



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 20 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

■ Business: Ventilation

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[49115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to inform businesses in the (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) leisure sectors of the role of ventilation in inhibiting the spread of covid-19.

Paul Scully:

The Working Safely [guidance](#) encourages businesses to ensure that their ventilation is adequate as a mitigation against COVID-19. We have amplified messages around ventilation through our wider engagement with businesses including regular discussions with sector bodies and meetings with business representatives.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has also used existing communication routes to direct members of their Hospitality Industry Liaison Forum to their ventilation guidance. To increase messaging impact, BEIS added a link to a HSE video on ventilation to our Working Safely guidance. Our guidance is kept under constant review and is updated when new evidence arises.

■ Carbon Emissions

Daisy Cooper:

[\[50145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the recommendations of the Climate Assembly UK report, The path to net zero, published on 10 September 2020, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the recommendations in that report.

Greg Hands:

The Government responded to the Select Committee's Call for Written Evidence as part of its inquiry that is available here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1191/findings-of-the-report-of-climate-assembly-uk/publications/>.

■ Conditions of Employment: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[47049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to extend employment rights to all workers in Newport West constituency.

Paul Scully:

The UK has one of the best employment rights records in the world and we have made good progress in bringing forward measures that add flexibility for workers while ensuring the protection of employment rights, such as banning the use of exclusivity clauses in zero hours contracts.

An individual's employment rights, are determined by their employment status (employee, limb (b) worker or self-employed). Employees are entitled to all rights including rights to flexible working (subject to qualifying periods) and have responsibilities towards their employer. So-called "limb (b) workers" are only entitled to some rights such as the National Minimum Wage but have increased flexibility and fewer obligations to their employer. The self-employed generally have no employment rights but have complete flexibility in their work. We believe our three-tiered employment status structure provides the right balance for the UK Labour Market.

We understand the importance of clarity around employment status and to ensure that individuals and businesses are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The Government will continue to work closely with businesses, trade unions and other groups to ensure that any options to clarify employment status are effective, preserving the flexibility of the labour market while making it easier to understand for individuals.

■ **Coronavirus: Newport West**

Ruth Jones:

[\[47053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to promote a green recovery from the covid-19 pandemic in Newport West constituency.

Greg Hands:

The Government is determined to seize the once-in-a-generation economic opportunities of the net zero transition by creating new business opportunities and, by one estimate, supporting up to 2 million green jobs by 2030 across all regions of the UK. The UK has a strong base to build upon, in 2019 there were already over 410,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains across the country.

The Ten Point Plan is part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's mission to level up across the country, mobilising £12 billion of Government investment to create and support a further 90,000 green collar jobs across the UK by 2024, and up to 250,000 by 2030.

Many of the initiatives and funding announced within the Ten Point Plan will apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For example, the Government will invest up to £1 billion to support the establishment of Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage in at least four industrial clusters, creating 'SuperPlaces' in areas such as central and north-eastern Scotland, south Wales, the Humber, Teesside and Merseyside.

Ahead of COP26, the Government will bring forward further bold proposals, including a Net Zero Strategy, to cut emissions and create new jobs and industries across the whole country, going further and faster towards building a stronger, more resilient future and protecting our planet for this generation and those to come.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Ian Mearns:****[49995]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the (a) data, (b) evidence and (c) reasoning which supports the findings that the Valneva covid-19 vaccine in trial would not receive UK regulatory approval prior to the end of that trial.

Paul Scully:

The response given by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to a question raised by the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) has been [clarified](#) [1] to make clear that Valneva's Covid-19 vaccine has not yet gained approval by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) here in the UK, and that the outcome of that approval process will be a matter for the MHRA once the trials have been concluded and the data has been submitted.

[1] <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-09-16/debates/E09C8E55-4307-43B6-B57E-BA2E9BFB556F/HealthAndSocialCare#10MC>

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: East of England Energy Group and Oil and Gas Authority**Clive Lewis:****[47021]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the details of any sponsorship agreements which exist between the East of England Energy Group and (a) his Department and (b) the Oil and Gas Authority.

Greg Hands:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has no sponsorship agreements with the East of England Energy Group.

The Oil and Gas Authority wishes to develop Bacton gas terminal as an energy transition hub and has engaged the East of England Energy Group to facilitate a number of Special Interest Groups for which a contribution has been agreed.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Listed Buildings**Tim Loughton:****[49013]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 44165 on Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Listed Buildings, if he will publish a list of the (a) properties classified as heritage assets owned by his Department, (b) the most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) the annual income derived from those properties as opposed to the details of the body responsible for advising him on those properties' management.

George Freeman:

The following table provides a list of heritage assets recorded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, alongside valuation and income data where available:

PROPERTY	ANNUAL INCOME	VALUATION 31.03.21
Pelham House (ID 1356190), Pelham House North Lodge (ID 1086590), Pelham House South Lodge (ID 1356193)	£120,051	£1,045,000
Calder Farm Stangs Cottage (ID 1068621)	£0	£150,000
Seascale Hall (ID 13360641)	£16,000	£1,000,000
Berkeley Summerhouse (ID 1274730)	£0	£1
Seascale Farm stone circle	£0	£0
Bushy House (ID 1089870)	£0	n/a
Dounreay Castle (ID SM6401)	£0	n/a
Cnoc-na-h'Uiseig Chambered Cairn (ID SM444)	£0	n/a
Knock Stanger Cairn (ID SM458)	£0	n/a
Dragon Square Garden (ID 422271)	£0	n/a
Dame Sylvia Crowe Garden (ID 422272)	£0	n/a
Cestyll Garden (ID 301555)	£0	n/a

■ **Energy Supply: Costs**

Richard Thomson:[\[47071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) his Department and (b) Ofgem have made an assessment of the potential effect of the mutualisation of costs from energy supplier failures on low-income consumers.

Richard Thomson: [\[47072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ask Ofgem to make an estimate of the costs of energy supplier failure in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK, including (i) managing the supplier of last resort process, (ii) covering the cost of consumer credit balances and (iii) unpaid renewables obligations, since January 2018.

Richard Thomson: [\[47073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make representations to Ofgem on the need for any new rules proposed under the Supplier Licencing Review to ensure that suppliers are not able to use an uninformed line of credit in the form of customer credit balances.

Richard Thomson: [\[47074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Ofgem on protecting consumers from higher bills as a direct result of energy supply company failures, where credit balances and unpaid renewables obligations are thereafter mutualised across other suppliers.

Greg Hands:

The Government wants a competitive and innovative supply market, and continues to promote competition as the best driver of value and service for customers.

In a competitive market, it is normal for suppliers to exit the market from time to time. Unfortunately, some energy suppliers are facing pressures due to sudden increases in global gas prices. If a supplier fails, Ofgem will ensure customers' are moved to a new supplier, household credit balances will be protected and gas and electricity supply will continue uninterrupted. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been clear that protecting consumers shapes the Government's entire approach on these gas price spikes.

Ofgem has reviewed their approach to supplier licensing with their resultant package of measures aimed at driving up standards across the energy retail sector by promoting more responsible risk management, improving governance, increasing accountability, and enhancing Ofgem's market oversight. Additionally Ofgem is considering the responses to its March 2021 consultation on further measures that would require suppliers to automatically refund customers' credit balances every year and protect any amounts they hold above a certain threshold.

■ Flexible Working: Newport West

Ruth Jones: [\[47051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to strengthen rights to flexible working for workers in Newport West constituency.

Paul Scully:

The UK has one of the best employment rights records in the world and we have made good progress in bringing forward measures that add flexibility for workers

while ensuring the protection of employment rights, such as banning the use of exclusivity clauses in zero hours contracts.

The Government continues to work closely with businesses, trade unions and other groups to develop options for supporting the flexibility of the labour market.

■ **Fossil Fuels: North Sea**

Ruth Jones:

[\[47047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the future of exploration of oil and gas in the North Sea.

Greg Hands:

As we move towards net-zero, oil and gas will play a smaller role, but still important in meeting UK energy demand. All scenarios proposed by the Climate Change Committee setting out how we could meet our 2050 net zero emissions target include demand for oil and natural gas.

■ **Fuel Poverty**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[50082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to tackle fuel poverty before (a) the removal of the temporary £20 universal credit uplift and (b) winter 2021-22.

Greg Hands:

During winter months we continue to support low income, fuel poor and vulnerable consumers with their energy bills through a number of existing schemes. The Warm Home Discount provides over 2 million low income and vulnerable eligible households with a £140 discount. In addition, the energy price cap, on average, saves 15 million households on default tariffs up to £100 a year.

Furthermore, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments will help ensure those most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes over the colder months.

■ **Help to Grow Scheme: Digital Technology**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the benefits to business of the digital technology provided in the Help to Grow Digital programme; and what steps his Department is taking to communicate those benefits to business groups.

Paul Scully:

The Department has considered research, including the Government's Business Productivity Review and from the Enterprise Research Centre and Office for National Statistics, which shows that technology adoption is strongly linked with significant productivity growth.

Dedicated communications and marketing activity to promote the Help to Grow Digital scheme and the benefits of technology adoption will commence when the scheme launches in Autumn 2021.

■ Hydrogen

Ruth Jones: [\[47048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the generation of green hydrogen.

Greg Hands:

This August, the UK published the first ever UK Hydrogen Strategy, alongside key policy detail on how the Government will support new low carbon hydrogen production and ensure standards are in place to deliver the carbon emissions savings, government need to meet net zero. This is the most substantive hydrogen strategy and policy package of its kind in the world and one that places the UK firmly at the forefront of the race to develop hydrogen as a promising replacement for fossil fuels in the global transition to net zero.

The UK Hydrogen Strategy sets out the Government's 'twin-track' approach to supporting both electrolytic 'green' and carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS)-enabled 'blue' hydrogen production. The UK has expertise and assets to support these and other low carbon production routes, helping us drive cost effective supply volumes in the 2020s in line with our 2030 5GW ambition, whilst scaling up electrolytic hydrogen.

The Government are currently consulting on new policy interventions to support low carbon hydrogen, including the £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, a hydrogen business model to incentivise the production and use of low carbon hydrogen, and a UK standard to ensure hydrogen production the government support is sufficiently low carbon.

■ Hydrogen: Storage

Richard Thomson: [\[47066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the need for hydrogen storage to manage fluctuations in (a) production and (b) consumption in supporting the Government's pathways to net zero.

Richard Thomson: [\[47067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has a preferred option for securing cost-effective UK hydrogen storage; and what assessment it has made of the potential merits of (a) repurposing existing salt caverns, (b) repurposing depleted gas fields and (c) building new storage capacity.

Richard Thomson:

[\[47069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential role that the Rough reservoir in the Southern North Sea could play in meeting hydrogen storage demand.

Richard Thomson:

[\[47070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what regulatory models he is considering to underpin investment in hydrogen storage.

Greg Hands:

The Hydrogen Strategy, published on 21st August set out that hydrogen storage, for example in salt caverns or depleted gas fields, can support the hydrogen economy in a range of ways that position it as a strategic asset as part of a fully decarbonised, net zero economy.

The Strategy made clear that there is still much work to do to understand, develop and scale up hydrogen storage infrastructure as both supply and demand grow. It committed to a review of systemic hydrogen storage requirements in the 2020s and beyond.

The Government's review will assess the need for hydrogen storage and what form this might take. It will also consider whether funding or other incentives are needed, and whether further government regulation might be required to ensure that hydrogen storage infrastructure is available when needed.

This work, in addition to other work we are undertaking with technology developers, regulators and other industry stakeholders will help inform future Government policy on hydrogen storage. Government intends to provide an update on its review in early 2022 to facilitate further discussions with stakeholders.

Alongside its Hydrogen Strategy, the Government also published the Hydrogen Business Model consultation. The consultation includes specific questions on the treatment of small-scale storage within the Hydrogen Business Model, as well as on the potential need for a separate Government intervention to facilitate investment in future larger scale storage. Responses to these questions will also help inform our hydrogen storage review.

Richard Thomson:

[\[47068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of hydrogen storage on (a) price volatility and wholesale natural gas prices, (b) the liquidity of the gas market, (c) security of supply and dependency on gas imports, (d) regional economies and integration and (e) the cost of mothballing and/or decommissioning existing depleted gas fields.

Greg Hands:

The Energy White Paper sets out that natural gas has an important and on-going role to play in the future as we decarbonise our energy system. Even as work progresses

with the move to a low carbon economy, energy security remains an absolute priority and Government will continue to engage with industry to ensure supply is balanced with demand.

BEIS is working with industry to explore the future role of hydrogen storage in meeting the net zero target. The UK Hydrogen Strategy provides Government's thinking around the role of hydrogen storage, and its plans to assess whether further regulation or support mechanisms are needed.

Though it is still too early to establish the role hydrogen storage will play, and the impact the production of hydrogen and the potential need for hydrogen storage facilities might be leading to 2050, BEIS continues to work with stakeholders to determine the future of the gas system, the market and any consideration around costs in meeting the net zero target.

■ **Made Smarter: North East**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding will be allocated to the Made Smarter Adoption North East scheme; and how many (a) small and (b) medium sized businesses that scheme will support.

Paul Scully:

BEIS is making £0.6m of funding available for Made Smarter Adoption support for SME manufacturers into the North East which will play a crucial role in delivering key BEIS and Government objectives.

This funding will support recovery and resilience following Covid-19; create long term growth for manufacturers by driving productivity and competitiveness and encourage more firms to get on the road to innovation; support levelling up across the North East and help drive down carbon emissions from manufacturing sectors.

The £0.6m funding will enable around 100 manufacturing SMEs in this region to gain increased awareness of industrial digitalisation with 88 in the region being able to access intensive advice. This is projected to generate a net GVA increase of £3.1m and in turn generate a discounted Net Social Benefit (NSB) of £1.9m. There will not be separate ring-fenced funding allocations for (a) small and (b) medium sized firms.

■ **Post Office: Pay**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help protect the income of postmasters under the pay structure of the new Mails Distribution Agreement, due to come into effect on 1 April 2022.

Paul Scully:

Helping to protect the income of Postmasters is important to the department and we welcome the improvements outlined in the Mails Distribution Agreement (MDA).

The improvements will mean that whenever Royal Mail put up customer prices, Postmasters will see the benefit – with interim tariff payments for price increases earlier this year already being paid to Postmasters.

■ Procurement: Wales

Ruth Jones: [\[47043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with businesses and trade unions on supply chain issues in (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales.

Ruth Jones: [\[47044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help tackle supply chain issues affecting businesses in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

Ruth Jones: [\[47046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support manufacturing in (a) Wales and (b) the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to supporting UK manufacturing businesses and recognises the vital role they play in the UK economy, by driving innovation, exports, job creation and productivity growth. We hold regular discussions with industry stakeholders to better understand the issues affecting supply chains, and recognise the significant pressures being felt by industry as a result of supply chain disruption, as well as the impact this is placing on businesses. Successful resolution of these issues will be a joint effort between industry and Government, and we will continue to engage with other departments to find practical solutions to these challenges, which are not unique to the UK.

In order to support UK manufacturing, we are investing £147 million through a Manufacturing Made Smarter Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund programme and have invested £730 million in the seven High Value Manufacturing Catapult centres, supporting manufacturers in bringing new technologies to market.

Furthermore, we have introduced a Super Deduction that will cut manufacturers' tax bill by 25p for every pound they invest in new equipment, which means they can reduce their taxable profits by 130% of the cost. In addition, the Government has a target for total R&D investment to reach 2.4% of GDP by 2027 and in our recent Innovation Strategy we have committed to increase our annual public investment in R&D to a record £22billion.

The Government has provided over £3.4 billion in direct support to businesses in Wales throughout the pandemic. This is on top of our support for the manufacturing sector through our £4.8m commitment to the development of Holyhead Hydrogen Hub, £30m for the Global Centre of Rail Excellence and £30m for Celsa Steel.

■ Recruitment

Alex Cunningham:

[\[50008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, published 14 September 2021, that labour shortages are the main concern of 88 per cent of recruiters for the remainder of 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government is working closely with industry to address sector challenges, which are being faced by countries around the world.

We have expanded the Seasonal Workers Pilot to 30,000 visas for workers to come to the UK for up to six months; and have introduced measures to help tackle the HGV driver shortage.

We have expanded the roles which now qualify for our new Skilled Worker Route: senior care workers, healthcare practice managers, telecommunications engineers, construction and building trades not elsewhere classified and veterinary nurses are now eligible.

The Government wants to see employers make long term investments in the UK domestic workforce and make employment more attractive through offering training, careers options and wage increases.

We are investing in our Plan for Jobs because supporting people into work, ensuring they get the skills they need to get good jobs and helping businesses fill their vacancies is the best way to secure our economic recovery.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Science and Research

Ruth Jones:

[\[47052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prioritise science and research in the levelling up agenda in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

George Freeman:

We recognise the need to take a comprehensive place-based approach to economic growth, that responds to the varying needs of places. We will publish a detailed approach for levelling up through R&D as part of the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper.

Ahead of then, UKRI's Strength in Places Fund (SIPF) is the first major national competitive R&D fund that takes a place-based approach contributing to the Government's wider levelling up ambitions. In June 2020, BEIS announced an award of £25m to the CS Connected project in the first wave of SIPF, to develop South Wales' compound semiconductor cluster. Project partners are from across the region including Newport. This summer, BEIS announced a £22m award to the media.cymru project to develop Cardiff's media cluster.

■ Subsidy Control Bill: Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-pacific Partnership

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[50113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on the compatibility of proposals in the Subsidy Control Bill with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Paul Scully:

Officials are working with the Department of International Trade to ensure that our international agreements are consistent with and support our ambitious domestic policy agenda. The Government is committed to upholding all its international obligations, including those on subsidy control. We do not anticipate any incompatibility issues with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which does not contain any commitments on subsidies that conflict with the proposals in the Subsidy Control Bill.

■ Vacancies

Ruth Jones:

[\[47050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to review the terms and conditions of employment in sectors of the economy experiencing labour shortages.

Paul Scully:

In general, terms and conditions of employment, except where they are subject to statutory minimum standards such as the national minimum wage, are a contractual matter for negotiation and agreement between employers and employees (or their representatives).

The Government is keen to see employers make long term investments in the UK domestic workforce instead of relying on labour from abroad, and businesses should be looking at how to make employment more attractive, including through wage increases and offering training.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Coronavirus: Public Opinion

Mr David Davis:

[\[49025\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether polling by the Government on public opinion on covid-19 was conducted on 10 February 2020.

Mr David Davis: [\[49026\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether polling by the Government on public opinion on covid-19 was conducted on 11 February 2020.

Mr David Davis: [\[49027\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether polling by the Government on public opinion on covid-19 was conducted on 12 February 2020.

Mr David Davis: [\[49028\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether polling by the Government on public opinion on covid-19 was conducted on 13 February 2020.

Mr David Davis: [\[49029\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether polling by the Government on public opinion on covid-19 was conducted on 14 February 2020.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to [PQ45797](#) on 14 September 2021.

■ Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Kevin Brennan: [\[49964\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the need for additional resources to help expedite investigations by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Michael Ellis:

The Government is aware that the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) is currently experiencing a backlog of complaints due to the increased casework from the pandemic and the pressure this has put on the Health Service.

As an independent organisation, the Ombudsman receives its funding directly through the Parliamentary Vote. It is my understanding that the PHSO intends to write to the member to provide more information on its current pressures.

■ Veterans: Charities

Henry Smith: [\[45098\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the additional support for veterans and military charities announced by the Government on 6 September 2021.

Leo Docherty:

The Government is fully committed to helping our veterans receive the support they need. Last month, the Defence Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care met service charities, academics and other relevant experts to discuss the impact of the withdrawal from Afghanistan on the mental health of veterans and their families. In response to this meeting, the Prime Minister announced an additional £5M for the service charity sector to improve the accessibility of services, and better signpost the range of statutory and charitable support available to veterans, including those affected by events in Afghanistan.

The Cabinet Office, Office for Veterans' Affairs is working at pace with key partners and the sector to determine how to distribute and use this funding most effectively and efficiently. Charities will be asked to report on the impact of the additional funding they receive.

COP26**■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Business Premises****Carol Monaghan:**[\[45188\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what plans the Government has to compensate businesses located within the COP26 secure perimeter that will have to close during conference for loss of revenue.

Carol Monaghan:[\[45189\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, when businesses located within the COP26 secure perimeter, that have been required to close for the duration of the conference, will be provided with full details of a compensation package.

Carol Monaghan:[\[45190\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what plans he has in place to compensate the Clyde Maritime Trust Tall Ship Glenlee for loss of revenue as a result of COP26.

Alok Sharma:

COP26 presents an amazing opportunity for both Glasgow and the world. Inevitably, a conference of this size brings both huge opportunities as well as some disruption to the local community hosting the event. In consultation with police and local authority partners, a decision was taken that there will be an extensive security perimeter around the event site to protect attendees. It is unavoidable that a small number of businesses will either need to close or will have disruption to staff and client access.

The COP Unit is contacting affected businesses directly and will be providing compensation. Businesses are eligible only where they are based inside the secure perimeter and will not have facilitated access for their staff and clients.

In some cases, businesses within the restricted security perimeter will be able to stay open to provide services to event staff and delegates, although not for public access.

The UK Government is providing compensation to these businesses to reflect potential shortfall in revenue where this can be clearly demonstrated based on an assessment of comparable periods.

We will not be able to offer compensation to businesses outside the restricted secure perimeters or for businesses inside the secure perimeters who are able to remain open for trading.

The Clyde Maritime Trust Tall Ship Glenlee falls within the outer security perimeter.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Civil Servants

Clive Lewis: [\[47020\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether there are plans for UK civil servants to travel to Glasgow for COP26 by air.

Alok Sharma:

Our default approach is that travel to and from Glasgow will be by train or other appropriate public ground transportation. COP26 will be carbon neutral, our principal priority is to reduce emissions from the conference, with any unavoidable carbon emissions from COP26 to be offset. We are working to achieve PAS2060 Carbon Neutrality validation for COP26 to ensure this approach. We will also encourage delegates to consider low-carbon travel options and will be offsetting the emissions associated with travel, including those of the COP President and UK officials in the run up to COP26.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Crown Dependencies

Andrew Rosindell: [\[41736\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Crown Dependencies on their contribution to and participation in the COP26 conference.

Alok Sharma:

The UK Government represents the interests of UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including in negotiations at the annual Conference of the Parties (COP).

We are working with the Crown Dependencies to ensure that their perspectives are accurately represented. In June, I met with representatives from the governments of the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey to discuss preparations for COP26.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Ministers

Matthew Pennycook: [\[47031\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, which Cabinet members will be attending the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow.

Alok Sharma:

We are currently finalising the UK Delegation for COP26. It is too early to confirm names at this stage, however we expect a number of Ministers from relevant government departments to be in attendance over the course of the event.

DEFENCE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Nick Smith:**[\[903506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of state, what recent progress has been made on the delivery of the Defence Equipment Plan 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

An update on the Equipment Plan was published in January 2021 but did not reflect the impact of the Spending Review and a £24 billion cash increase in the Defence Budget over four years. An updated Equipment Plan reflecting this increase in funding and the Defence Command Paper will be published in due course.

Stuart Anderson:[\[903515\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support the families of armed forces personnel.

Leo Docherty:

Families are at the heart of the Defence Community. Our assistance to them includes, wraparound childcare and children's education partner employment. The Armed Forces Families Strategy, to be published this autumn, will provide a cross-Government policy framework to support outcomes for families.

■ **Afghanistan: Asylum****Caroline Lucas:**[\[49087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether an application for assistance from an Afghan national under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy which is rejected is automatically passed to the Home Department for consideration under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

There are no plans to automatically consider Afghan nationals who have not been successful in applying to come to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy for resettlement through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[49160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme (a) applications were fully processed, (b) applicants and their families were able to leave for the UK before 14 August 2021 and (c) applicants were processed between 15 August 2021 and 28 August 2021 were (i) called forward to Kabul International airport and (ii) evacuated.

James Heappey:

Under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, prior to the start of OP PITTING on 14 August, 850 applications were accepted, and 1,978 people were relocated to the UK.

During OP PITTING, no new applications were processed, although around 800 additional individuals were approved for the scheme as the eligibility criteria were expanded.

All of those eligible or otherwise approved for the scheme were called forward and around 7,000 were evacuated.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[50651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve processing times for applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme.

James Heappey:

Since the launch of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in April 2021, we have received more than 67,000 applications and are continuing to receive large quantities each day.

The original ARAP team has already been augmented with significant additional resource, and in the coming days we are establishing a cell of augmented staff to support the initial triage of applications so that applicants can be notified of our decision on their eligibility as soon as possible. A dedicated casework team are currently processing 6,800 applications, however in the majority of these cases we have requested more information and documentation from the applicant and are waiting to receive this before we can make the most appropriate and informed eligibility decision.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[50652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time taken was for processing applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme since 1 August 2021.

James Heappey:

Since 1 August 2021 the applications received for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) have increased exponentially. This has affected the processing times of each case, which varies enormously.

We do not record or hold the metrics for the processing times of applications, and any number of factors can affect how long it takes for an applicant to progress through

each stage of the process, for example their location, access to IT, employment history verification, security checks, or family circumstances.

■ Air Force: Housing

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[46981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the condition of Royal Air Force (a) single living accommodation, (b) mess accommodation and (c) service families accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

There has been no recent assessment of the totality of single living accommodation, which includes mess accommodation, provided by the Royal Air Force (RAF), but data collected between 2005 and 2020 does provide an overview of their condition. All single living accommodation the RAF provides to its personnel is required to be of a suitable standard and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is currently working to define a Defence Minimum Standard (DMS) against which all single living accommodation will be assessed.

The MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation manages, on a Tri-Service basis, around 50,000 properties in the UK including targeted improvement programmes and planning future requirements. Therefore, it is not possible to separately identify RAF Service Families Accommodation (SFA). However, as at 1 September 2021, of the 99% of SFA that were assessed, 87.8% of the properties were above the Government's Decent Homes Standard and 8.9% were at the standard. The remaining 2.3% were considered below the standard and not allocated to Service Families.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[46982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the condition of Royal Air Force service accommodation on (a) flight safety, (b) operational effectiveness and (c) morale; and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

There have been no recent assessments conducted specifically in relation to accommodation issues affecting flight safety and operational effectiveness. However, the annual Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) includes questions regarding accommodation and morale to enable the MOD to garner the views of Service personnel and act where necessary.

The most recent report is published on the Gov.UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2021>

■ Ajax Vehicles: Hearing Impairment**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[46941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the maximum recommended dose of steroids is which can be administered to armed forces personnel for temporary hearing loss caused by participation in the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme.

Jeremy Quin:

Steroids are only used in cases of serious concerns on otherwise potentially permanent hearing loss.

Personnel are maximally offered the steroid medications below:

a) 1mg per Kg of Prednisolone (up to a maximum of 60mg) to be taken as an oral preparation (tablets) once a day for seven days only.

b) Intra-tympanic Injection of Solu Medrone - reconstituted from 125mg in 2ml of sterile water. As the volume of the middle ear varies between individuals and cannot be measured before injection the precise amount varies but is, in general - 0.5 to 1ml which equates to 3.175mg - 6.25mg of Solu Medrone into the middle ear on the affected side(s).

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[46947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Ministerial Statement of 9 September on Ajax Armoured Vehicle Procurement, in what year did DSTL recommend the mandating of a 40mm main armament for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) provided technical analysis of different armament options to both DE&S and the Army as part of the evidence informing the Army's decision in 2008 to specify a 40mm armament. Dstl continues to provide technical analysis and advice to the programme.

Dave Doogan:[\[50136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answers of 14 and 9 September 2021 to Questions 45921 and 37376 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, what (a) mechanisms are in place and (b) information is available to enable hon. Members and members of the public to establish how the financial costs of delays to the Ajax armoured fighter vehicle contract are shared between General Dynamics and his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has a firm price contract with General Dynamics Land Systems for equipment Demonstration and Manufacture, and extended initial in-service support solution for Ajax. General Dynamics are (inter alia) required to deliver 589 vehicles that meet the contractual specifications for £5.552 billion.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost is of the trials programme for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle to date; and what proportion of those costs has been funded by (a) General Dynamics, (b) his Department and (c) other funding sources.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the total cost to his Department is of the trials of the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle; and from which top level budget those trials have been funded.

Jeremy Quin:

The information needed to answer my Rt Hon. Friend's questions is taking time to collate. I will write to him with a full answer shortly, and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the Army Reserve have been involved in the trials of the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme to date.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many medical personnel have been involved in the trials of the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme as at 10 September 2021; and of what ranks those personnel were.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Armed Forces personnel have been involved in the trials programme for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle as at 10 September 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

As I stated in the House, in total 310 personnel have been identified as requiring medical assessment following exposure to AJAX, but not all of those have been directly involved in trials.

MOD-led Ajax vehicle trials are conducted by the Armoured Trials and Development Unit (ATDU) at Bovington. Since 2015, 104 Armed Forces Personnel have served with the ATDU Ajax Reliability Trials Team and been involved in the trials programme. The team is composed of Regular personnel only; therefore, no Reservists have been involved. No medical personnel have participated directly in the trials, but they have supported the subsequent assessment and treatment of personnel who have operated Ajax vehicles.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Hearing Impairment

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the maximum amount payable under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is for (a) temporary hearing loss and (b) permanent hearing loss, as a result of injuries sustained during military service.

Leo Docherty:

The maximum amounts payable under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) for temporary hearing loss is £6,180 and for total deafness in both ears is £484,100.

The full list of descriptors between Level 13 and Level 2 can be found within Table 7 of Schedule 2 of the AFCS Order 2011 at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/517/schedule/3/part/1>

■ Armed Forces: Hearing Impairment

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether armed forces personnel may be required under their terms of service to have steroid injections for hearing damage or loss sustained during their service.

Leo Docherty:

All hearing rescue treatment for Armed Forces personnel is based on informed consent. It is not compulsory.

■ CTA International: Ammunition

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many rounds of ammunition were included in the £150 million contract for 40mm ammunition signed with the contractor CTA in 2015-16.

Jeremy Quin:

The £150 million contract awarded to CTA International in 2015 did not include any 40mm ammunition.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[49966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 September 2021 to Question 44207 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement, to which (a) companies and (b) consortiums the £5 million design contracts have been awarded in that procurement.

Jeremy Quin:

As announced on 1 September, the four consortia awarded Competitive Procurement Phase (CPP) contracts for the Fleet Solid Support competition are (in alphabetical order):

- Larsen & Toubro, which includes UK company Leidos Innovations, teamed with Gibbs and Cox.
- Serco/Damen, which includes UK company Serco.
- Team Resolute, which includes UK companies Harland & Wolff and BMT, teamed with Navantia.
- Team UK, which includes UK companies Babcock and BAE Systems.

The award of the CPP design contracts, each initially worth around £5 million, means the Fleet Solid Support competition has successfully moved to the next stage.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[49967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2021 to Question 44204 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement, whether the prime contractor for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract must be a UK-based company.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer given by my noble friend, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie), on 13 July 2021 to Question HL1745 in the House of Lords.

Attachments:

1. HL1745 - Fleet Solid Support Ships Procurement [HL1745 - Fleet Solid Support Ships Procurement.docx]

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[48150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 40639 on Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft, which UK military aircraft are certified to carry that container; and on what date those aircraft were certified to do so.

Jeremy Quin:

The F135 engine container is planned for carriage in the Globemaster C-17 and Hercules C-130J. The aircraft were certified to carry the container in May 2020.

■ Mali: Desertion**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[49287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the desertion rates among Mali's (a) police and (b) military.

James Heappey:

Desertion rates amongst Mali's defence and security forces were high in late 2019, but subsequently appear to have improved. Given the role of the UK Armed Forces in

Mali as part of the UN Mission, there we keep the security situation under regular review.

■ Shipbuilding

Mr Philip Hollobone: [\[903514\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the potential effect of the creation of the National Shipbuilding Office on (a) the number of ships being built in the UK and (b) the amount of (i) British technology, (ii) components and (iii) steel in those ships.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The National Shipbuilding Office will be responsible for driving forward one of the Prime Minister's key domestic priorities across Government. It will report directly to the Shipbuilding Tsar and will oversee all of the UK Government's interests in UK shipbuilding.

Our National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh, which will be published later this year, will set out our approach in more detail.

■ Technology: Publications

Anneliese Dodds: [\[49253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who commissioned the production of the report entitled 'Human Augmentation - The dawn of a new paradigm, published in May 2021.

James Heapey:

'Human Augmentation - The Dawn of a New Paradigm' was a bilateral cooperation proposed by MOD's Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) with the Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning in Germany, as part of DCDC's Strategic Analysis Programme, to build on themes identified in 'Global Strategic Trends: The Future Starts Today' [published in 2018].

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

Stephen Morgan: [\[47041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans ID cards his Department has issued in phase 2 of the rollout.

Leo Docherty:

The Veterans' Recognition Scheme has a two-phase roll-out and phase one, where Service leavers receive a recognition card as part of the discharge process, is complete. There have been 37,284 cards issued from the start of the programme in December 2018 to August 2021 in phase one for personnel as they left the Services.

The launch of phase two, for existing veterans, has been delayed and there have, therefore, been no ID cards issued as part of this phase. This is taking longer than we would like but we are making progress, and hope to provide an update on this shortly.

EDUCATION**■ After School Clubs and Holiday Play Schemes: Disability****Peter Kyle:****[47022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to improve the provision of specialist after-school and holiday clubs for children with disabilities.

Will Quince:

We recognise that after-school and holiday clubs play an important role in providing enriching activities for children, including those with disabilities, as well as being a valuable source of additional childcare for working parents and carers.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities, have been prioritised for attendance at after-school, holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings. All children are now able to attend these settings without restrictions on the reasons for which they may attend, and we have provided updated COVID-19 guidance for providers to enable them to run their provision as safely as possible. This guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/covid-19-actions-for-out-of-school-settings>.

Where parents are still finding it difficult to access sufficient childcare, we recommend that they contact their local authority's family information services. Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient free early years provision and paid-for childcare places, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14.

We have also published safeguarding guidance for out-of-school settings, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice/keeping-children-safe-during-community-activities-after-school-clubs-and-tuition-non-statutory-guidance-for-providers-running-out-of-school-settings>. This guidance outlines the policies and procedures that providers should have in place to promote the welfare of the children attending them. This includes specific advice for providers that cater for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

■ Education: York**Rachael Maskell:****[46998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate has made of the number (a) secondary and (b) primary school-aged children who were not enrolled for education in a school or home setting in York in (i) September 2019 and (ii) September 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department does not collect numbers of children missing education; this information is held by local authorities.

Local authorities have a duty to make arrangements to enable them to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age but are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

The department remains committed to a registration system for children not in school. Further details on a proposed registration system will be in the government response to the children not in school consultation, which we intend to publish in the coming months.

■ Free School Meals and Healthy Start Scheme

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[50109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding eligibility for (a) free school meals and (b) the Healthy Start scheme.

Will Quince:

We think it is important that free school meal support is targeted at those that need it most. Free school meals (FSM) are an integral part of our provision for families on low incomes and our wider actions to promote social mobility.

Under the benefits-related criteria, there are currently around 1.7 million pupils eligible for and claiming a free school meal. An additional 1.3 million infants receive a free meal under the Universal Infant FSM policy.

Eligibility for the Department of Health and Social Care Healthy Start scheme is kept under continuous review and aligns closely with other passported benefits across government. There are no current plans to change eligibility for the scheme with regard to the earnings threshold or the qualifying age range.

The government will consider the recommendations in Henry Dimbleby's independent review when developing the forthcoming Food Strategy White Paper.

■ Free Schools: Sports

Philip Davies:

[\[45824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2021 to Question 40787 on Free Schools: Sports, if he will set out the location and nature of the (a) indoor and outdoor facilities for sport and (b) site for additional sporting facilities referred to in the Answer.

Michelle Donelan:

One in a Million Free School currently has access to an indoor creative arts studio area and an outdoor single Multi-Use Games Area on site. The department does not hold information on the off-site facilities that the school is currently accessing. The site that the department has identified to provide additional sporting facilities for the school is on Bolton Road in Bradford and the department is currently in the process of assessing its suitability for use by the trust.

■ Further Education and Schools: Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[46999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of the effectiveness of the Wellbeing for Education Return scheme in academic year 2020-21; and how much funding been allocated to the city of York under that scheme.

Rachael Maskell: [\[47002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what indicators and metrics are used by his Department to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Wellbeing for Education Return scheme.

Rachael Maskell: [\[47003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of the demand and availability of mental health and wellbeing support under the Wellbeing for Education Return scheme.

Will Quince:

The Wellbeing for Education Return programme ran from August 2020 to March 2021 and funded local authorities to provide free expert training, support, and resources for school staff to help them understand and respond to the mental wellbeing issues faced by children and young people as a result of the additional pressures they have faced in the last year. Formal reporting to the Department for Education was not a condition of the Section 31 Grant to local authorities. However, we asked local authorities to provide management information to understand their intended delivery of the programme, reach and impact and wider qualitative information.

From the information provided, it has been estimated that:

- Local experts from 96% of England's local authority areas attended interactive training on delivering Wellbeing for Education Return support and resources into schools and colleges.
- The training reached up to 12,000 schools and colleges[1] with free expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year, including trauma, anxiety, or grief.

Some local areas also conducted their own local evaluations of the programme and further information about specific areas delivery plans may be available by contacting the relevant local authority.

The Grant Determination Letter for Wellbeing for Education Return, including each local authorities funding allocation can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909607/LA_Grant_Determination_Letter.pdf.

[1] This figure has been generated from our Wellbeing for Education Return (WER) Management Information 4 collection sent out to local authority WER leads in March 2021. The figure was calculated as a total of the estimated number of education

settings each responding local authority said they had delivered training to as a result of, or using some materials provided by, WER. This includes both live and recorded sessions. The figure is based on a return rate of 80% which equates to 122 local authorities out of a total of 151 who were sent the Management Information Return.

Rachael Maskell:

[47000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) teaching staff and (b) support staff were trained in the city of York as a result of Wellbeing for Education Return scheme funding in academic year 2020-21; and what training those people received.

Will Quince:

In August 2020, we provided £8 million for the Wellbeing for Education Return programme to support staff working in schools and colleges to respond to the additional mental health and wellbeing challenges as a direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

National training materials were created with input from health partners, mental health experts, local authorities, and schools and colleges. Funding was distributed to each upper tier local authority in England to recruit local experts to offer additional training and support to nominated staff in local schools and colleges. The national training resources can be found here:

https://www.minded.org.uk/Catalogue/Index?HierarchyId=0_48943_49165&program_meld=48943.

Local experts from 96% of England's local authority areas, including the City of York, attended interactive training on delivering Wellbeing for Education Return materials and support into schools and colleges. It was then for local authorities to determine how best to use the training materials and funding in their local areas, and we do not hold information specifically on how many teaching staff, or support staff were trained in the City of York.

Overall, information from local authorities indicates that up to 12,000 schools and colleges^[1] in England received additional free expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year, including trauma, anxiety, or grief.

Most local areas also confirmed they tailored their support to meet the specific needs of local schools and colleges, offering interactive online training sessions and follow up support on key themes to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff, pupils and students.

[1] This figure has been generated from our Wellbeing for Education Return Management Information 4 collection sent out to local authority leads in March 2021. The figure was calculated as a total of the estimated number of education settings each responding local authority said they had delivered training to as a result of, or using some materials provided by, Wellbeing for Education Return. This includes both live and recorded sessions. The figure is based on a return rate of 80% which

equates to 122 local authorities out of a total of 151 who were sent the Management Information Return.

■ GCSE: Private Education

Dr Matthew Offord:

[48205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of applications for private candidates taking GCSEs.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department does not routinely collect information relating to the cost to private candidates of sitting GCSE examinations at a school, college or other examination centre.

In 2021, in light of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, GCSE grades were determined by teachers via Teacher Assessed Grades. The department is therefore providing an exceptional grant to centres of £200 per private candidate entry to support centres with the particular additional requirements of assessing private candidates in 2021. This is to avoid the cost being passed on to candidates who have not been taught alongside a wider cohort, so that private candidates could access qualifications at a similar cost to a normal exam year.

■ Health Education and Sex and Relationship Education: Training

Sarah Champion:

[50037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of training for teachers delivering the new Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

The consultation on the statutory guidance for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum revealed that many teachers and subject leads needed training and support to deliver the new content. The department invested in a package of support to develop teacher capability and competence to teach high quality RSHE. The package of support included a training and peer support programme, delivered by teaching schools and based on the department's training modules which were developed with subject experts and tested with teachers. In the 2020/21 academic year, the programme reached 3,800 schools, and provisional data for the last wave, which ended in July, shows a further 1,000 schools have been supported. This is a cascade model of training whereby those trained are expected to share the training with other teachers in their school and wider school networks. Teaching schools have made their training materials and other resources freely available on their websites. The department's training modules are also freely available for all schools to download via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>.

The department is developing plans to monitor national implementation of RSHE over time, including new quantitative and qualitative research, which will seek to

understand the quality of implementation, including teacher confidence in teaching the statutory requirements, and identifying training and support needs to inform future policy development.

■ Higher Education: Arts

Dan Jarvis:

[\[49146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) level of reduction in funding for Higher Education arts subjects in England and (b) potential effect of that change in funding on the future (i) accessibility and (ii) viability of cultural and creative sectors.

Michelle Donelan:

In January 2021, the former Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson), my right hon. Friend for South Staffordshire, asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the Strategic Priorities Grant for the 2021-22 academic year[1].

The OfS consulted on the proposals and has recently published its conclusions. Following careful consideration of the issues raised in consultation responses, the former Secretary of State for Education issued Terms and Conditions of funding to the OfS (in relation to London Weighting and high-cost subject funding) to ensure the government's priorities for the grant were implemented this year.

For the 2021-22 academic year, the high-cost subject funding rate for arts and music courses has been set at £121.50 – this is equivalent to a reduction of around 1% in combined funding (on a per-student basis) from a £9,250 tuition fee and OfS grant funding compared to 2020-21. Total funding for high-cost subjects, such as medicine and engineering, is 12% higher than last year, an increase of £81 million[2].

The government continues to value performing arts and creative subjects. High quality provision in a range of subjects is critical for our workforce and our public services, as well as being intellectually rewarding and culturally enriching for those studying them and wider society.

As part of the same reform programme, we asked the OfS to invest an additional £10 million in our world-leading specialist providers, many of which specialise in arts provision. We want to ensure that such providers receive additional support, and that grant funding is used effectively to support students, including those with an interest in the cultural and creative sectors.

The government supports the arts throughout the education system. For example, the government has invested nearly £620 million during 2016-21 in a diverse portfolio of music and cultural education programmes to ensure all school children, whatever their background, have access to a high-quality education in music and arts[3].

[1] <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/a3814453-4c28-404a-bf76-490183867d9a/rt-hon-gavin-williamson-cbe-mp-t-grant-ofs-chair-smb.pdf>.

[2] <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/b2eaeeb4-7fed-4eda-9868-a4671f170129/recurrent-funding-2021-22.pdf> Table 2: Recurrent grant budgets for academic year 2021-22 (£ millions).

[3] <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-06/43435>.

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme: Finance**

Dr Rupa Huq: **[50110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to publish a long-term funding plan for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

Will Quince:

Our holiday activities and food programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children. For 2021, it was expanded to every local authority across England and was backed by up to £220 million. It builds on previous pilots of the programme operating since 2018, including last summer's, which supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities.

As with other programmes, a decision on future funding is dependent upon the forthcoming spending review.

■ **Home Education**

Rachael Maskell: **[45878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children registered for home schooling in York in (a) September 2019 and (b) September 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The department does not collect data on the number of electively home educated children. This data is held by local authorities.

■ **Mental Health Services: York**

Rachael Maskell: **[49193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of senior mental health leads that have been trained in York from the £9.5 million fund announced on 10 May 2021; and at which schools those posts are based.

Will Quince:

Schools and colleges in the City of York will be able to apply for a grant to pay for Department for Education quality assured senior mental health lead training from this autumn term.

The government is providing £9.5 million in grants this financial year, allowing up to 7,800 school and college senior leaders in England to attend training, providing the knowledge and skills to implement a whole school or college approach to mental

health in their setting. This is part of the government's commitment to offer senior mental health lead training to all state schools and colleges by 2025.

More information on this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training#which-staff-can-get-the-training>.

■ Nurseries: York

Rachael Maskell: [45884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of children in York unable to be placed in a nursery in York as a result of a lack of available places in that city.

Rachael Maskell: [45885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many nursery places were available in York in September 2019; and what estimate he has made of the number of nursery place available in York in September 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

To help understand the impact of COVID-19 on the early years (EY) sector, from 6 April 2020, the Department of Education asked local authorities to regularly report to the department information on the number of children in attendance, including the number of settings open or closed. The last collection of summer term was on the 16 July 2021. For Autumn term this data will be collected on a monthly basis with the first data collection being on Thursday 16 September 2021. The department will use this data to work with the EY team in York to address any emerging sufficiency issues including children affected by a lack of place.

The linked table shows the number of registered childcare providers and places in York local authority as at 31 March 2021. The data as at 31 August 2021 is not available until November 2021:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/996094/Childcare_providers_and_inspections_charts_and_tables_31_March_2021.xlsx.

The most recently published results (wave 3) of the 'Survey of childcare and early years providers and coronavirus', published in March this year, set out that 98% of school-based providers, 96% of group-based providers, and 89% of childminders reported being open at the time of the survey being taken. This data is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-coronavirus-covid-19-wave-3>.

We have not seen a significant number of parents unable to secure a childcare place in any part of England, in the summer term, during the most recent lockdown in the spring term, or since early years settings re-opened fully on 1 June 2020. Where parents have been unable to temporarily secure a childcare place, for example due to their usual setting being temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this has been quickly resolved locally, and local authorities are not reporting sufficiency of

supply issues. The next Ofsted statistical release on the number of childcare places is due to be published in November 2021.

We continue to work with the early years sector and officials from the department regularly speak with York City Council's EY team to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

Department officials have a scheduled call with the EY teams in all local authorities every 6-8 weeks where sufficiency of childcare places is discussed alongside a wider exchange of information on the delivery of early education entitlements. Local authorities are also encouraged to liaise with their Department for Education regional lead official as soon as possible if sufficiency issues were to arise. From the latest information we have from discussions with York, there are no immediate or emerging sufficiency issues in the local authority area.

■ Pupil Referral Units: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to provide additional funding support to pupil referral units to assist with (a) closing the attainment gap and (b) wellbeing and mental health support.

Michelle Donelan:

As part of the department's £3 billion education recovery package, we have provided additional support worth £1.7 billion for all schools, including alternative provision (AP). This can be used to help pupils to catch up on missed education, and for additional support for mental health and wellbeing where needed. AP schools have also benefitted from:

- extra funding for one to one tutoring for their pupils - this was additionally weighted in recognition of the significantly higher per-pupil costs that AP schools face
- the £200 million summer schools funding to provide additional support over the summer holidays, which has also been uplifted for AP and other types of specialist schools
- the £8 million transition fund to support successful transitions to post-16 destinations for Year 11 AP pupils who during the COVID-19 outbreak have been at a heightened risk of dropping out of education
- investment of over £45 million, announced in the cross-government Beating Crime Plan, for specialist support in both mainstream and AP in serious violence hotspots to support young people at risk of involvement in violence to reengage in education

Mental health and wellbeing are a priority for the government. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the department prioritised keeping schools open for vulnerable children and young people. Attending school is vital for children and young people's wellbeing, as well as their education.

In March, the department announced a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support. We will increase the number of Mental Health Support Teams, which provide early intervention on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in schools and colleges, from 59 in March this year to around 400 by April 2023. This will mean that nearly 3 million children and young people, including those in AP, will have access to significantly expanded mental health services.

Additionally, AP schools are eligible for an additional £17 million of new funding for schools and local authorities to improve mental health and wellbeing support. This includes funding for local authorities to deliver the Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme to provide free expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year, including trauma, anxiety, or grief. It also includes funding for schools to train a senior mental health lead from their staff in the next academic year, which is part of the government's commitment to offering this training to all state schools and colleges by 2025.

■ Pupils: Diseases

Rachael Maskell: **[45881]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that clinically vulnerable pupils will be protected from health chiefs' predicted rise in childhood respiratory illness from September 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

All nurseries, schools, colleges and out-of-school settings are continuing to put in place a combination of measures to help minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19. These include handwashing, enhancing cleaning, ventilation and managing confirmed cases.

The department will continue to keep these measures under review, in partnership with health experts and informed by the latest scientific evidence and advice. Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance>.

Schools, colleges and nurseries should continue to conduct risk assessments for their particular circumstances and take appropriate action in line with the guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>.

If parents, carers, staff, students, pupils or early years children are anxious about attendance, they should speak to the school, college or nursery about their concerns and discuss the measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk.

■ Pupils: Food

Rachael Maskell: **[47007]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of pupils who had received free school meals by the end of the 2020-21 summer term in

York; and how many of those pupils were in receipt of food support during the 2021 school summer holidays through their (a) school and (b) local authority.

Will Quince:

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) in England is published as part of the annual 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' statistical release available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2021>.

The number of pupils eligible for and claiming FSM in the York local authority in January 2021 is 3,349.

This data includes pupils at state-funded nursery and primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, pupil referral units, alternative provision academies and free schools.

The Department for Education funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children, has been expanded to every local authority across England this year, backed by up to £220 million. It builds on previous programmes, including last summer's, which supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities.

York Council has been allocated a maximum of £436,010 to deliver HAF programmes over Easter, summer and Christmas 2021.

The Department for Work and Pensions have also distributed further funding through the Covid Local Support Grant which supports the hardest hit families and individuals with food and essential utility costs.

■ **Pupils: ICT and Internet**

Rachael Maskell:

[47004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of how many and what proportion of (a) primary and (b) secondary school children have access to (i) IT equipment and (ii) broadband (A) in York and (B) nationally.

Rachael Maskell:

[47005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of (a) primary school and (b) secondary school pupils who have access to (a) IT and (b) internet outside of school.

Rachael Maskell:

[47006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he take steps to ensure that all pupils at (a) primary and (b) secondary school have access (i) home IT equipment and (ii) an internet connection.

Mr Robin Walker:

Ofcom runs an annual survey which publishes data on children's access to technology, available here: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media->

[literacy-research/childrens](#). This data informed the Department for Education's COVID-19 response through the Get Help with Technology programme.

The department has invested over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care. Over 1.35 million laptops and tablets have been distributed to schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities, supporting disadvantaged children and young people who would not otherwise have access to a digital device.

The department has provided support for over 110,000 families to get online through uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers. This included partnering with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help over 33,000 disadvantaged children get online and delivering over 77,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

The department has recently announced new funding to support schools and colleges in providing internet access for disadvantaged pupils whose face-to-face education is disrupted during the autumn term. We have continued to enable ordering of 4G wireless routers for pupils without internet access.

The department supports the role of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in leading digital inclusion across government. We are working closely with DCMS to improve broadband connections in schools. DCMS has powers to address some affordability issues for some telecoms services.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[44385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he is providing to schools to ensure levels of covid-19 infection do not increase as pupils return to classrooms in the autumn 2021 term; and what the guidance is on the use of face coverings in classrooms.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government has made it a national priority to minimise disruption to education so that nurseries, schools and colleges should continue to operate as normally as possible during the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why bubbles are no longer recommended, children no longer need to self-isolate if identified as a contact of a positive case, schools are no longer expected to undertake contact tracing, and those 12 and over are being offered the COVID-19 vaccine. As per the department's guidance, schools should keep good hygiene measures in place, keep spaces well ventilated and follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases.

Operational guidance for nurseries, schools and colleges provides further detail on the testing, ventilation and hygiene measures that should be in place from the start of the autumn term to manage transmission of COVID-19 on a day-to-day basis. The contingency framework includes the additional measures that should be included in their contingency plans in case they are advised to take extra steps because of a spike in infections, such as increasing testing and face coverings.

The department has worked with Public Health England to develop the new thresholds outlined in the contingency framework. These are designed to help nurseries, schools and colleges identify when it might be sensible to seek public health advice. It is advised to take extra action if the number of positive cases substantially increases. Where thresholds are reached, nurseries, schools and colleges should consider reinforcing the measures they already have in place and may consider seeking further public health advice, if concerned.

Face coverings are no longer recommended in nurseries, schools and colleges but it is expected and recommended that these are worn when travelling on public or dedicated transport. The department's guidance does not create any legal obligations on pupils, students and staff. Nurseries, schools and colleges should continue to conduct risk assessments for their particular circumstances and take appropriate action in line with the control measures.

■ Schools: Energy

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding has been allocated by his Department to schools in York to improve their energy efficiency in each of the last five years.

Michelle Donelan:

The department supports sustainability through our capital funding and programmes, both to reduce carbon emissions and save schools money. Responsible bodies, such as local authorities, academy trusts and dioceses can use their capital funding allocations to invest in improving energy efficiency in schools.

Since 2015, the department has allocated £11.3 billion to maintain and improve school buildings, including improving energy efficiency. This includes £1.8 billion for the financial year 2021/22.

Local authorities receive an annual School Condition Allocation (SCA) to invest in capital maintenance and upgrades across the schools for which they are responsible. All schools also receive funding to spend on their capital priorities through an annual Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocation.

The SCA and DFC allocated to City of York Council in previous financial years is set out in the table below. The SCA total in 2020/21 includes an extra £377,261 from the additional £560 million announced that year for essential maintenance and upgrades. The DFC total in 2018/19 includes an extra £454,917 from the additional £400 million announced in that year. Large multi-academy trusts and voluntary-aided (VA) school bodies (such as dioceses) also receive SCA. These allocations typically cover schools across multiple local authority boundaries so are not included below. All SCA funding is published on GOV.UK.

FINANCIAL YEAR	SCA FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS	DFC FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS
2017/18	£1,464,231	£360,494
2018/19	£971,129	£738,904
2019/20	£841,590	£234,432
2020/21	£1,189,594	£223,405
2021/22	£1,451,067	£230,768
Total	£5,917,612	£1,788,003

Smaller multi-academy or stand-alone trusts, other voluntary-aided schools and sixth form colleges are able to bid to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) each year. The department welcomes CIF applications from eligible schools for energy efficiency projects, but only where the project addresses an existing priority condition need.

Funding allocated to schools in York through CIF in the past five years is set out in the table below. The department defined energy efficiency projects as those that have a significantly positive impact on energy efficiency, such as improvements to heating systems and repairs or replacements of windows and roofs, and where improvements in energy efficiency were set out in the CIF application.

CIF ROUND (FINANCIAL YEAR)	TOTAL FUNDING TO SCHOOLS IN YORK	FUNDING TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROJECTS
2017/18	£250,142	£250,142
2018/19	£2,167,450	£2,167,450
2019/20	£3,051,832	£1,650,275
2020/21	£1,368,742	£983,325
2021/22	£1,216,612	£0
Total	£8,054,778	£5,051,192

The department also invests in centrally delivered programmes. There has been a total of three schools in the York local authority area that have benefited from the Priority School Building Programme, with a total investment of over £9 million. New school buildings are easy to operate and reduce operational energy use. Additionally, Hempland Primary School in York will be part of the new School Rebuilding Programme (SRP). New school buildings delivered under the SRP will be modern, energy-efficient buildings that are net zero carbon in operation, helping to meet the government's net zero target to tackle climate change.

In addition, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy set up the £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) in 2020 which provided grants for eligible public sector bodies, including schools, to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures across their estate. Phase three of the PSDS will be open for applications from 6 October.

Alongside this substantial investment in the school estate, the department has provided schools and responsible bodies with guidance on energy efficiency such as minimising energy, water, and waste within our Good Estate Management for Schools manual.

Rachael Maskell:

[45882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of issuing schools with an energy efficiency assessment and score for the purposes of prioritising schools for energy saving measures.

Michelle Donelan:

The department supports energy efficiency improvements through a range of capital funding allocations and programmes, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and saving schools money on energy. Schools and responsible bodies have been provided with guidance on energy efficiency such as minimising energy, water and waste within the Good Estate Management for Schools manual. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools>.

In June 2020, the government announced a new school rebuilding programme aimed at replacing poor condition and ageing school buildings. All new school buildings delivered through the programme will be net zero carbon in operation, as well as responding appropriately to the wider aspects of climate change adaptation such as overheating risk, biodiversity net gain and flood resilience.

Schools and those responsible for school buildings have access to condition funding to maintain and improve the school estate, which can be used to invest in improving energy efficiency in schools. Since 2015, the department has allocated £11.3 billion on school condition, including £1.8 billion in the current 2021/22 financial year.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy set up the £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) in 2020 which provided grants for eligible public sector bodies, including schools, to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures across their estate. Phase 3 of the PSDS will be open for applications from 6 October. More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-sector-decarbonisation-scheme>.

The department is working across government to understand the most appropriate way to address climate change and improve energy efficiency in support of the legal commitment to net zero by 2050. We will continue to review the support and advice to schools. Further details on capital funding and prioritisation for the period beyond this financial year will be set out at the next Spending Review.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services**Rachael Maskell:****[47001]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he made of the number and proportion of young people requiring mental health support at (a) primary school and (b) secondary school in (i) York and (ii) nationally.

Will Quince:

Mental health and wellbeing are a priority for the government. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have prioritised keeping schools open above all else, as long as it was safe to do so, because it is so vital for children and young people's wellbeing, as well as their education.

We are working across government to understand the data and evidence on mental health support, as it emerges. Public Health England is publishing surveillance reports on the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on children and young people's mental health. More information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/7-children-and-young-people>.

We do not make local estimates of need. Nationally, in July 2020, our updated NHS mental health survey suggested that the proportion of 5-16s with a 'probable diagnosable mental health [issue]' had risen to 1 in 6 (from 1 in 9 in 2017) with an increase seen in both boys and girls and across age groups.

The support needs that these children will have will vary from case to case. We are taking action to increase specialist support and to support schools to understand and respond to need. This includes a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support which we announced in March and will increase the number of Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges to around 400, covering approximately 35% of pupils in England by 2023.

We have put in place a wide range of training and guidance to help schools and colleges to understand the issues and how to respond effectively, including when to seek specialist support. We have invested £7 million into our Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme, enabling local authorities to continue supporting schools and colleges until the autumn, as they rethink their curriculum and pastoral care provision to meet ongoing mental health wellbeing needs. Backed by £9.5 million, from the autumn, we will be offering 7,800 schools and colleges in England grants to train a senior mental health lead in their setting. The training will equip senior mental health leads with the knowledge and skills to implement effective processes for identifying students, or specific groups, who need additional mental health support.

■ Schools: Standards

Feryal Clark:

[\[44463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to reduce the attainment gap between state and independent schools in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) London and (c) England.

Mr Robin Walker:

Since 2010, this government has been committed to raising educational standards in all state schools across the country. In March 2020, 86% of schools were Good or Outstanding compared to just 68% in 2010. When it comes to raising standards, evidence shows that teachers are the most important in-school factor affecting attainment.

In June 2021, we announced an investment of over £250 million in teacher quality, which includes investment in our National Professional Qualification and Early Career Framework programmes. School leadership is the second most important in-school influence on pupil learning. Since 2010 the number of academies has grown from 200 to over 9,400, enabling more leaders of good schools to make decisions based on local need and the interests of their pupils, and more previously underperforming schools to receive the support they need to raise standards for all pupils as part of a strong multi-academy trust.

We know that COVID-19 and disruption to education has created an additional challenge for schools, and that the impact of the COVID-19 has been felt most significantly by disadvantaged pupils, which is why we have targeted much of our education recovery funding specifically at this group. Through the recovery premium, schools will directly receive over £300 million in the 2021/22 academic year for them to use flexibly to support disadvantaged pupils.

This is in addition to the funding we already target towards disadvantaged pupils as part of the National Funding Formula. The pupil premium targets further funding to disadvantaged pupils and plays a crucial role in the work of schools across England, to ensure they have the resources they need to boost the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Through this, we will be providing £2.5 billion nationally for the 2021/22 financial year. The pupil premium allocation for London is £405 million, and £19.2 million for Enfield for the 2021/22 financial year.

In Enfield, we know there are a higher number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, with an average of 37.6% of secondary pupils eligible, compared to the national average of 27.7%. This year, Enfield is receiving £283.4 million, or £5,283 per pupil, in funding. This is an increase of 2.0% per pupil in the local authority's pupil-led funding compared to the 2020/21 financial year, and is above the national average in per pupil funding of £5,228.

■ Schools: Ventilation

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[49114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to improve ventilation in schools to inhibit the spread of covid-19.

Mr Robin Walker:

On 21 August, the department announced that carbon dioxide monitors will be provided to all state-funded nurseries, schools, and colleges from September. Backed by a £25 million government investment, 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 colleges with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across the indoor spaces in their estate, assessing all spaces in a relatively short space of time. On 6 September, the department also provided new information to settings on how to use CO2 monitors to better manage ventilation.

The department has committed to supplying around 300,000 carbon dioxide monitors across England in the Autumn term. From 6 September, the department started to despatch carbon dioxide monitors to special schools and alternative provision, who have been prioritised to receive their full allocation given their higher-than-average numbers of vulnerable pupils.

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

■ Secondary Education: Vaccination

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[50036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will compensate schools for any costs incurred carrying out vaccinations for 12-15 year olds.

Mr Robin Walker:

Like all school-based vaccination programmes, the COVID-19 vaccines will be administered by healthcare staff working closely with schools and following the usual approach to school-based immunisation.

Local School Aged Immunisation Services (SAIS) will work with schools to plan for the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations for 12 to 15 year olds. The SAIS will be the primary provider of the vaccination programme for healthy 12 to 15 year olds and will be legally responsible for the delivery of the vaccine.

Schools will have three primary roles, which will be familiar to them from other vaccination programmes. They are to provide information to their SAIS provider on which children on their roll are eligible for the vaccine, share the information leaflet, consent form and invitation letter supplied by the SAIS team with parents and

children, and provide space within school, and time away from the timetable, to enable vaccinations to take place.

The department does not expect additional resource implications for schools.

■ **Speech and Language Disorders: Health Education**

Geraint Davies:

[\[49941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to mark Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Day on 15 October 2021.

Will Quince:

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) Awareness Day on 15 October 2021 is an important opportunity to raise awareness of DLD. It is key that schools are aware of how to best support pupils diagnosed with DLD.

The department will be highlighting Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Day to schools through its communication routes and encouraging settings to draw on best practice to support pupils with DLD.

■ **Students: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49131\]](#)

19. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of how many students have been rejected for student finance in the 2021-22 applications due to not meeting the three year ordinary residency criteria; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure there are alternative forms of financial support or discretionary appeals for prospective students who fail to meet the three year ordinary residency criteria for student finance.

Michelle Donelan:

The Student Loans Company (SLC) classes applicants who do not meet the residency criteria as ineligible and their application does not proceed any further. This activity is not automatically captured within the SLC systems, and it is not possible therefore, to provide an estimate of the numbers of students rejected for this reason.

Government funding is available only for applicants who have been here lawfully for a defined period, in order to target the limited funding available at those who have a recent, substantial connection to the United Kingdom.

It is open to students to seek an independent assessment of a decision made by Student Finance England if they consider that the regulations have not been applied correctly.

■ **Students: Immigration**

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[48378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of delays to decisions on Leave to Remain or Indefinite Leave to Remain on applications for student finance.

Michelle Donelan:

Generally, to be eligible for student support, a student must be ordinarily resident in England and 'settled' in the UK on the first day of the first academic year of the course and must have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) for the 3 years prior to that date.

Settled status is granted by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and, once confirmation of that status is received, and, if necessary checked with the Home Office, Student Finance England is able to assess whether the student is eligible for student support. In general, Student Finance England will endeavour to reach a decision on an application within 30 days of all relevant information being submitted by the student.

Teachers: Training**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[49220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Initial teacher training market review report, published in July 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposals set out in that report on the numbers of trainee teachers being trained on university-run courses.

Mr Robin Walker:

The review focused on producing recommendations aimed at increasing the quality, consistency and coherence of Initial Teacher Training for trainee teachers. Ensuring there are sufficient teachers in the subjects that schools require is one of the priorities of the review and the department will proceed carefully to ensure this is maintained. We intend to respond to the report and its recommendations this autumn.

The department has engaged widely with stakeholders and sought opinions through the consultation to help us understand any potential impact of the proposals on the numbers of trainee teachers. If the recommendations are accepted, the department's priority during the transition period to any new configuration will be ensuring that the capacity continues to offer enough training places to meet the continuing teacher supply needs across the whole education system. The department expects any future landscape to consist of a diverse range of provision and partnerships, including higher education institutions and school-based providers, as it does now.

Universities: Fees and Charges**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[48209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will restrict university tuition fees so that universities cannot charge full fees for only teaching lessons online.

Michelle Donelan:

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees, within maximum fee limits set by Regulations. Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the higher education provider and student.

The government has now lifted the restrictions on in-person teaching and therefore universities should not be limiting face-to-face learning based on COVID-19 restrictions. We expect all universities to continue to deliver excellent learning, in line with guidance from the Office for Students (OfS), to provide students with a full experience. The OfS will be monitoring to ensure this is the case, and universities should be open about what students can expect.

If students have concerns, they should first raise them with their higher education provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint. More information on this process is available on the OIA website at: www.oiahe.org.uk/students.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Climate Change

Sarah Olney:

[\[48324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to invest in climate change preparedness to protect communities from adverse effects of climate change.

Sarah Olney:

[\[50123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support those communities most affected by climate change in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

Climate change is already with us, and further changes are expected in the coming decades, despite ambitious commitments from the UK and the global community to cut carbon emissions. Building the resilience of our society, economy and environment to the impacts of climate change is therefore a priority for Government.

Adaptation is a challenge for the whole of society, and is fundamentally place-based. Local authorities and communities have a critical role to play in developing community resilience. The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) in conjunction with Defra's Local Adaptation Advisory Panel, has published adaptation guidance for all local authorities. This good practice guide outlines practical steps for local authorities to enhance local resilience. ADEPT has also published its blueprint to accelerating resilience to climate change risks and green recovery at the local level.

In addition, the Cabinet Office provides Local Resilience Forums with the National Security Risk Assessment and Local Risk Management Guidance to support their work to develop effective local resilience plans and fulfil their statutory duty to conduct local risk assessments.

Defra has made significant progress to protect communities from future flooding and coastal erosion. Last year, the Government published its long-term Policy Statement which sets out our ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The Policy Statement includes five policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.

The Government is making record investment in flood and coastal defences. We have doubled the amount invested in the flood and coastal defence programme in England to £5.2 billion over the next 6 years. This will fund around 2,000 new defence schemes to better protect 336,000 properties.

At the March 2020 Budget, the Government announced a £200 million 'place-based resilience programme', which will run for 6 years from 2021. This will help to inform future approaches to prepare communities for flooding and coastal erosion across the country. Funding will help around 25 local areas to take forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion including natural flood management, property flood resilience and community engagement.

The Government published its latest National Adaptation Programme in 2018, and will publish the next one in 2023, building on this year's advice and evidence from the independent Climate Change Committee. As well as the Defra policies I have mentioned, the Government's programme contains actions from all relevant Government departments and sectors of the economy. For example, MHCLG's Future Buildings Standard consultation recently proposed a new regulation to prevent the health risks of overheating in new buildings. And DHSC is establishing a climate resilience working group to drive adaptation and health protection actions across the health sector.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton:

[\[44161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra 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>

Defra does not collect or collate data on the property value or income data for these assets.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Seema Malhotra:

[\[49153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made on bringing forward a deposit return scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

A second consultation on introducing a deposit return scheme (DRS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland was published earlier this year and is now closed. Government is analysing the responses to that consultation, with a view to publishing a government response in due course.

■ Marine Protected Areas

Caroline Lucas:

[\[46971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 33200, what the evidential basis is for his Department's decision to use byelaws to manage fishing in Marine Protected Areas rather than fishing vessel licences to further site conservation objectives; and what assessment he has made of how that approach will deliver (a) recovery of the whole marine ecosystem within Marine Protected Areas and (b) the Government's commitment to protect 30 per cent of land and sea for nature by 2030.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is at the forefront of marine protection with 40% of English waters now designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the Government has further plans to pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas.

All MPAs are already protected through the planning and licensing regimes that cover activities such as dredging for aggregates and construction of offshore wind farms.

The excellent work of fisheries regulators in our inshore waters has resulted in 98 MPAs being protected from fishing activities that would otherwise have hindered the achievement of their conservation objectives. This work has shown that providing the fishing industry and other stakeholders with the opportunity to work closely with management authorities to shape management measures is crucial to their long-term success. We want this collaborative approach to be at the core of our management approach for offshore waters.

Each MPA protects specific features, whether that is a particular species or a variety of different habitats. These features are set out in legislation and it is the role of regulators to ensure that activities that take place will allow MPA conservation objectives to be achieved. Tailored byelaws for each site will help to achieve conservation objectives, but without unnecessarily restricting legitimate fishing activity.

■ Pigmeat: Exports

Dave Doogan:

[\[45923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken with Cabinet colleagues to expedite a resumption of pork exports from UK pig processing plants, whose export licenses to China were voluntarily surrendered due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working closely with the Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) at every level to utilise opportunities to press the General Administration of Customs China (GACC) for the re-listing of the three affected UK pork processing plants. As part of this Defra has taken a number of steps, including those summarised below.

Defra, in collaboration with DIT and FCDO, continues to monitor the situation and to do all it can to resolve this issue. However, re-listing these establishments is ultimately in the gift of the GACC.

- The Defra Secretary of State wrote to GACC Minister Ni in March 2021 and again in May 2021 to raise this issue and request a meeting. GACC have not responded.
- Defra has fulfilled all of China's technical requests to enable the re-listing of these UK establishments. This includes the submission to GACC of extensive COVID-19 dossiers, countersigned by the relevant Food Safety Competent Authorities and Public Health Authorities, as well as completing virtual video inspections chaired and facilitated by Defra with GACC Officials, where requested.
- A letter from the UK Chief Veterinary Officer was sent to GACC to highlight the latest UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's guidance that was published in August 2021 on the risks COVID-19 transmission via food or food packaging.
- Beyond direct engagement with GACC, Defra continues to engage with FCDO and DIT colleagues at different levels on a regular basis to ensure a consistent, joined up approach to UK Government pressing GACC for the re-listing of UK pork establishments.
- Additionally, the UK raised concerns regarding these trade restrictive measures at the World Trade Organisation Sanitary Phytosanitary (WTO SPS) Committee in November 2020, March 2021, July 2021 and in bilateral discussions with China.

■ Plants: Inspections

Justin Madders:

[\[45174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what economic impact assessment he has carried out on the impact of plant inspection charges on garden centres.

Victoria Prentis:

It has long been UK Government policy to charge for many publicly provided goods and services. The standard approach is to set fees to recover the full costs of service delivery. This relieves the general taxpayer of costs, so that they are properly borne by users who benefit from a service. This allows for a more equitable distribution of public resources and enables lower public expenditure and borrowing. Defra plant health services operate in line with that principle and have done for many years.

No assessment on the impact of plant inspection charges on garden centres has been carried out.

Legislation relating to fees does not fall within the bounds of the Business Impact Target and so does not require the development of impact assessments.

Additionally, The Plant Health etc. (Fees) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which extended the existing plant health charging regime to imports from and exports to the EU, was covered by a statutory exclusion under the Small Business Enterprise and Employment (SBEE) Act, because the instrument was varying an existing charge levied by a public body (the Animal and Plant Health Agency). The actual cost to businesses will vary depending on how they organise their imports and the type of material being imported.

However, Defra has engaged extensively with industry and, to reduce the burden on businesses, Defra took the decision to delay the introduction of inspection fees for imports of 'high priority' plants and plant products from the EU until 1 June 2021 in England and Wales. In arriving at the decision to delay the introduction of plant health import inspection fees for these goods, Defra has had to balance the need to support affected businesses against legal considerations and the rules around managing public money. Delaying these fees until 1 June 2021 struck the right balance between these competing demands.

■ Rural Areas: Crime**Conor McGinn:**[\[50073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with (a) local police forces, (b) agricultural and rural organisations and (c) rural communities to (i) raise awareness of rural crime and (ii) make reporting incidences of that crime easier.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government remains committed to driving down crime in rural areas. My department engages regularly with the Home Office, police and rural organisations to discuss tackling rural crime and we recognise the concern which crime can cause to rural communities.

To boost policing capabilities, this Government has already recruited 9,814 additional police officers as of 30 June this year, as part of the biggest recruitment drive in decades. We are also supporting external partners in their activity to raise awareness of rural crime. For instance, Crimestoppers, along with leading charitable and

enforcement agencies has produced a national campaign to raise the profile of rural crime.

Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables understand the priorities of their local communities and take these into account in deciding how resources should be allocated.

■ UK Trade with EU: Import Controls

Drew Hendry:

[\[50078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of extending the delay on EU trade import controls beyond October 2021 on the level of risk posed to the (a) biosecurity and (b) health and hygiene reputation for future UK trade; and whether he has plans to publish any such assessment.

Victoria Prentis:

Risk posed to Biosecurity

The Government has set out a new timetable for introducing full import controls for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) goods being imported from the EU to the UK. The new timetable considers the challenges businesses have faced due to the global pandemic, as well as its impact on supply chains across the UK and Europe.

These temporary practical arrangements recognise the need to ensure biosecurity across the UK whilst balancing the need to remove barriers to trade. We already have SPS controls in place on high-risk goods, such as live animals and high-priority plants and plant products, and checks on these goods will continue to be carried out at destination.

Pre-notification is also being introduced from January 2022 and increases our biosecurity status. It allows the Food Standards Agency to know what high-risk food and feed is crossing our borders, as well as trace products back to the established premises, helping us to manage any food incidents that may occur.

The Government continually assesses risks to biosecurity and has a range of measures it can take should the need arise.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad

Chris Bryant:

[\[49042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK nationals remain in Afghanistan as at 14 September 2021.

Amanda Milling:

As the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa stated in the House on 15 September, it remains difficult to put a precise number on the number of UK

nationals remaining in Afghanistan. We have evacuated over 8000 British nationals to date and we believe that the vast majority of UK nationals who wanted to leave and had valid documentation were evacuated. Since then, more UK nationals have sought assistance and more than 4,200 individuals as of today have signed up to the FCDO's "Register your Presence in Afghanistan". We are working to verify how many of these are British nationals and are continuing to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[50005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK nationals have registered their presence in Afghanistan by using the (a) online form or (b) phone number accessed via the Afghanistan Travel Advice page of Gov.uk.

Amanda Milling:

The 'Register your Presence in Afghanistan' form, launched on 30 August, has more than 4,200 British Nationals registered as of today. Registrations are still being submitted, therefore this number is likely to increase. We are working to verify how many of these are British nationals and are continuing to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to.

■ **Afghanistan: Diplomatic Service**

Chris Bryant:

[\[49045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what provisions the UK is putting in place for consular services for people in Afghanistan either in country through another nation state or out of country.

Amanda Milling:

Four Rapid Deployment Teams have been deployed to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan and provide consular assistance on travel documentation and transport to support the return of British nationals to the UK. We continue to work closely with international partners, including the Qatari authorities, to get as many remaining British Nationals as possible out of Afghanistan.

■ **Afghanistan: Overseas Aid**

Layla Moran:

[\[49251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45259 on Afghanistan: Overseas Aid, how much of the £286 million announced as aid for the people of Afghanistan is (a) from ODA allocations as part of the 0.5% gross national income commitment this year and (b) additional spending.

Amanda Milling:

£143m was originally allocated within the 0.5% gross national income commitment for this year.

The uplift will take into account potential changes in GNI and an assessment of spending forecasts across the wider department.

■ **Afghanistan: Repatriation**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[49086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister on 6 September 2021, Official report, column 26, that every email from hon. Members would be answered by close of play on that day, for what reason a response has not yet been sent to the hon. Member for Brighton Pavilion in respect of (a) five British nationals and their families, (b) one former Chevening scholar, (c) one case in which eligibility for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) has been confirmed, (d) one case registered with ARAP and (e) nine cases related to other priority group categories of NGO workers, journalists, Afghan government roles and other categories; if he will confirm (a) receipt of those 17 cases, (b) that outstanding paperwork to enable people to safely cross borders will be provided immediately, (c) what support the Government plans to provide to help facilitate the joining of at risk, immediate family members with relatives in the UK and (d) when he plans to provide a substantive written response to the hon. Member for Brighton Pavilion on those case enquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Milling:

As the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa said in the House on 15 September, during the evacuation operation alone the FCDO received over 200,000 emails. Approximately 30,000 of these emails were from MPs. Hundreds of civil servants are being assigned to work through that case load, working in multiple shifts through the day, seven days a week. The FCDO aimed to complete the triage of cases to the Ministry of Defence or the Home Office, and notify Hon. Members by 16 September. It has become increasingly clear, as we work through cases, that both the volume and their complexity mean that we will have to take longer than we had originally hoped. We will endeavour to complete that process for all but the small minority of MPs with the most complex cases by the timelines previously communicated to Members.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[49290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many enquiries his Department has received from hon. Members since the fall of the previous Afghan government with regard to (a) UK citizens seeking to return to the UK and (b) Afghan nationals seeking safe passage to the UK.

Amanda Milling:

Since the start of Operation Pitting we have received over 200,000 emails, including approximately 30,000 from Hon. Members .

Neale Hanvey:

[\[50154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps her Department has taken in order to assist (a) UK citizens seeking to return

to the UK and (b) Afghan nationals seeking safe passage to the UK following the fall of the previous Afghan Government in August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

Since 15 August, the UK has 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, academics, researchers, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others. All these figures include dependants. This is in addition to the almost 2,000 people we brought to the UK between April and August under the ARAP scheme.

Our immediate focus is on ensuring safe passage for anyone remaining in Afghanistan who is eligible to come to the UK and wishes to leave. We continue to work closely with the Qatari authorities to facilitate the evacuation of British nationals from Kabul.

Rapid Deployment Teams have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan. Teams have also deployed to Qatar and UAE to assist our operations there and we are providing consular support to British nationals who were evacuated by other allies, including via US airbases in Europe.

■ **Afghanistan: Taliban**

Alan Brown:

[\[49186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41005 on Afghanistan: Taliban, whether he convened internal departmental meetings to discuss the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan on 12 August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary has overseen the FCDO's response to the situation in Afghanistan throughout, including directing the FCDO's crisis response.

Alan Brown:

[\[49188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41005, whether he convened internal departmental meetings to discuss the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan on 14 August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary has overseen the FCDO's response to the situation in Afghanistan throughout, including directing the FCDO's crisis response.

Alan Brown:

[\[49189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41005, whether he convened

internal departmental meetings to discuss the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary has overseen the FCDO's response to the situation in Afghanistan throughout, including directing the FCDO's crisis response.

Alan Brown:

[\[50079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41005, whether she convened internal departmental meetings to discuss the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan on 13 August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary has overseen the FCDO's response to the situation in Afghanistan throughout, including directing the FCDO's crisis response.

■ **Alexei Navalny**

Catherine West:

[\[49224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Russian counterpart on guaranteeing the health and well-being of Alexei Navalny, who is imprisoned in Russia.

Wendy Morton:

We are appalled by the politically motivated detention and sentencing of Mr Navalny and deeply concerned by reports of Mr Navalny's ill health. Mr Navalny is the victim of a despicable crime and he must be released without condition as a matter of urgency. The UK regularly raises Mr Navalny's case with the Russian government, at all levels of engagement. The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns with his counterpart Foreign Minister Lavrov in June.

■ **Belarus and Russia: Females**

Catherine West:

[\[49223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle gender-based violence that is targeted at female journalists in Belarus and Russia.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to addressing violence against women and girls overseas. Gender Equality (encompassing LGBT rights, women's rights, and domestic violence) is a priority for the FCDO, including in Russia, and we continue to support civil society organisations working on gender-related issues. Impunity for attacks on journalists in Russia and Belarus 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, and have repeatedly called on the Belarusian

authorities to release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained, and to hold to account those responsible for attacks on journalists.

■ **Belarus: Conditions of Employment**

Catherine West:

[\[49228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with trade unions in Belarus to increase awareness of workers' rights.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains concerned by the Belarusian regime's continued repression and assault on civil society. Many workers and trade unionists have paid a heavy price for their support for democracy and freedoms in Belarus, including prison sentences and loss of employment. The UK continues to call on the Belarusian authorities to release all those imprisoned and facing politically motivated charges, and to engage in genuine dialogue with political opposition. The UK has imposed over 100 sanctions in response to the fraudulent elections, human rights violations, and repression of civil society and democratic opposition in Belarus.

■ **Central Asia: Press Freedom**

Catherine West:

[\[49222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with European partners on (a) freedom of press and (b) violence against journalists in countries in Central Asia.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO remains committed to the Global Media Freedom campaign launched in 2018. Through the UK's co-chairing of the Media Freedom Coalition we are working to improving media freedom domestically and internationally. Many European countries are members of the Coalition. The Foreign Secretary has not raised press freedom in Central Asia in his recent calls with European counterparts. However, The UK's diplomatic network champions media freedom, including in Central Asia, with Missions hosting and advocating on these issues on a regular basis, where media freedom is under attack. FCDO officials also engage regularly on this and other human rights issues relating to Central Asia with our European partners through our engagement with international organisations such as the OSCE the UN Human Rights Council.

■ **Embassies: Closures**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[50001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether any countries have closed their diplomatic offices in the UK in 2021.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO records indicate that the diplomatic mission of the Solomon Islands to the Court of St. James's closed permanently on 31 March 2021, relocating to Brussels, Belgium.

■ Embassies: Finance

Conor McGinn: [\[50072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what new resources have been allocated to UK embassies to (a) review and (b) improve security vetting procedures for private contractors since August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

We security clear staff and contractors to the level that they require for access, this service is resourced appropriately. Security clearances are kept under regular review.

■ EU Countries: Diplomatic Service

Paul Blomfield: [\[50000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many diplomats the Government deployed to EU countries in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021.

Amanda Milling:

At the end of the two most recent financial years, the number of FCDO UK Based staff working in EU countries was between 450-499 for 2019-20 and between 350-399 for 2020-21.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton: [\[49937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 44163 on Foreign Office: Listed Buildings, if she will publish a list of the (a) properties classified as heritage assets owned by his Department, (b) the most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) the annual income derived from those properties as opposed to the details of the body responsible for advising him on those properties' management.

Amanda Milling:

As stated in my answer to Question 44163, Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit holds all information on Heritage Assets owned by the UK Government. The FCDO does not collate or collect data on the value or income derived from these properties.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Procurement

Tommy Sheppard: [\[50070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, further to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 41953, if she will provide a

breakdown of the year and value of each contract and the nature of the consultancy services procured in each case.

Amanda Milling:

The financial figures associated with each contract have been temporarily removed from the public domain due to the current situation in Afghanistan, while we review the security risks of this information being made publicly available.

■ **France and Germany: Foreign Relations**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[49999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many meetings the UK Government has planned to take place with (a) German and (b) French Ministers before the end of the 2021 calendar year.

Wendy Morton:

Ministers at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regularly engage with their German and French counterparts in bilateral, E3 (UK-France-Germany) and multilateral formats. Meetings are arranged as and when required. Early meetings between the new Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and her German and French counterparts are being arranged.

■ **Overseas Aid**

Neale Hanvey:

[\[50156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure that (a) UK and international volunteers and (b) UK Non Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations which facilitate volunteering are actively involved in his Department's initiatives to strengthen and promote (i) global peace, security and governance, (ii) humanitarian preparedness and response and (iii) efforts to tackle extreme poverty and help the world's most vulnerable people.

Wendy Morton:

The UK funded Volunteering for Development (V4D) programme works through volunteers, including UK and international volunteers, across five of the UK Government's seven strategic priorities for ODA. This includes the promotion of open societies and conflict resolution; humanitarian preparedness and response; and the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[50157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has held with relevant stakeholders on the steps her Department can take to support international (a) volunteering and (b) civil society in the delivery of (i) the UK's global aid priorities and (ii) UK Aid Direct programmes to support civil society to deliver solutions to achieve sustained poverty reduction overseas.

Wendy Morton:

The International Development Strategy will outline the UK government's strategic priorities and approach to development. My ministerial colleagues have held meetings with several stakeholders, including civil society organisations, to discuss the Strategy, as part of our wider engagement process which included a public call for evidence. We intend to publish the Strategy later this year.

■ **Palestinians: Textbooks****Steve McCabe:**[\[43385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the most effective ways to avoid educational materials with hateful content funded by the UK being produced for Palestinian children.

James Cleverly:

It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties and should have no place in education. We will continue to raise concerns about this with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and continue to urge all parties to condemn incitement wherever and whenever it occurs.

■ **USA: Travel Restrictions****Carol Monaghan:**[\[50069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress her Department is making through discussions with the US Administration on the lifting of the current travel ban applying to UK nationals travelling to that country.

Wendy Morton:

On 10 June the Prime Minister and President Biden announced the formation of a UK-US travel taskforce with the purpose of sharing expertise and providing recommendations to leaders on the return of safe and sustainable international travel. The Government is aware of the significant impact this is having on many British Nationals and are engaging extensively with the US to try and find a resolution.

■ **Western Sahara: Armed Forces****Alex Sobel:**[\[50133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 142052; Western Sahara: armed forces how many Moroccan soldiers are based (a) along the berm and (b) elsewhere in Western Sahara.

Amanda Milling:

Since 15 August, the UK has evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan including 30 charter flights. 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,

academics, researchers, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others.

Rapid Deployment Teams have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan. Teams have also deployed to Qatar and UAE to assist our operations there and we are providing consular support to British nationals who were evacuated by other allies, including via US airbases in Europe.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Alan Brown:

[\[41979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing Afghan nationals in the UK to submit further submissions on asylum applications online.

Kevin Foster:

In March 2020, to protect claimants and Home Office staff, we made changes to the further submissions process to allow for representations to be made remotely. It was always the intention of the Home Office to re-start the process of requiring further submissions from failed asylum seekers to be made in person as this helps to ensure people maintain contact with the Home Office and enables identity to be checked. In order to make this process more accessible, we have recently increased the number of locations people can lodge submissions, with Glasgow coming on line in mid-August 2021, in addition to the previous locations of Liverpool and Belfast.

■ Asylum: LGBT People

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[49169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the Nationality and Borders Bill on (a) equality, (b) personal safety and (c) the process of providing evidence of one's identity in the asylum process for LGBTQ+ people.

Tom Pursglove:

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the policies being delivered through the Nationality and Borders Bill. This includes consideration of possible impacts on people who are LGBTQ+. The Equality Impact Assessment will be published in due course.

■ Crime: Rural Areas**Conor McGinn:**[\[49180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources have been made available to (a) Merseyside Police and (b) wider police forces across England and Wales to deal with rural crime.

Kit Malthouse:

To support with the existing policing efforts to fight crime, which includes rural crime, this department provides £136,000 in grant funding to the police's National Wildlife Crime Unit, which is in addition to the £15.8 billion Police Settlement funding given for the year 2021-22. As part of this settlement, Merseyside Police will receive funding of up to £378.3 million.

Furthermore, to boost policing capabilities, this government has recruited 9,814 additional police officers with 532 of these being recruited by Merseyside Police as of 30 June this year.

The allocation of these resources remains a decision for Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables, who understand the priorities of their local communities to ensure that resources, including these new officers are deployed accordingly to fight rural and more general crime.

■ Immigration: Equality**Bambos Charalambous:**[\[49232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has undertaken of the equalities impact of the (a) New Plan for Immigration and the (b) Nationality and Borders Bill, in accordance with her duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010; and if she will publish those assessments.

Kevin Foster:

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the policies being delivered through the Nationality and Borders Bill, which is the cornerstone of the New Plan for Immigration. The Equality Impact Assessment will be published in due course.

■ Migrant Workers: Food**Mr Steve Baker:****[R]** [\[49108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will introduce a 12-month covid-19 recovery visa for people involved in the food and drinks sector supply chains.

Kevin Foster:

The Government position remains we will not be introducing a short-term visa route allowing recruitment at or near the minimum wage with no work-based training requirements, such as the 'Covid recovery visa' which has been suggested.

Most of the solutions for labour shortages are likely to be driven by industry, with a big push towards improving pay, conditions and diversity needed. This includes

business facing recruitment issues engaging with the Department for Work and Pensions about the support they can provide, rather than turning to the Home Office for immigration based solutions instead.

The UK labour market has changed rapidly in recent months and we need time to monitor the impact of the new Skilled Worker route, as well as how the economy recovers post-Covid 19 including those individuals who will begin returning to the labour market from the furlough scheme.

The independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) found some roles in the food production, supply and agricultural sectors meet the RQF3 skills threshold for the Skilled Worker route so are eligible to be sponsored for a Skilled Worker visa and can therefore be recruited on global basis. The threshold was previously set at degree-level jobs. Modelling by the MAC suggests the new, broader RQF3 threshold strikes a reasonable balance between controlling immigration and business access to labour.

■ **Scottish Parliament: Environment Protection**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[49289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the reasons for which the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body sought to have the Scottish Parliament and its surrounding grounds designated as a protected site.

Damian Hinds:

We do not comment on the reasons why a site has been designated as a protected site as to do so could compromise the security of the site and those that use it.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[44236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the number of illegal crossings of the English Channel are reduced.

Tom Pursglove:

I refer the Honourable Gentleman to the answer my colleague gave to the Member for Ipswich on 26 April. Since that time, we have continued in our determination to end these dangerous and unnecessary crossings, and to tackle the criminality behind them.

These crossings are inherently dangerous; those embarking upon them are endangering themselves and others. The Home Office has developed techniques to physically oppose these crossings, and these are designed to discourage attempts. The aim in deploying these tactics is to reduce risk to life at sea. These techniques will only be deployed where it is safe to do so, and only after an individual assessment of circumstances and conditions has been made.

We are engaging with France at the highest levels to stop these crossings. So far this year, the French have stopped more than twice as many crossing attempts compared

to 2020, and the proportion of crossings prevented is higher. Nevertheless, there is more to do to build on these efforts.

On 21 July, the Home Secretary agreed a further package of support with France, significantly increasing the equipped French police resource to patrol a wider area of coastline. The package will also enable more wide-area surveillance technology to be deployed to prevent crossing attempts.

The Nationality and Borders Bill will increase the maximum sentence for people smuggling to life, and will make changes so that how someone arrives in the country will impact their asylum claim. This legislation will break the business model of people smugglers, and I hope its passage will continue to receive the Honourable Gentleman's support.

Clive Lewis: [\[47019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish legal advice her Department has received on the compliance of the policy of turning certain boats back in the Channel with international maritime law.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: As a matter of course, the Government does not publish legal advice.

■ **Visas: Journalism**

Catherine West: [\[49225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many humanitarian visas have been issued to foreign journalists who have fled their home countries due to their media work in the last year.

Kevin Foster:

Journalists are eligible to apply under the skilled worker route of the Points-Based system, providing they meet the specified requirements.

Additionally, through the UK's resettlement schemes we continue to welcome vulnerable refugees in need of protection to the UK, as identified and referred by UNHCR. Through these routes we have resettled more refugees than any EU country since 2015.

We do not have a humanitarian visa scheme.

■ **Visas: Students**

Daisy Cooper: [\[43679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the cost of visas to EU countries on the number of students applying to study modern languages.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office only has responsibility for UK visa policy. The matter of UK students choosing to study modern language courses is for the Secretary of State for Education

■ Windrush Generation: Compensation**Kate Osamor:**[\[47027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff in her Department are working on the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Kate Osamor:[\[47028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether caseworkers who were previously working on the Windrush Compensation Scheme have been re-allocated as a result of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Priti Patel:

As of August 2021, the Home Office (HO) has 63.1 FTE decision-making caseworkers working on the Scheme, which will increase by 56 Caseworkers over the next four months.

No Windrush Compensation Scheme caseworkers have been reallocated as a result of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme: EEA Nationals**Layla Moran:**[\[49252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference the Independent Report, International review: immigration routes for social care workers produced for the Migration Advisory Committee, published 1 September 2021, whether her Department plans to implement the report's recommendation that the Youth Mobility Scheme should be extended to EEA member states.

Kevin Foster:

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) were commissioned on 6 July to review the impact of free movement ending on the social care sector. The MAC have indicated, in their letter accepting the commission, they will make use of expert social care advisors. On 19 August, the MAC launched a call for evidence to support this review. We look forward to receiving the MAC's report next year.

Our Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) agreements provide a valuable route for mutual cultural exchange and are not simply a one-way route for recruiting labour from overseas.. We will therefore not add nations to the YMS unilaterally.

We remain open to negotiating YMS arrangements with other countries and territories, including EEA countries, and last week laid changes to the Immigration Rules to add Iceland as a participating country in the scheme. However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK nationals, with the detail negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties, we are

unable to disclose the status of ongoing negotiations with partner countries as they occur.

Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ House of Commons: Carbon Dioxide

Rachael Maskell:

[\[47016\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will publish the (a) available data on carbon dioxide levels in locations in the House of Commons and (b) risk assessment of the effect of levels of carbon dioxide in the House of Commons on the transmission of covid-19.

Sir Charles Walker:

Guidance has been published by the Health and Safety Executive on ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This, along with the latest Government guidance has been incorporated into the Parliamentary Covid risk assessment.

Carbon Dioxide monitoring has been carried out across the estate in recent months. No readings on the estate have met or exceeded Government thresholds, which would recommend further action be taken. Should any readings exceed recommended levels these would then be managed and mitigated against, in line with other risks, and consulted on in the normal way.

■ Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

Alan Brown:

[\[49191\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 40981 on Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance, what the timescale is for the compilation of the business case referred to in that answer.

Sir Charles Walker:

A mandate has just been approved for work to be carried out to stonework across the Palace. This work will target areas that cannot wait until the Restoration and Renewal Programme. Cloister Court is one of the key areas it will address. The average timescale for our business cases is 18 months.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Community Infrastructure Levy****Ms Nusrat Ghani:****[49181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will provide local councils with the ability to raise a Community Infrastructure Levy within one year of the grant of consent to ensure delivery of homes and infrastructure delivery.

Christopher Pincher:

We have consulted on introducing a new infrastructure levy to replace section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy. We are currently analysing the 44,000 responses to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation and will be publishing our response.

■ High Rise Flats: Greater London**Mr Virendra Sharma:****[49085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of unsafe blocks of flats in (a) London and (b) Ealing; and what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Fire Commissioner's report detailing unsafe buildings in London.

Christopher Pincher:

Information on the number of high-rise (over 18 metres) residential and publicly-owned buildings with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet Building Regulations by local authority is published in the [Building Safety Programme data release](#).

For high-rise residential buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding, the Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund at pace so that more remedial works can begin as swiftly as possible. Information on registrations to the Building Safety Fund by local authority can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>.

■ Housing: Construction**Ms Nusrat Ghani:****[49185]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will review the five-year plan to assume that homes will be built within five years to remove incentives for developers to delay development and speculate on land.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies.

The Government wants to see homes built faster and expects house builders to build out as soon as possible once planning permission is granted.

Where build-out is delayed, it is for councils and developers to work closely together to overcome any barriers. To support them, this Government is looking at strengthening the tools available to local authorities to encourage faster build out rates. We are considering the responses to the Planning for the Future consultation and will publish our response.

■ Housing: Multiple Occupation

Seema Malhotra:

[49152]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2021 to Question 33931, what recent estimate he has made of the number of houses in multiple occupation in each (a) region and (b) London borough; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a property where three or more people from two or more households share facilities, such as a kitchen and/or bathroom. Under mandatory HMO licensing, all local authorities must license HMOs in which five or more people from two or more households share facilities.

The Department gathers data from local authorities on the estimated number of HMOs annually. The latest returns can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2019-to-2020>.

■ Housing: Older People

Stephen Timms:

[49017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of implementing the Law Commission's recommendations on the regulation of event fees in retirement properties.

Christopher Pincher:

In 2017, the Law Commission published a report of their review of event fees on behalf of this Department. This followed concerns raised by the Competition and Markets Authority about the fairness of some retirement property leases that have resulted in leaseholders paying an event fee of between 0.25% and 30% of the sale price of the property when selling or sub-letting. Concerns were also raised about the lack of transparency of event fees for older people and their families when purchasing a leasehold retirement property. The Law Commission made a number of recommendations in its report, which can be downloaded at <http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/event-fees-in-retirement-properties>.

The Government responded to the Law Commission, thanking them for the report and agreeing to implement the majority of the recommendations.

This includes a new statutory code of practice which will ensure that these fees cannot be charged unexpectedly, while fees that breach it will be regarded as unenforceable and developers and estate agents will be required to make all such fees crystal clear to people before they buy, so prospective buyers can make an informed decision before forming a financial or emotional attachment to a property.

The Government is considering two further recommendations, on succession rights and a database of leasehold retirement properties with event fees, and will respond.

■ Infrastructure: Finance

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[49183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to provide assurance that infrastructure funding supports housing development in places where rigid strategies exist such as the Road Investment Strategy.

Christopher Pincher:

It is important that local authorities plan well for the infrastructure required to support housing development, taking into account Government funding streams such as the Road Investment Strategy and securing appropriate contributions from developers. Developer contributions can be secured through section 106 planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy. The 'Planning for the Future' White Paper' proposes a new 'Infrastructure Levy' to replace the existing system. The consultation on 'Planning for the Future' closed on 29 October 2020 and we will be responding formally.

The Government published its second Road Investment Strategy in October 2019, which allocated grant funding of £27.4 billion from 2020-2025. Other funding streams include NHS England, the Environment Agency, and various schools funding programmes. We recognise there is still a need for further infrastructure funding, which is why the Government committed £4.3 billion from the Housing Infrastructure Fund for 133 projects across England unlocking over 300,000 homes.

■ Park Homes

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[49020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when (a) he or (b) a Minister in his Department plans to respond to the email invitation to attend a meeting of the all-party Parliamentary group on park homes.

Eddie Hughes:

The invitation is under consideration and a response will be issued shortly.

■ Party Wall etc Act 1996**Alun Cairns:** [\[49118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to bring forward proposals to amend the Party Wall Act 1996.

Christopher Pincher:

To ensure safe and high-quality buildings, it is important that anyone involved in a project throughout a building's lifecycle is competent to do their job properly and in compliance with the Building Regulations. The Government is working with industry to develop the professional standards of competence of those working across the built environment and enforcing a stringent new regulatory regime for high-rise residential and other in scope buildings for the Building Safety Regulator.

The Party Wall Act provides a framework for preventing and resolving disputes in relation to party walls, boundary walls and excavations near buildings. The Act is separate from obtaining planning permission or building regulations approval. At present, there are no plans to amend the Act.

■ Permitted Development Rights**Steve Reed:** [\[46989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 29058, on Permitted Development Rights, whether work has commenced on the regulatory impact assessment referred to in that answer.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: As we stated in our previous responses, we aim to publish a full Regulatory Impact Assessment on the measures as soon as possible.

■ Social Rented Housing: Mental Illness**Sarah Olney:** [\[47035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support those with mental health problems to navigate the social housing system.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: Local authorities are responsible for drawing up and operating their allocation scheme for social housing within the framework of legislation which ensures that they must give 'reasonable preference' to specific groups including people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability. This will include people with mental health problems.

Statutory guidance in 2012 advises local authorities to consider giving additional preference to those who those who need to move urgently because of a sudden disability.

The Social Housing White Paper sets out clear expectations that all social housing tenants, especially those with mental health problems, receive a professional service from competent and empathetic landlord staff. The White Paper commits to a review of professionalisation in the social housing sector including how well housing staff are equipped to support those with mental health needs and will encourage landlords to adopt best practice in this area.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Agricultural Products: Australia

Emily Thornberry: [\[49069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether any of the agricultural imports on which tariffs are proposed to be reduced as part of the agreement in principle with Australia, announced on 17 June 2021, meet the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's Call for Evidence on Labelling for Animal Welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[49070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether agricultural imports on which tariffs will be reduced as part of the agreement in principle with Australia, announced on 17 June 2021, will be required to meet the baseline UK welfare regulations set out in the Government's Call for Evidence on Labelling for Animal Welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[49071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her agreement in principle with Australia, announced on 17 June 2021, of the proposals set out in the Government's Call for Evidence on Labelling for Animal Welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[49072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what legal advice she has (a) sought and (b) received on the compatibility of sections (a) 1.1, (b) 1.2, (c) 1.7 and (d) 1.8 of her agreement in principle with Australia, announced on 17 June 2021, with the proposals set out in the Government's Call for Evidence on Labelling for Animal Welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare, and food standards.

All goods coming into the United Kingdom must meet our relevant domestic rules. Legal protections for food standards and import requirements remain in place, including through the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and our other EU Exit

legislation. This provides a firm basis for maintaining the same high level of protection for both domestic and imported products.

The responses to the call for evidence will be used to inform any future policy proposals on animal welfare labelling.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Emily Thornberry: [\[49073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has held discussions with her Australian counterpart on the implications for the agreement in principle with Australia, announced on 17 June 2021, of the proposals set out in the Government's Call for Evidence on Labelling for Animal Welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government has negotiated an unprecedented animal welfare chapter in the Anglo-Australian Trade Deal that includes a non-regression clause and cooperation commitments. Nothing in the agreement will prevent the United Kingdom from amending or introducing any new labelling requirements for products to be sold here.

This deal will not compromise our animal welfare standards and does not create new permissions for imports from Australia. All agri-food imports imported into the United Kingdom under existing or future free trade agreements will, as now, must comply with our import requirements.

■ TRIPS Agreement: Coronavirus

Alyn Smith: [\[50138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if the Government will support the South African and Indian Governments' amended proposal to the World Trade Organisation to waive certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of covid-19.

Alyn Smith: [\[50139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of the amended proposal by the South African and Indian Governments to the World Trade Organisation to waive certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of covid-19.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Hon. Gentleman for Stirling to the answer given to the Hon. Gentleman for Dundee West on 19th July (UIN: 31441)

JUSTICE**■ Vandalism: Fines****Sarah Champion:****[50038]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many fines for vandalism of lifesaving equipment under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 were issued in the years (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

James Cartlidge:

Information on fines given for vandalism of lifesaving equipment cannot be disaggregated from broader criminal damage offences within the MOJ's Court Proceedings Database as they are not separately defined in legislation. This information may be held on court record but to be able to identify these cases would require access to individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

Fines given for offences related to criminal damage can be found in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

To isolate the broader offences within which vandalism of lifesaving equipment is likely to sit in the data tool, select the categories below in the 'offence' filter:

- 58D Other Criminal Damage (relating to indictable offences)
- 149 Criminal or Malicious Damage Offence (relating to summary offences)

LEADER OF THE HOUSE**■ Palace of Westminster: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:****[47017]**

To ask the Leader of the House, if he will reassess the requirement to wear face coverings in (a) the House of Chamber, (b) voting lobbies, (c) Members' lobby and (d) Westminster Hall during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Face coverings are not mandatory for Members in the House of Commons Chamber, voting lobbies, Members' lobby and Westminster Hall. The current UK Government guidance on face coverings is available on gov.uk. Face coverings are not required by law in the workplace and the Government removed the legal requirement to wear face coverings in public indoor spaces. If you are in a crowded, indoor space where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet, wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. I encourage all eligible individuals to take up the vaccinations on offer, in order to protect themselves and others in the best way against COVID-19.

SCOTLAND■ **Ports: Scotland****Dame Meg Hillier:**[\[49068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 903227 on Ports: Scotland, what additional resources have been deployed by the Border Force at Scottish ports since the Northern Ireland Protocol came into effect on 1 January 2021.

Mr Alister Jack:

Information relating to the wider staffing in the Home Office including Border Force, for the year 2019-20 is below:

[Home Office annual report and accounts: 2019 to 2020](#)

The Home Office Annual reports and accounts for 2020 to 2021 will be published in due course.

Border Force regularly reviews its capacity plans and resources. Redeploying and recruiting staff where necessary to help meet and maintain service standards for individual services.

Border Force is confident that resources to meet anticipated overall operational requirements are in place with Border Force recruiting sufficient additional frontline staff and continuing to build staffing levels during 2020/2021.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY■ **Members' Staff: Pay****Sarah Owen:**[\[50148\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, what representations he has made to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority on equalising pay scales of hon. Members' caseworkers with those of hon. Members' researchers.

Sir Charles Walker:

I have not made any such representations. Parliament established IPSA as an independent body, and it is for them to make decisions on pay scales which are set following periodic reviews and based on market rate data and comparative benchmarking. The Speaker's Committee maintains a constructive working relationship with IPSA and I know that it is always open to hear from honourable members on matters affecting the running of their offices. I understand that the GMB union has already raised this issue with the Chief Executive of IPSA and that he will be meeting with them in the near future to hear their views.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Coronavirus****Seema Malhotra:**[\[49155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on bringing forward an aviation sector deal to support the recovery of aviation related businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the aviation industry because of Covid-19 and firms experiencing difficulties have been able to draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor. In total, we estimate that by the end of September 2021 the air transport sector (airlines, airports and related services) will have benefited from around £7bn of Government support since the start of the pandemic. This includes support through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The Department for Transport works closely with HM Treasury on matters related to aviation. We continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

■ Aviation: Exhaust Emissions**Seema Malhotra:**[\[49311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which projects the £3 million Government funding for zero emission flight infrastructure has been allocated to; how much of that funding has been allocated to each of those projects; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Zero Emission Flight Infrastructure competition, announced at the June meeting of the Jet Zero Council, has taken place over the summer and an announcement on the projects receiving funding will be made shortly.

The Government has in addition consulted over the summer to develop our Jet Zero Strategy to be published later this year.

■ Bridges: Northern Ireland and Scotland**Louise Haigh:**[\[49212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total cost of the feasibility study on the possible Northern Ireland link was; and what the full-time equivalent headcount of people working on that study was.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Fixed Link Feasibility Study forms part of the Union Connectivity Review, independently chaired by Sir Peter Hendy CBE. Sir Peter's review has not yet concluded, so the final figure is not yet available.

■ Cycling: Safety**Steve McCabe:**[\[49024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of Rule 163 of the Highway Code on giving cyclists at least as much room when overtaking a car.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department consulted last summer on proposed changes to The Highway Code to improve the safety of vulnerable road users, including cyclists. The proposed changes include new guidance in Rule 163 around safe passing distances and speed limits when overtaking.

The consultation on the proposed changes generated a huge response with nearly 21,000 replies received. The Department has concluded full analysis of the feedback and published the Government response to the consultation on the 30 July 2021.

■ Department for Transport: Listed Buildings**Tim Loughton:**[\[49011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45033 on Department for Transport: Listed Buildings, if he will publish a list of the properties classified as heritage assets by his Department as opposed to those owned through local authorities giving the (a) value and (b) annual income derived for each of those properties.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of the Government's Transparency Agency information about Department for Transport properties is published on the data.gov.uk website. Please follow the below link, and select the 'Property (excel download)' file and download.

<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/epimstransparency>

Information on the properties classified as heritage assets, value of those properties and income derived from those properties can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Telephone Services**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[49021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the time taken by DVLA staff to answer telephone calls from the public; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

Throughout the pandemic the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's contact centre has actively managed its operation and flexed the services for customers in line with the available resources. To help respond to more enquiries, remote working has been increased with staff handling email, webchat, social media and telephone customer

contacts. The DVLA has also procured the use of an additional building to increase the number of staff able to take calls.

■ **Electric Scooters: Pedestrian Areas**

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[49022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that riders of motorised scooters are aware of their safety responsibilities on pavements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[49023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to provide approved routes for riders of motorised scooters to make pavements safer for pedestrians; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

Motorised scooters may refer to either e-scooters or electric mobility scooters and/or powered wheelchairs which are classified as invalid carriages. Trials of rental e-scooters are currently being run by the Department to assess their safety and wider impacts.

For the e-scooter trials, it is a requirement for all operators involved in the trials to provide training to users. This takes place in various forms: apps; training videos; face-to-face training. It is illegal to use any e-scooter in spaces which are set aside for use by pedestrians and horse-riders, this includes the pavement. E-scooters used in trial areas can be used on cycle paths and tracks. We have asked operators in trial areas to develop more robust geo-fencing to tackle pavement riding and other anti-social behaviour. Outside of the trials, e-scooters remain illegal to use, unless ridden on private land with the permission of the landowner.

The Department has published an information sheet for mobility scooter users including where they can be used and how the Highway Code applies to them. It is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobility-scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs-on-the-road-some-guidance-for-users.

There are no plans to provide approved routes for either type of vehicle. Local authorities are responsible for running the trials and are able to control how the trials run in their areas, it is for them to determine if they wish to implement approved routes.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Unicycles**

Kevin Brennan: [\[49961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of legalising the use of electric unicycles.

Trudy Harrison:

In the UK, powered transporters, also known as micromobility devices, are treated like any other motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Act, and this includes electric unicycles.

As part of the Government's Future of Transport regulatory review the Department is running trials of rental e-scooters which will decide whether micromobility devices should be allowed on the road and, if so, what rules should apply to them. We have put in place a national monitoring and evaluation programme and data continues to be collected from the e-scooter trials. An interim report summarizing findings from the data collected so far will be published in autumn 2021, with a final report due in spring 2022.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Feryal Clark: [\[47079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on the number of heavy goods vehicle drivers in the UK.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department for Transport has regular discussions with the road haulage industry. We are working together to address the current HGV driver shortage, which is an issue affecting many countries worldwide. For example, the International Road Transport Union predicts a gap of 185,000 drivers by 2027 in Germany.

The Government has already taken firm action, including through training for jobseekers, additional funding for apprenticeships, and taking measures to increase lorry driver testing capacity to bring new drivers into the industry as soon as possible.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Stephanie Peacock: [\[50126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average processing time has been for an HGV driving licence application in 2021.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[50127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average processing time was for an HGV driving licence application in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[50128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency Staff are responsible for processing heavy goods vehicle driver applications.

Andrew Stephenson:

The table below shows the average processing time for vocational (which includes HGV) driving licence applications.

FINANCIAL YEAR	AVERAGE DAYS TO ISSUE A VOCATIONAL DRIVING LICENCE
2018/19	3.33
2019/20	3.42
2020/21	6.71
2021/22 (to end of August)	16.80

Industrial action by the Public and Commercial Services union, a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements, as well as the increased demand for Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) services has led to the increased processing times in this financial year.

It is not possible to specify how many staff are working on applications for HGV licences as most DVLA operational roles require employees to carry out a range of tasks.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Qualifications

Alex Cunningham:

[\[50010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence; and whether he plans to amend the requirement for that certificate to help tackle driver shortages.

Andrew Stephenson:

In 2016, the Government published a post-implementation review of the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) 2007 regulations. The review considered the extent to which the regulations improved road safety and increased the professionalism of driving as an occupation. Road safety has improved but it is not possible to isolate the effect of the regulations from other measures.

HGV drivers continue to be required to hold a DCPC. Many employers are offering training packages to allow drivers whose DCPC has lapsed to renew it and return to driving.

■ Motorcycles: Driving Tests

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[49234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of extending the validity period for compulsory basic training pass certificates for those who could not take their motorcycle rider tests due to covid-19 restrictions.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[49235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of refunding the price of compulsory basic training pass certificates for those who could not take their motorcycle rider tests due to covid-19 restrictions.

Andrew Stephenson:

The two-year validity period of a compulsory basic training (CBT) certificate is set out in legislation. It is in place to ensure learner moped and motorcycle riders can ride safely on their own, with L-plates, while they practise for a full moped or motorcycle test. The Government has no plans, on road safety grounds, to extend or waive that two-year validity period.

There are no plans to refund learners riders, given that they will have already received the service for which they paid.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas**Kate Osamor:**[\[47030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the Government's timetable for its plans to tackle pavement parking in response to his Department's 2020 consultation on that matter.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are giving careful consideration to the large volume of responses to this consultation and will publish the outcome as soon as possible.

■ Railways: Commuters**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[49055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage people to return to commuting by train.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are working with the rail industry to develop a number of recovery initiatives, focused on restoring passenger confidence in travelling by rail.

We have also launched new national flexible rail tickets, matching modern working habits and saving passengers hundreds of pounds, for commuters across England.

■ Railways: South West**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[49150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with Network Rail on the South West Resilience Programme.

Anne Marie Morris:[\[49151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to fully fund the South West Resilience Programme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Department officials meet with their counterparts from Network Rail on a weekly basis to discuss the progress of the South West Rail Resilience Programme.

The Department has so far committed approximately £140m towards the development and delivery of the South West Rail Resilience Programme. Funding for further phases of the Programme will be considered in accordance with Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline principles supported by a business case.

The following investment has been provided for the Programme via the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline:

- Development funding - £17.2m
- Phase 1 & 2 (Dawlish sea wall) - £85.3m
- Phase 3 (Parsons Tunnel rock fall shelter) - £37.44m

Phase 4 (cliff protection measures between tunnels) will be submitted for investment approval in Autumn 2021. Phase 5 (Parsons Tunnel to Teignmouth) is at an earlier development stage and is currently the subject of an optioneering exercise being undertaken by Network Rail.

Restoring Your Railway Fund**Damien Moore:**[\[49261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when an announcement will be made on round three bids to the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are assessing the bids and currently expect to announce the outcomes later this year.

Roads: Exhaust Emissions**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[49969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his policy is on the role of carbon offsetting in his plans to decarbonise the UK's strategic road network by 2050.

Andrew Stephenson:

National Highways (formerly Highways England) published its "Net Zero Highways Plan" in July, setting out how it will achieve net zero for the whole strategic road network (SRN) by 2050. National Highways' focus is to achieve net zero rather than carbon neutral. This means reducing emissions to zero, or close to zero, with minimal use of offsets for residual emissions. As National Highways works towards net zero, it is using carbon offsets for projects being delivered in the interim. National Highways' plans also include planting additional trees on its own land to lock up carbon.

National Highways is committed to 100% corporate emissions being net zero in 2030 without purchased offsetting. By 2040, 100% of National Highways' maintenance and construction schemes will also be net zero, and where there are residual emissions

these will be offset using robust certified 'removal' offsets. National Highways has set a net zero, rather than a carbon neutral, goal to keep our focus on emissions reduction and innovation to get to close to near zero schemes.

■ Roads: Freight

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[49221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward a road freight recovery plan based on the input of (a) training providers, (b) examiners, (c) businesses, (d) industry bodies, and (e) trade unions.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is in regular dialogue with businesses, industry bodies, trade unions, training providers and examiners on a range of issues affecting the road freight sector.

We continue to support the industry in addressing its labour market challenges through apprenticeships and training and diversifying the demographic of its workforce. We continue to lead on issues such as the availability of driving tests and improving the quality and supply of facilities and overnight lorry parking.

■ Trains: Diesel Fuel

Jim Shannon: [\[48226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to encourage and require the operators of diesel locomotives in the rail freight sector to use renewable diesel in place of fossil diesel to improve air quality for rail freight terminals, local communities and railway workers.

Jim Shannon: [\[48228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to require the operators of diesel powered long distance high speed passenger trains to use renewable diesel instead of fossil diesel to support air quality for passengers in stations, railway staff and local communities close to the railway.

Jim Shannon: [\[48229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment the Government has made of the impact of idling diesel powered passenger trains on railway station passengers; and if he will take steps to help increase the use of renewable diesel for trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is determined to reduce the impact of poor air quality on railway users, workers, and neighbours. We know that air pollution in stations is an area of particular concern. To better understand it the Department has funded air quality monitoring studies at three large enclosed stations; Birmingham New Street, London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverly. This research has highlighted that enclosed

stations can be high risk areas for poor air quality, due to idling diesel engines and poor air flow and ventilation.

Following these findings, and given the importance of the issue, the Department is now funding a new £4.5 million air quality monitoring network.

This will be rolled out over the next three years, with air quality monitors installed in around 100 stations across England and Wales. Once established, the network will help the rail industry identify priority locations where air quality improvement measures are required. Responsible organisations will be required to produce air quality improvement plans with the aim that levels of air pollutants meet the targets we will set for PM2.5, PM10 and NO2.

The government has committed to a net zero railway by 2050, and set out an ambition to remove all diesel-only trains from the rail network by 2040, which will reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. To achieve immediate carbon savings and air quality improvements, some rail operators are exploring the use of biofuels and sustainable alternative fuels. We recognise the potential value of sustainably sourced biofuels as a transitional technology, where their use is technically feasible and makes commercial and environmental sense. As part of Decarbonising transport: a better, greener Britain, the government has set out plans to work with stakeholders to develop a longer-term strategy on how the uptake and use of low-carbon fuels, including biodiesel and renewable hydrogen, could support decarbonisation across transport modes to 2050. The strategy is to be published in 2022.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Feryal Clark: [\[47080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to review the status of Turkey on the traffic light covid-19 travel list.

Feryal Clark: [\[47081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the evidential basis is for his Department's decision to assign Turkey to the red travel list for covid-19, and what criteria Turkey needs to meet to move to the amber covid-19 travel list.

Feryal Clark: [\[47082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with his Turkish counterpart on the status of Turkey on the traffic light covid-19 travel list.

Robert Courts:

Decisions on Red, Amber or Green List assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account Joint Biosecurity Centre risk assessments of countries and territories, alongside wider public health factors.

These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under regular review. Turkey will move to the amber list from 4am on Wednesday 22 September.

TREASURY■ **Air Passenger Duty: Reform**

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[50170\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many officials in his Department are working on reforms to domestic Air Passenger Duty.

Helen Whately:

HMT takes a flexible and dynamic approach to resourcing in order to meet Government priorities. We do not routinely record the number of full time equivalent civil servants who work on individual policy initiatives.

■ **Carbon Emissions**

Caroline Lucas: [\[46972\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the (a) terms of reference and (b) names of members of the carbon markets working group announced in Budget 2021.

Caroline Lucas: [\[46973\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has for parliamentary oversight of the carbon markets working group established by Dame Clara Furse; and what progress has been made by that working group to date.

John Glen:

The UK VCM Forum is private sector led and independent of HMG. The Forum is chaired and established by Dame Clara Furse, with the encouragement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. For queries about the UK VCM Forum, the initiative can be reached through VCM@cityoflondon.gov.uk.

■ **Carbon Emissions and UN Climate Conference 2021**

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[50169\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he last discussed (a) the UK's net zero target, (b) COP26 and (c) HM Treasury's Net Zero Review with the Prime Minister.

Helen Whately:

The Chancellor speaks regularly with the Prime Minister on a wide range of matters.

The government is working at pace to deliver COP26 and the Net Zero Strategy, as well as complementary publications, including HM Treasury's Net Zero Review. This is in addition to implementing sectoral policies and programmes that support the government's net zero objectives.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Dave Doogan: [\[50137\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department can take to inform or resolve a dispute between an employee and their employer or former employer on

payments made through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where the payments from the employer to the employee or former employee are subject to dispute.

Lucy Frazer:

Since 25 February 2021, employees can check if their employer made a CJRS claim on their behalf for periods from December 2020 onwards through their online Personal Tax Account (PTA). Details of CJRS claims are updated monthly in PTAs.

If an employee thinks their employer is incorrectly claiming for them, they should talk to their employer about this in the first instance to rectify this if they feel comfortable doing so.

Anyone who suspects a fraudulent claim has been made can report it to HMRC's Fraud Hotline. HMRC operates a Fraud Hotline service which allows members of the public to submit allegations of fraud relating to all of its COVID-19 schemes, including CJRS. The public can access this reporting service by searching 'report tax fraud' on GOV.UK or, for urgent and time critical matters, by telephone on 0800 788 887, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. HMRC encourages the public to use its online form wherever possible as it remains the most efficient way of informing HMRC of potential wrongdoing.

HMRC will check claims made through the scheme. Payments may be withheld or need to be repaid in full to HMRC if the claim is based on dishonest or inaccurate information or found to be fraudulent.

■ **Coronavirus: Government Assistance**

Stephen Farry:

[\[49309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate potentially anti-competitive consequences of the Government's lending schemes via the (a) Bounce Back Loan, (b) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan and (c) Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan for the UK banking sector.

John Glen:

Over 1.6 million businesses accessed over £79 billion of finance through the Covid-19 business loan schemes. The Treasury recognises the vital role that non-banks and challenger banks play in the provision of credit to SMEs. It is grateful for the way the sector has responded to the current crisis, and remains committed to promoting the participation of a diversity of lenders in the market and widening the funding options available to UK businesses. We will continue to work with non-bank lenders to support their participation in the new Recovery Loan scheme following the closure of the previous loan guarantee schemes, as well as engaging closely with alternative lenders and continuing to promote competition more generally.

■ **Energy: VAT**

Rob Roberts:

[\[49297\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much VAT was collected from domestic (a) electricity and (b) gas bills in each of the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC does not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services because businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

■ Fiscal Policy: Scotland

Ian Murray: [\[49989\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the process is for the production of an independent report on the Scottish Fiscal Framework; and what the timetable is for (a) the appointment and (b) the production of that report.

Ian Murray: [\[49990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the process will be for discussions with the Scottish Government on the scope of the independent report into the Scottish Fiscal Framework; and if he will make a statement.

Ian Murray: [\[49991\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the negotiations on reviewing the Scottish Fiscal Framework being a transparent open book exercise.

Ian Murray: [\[49992\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what correspondence and representations he has received from the Scottish Government on the Scottish Fiscal Framework negotiations.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The published Scottish Government Fiscal Framework agreement sets out the arrangements for an independent report to inform the review. Namely that the UK and Scottish governments will jointly commission an independent report on the Block Grant Adjustment arrangements, which is to be presented to both governments by the end of 2021. This independent report on the Block Grant Adjustment arrangements will then inform the UK and Scottish governments review of the Fiscal Framework.

The scope and authorship for the independent report, as well as the arrangements for the subsequent review, are to be finalised by the Joint Exchequer Committee. For transparency, a communiqué is typically published after meetings of the Joint Exchequer Committee to outline agreements reached between the UK and Scottish governments.

The UK Government is committed to following the arrangements for the report and the review as set out in the Fiscal Framework agreement. I look forward to continuing the engagement the UK Government has had with the Scottish Government on preparations for the review.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

Stephen Flynn:

[\[50135\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to businesses of administering the new Health and Social Care Levy.

Lucy Frazer:

The Health and Social Care Levy will levy a 1.25% tax on taxpayers liable to Class 1, Class 1A, Class 1B and Class 4 National Insurance contributions, via a temporary increase to NICs rates in 2022-23 and a separate Levy from 2023-24. Revenue raised will be ringfenced to support UK health and social care bodies.

The Government has published a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) setting out that this measure will affect over 1.6 million employers required to introduce this change, including through one-off familiarisation costs. Further details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-social-care-levy/health-and-social-care-levy>.

■ Insurance: Floods

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[49075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether insurance companies are permitted to deduct the cost of furlough payments made to staff in a business insurance claim for flood damage.

John Glen:

Insurers must treat customers fairly and firms are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules.

As insurance policies differ significantly, businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers. The individual policy wording generally sets out the basis on which the sum due to the policyholder following an insured event will be calculated. Insurers should therefore calculate claims payments due to the policyholder in accordance with the terms and conditions of the relevant policy.

■ Mortgages: Arrears

Ian Mearns:

[\[48188\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on the level of mortgage arrears.

John Glen:

Prior to the pandemic, mortgage arrears were at historically low levels.

At the height of the pandemic, the Government worked with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to oversee an unprecedented package of forbearance measures for

mortgage customers, including the provision of 2.9 million mortgage payment holidays and a ban on repossessions.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was also set up to support employers to retain their employees through the Covid-19 pandemic. To date, the scheme has succeeded in supporting 11.6 million jobs across the UK with employer claims totalling £68.5 billion, aiding businesses and protecting livelihoods.

While these measures have ended or are coming to a close, the Government will continue its efforts to support mortgage borrowers. For example, the Government will continue to offer Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans to homeowners in receipt of an income-related benefit to help prevent repossession. The Government also aims to help people avoid repossession through protection in the courts under the Mortgage Pre-Action Protocol which makes it clear that repossession must always be the last resort for lenders. In addition, FCA guidance requires firms to continue providing support through tailored forbearance options, including further payment holidays, for borrowers facing ongoing financial difficulties as a result of Covid-19. Any borrowers worried about their mortgage payments should make early contact with their lender to discuss their options.

Bank of England data published on 14 September 2021 shows that arrears levels remain low, with the proportion of total loan balances with arrears at 0.89%.

■ National Insurance: Schools

Sarah Olney:

[\[49229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether schools will be required to meet the cost of increased national insurance contributions for their staff from their existing budget.

Mr Simon Clarke:

As set out in 'Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care', the Government intends to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England for the increased cost of the Levy and provide Barnett consequential on this funding to the devolved administrations. Details will be set out at the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Net Zero Review

Abena Opong-Asare:

[\[50168\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many officials in his Department are working on the Net Zero Review.

Helen Whately:

HMT takes a flexible and dynamic approach to resourcing in order to meet Government priorities.

■ Public Finance

Stephen Farry:

[\[48388\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent changes have been made to the Green Book in assessing value for money to give weighting for bids from particular regions; and if he will set out that weighting.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Green Book sets out guidance on how to appraise policies, programmes and projects, to help public servants give objective advice to decision makers. In November 2020 the Government completed a review of the Green Book, which included new requirements for the appraisal of place based impacts. This guidance sets out that where a proposal has geographically defined objectives, then the principal frame of the analysis should be on the effects on that area specifically. Alternatively, where a proposal is expected to have different implications for parts of the UK, then these impacts on different places should be appraised and presented to support decision making.

Value for money is a judgement following the application of the wider Green Book method. These judgements also need to consider un-quantified factors and the extent to which different options best meet the objectives for intervention, rather than a quantified score alone. It is therefore not possible to apply regional weightings to these wider considerations which are necessary in assessing value for money.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Banks

Stephen Farry:

[\[49308\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing (a) regional mutual banks and/or (b) regional angel finance programmes for the purposes contributing to its Levelling Up agenda and enhancing competition and lending practices within the banking sector.

John Glen:

The Government welcomes the efforts to establish regional mutual banks and recognises the importance of diversity in the banking system. Officials have been engaging with prospective mutual banks over their efforts to raise capital and look forward to further discussions.

The British Business Bank is already delivering the Regional Angels Programme, a £100m scheme which seeks to increase the aggregate amount of early-stage equity capital that is available to smaller businesses with high growth potential across the UK. This programme is off to a promising start and has seen very strong demand. The British Business Bank will assess the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its stated objectives in due course.

■ Small Businesses: Finance**Stephen Farry:** [\[49306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Bank of England's Term Funding Scheme for SMEs beyond its planned expiry date of October 2021.

John Glen:

Monetary policy is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England and this includes decisions on Bank Rate and quantitative easing. The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy, so the Government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

Stephen Farry: [\[49307\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is planning to extend the SME Supporting Factor beyond 2022 to maintain lending capacity and businesses' access to finance.

John Glen:

The "SME supporting factor", allows firms to apply a discount (ranging between 15% and 24%) to risk weightings for qualifying exposures to SMEs.

This measure was introduced by the EU and deviates from internationally agreed Basel standards.

The recent Financial Services Act 2021, passed in May, delegated responsibility for the implementation of capital requirements relating to the international Basel standards to the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA). This is subject to an enhanced accountability framework, which requires the PRA to consider the impact of their rules on the ability of firms to provide finance to the UK economy (including SMEs) on a sustainable basis in the medium and long-term.

Colleen Fletcher: [\[50046\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to help small and medium-sized businesses in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has provided historic levels of support to the economy. This is a total of £352 billion, delivered through job and income support, tax reliefs and deferrals, and cash loans and grants for businesses. However, the Government recognises that it takes time for businesses and the economy to bounce back – this is why many of the pillars of the support package announced at the Spring Budget were set to last well beyond the end of the Roadmap.

Over the course of the pandemic the Government has made up to £25 billion in cash grants available to protect businesses of all sizes in England and the jobs they

support. Over £2 billion of discretionary business grant funding has been provided to local authorities via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) fund, including a £425 million top-up announced at the Budget. A significant proportion of this £2 billion is still with local authorities and available to be allocated to businesses, including small and medium sized businesses, in need of support.

Businesses throughout the UK can also benefit from the Recovery Loan Scheme, which runs until the end of the year. This ensures viable businesses continue to have access to Government-backed finance they need throughout 2021.

Businesses of all sizes have been supported through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which have provided a total of £68.5 billion and £27 billion in support respectively to date. The CJRS has supported approximately 21,000 jobs in the Coventry North East constituency since its inception, and the SEISS has had over 15,000 claims in this area.

There is also significant continued relief on business rates and VAT for retail, hospitality and leisure sectors for this financial year. And the commercial rent moratorium has been extended until March 2022.

■ Social Services: Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[49949]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Plan for Health and Social Care, published September 2021, what estimate he has made of the costs of the funding and system reform commitments referred to in paragraph 36 of that Plan over financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25; and if he publish the costs related to the specific commitments in that Plan.

Mr Simon Clarke:

In Build Back Better: Our plan for health and social care,^[1] the Government set out that £5.4bn in additional funding will be provided to support a sustainable social care system that is fit for the future.

This funding will end unpredictable care by introducing a cap of £86,000 on the costs of care; and include over £500 million pounds to support the adult social care workforce, in recognition of their tireless efforts during the pandemic.

It also includes funding to enable all Local Authorities to move towards paying providers a fair rate for care, which should drive up the quality of adult social care services, improve workforce conditions and increase investment.

The government will set out its plans for spending across all public services at the Spending Review on October 27th.

[1]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1015736/Build_Back_Better_-_Our_Plan_for_Health_and_Social_Care.pdf

■ Treasury: Listed Buildings**Tim Loughton:** [\[49014\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 44164 on Treasury: Listed Buildings, if he will publish a list of the (a) properties classified as heritage assets owned by his Department, (b) the most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) the annual income derived from those properties as opposed to details of the body responsible for advising him on the properties' management.

Helen Whately:

HM Treasury does not own any properties classified as heritage assets.

■ UK Trade with EU**Hilary Benn:** [\[49030\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list the forms and documents that companies based in the EU exporting to the UK have to complete when sending their goods into the UK.

Lucy Frazer:

When importing goods into the UK, traders (or their representatives) will generally need to complete a customs declaration. Most customs declarations are made electronically.

Depending upon the type of goods and whether the goods are entering free-circulation or another customs procedure, other information, documents and licences may be needed. Full details of these requirements are available in HMRC guidance.

Until 31 December 2021 most importers of non-controlled goods from the EU can delay the submission of their customs declarations for up to 175 days after import if they wish. The importer needs to record details of the import in their commercial records and provide their Economic Operators Registration and Identification number to their haulier in case they need to demonstrate to UK port and border officials that they are importing goods using delayed declarations.

The management of EU export procedures and documentation is the responsibility of the customs authorities of EU Member States. It is important that companies based in the EU (or their representatives) confirm the processes at their port of departure and any conditions or procedures that may apply.

Hilary Benn: [\[49031\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what checks goods coming into the UK from companies based in the EU are currently subject to.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government's priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border. HMRC uses a risk based, intelligence-led response to compliance issues working alongside Border Force.

As the Government has made consistently clear, it will not compromise on the security of the UK at the border, and keeping goods flowing over the border is of vital importance.

HMRC, Border Force and other Government departments make targeted interventions. These are based on intelligence and threat assessment and will typically involve documentary checks and physical interventions, designed, wherever possible, to avoid delaying traffic flows across the border.

HMRC will continue to work closely with industry to ensure interventions are carried out in a way that minimises delays and additional burdens for legitimate trade, while robustly ensuring compliance.

The management of EU export procedures is the responsibility of the customs authorities of the Member States.

■ Universal Credit

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[48179\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the potential effect of the removal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit on the cost to the public purse of spending on health.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government has always been clear that the £20 per week increase to Universal Credit was a temporary measure to support households whose incomes and earnings were affected by the economic shock of Covid-19.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health and economic situation since the uplift was first announced and later extended. Now that the economy has reopened, the Government is focusing on supporting people to move into and progress in work.

As part of the comprehensive Plan for Jobs, the Government has announced the £2 billion Kickstart scheme which will create 250,000 new, fully subsidised jobs for young people, and the new three-year Restart programme, which will provide intensive and tailored support to over one million unemployed Universal Credit claimants.

WALES

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Ruth Jones:

[\[48351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on Operation Warm Welcome.

Simon Hart:

Representatives from across Government meet frequently with colleagues in the Welsh Government to update them on the resettlement of Afghans in the UK.

In recent weeks, both the Minister for Safeguarding and Afghan Resettlement and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have chaired meetings to discuss Operation Warm Welcome with Ministers from all the devolved administrations.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES■ **Equality****Lee Anderson:**[\[45928\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to tackle geographic inequality of opportunity.

Kemi Badenoch:

Levelling up is at the heart of the Government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic. The Government will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper later this year, setting out bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity in all parts of the UK.

To support this, the Minister for Women and Equalities announced the Equality Data Programme in December, to ensure that geographic and socio-economic inequality is taken into account, alongside other factors, when identifying barriers to opportunity.

We also moved the sponsorship of the Social Mobility Commission across to the Equality Hub in April, so that it can play a crucial role in tackling regional inequalities.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Average Earnings****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[49219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral contribution of 7 September 2021, Official report, column 185, whether her Department has made an assessment of the level of wage growth which discounts the impact of furlough during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will publish the legal advice referred to in her oral contribution.

Guy Opperman:

Legal advice is privileged. This has been the situation under successive governments.

As the Office for National Statistics have stated, there is no single accepted approach to assessing underlying growth. They have published information that identifies temporary factors, called base and compositional effects, which have been caused by the pandemic and have increased the headline growth rate in earnings above the

underlying rate. They have published a range of possible growth rates, but stressed that these should be treated with caution

■ Children: Day Care

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of comprehensive childcare access on (a) levels of underemployment among parents and (b) improving local economies.

David Rutley:

No such impact assessment has been made.

Childcare costs should not be a barrier to getting into work; this Government is committed to helping parents into work. Universal Credit pays up to 85% of childcare costs regardless of the hours worked, compared to 70% in legacy benefits and can be claimed up to a month before starting a job. In cases where people need to pay for childcare upfront prior to starting work, Work Coaches can use the Flexible Support Fund for eligible claimants to meet these costs until their first wage is received.

All three and four year olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare each week, providing children with high-quality early education and helping parents to return to work.

Additionally, 30 hours free childcare was introduced in England in September 2017 and is an entitlement for working parents of three and four year olds. To be eligible, both parents, or a single parent, must earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum/ living wage (for parents aged 23 or over, this would work out at just over £7,400 per year) and less than £100,000 per year .

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[49120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that Job Centre Pluses can manage potential increased demand after the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Mims Davies:

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the UK labour market, leading to an increase in demand for DWP's services. As part of the Government's ongoing commitment to support claimants back into work, the Department has recruited 13,500 additional Work Coaches to respond effectively to this increase and to help provide the full range of Jobcentre services to both existing and new customers so they can receive benefit payments as well as being supported into work.

The Department has seen, and anticipates further, an increase in demand for our services and as a result, we are rapidly expanding the space available, on a temporary basis. This increase cannot be contained within existing premises both due to the scale of the increase in demand and social distancing requirements.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes to help claimants prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for Universal Credit claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to Universal Credit claimants who are unemployed for a year; and Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS), which provides light touch employment support for people who are claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseekers Allowance, for up to 6 months, helping participants effectively re-engage with the labour market and focus their job search.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Flags

Justin Madders: [50065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which companies have supplied Union Jack flags to her Department since 2019.

Guy Opperman:

DWP are supplied Union Flags by The Flag Consultancy Ltd.

Justin Madders: [50066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Union Jack flags purchased by her Department in each of the last two years were manufactured in the UK.

Guy Opperman:

In the last 2 years, DWP has purchased 7 Union flags and all flags were manufactured in the UK.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton: [49015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to his Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 44160 on Department for Work and Pensions: Listed Buildings, if he will publish a list of the (a) properties classified as heritage assets owned by his Department, (b) the most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) the annual income derived from those properties as opposed to the details of the body responsible for advising him on those properties' management.

Guy Opperman:

DWP does not own any of the buildings, every building we occupy is leased.

DWP 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/>

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[49122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many staff working for her Department are employed on a fixed-term contract; and how many of those contracts are due to end each month in the next 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

DWP has 14,651 employees on Fixed Term Contracts as of 31 August 2021.

The full breakdown by month is not currently held centrally. We have recently extended a number of contracts and are in the process of updating our records on the HR and Payroll system.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services

Lee Anderson:

[\[48360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce phone call waiting times for service users trying to contact her Department's services.

Guy Opperman:

The Department prioritises resource to our telephony services according to forecast demand. In periods of unexpected high demand (such as experienced through the pandemic) waiting times may vary while the Department rebalances across services, or secures external resource. The Department also continues to progress automation of services for those citizens able to self-serve to reduce demand and therefore wait times.

■ Financial Services and Vocational Guidance: Older People

Stuart Anderson:

[\[47054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people over the age of 50 can access personalised (a) financial and (b) careers advice.

Mims Davies:

In 2019, the government launched an online Mid-life MOT to encourage individuals to optimise re-skilling prospects and improve health and longer-term financial resilience. The Mid-life MOT acts as a vital prompt to engage more people in planning more actively for later life – both for work and retirement. It provides individuals in their 40s, 50s and 60s with signposting to information and guidance on wealth, work and wellbeing, providing a holistic assessment to ensure that individuals can plan for the later life that they want. We continue to work with organisations, and with employers, on how they can offer the Mid-life MOT.

The government also ensures that all savers have access to free, impartial financial guidance as they approach retirement. Pension Wise, part of the Money and Pension Service (MaPS), is available from age 50 and helps consumers understand their

options and make informed decisions when accessing their pension savings. MoneyHelper Pensions, also provided by MaPS, provides guidance on all areas of UK pensions to the public regardless of age.

DWP published its consultation on draft regulations implementing a stronger nudge to pensions guidance in July 2021. These regulations propose requiring occupational pension schemes to ensure that members who wish to access their pension have either received, or opted out of receiving, pensions guidance.

■ Immigration: Hong Kong

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[49032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time taken by her Department was from an application being received to issuing National Insurance numbers to those people arriving from Hong Kong with British national overseas status.

Guy Opperman:

Demand for the National Insurance Number (NINo) service is currently high with the average time taken to process applications around 13 weeks. This is for all employment inspired applications including people arriving from Hong Kong with British National Overseas status.

The Department is currently recruiting and training additional staff to reduce these waiting times.

The Department expedites NINo applications for those who require one in order to receive Social Security Benefits.

■ Post Office Card Account

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[49035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Post Office Card Accounts are active in (a) Newcastle upon Tyne East constituency, (b) Newcastle upon Tyne and (c) the UK.

Guy Opperman:

As of August 2021 there were less than 350k active Post Office Card Accounts. This is down from 1 million in 2019.

We do not hold information on Post Office card account customers in specific geographical areas as sought.

■ Social Security Benefits and State Retirement Pensions: Post Office Card Account

Marion Fellows:

[\[49174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of (a) benefits and (b) state pension who have not registered a bank account with her Department still receive payments through a Post Office card account.

Guy Opperman:

As of August 2021 there were less than 350k active Post Office Card Accounts. This is down from 1 million in 2019.

The exact number of Post Office card account customers in receipt of a) benefit and b) State Pension is not available for a variety of reasons.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Post Office Card Account**

Marion Fellows:[\[49175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many payments her Department has made to Post Office card accounts in each of the last five months.

Guy Opperman:

MONTH	TOTAL
Apr-21	701,400
May-21	654,500
Jun-21	596,600
Jul-21	543,900
Aug-21	488,200

Government payments into a Post Office card account do not reflect the number of customers as multiple payments can be made into an account during a month depending on varying pay dates of State Pension and benefits.

■ **State Retirement Pensions**

Alex Cunningham:[\[50006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will arrange emergency payments for people who have seen their state pension delayed.

Guy Opperman:

DWP is aware that a small number of new State Pension claims have been subject to delays in receiving payment.

The Department is working hard to clear the current backlog, many of which have accrued since the Covid Pandemic.

We are prioritising overdue payments and payments that are imminent within the next few weeks. Normal service will be resumed by the end of October 2021.

Alex Cunningham:[\[50007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the delays in processing state pension applications will be resolved.

Guy Opperman:

DWP is aware that a small number of new State Pension claims have been subject to delays in receiving payment.

The Department is working hard to clear the current backlog, many of which have accrued since the Covid Pandemic.

We are prioritising overdue payments and payments that are imminent within the next few weeks. Normal service will be resumed by the end of October 2021.

Claimants don't need to act, we have identified the cases and will process them as soon as possible.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[50143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45271 on State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays, if she will provide statistical information on the (a) average processing time for a new state pension claim and (b) average processing time 12 months ago; and how many unprocessed claims for new state pensions her Department holds.

Guy Opperman:

DWP is aware that a small number of new State Pension claims have been subject to delays in receiving payment.

The Department is working hard to clear the current backlog, many of which have accrued since the Covid Pandemic.

We are prioritising overdue payments and payments that are imminent within the next few weeks. Normal service will be resumed by the end of October 2021.

Claimants don't need to act, we have identified the cases and will process them as soon as possible.

■ Universal Credit**Jessica Morden:**[\[45822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason deductions for child maintenance are listed at numbers 13 and 14 in her Department's guidance on the deductions priority order for universal credit.

David Rutley:

Schedule 6 of the Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) Regulations 2013 sets out the priority order in which Departmental staff must consider all deductions from Universal Credit, including Child Maintenance. The deductions contained in that priority order are all priority debts and social obligations that are important for claimants to address.

The Department recognises the importance of Child Maintenance payments and these deductions are already prioritised above others such as benefit overpayments of Housing Benefit, Tax Credit and DWP overpayments and Recoverable Hardship and Social Fund loans.

Mick Whitley:

[\[45929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of ending the £20 uplift to Universal Credit on (a) levels of poverty (b) levels of homelessness and (c) foodbank usage.

David Rutley:

It is not possible to produce a robust estimate of the impact of removing the £20 uplift on poverty or related issues. This is particularly the case at the moment given the uncertainty around the speed of the economic recovery, and how this will be distributed across the population.

In addition, foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level.

The latest poverty figures (2019/20) demonstrate that absolute poverty rates (both before and after housing costs) for working-age adults in working families have fallen since 2009/10. In 2019/20, 8% of working age adults in working families were in absolute poverty (before housing costs), compared to 9% in 2009/10.

Discretionary Housing Payments provide critical support to vulnerable claimants, including those who are at risk of homelessness, that need help with their housing costs.

For 2021-22 the Government has made available £140m in Discretionary Housing Payments funding for local authorities in England and Wales. In 2020-21 we boosted investment in the Local Housing Allowance by almost £1 billion and have maintained rates in cash terms for 2021-22. In addition, earlier this year we extended the exemptions from the shared accommodation rate of Local Housing Allowance for care leavers and those who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel. From 31st May 2021 the care leavers exemption applies up to age 25 and the homeless hostel exemption applies up to age 35.

Work Coaches support claimants to address their housing issues by signposting to relevant housing services. Under “duty to refer” legislation, Jobcentres in England offer a voluntary referral to claimants who may be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, to local housing teams for support.”

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced. With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, it is right that our focus is on helping people back into work.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year; and JETS, which provides light touch employment support for people who are claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseekers Allowance, for up to 6 months, helping participants effectively re-engage with the labour market and focus their job search. We have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job. In total, our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Bishops

Valerie Vaz:

[\[48216\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, with reference to the Catholic Relief Act 1829, what assessment the Commissioners have made of the Prime Minister's ability to advise the Sovereign on the appointment of Anglican Bishops.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 16 September 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Andrew Selous:

~~The Church Commissioners have not made any such assessment.~~ **The application of the Catholic Relief Act 1829 to the Sovereign's advisers is a matter for the Government, not for the Church Commissioners.**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Draft Revised Energy National Policy Statements

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):

[\[HCWS295\]](#)

Today I am laying before Parliament the draft revised energy National Policy Statements.

The energy National Policy Statements were first designated in 2011. They set out the Government's policy for the delivery of energy infrastructure and provide the legal framework for planning decisions. in key energy policy areas: fossil fuels (EN-2); renewables (EN-3); gas supply and gas and oil pipelines (EN-4); electricity networks (EN-5); and nuclear (EN-6). They each sit below an overarching energy NPS (EN-1) which sets out the need for new energy infrastructure.

The Government announced a review of the current suite of energy National Policy Statements (NPS) in the *Energy White Paper: Powering our net zero future* in December 2020.

The Energy White Paper builds on the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan to set a long-term strategic vision for our energy system, consistent with net zero emissions by 2050. It establishes our goal of a decisive shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, in power, buildings and industry, while creating jobs and growing the economy and keeping energy bills affordable. It addresses how and why our energy system needs to evolve to deliver this goal whilst retaining a secure and operable energy system.

We have reviewed all the National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure and determined that the existing EN-1 to EN-5 documents should be amended to reflect the policies set out in the White Paper and support the investment required to build the infrastructure needed for transition to net zero.

A review of EN-6 has concluded that it will not be amended and therefore it is not part of this consultation. A new technology specific NPS for nuclear electricity generation deployable after 2025 is proposed and will be developed to reflect the changing policy and technology landscape for nuclear and support the transition to net zero.

On 6th September 2021 I launched a public consultation on the draft revised energy National Policy Statements, supporting habitats and sustainability reports and associated appendices. These are subject to a 12-week public consultation and are all available on gov.uk.

I will place copies of the public consultation "Planning for new energy infrastructure: review of energy National Policy Statements", the Appraisal of Sustainability and its appendices: Appendices Supporting Evidence Volumes I and II, and the Habitats Regulation Assessment in the Libraries of the House. The public consultation will close

on 29th November 2021. The relevant period for parliamentary scrutiny will be from 20th September 2021 to 28 February 2022.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Update

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[\[HCWS294\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the Department's implementation of the Supreme Court judgment from July 2019 in the case of Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v. MM, known as MM. The judgment concerned the way we assess the help that someone might need to engage with other people face to face and whether that help is considered "prompting" or "social support" under the PIP assessment.

The Department set out to the House on 17 September 2020 that, following this judgment, the Department had made changes to the way PIP is assessed for all new claims, award reviews and Mandatory Reconsiderations.

We have now started an Administrative Exercise, looking at PIP claims since 6 April 2016 to check whether claimants may be eligible for more support under PIP.

This is a complex exercise that will take some time to complete. We will be contacting claimants who may be affected by this change and will be writing to those we review. If claimants are eligible for more PIP, we will make backdated payments.

It is important to stress that not everyone we contact will be eligible for more PIP, however, I hope this reassures the House that we are committed to treating people fairly and ensuring that they are fully supported.