aged between 16 and 24 years old. Prior to any referral to other provision, including Work and Health Programme, DWP Work Coaches will assess if Kickstart is the most suitable support to improve the employment prospects for the young person.

Once a young person has completed a contracted intervention they can be referred to apply for a Kickstart job. The Department is currently reviewing under which circumstances it is appropriate for a young person to benefit from both a contracted employment intervention and the Kickstart Scheme at the same time.

**■ Personal Independence Payment****Mr Nicholas Brown:**[\[43391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the average waiting time to process personal independence payment applications in (a) England, (b) the North East of England and (c) Newcastle upon Tyne East constituency.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Average waiting times for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) new claims made under normal rules (i.e. excluding those processed under special rules) are calculated as the median number of weeks from registration to DWP decision, and published as the "Average Actual Clearance Time". For claims cleared in April 2021, the latest published data shows:

- (a) The Average Actual Clearance Time for new claims in England was 19 weeks.
- (b) The Average Actual Clearance Time for new claims in the North East of England was 19 weeks.
- (c) The Average Actual Clearance Time for new claims in Newcastle upon Tyne East was 22 weeks.

We are currently operating within expected levels. Average clearance times from initial claim to a decision being made for new claims at the end of April 2021 is 19 weeks, which is the same as average clearance times achieved in March 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through PIP in a timely manner. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence.

Data on clearance times for PIP claims is published in the PIP Official Statistics tables, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-independence-payment-statistics-to-april-2021>

(Clearance times for (b) the North East of England are published in Table 2A (v)).

Data to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 will be published on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021, as part of the next scheduled release of PIP Official Statistics.

Notes:

Data Source: PIP Atomic Data Store (ADS)

- Data for England and Newcastle upon Tyne East is unpublished. It should be used with caution as there is likely to be more variability in clearance times at small geographical levels. It may be subject to future revision.
- The status of claims as 'normal rules' and 'new claim' is shown as at the point of the DWP decision, in accordance with the measure. It is possible for claims to transition between normal and special rules, and between new claims and reassessments, during the course of the claimant journey.
- Clearance time measures do not include claims that were withdrawn by the claimant or claims that were disallowed by DWP prior to referral to the Assessment Providers (e.g. for failure to meet basic eligibility criteria).
- The median time is the middle value if you were to order all the times within the distribution from lowest value to highest value. The median is presented here instead of the mean because the mean can be unduly affected by outlying cases (e.g. cases where the person has been hard to reach due to being in prison, hospital, failed to attend the assessment on numerous occasions etc.).

**Mr Nicholas Brown:**

**[43392]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to reduce the time it takes to process personal independence payment applications.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

We are committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment in a timely manner. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence.

We are currently operating within expected levels. Average clearance times from initial claim to a decision being made for new claims at the end of April 2021 is 19 weeks, which is the same as average clearance times achieved in March 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## ■ Post Office Card Account

**Mr Nicholas Brown:**

[\[43395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to assist Post Office Card Account users transition from their cards in preparation for the end of universal credit, tax credit and State Pension payments into those accounts from November 2021.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department has a dedicated team, the Financial Inclusion Customer Contact Centre, to support all Post Office Card Account customers to transition to standard accounts. A new Payment Exception Service exists for customers who are unable to access a standard account to receive their payments.

The Department is actively contacting Post Office Card Account customers to support and advice on the future payment methods available.

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[43541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefit claimants currently hold Post Office Card Accounts; what assessment her Department has made of the impact on claimants of ending their use for benefit and pension payments from November 2021; and what steps her Department is taking to help claimants set up alternative accounts.

**Guy Opperman:**

In 2015 there was circa 2.3m active Post Office Card Accounts (POCa) users, which has now reduced to less than 350k.

The Department has a dedicated team, the Financial Inclusion Customer Contact Centre, to support all Post Office Card Account customers to transition to standard accounts. A new Payment Exception Service exists for customers who are unable to access a standard account to receive their payments.

The Department is actively contacting Post Office Card Account customers to provide support and advice on the future payment methods available.

## ■ Restart Programme

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[42167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the (a) introduction and (b) initial operation of the Restart Scheme for jobseekers in (i) the UK and (ii) Leicestershire.

**Mims Davies:**

The Restart Scheme is still in its initial stage. It is aimed at supporting people who have been on Universal Credit in the Intensive Work Search Regime for 12-18 months into sustained employment. Referrals to Restart began in July 2021 and participants can spend up to 12 months on the scheme.

At this stage, it is too early to give an assessment of the effectiveness of the introduction and initial operation. However, a comprehensive, multi-strand evaluation will be undertaken to provide a robust analysis of Restart delivery and impact.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Disability****Stephen Timms:**[\[43382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date her Department received the final report of the NatCen research project entitled The Uses of Health and Disability Benefits; and for what reason that report has not been published.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

**The Government considers a broad range of analysis and evidence to support the formation of all its policy, including that which is both internally and externally commissioned. It is not necessary to publish all of this material, and the Government does not have plans to publish the NatCen report at this time.**

**■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses****Stephen Timms:**[\[43378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will remove the three year award duration for benefits claims made under the special rules for terminal illness.

**Stephen Timms:**[\[43379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason people with a terminal illness are required to reapply for a claim after three years under the special rules for terminal illness.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[43586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will remove the three-year award duration for benefits claims made under the special rules for terminal illness.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

For the majority of cases made under the SRTI, people are given three year awards. This approach was based on a recommendation from an expert advisory group, initially for DLA, but later adopted in other benefits. The three year awards given to SRTI claims strikes a balance that recognises making a prognosis is not an exact science and that people who do live longer than expected should continue to receive the support provided to them by benefit system, while also enabling those who live for much longer than expected, to be looked at afresh in light of their circumstances as they come towards the end of their award.

As part of the Health and Disability Green Paper consultation, we are consulting on reform of assessments and seeking views on policy proposals, including the principle of receiving unnecessary assessments and reviews. Following the consultation, detailed proposals will then be brought forward in a White Paper next year.

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

**Rachael Maskell:** [43560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of the £20 uplift to universal credit (a) nationally, (b) in York and (c) in York Central constituency.

**Will Quince:**

The £20 uplift applies to all Universal Credit claimants.

The latest available statistics on the number of people on Universal Credit, by parliamentary constituency and other geographical breakdowns, is published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ **Universal Credit: Rented Housing**

**Hilary Benn:** [43389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department takes to check that a tenancy agreement and the rent quoted are genuine when considering the housing allowance element of a universal credit claim.

**Will Quince:**

For those who live in the Private Rented Sector, we have an upload facility available for claimants to submit evidence to support their claim for housing costs support.

Where necessary, original documents can be provided face to face to a Work Coach. In some circumstances, housing costs can be verified by directly contacting the landlord. Housing costs are always verified directly with the Social Sector landlord in Social Rented Sector cases.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Introducing an Approved Sales System for National Lottery Products

**Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):**

**[[HCWS272](#)]**

Following a consultation, the government announced last year that it was raising the age at which National Lottery products can be bought and sold from 16 to 18, protecting young people from the possible risk of gambling harm. The new minimum age comes into force on October 1st and the operator and retailers have already stopped selling tickets to anyone aged below 18.

Following a further consultation which was held in July and August, the government intends to make some technical amendments to the requirements placed on retailers in connection with the uplift in the minimum age for buying and selling National Lottery products from 16 to 18, and today a statutory instrument is being laid which will introduce this change.

The approved sales system is a minor technical easement and will be based on the two existing provisions already in place for alcohol sales in England, Wales and Scotland, and for sales of tobacco and nicotine vaping products in Scotland, through which a designated person aged 18 or over can approve a transaction being handled by a 16 or 17 year old. This approach therefore builds on an existing framework and maintains the intent of the original policy.

The majority of National Lottery retailers will already be familiar with at least one of the systems. By offering both approaches we hope that the easement will meet the diverse needs of the National Lottery's 44,000 retailers who range from large supermarket chains to small independent family run shops.

The consultation response is being published today on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and thank you to everyone who took the time to respond.

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Prevailing Market Rates

**The Minister of State for Universities (Michelle Donelan):**

**[[HCWS275](#)]**

I am announcing today a temporary reduction in the maximum student loan interest rate following the recent decline in the prevailing market rate for comparable unsecured personal loans.

In accordance with the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, where the Government considers that the student loan interest rate is higher than the prevailing market rate for comparable unsecured loans, we will take steps to reduce the maximum student loan interest rate.



The Government regularly monitors the interest rates set on student loans against the interest rates prevailing on the market for comparable loans.

Following a decline in the prevailing market rate, I have today, 9 September laid legislation to cap the maximum Post-2012 income contingent repayment undergraduate and the postgraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rate in line with the prevailing market rate. The cap will come into effect from 1 October 2021 and last for a period of three months.

The reduction will be 0.4 percentage point on the maximum student loan interest rate to reflect the average market rates during the preceding monitoring period.

The maximum Post-2012 undergraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rate and the postgraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rate will be 4.1% between 1 October and 31 December.

From 1 January 2022, the Post-2012 undergraduate and postgraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rates will revert to the standard rate +3%.

Further caps may be put in place should the prevailing market rate continue to be below student loan interest rates.

## ■ Statement on Adoption Provision

**Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

**[[HCWS274](#)]**

Every child should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Children thrive in loving, stable families. However, some face challenges which most of us can only imagine. They will often have experienced abuse and neglect. Where a child cannot live with their birth parents the best alternative home will often be with other family members or within loving foster families. For some children, adoption is the best alternative.

We cannot overestimate how important a new family is to an adopted child. Their security comes from knowing that they are safe and cared for, that they will get the love and support they need and will be supported to make the most of life's opportunities. That is why we published our new adoption strategy "Achieving Excellence Everywhere". A copy of the strategy can be found at [gov.uk\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94444/achieving-excellence-everywhere.pdf)

In 2015 the adoption system was highly fragmented, with around 180 agencies recruiting and matching adopters; most of these were operating at a very small scale. This caused delays in the recruitment of adopters and in the matching of children with approved adopters. Since then, we have moved successfully to a regionalised approach with 31 regional adoption agencies covering 145 local authorities across the country. Regional adoption agencies are delivering adoption services more effectively at a greater scale with the regional leaders collaborating to improve services and address challenges.

In 2015 we introduced the Adoption Support Fund to help children who have experienced abuse and neglect to get the therapeutic support they need. Since then, over 36,000 individual children have been supported and had their lives transformed.

We have reduced the number of children waiting from 5,000 in 2010 to 2,600 now, and children are moving in with adoptive families faster, with more families now getting the

adoption support they need. This is good progress, but we need to do more. 2,600 children waiting is still too many. 1,000 children are still waiting over 18 months to be matched; this is too long. This typically includes older children, children from ethnic minorities, sibling groups and children with additional needs. This is unacceptable.

Our strategy sets out a bold and ambitious vision which will see regional adoption agencies building on their collaborative approach to deliver a framework of national standards and working with other agencies across health, education, and justice so that high-quality provision is available everywhere across the country. This will help to ensure that adopted children and their families can access the services and support they need to flourish wherever they live.

A new framework of national standards will mean services delivered to the same high quality across the country. It means that best practice will drive services as part of a culture of continuous improvement.

The strategy will see us recruiting adopters from all communities and from all walks of life so that we recruit all those who are able to provide loving homes to the children who are waiting to be adopted. A service where children are matched seamlessly across organisational boundaries with families that can provide a loving home without unnecessary delay.

Our strategy sets out how we will radically improve adoption support from the moment a match with a family has been approved. This includes not only direct support in the home, but also by schools and local health services, and support which continues throughout their childhood whenever it is required.

Sector leaders will build on their collaborative approach to ensure that all services are delivered to the same high standards across the country-developing the new national standards. Where it is most effective, we will look to deliver services on a national scale, for example on adopter recruitment or some elements of support.

To ensure that the needs of adoptive families become a high priority for all, sector leaders will develop strong partnerships with local authority children's services, Voluntary Adoption Agencies, education, health, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, the judiciary and voluntary and community groups.

We are making significant investment in 2021-22 as part of the strategy:

- £1m for regional adoption agency leaders to collectively improve recruitment and the adopter approval process;
- £500k to increase early permanence arrangements (whereby a child is placed with prospective adopters when first removed from their birth family);
- £46m to continue post adoption support for families through the Adoption Support Fund;
- £500k to employ a National regional adoption agency strategic leader and a support team of two project workers to progress collaborative working on agreed priority areas; &

- £100k funding to commission research on outcomes of children who left care on an adoption or Special Guardianship Order.

Our ambition is to deliver adoption swiftly and effectively when adoption is the right path for the child. They and their families deserve the very best services we can offer to help them thrive and to achieve the best possible outcomes. Our strategy will help them to do so.

A copy of the strategy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ COVID-19 Update

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):**

**[[HCWS273](#)]**

I wish to inform the House of the action the Government is taking to consider how to further improve uptake of Covid-19 and Flu vaccinations by those who work in our health and social care services.

Following a public consultation on making Covid-19 vaccination a condition of deployment for those working in adult care homes, the Government informed the House on 17 June 2021 that Covid-19 vaccination would be required of people entering a CQC registered adult care home, unless exempt, to protect vulnerable residents.

While residents in care homes are some of the most at risk from Covid-19, the responses to this initial consultation made a clear case for extending this policy beyond care homes to other settings where vulnerable people receive care and treatment.

It is right that the Government strains every sinew to maximise the benefits of the vaccine and protect the most vulnerable as we return our freedoms and get back to a normal way of life.

The Government is therefore now undertaking a further public consultation on whether or not to make Covid-19 vaccination and Flu vaccination a condition of deployment for frontline health and care workers, to help safeguard the vulnerable.

While many of those working in health and social care sectors have taken up the offer of vaccination, it is crucial that this is consistent across services to safeguard vulnerable people, and that this high level is maintained as new people join the workforce.

Recent research has shown people infected with both Flu and Covid-19 are more than twice as likely to die as someone with Covid-19 alone and nearly six times more likely than those with neither flu nor Covid-19, so it is right that both are considered within the consultation.

These are complex and important issues and the consultation seeks to gather a wide range of perspectives from the public and across the health and care sectors about whether vaccination requirements should be introduced and how they could be implemented.

I will provide an update to the House, following the completion of the consultation.