



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:58 P.M., 20 March 2023). 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Legal Costs

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[165348\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what the average rate per hour of government-funded external legal advice was in the last 12 months.

Michael Tomlinson:

The average rate per hour of government funded work using the Attorney General's Civil Panels is £110.

■ Lord Pannick

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[165347\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether Lord Pannick KC is on the list of King's Counsel maintained by the Government Legal Department who have expressed an interest in receiving instructions.

Michael Tomlinson:

Yes.

■ Peters and Peters

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[165343\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether Peters & Peters is on the Legal Services Panel.

Michael Tomlinson:

No, Peters & Peters is not on the Panel. Where a Department cannot find the legal services they need through the Panel, there is an established process. Details are set out on the Crown Commercial Service website.

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[165344\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what discussions she had with Cabinet colleagues on the award a legal services contract to Peters and Peters in relation to the Privileges Committee investigation into the Rt Hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Cabinet Office awarded a legal services contract to Peters and Peters after following the established process for such a contract. As the Honourable Member knows, by convention, whether the Law Officers have been asked to provide advice, and the contents of any such advice, is not disclosed outside of Government.

BUSINESS AND TRADE**■ Business and Public Sector: Environment Protection and Human Rights****Fleur Anderson:**[\[161430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring (a) the public sector and (b) UK businesses to conduct human rights and environmental due diligence.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government supports and encourages the current voluntary approach to due diligence by UK businesses as set out in international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises.

Whilst the Government keeps this approach under review, we currently have no plans to require companies to conduct due diligence assessments for human rights and environmental protection on top of their existing annual corporate reporting obligations.

The Department has made no assessment of due diligence policies across the activities of the public sector as whole.

■ Business Premises: Assistance Dogs**Catherine West:**[\[147183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions she has had with businesses on access refusal for guide dogs.

Kevin Hollinrake:

There have been no recent discussions between this Department and businesses on access refusal for guide dogs.

Strong protection already exists in the Equality Act 2010, which places a duty on businesses and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve disabled people's access to goods and services so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. This reasonable adjustment duty is an anticipatory duty, meaning that those who provide goods, facilities and services to members of the public are expected to anticipate the reasonable adjustments that disabled customers may require, including auxiliary aids.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is the public body responsible for enforcing the Equality Act. In 2017, the Commission published two pieces of guidance - a guide to help businesses understand what they can do to meet their legal duties to assistance dog owners, and a guide to help tourism businesses welcome people with access requirements. The EHRC supports disabled individuals who have experienced discrimination to take their cases to court.

These duties and protections are ultimately enforceable through the courts, but as a first step, anybody who thinks that they have been discriminated against in the

services offered to them - including where access to an assistance dog has been refused - can take legal action to resolve the issue. Before doing so, they might first find it useful to contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) which provides free bespoke advice and in-depth support to individuals with discrimination concerns via their website - <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>, or by telephone on 0808 800 0082 or by text phone on 0808 800 0084.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Consultants

Emily Thornberry:

[165276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March to Question 158843 on Question for Department for Business and Trade, how much of the (a) £897,000, (b) £5,782,000 and (c) £380,000 spent on consultancy in the respective financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 by the Department for International Trade was attributable to spending by UK Defence and Security Exports.

Nigel Huddleston:

UK Defence and Security Exports expenditure on consultancy is as follows:

- 2019/20: £20,000
- 2020/21: £16,538
- 2021/22: £252,500

■ Department for Business and Trade: Written Questions

Daniel Zeichner:

[153796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she plans to answer Questions 146998, 146999 and 14700 tabled by the hon. Member for Cambridge on 17 February 2023 for answer on 22 February.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[Holding answer 2 March 2023]: I refer the Hon. Member for Cambridge to the answer I gave him today, UIN: 146998, UIN: 146999, UIN: 147000.

Daniel Zeichner:

[162195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she plans to answer Question 153796 tabled by the hon. Member for Cambridge on 27 February 2023..

Kevin Hollinrake:

[Holding answer 14 March 2023]: I refer the Hon. Member for Cambridge to the answer I gave him today, UIN: 153796.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Waste Disposal

Dr Matthew Offord:

[161274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Office for Product Safety and Standards has taken enforcement action against any company placing disposable vaping products on the market in each of the last five years.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards has not taken enforcement action in relation to disposable vapes in the last five years.

Dr Matthew Offord:**[161275]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to issue guidance to vaping manufacturers on compliance with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Vaping products are in scope of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations and the Government has published comprehensive guidance on Gov.uk setting out what businesses, including manufacturers, need to do to comply with the legislation. The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulations-waste-electrical-and-electronic-equipment>

■ Employment: Long Covid**Fleur Anderson:****[161437]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has held discussions with employers on offering flexibility and part-time work to people with long Covid-19.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department speaks regularly with employers and business representative organisations about flexible working. These discussions have covered a range of issues, including the importance of flexible working in managing employees with long term health conditions, such as long covid.

In December 2022 the Government announced plans^[1] to make the right to request flexible working a day one right, alongside other changes to make flexible working more accessible to all employees. The Government is pleased to support the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Private Members' Bill^[2] which will deliver several of these changes.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default>

[2] <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3198>

■ Food Supply**Daniel Zeichner:****[146998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when (a) she and (b) her predecessors held discussions with Ministers in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on food security in the last 12 months.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[146999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when (a) she and (b) her predecessors held discussions with Ministers in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on international food prices in the last 12 months.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[147000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when Ministers in her Department held discussions with Ministers in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on food security in the last 12 months.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[147001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when Ministers in her Department held discussions with Ministers in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on international food prices in the last 12 months.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[Holding answer 22 February 2023]: Since the creation of the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) there have been no such discussions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on international food prices nor food security.

Information on meetings that pre-date DBT is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Forced Labour: Supply Chains**

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[162201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department have taken to help (a) monitor and (b) reduce the use of forced labour in global supply chains.

Nigel Huddleston:

Our Free Trade Agreements reaffirm our commitment to the International Labour Organization fundamental principle to eliminate forced or compulsory labour.

The Developing Countries Trading Scheme will enable the UK to suspend preferential trading arrangements on the grounds of serious and systematic violations of labour rights.

UK Export Finance conduct human rights due diligence and monitoring, including considering forced labour risk factors for transactions that fall within the scope of their Environmental Social and Human Rights policy.

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Economic Situation**

Bill Esterson:

[\[163867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of MAKE UK's findings on manufacturing growth in their Manufacturing Outlook Report for quarter four of 2022.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government keeps its policies in respect of important sectors such as manufacturing under continual review. We will consider the Make UK report and its findings as part of that process.

■ Multinational Companies: Environmental Protection and Human Rights**Dan Carden:**[\[165500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions she has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) multinational companies and (c) non-governmental organisations on ensuring businesses adhere to global human rights and environmental norms.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government supports and encourages the current voluntary approach to human rights and environmental standards for multinational companies in the UK. This approach is set out in international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, and ensures businesses adhere to global norms. The Government continues to keep this approach under review, including by welcoming discussion with companies and non-Governmental Organisations.

■ Paternity Leave**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[162541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to increase the period of eligibility for Statutory Paternity Leave.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Employed fathers and partners can take two weeks of paternity leave and pay following their child's birth or adoption, if they meet certain eligibility criteria. As outlined in our Manifesto, the Government is committed to making it easier for fathers and partners to take Paternity Leave. The Government consulted on parental leave and pay reform, including Paternity Leave and Pay in 2019. We are considering responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

■ Re-employment**Angela Rayner:**[\[158942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, in relation to the draft Statutory Code of Practice on Dismissal and Re-engagement, what procedures the Government plans to follow where employers engaged in Government procurement contracts are found to have fallen foul of that code.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is currently consulting on a draft Code of Practice to address dismissal and re-engagement. The Government has made clear to all employers that threats of dismissal and re-engagement should not be used as a negotiation tactic.

Public procurement policy is subject to a legal framework which encourages free and open competition and value for money, in line with internationally and nationally agreed obligations and regulations.

Trade Promotion: India**Navendu Mishra:**[\[163988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if the Government will appoint a trade envoy to the Republic of India.

Nigel Huddleston:

As the Honourable Member is aware, India is a dynamic, fast-growing trade partner and negotiating a free trade agreement offers the opportunity to deepen our already strong relationship, which was worth £34 billion in the year to end Q3 2022.

The position remains the same and there are currently no plans to appoint a Trade Envoy to India, however, we regularly review countries and markets to identify where the appointment of a Trade Envoy can be of greatest benefit to the trade and investment aims of the UK, alongside the Department's other support for exporters and investors.

UK Export Finance**Emily Thornberry:**[\[163736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether (a) SVB Financial Group and (b) any of its subsidiaries were regarded by UK Export Finance as acceptable institutions for partnership in the provision of (i) buyer credit facilities, (ii) lines of credit, (iii) standard buyer loan guarantees and (iv) bills and notes guarantees as of 1 January 2023.

Emily Thornberry:[\[163737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether UK Export Finance had any outstanding arrangements with (a) SVB Financial Group and (b) any of its subsidiaries relating to the provision of (i) buyer credit facilities, (ii) lines of credit, (iii) standard buyer loan guarantees and (iv) bills and notes guarantees as of 1 January 2023.

Nigel Huddleston:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has not had any interactions with the SVB Financial Group or its subsidiaries. As a consequence, UKEF has not had reason to form any opinion over their suitability as partners in any transactions.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Committee of Privileges****Angela Rayner:****[166245]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons the Government decided to publish Lord Pannick KC's legal opinion on the Privileges Committee investigation into the Rt Hon Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government at the time determined it was in the public interest for Lord Pannick's legal opinion to be published given the exceptional circumstances. It remains the case that the Government does not comment on legal advice that may or may not have been sought or received. This is in line with the long-standing policy under successive administrations.

■ **Overseas Trade: St Kitts and Nevis****Daniel Kawczynski:****[166165]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value of trade between Britain and St Kitts and Nevis was in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Hon gentlemen's Parliamentary Question of 15 March is attached.

Attachments:

1. [ONS Response](#) [PQ166165.pdf]

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Performing Arts: Children and Young People****Anna McMorris:****[163992]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to take steps to help increase participation in the performing arts among (a) children and (b) young people, particularly those from (i) disadvantaged backgrounds and (ii) groups underrepresented in the sector.

Julia Lopez:

My Department is committed to broadening access to arts and culture for children and young people across the country, regardless of their background.

Arts Council England's recent announcement of the 2023-26 Investment Programme will see a record number of organisations receiving funding, in more parts of the country than ever before. It also includes a 20% increase in the number of organisations which are funded to deliver work for children and young people; 79% of the organisations in this portfolio will be delivering activity specifically for children and

young people. Programmes supported through the new portfolio will support children and young people to take part in creative and cultural activities at all ages - from early years to young adulthood.

Separately, the Government funds a diverse portfolio of music and arts education programmes that are designed to improve participation in the arts for all children, including the National Saturday Club, which gives 13 to 16-year-olds across the country the opportunity to participate in creative learning programmes, studying the subjects they love for free, on a Saturday at their local university, college or cultural institution.

In addition, the Schools White Paper (2022) sets out that the Department for Education and Department for Culture, Media and Sport will publish a Cultural Education Plan in 2023, working with Arts Council England, Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and the British Film Institute. A key aim of this Plan is to tackle the barriers to accessing cultural education.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[\[162465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 122054 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many applications for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme were (a) received and (b) processed in (i) January 2023 and (ii) February 2023.

James Heappey:

In January 2022, 1,327 applications were received, of which approximately 721 were duplicates, while an approximate 7,503 applications were processed.

In February 2022, 2,106 applications were received, of which approximately 935 were duplicates, while an approximate 8,444 applications were processed.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[163852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many caseworkers are currently working on Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy cases.

James Heappey:

As of 14 March, there are 73 personnel working on processing ARAP cases. This figure includes civilian, military and contractor staff assigned to the ARAP scheme in the UK and overseas.

The MOD continues to seek and recruit suitable personnel to ensure all aspects of the ARAP scheme operate as efficiently as possible.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[165302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to reopen the ex gratia scheme for Afghan nationals.

James Heappey:

There are no plans to reopen the Ex-Gratia Scheme (EGS) which closed on 30 November 2022. EGS was replaced by the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme, which offers a safe and legal route for relocation to the UK for Afghan citizens who worked for or alongside UK forces in support of the UK mission in Afghanistan.

The scope of those eligible under ARAP includes, and is wider than, those who would be eligible for EGS.

■ **Aldershot Garrison**

John Healey: [\[166129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of Ordnance Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of Provost Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of Thornhill Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of Travers Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Browning Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Browning Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Duchess of Kent Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Saint Omer Barracks.

John Healey: [\[166143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of New Normandy Barracks.

John Healey:

[\[166146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of New Normandy Barracks, Aldershot.

John Healey:

[\[166148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Aldershot Garrison South Camp.

Alex Chalk:

Ordnance Barracks is 9.821 hectares in size.

Provost Barracks is 1.278 hectares in size.

Thornhill Barracks is 2.423 hectares in size.

Travers Barracks is 7.598 hectares in size.

Browning Barracks is 12.774 hectares in size.

Duchess of Kent Barracks is 12.316 hectares in size.

Saint Omer Barracks is 22.187 hectares in size.

New Normandy Barracks is 15.462 hectares in size.

Aldershot Garrison South Camp is 44.593 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of these sites, as they have not been identified for disposal.

■ Armed Forces: Employment

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[165266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of armed forces personnel took on (a) second jobs and (b) other additional work in the last two months.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[165268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 158939 on Armed Forces: Employment, whether his Department regularly (a) collects and (b) reviews information on (i) second jobs and (ii) other additional work taken up by armed forces personnel.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The requested information is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Secondary employment and rules governing this are managed on a single Service basis and vary between Services. Generally, Service personnel are not prohibited from having second jobs when off-duty or on leave. Permission to take up a second job rests with the Service person's Commanding Officer and is granted on a case-by-case basis. Any such permission is approved and reviewed locally, with the information held within each chain of command. Due to the size of the Armed Forces

and the number of chains of command it is not practical to manage this process or collate this information centrally. The exercise required to produce an overall figure would incur disproportionate cost. Beyond any formal additional or secondary employment there is no requirement for personnel to report “other additional work” and no record of this is held by the Ministry of Defence. If a Service Person chooses to undertake informal work in their own time, for example making and selling something, this would not count as formal employment and, therefore, would not need approval or be brought to the attention of Defence.

■ Iran: Journalism

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[163699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps to tackle threats towards UK-based journalists working for the Iran International new channel.

James Heappey:

The UK will not tolerate Iranian threats against the lives of individuals in the UK. His Majesty's Government has identified at least 15 such threats since January 2022, including against Iran International employees based in London, and is working to tackle this domestic threat. Iran has established a pattern of this type of behaviour which is deplorable, yet sadly typical of the regime and its lack of respect for basic rights.

On 20 February, the Security Minister gave a statement in the House of Commons on steps being taken to address the activities of the Iranian regime and its operatives in the UK. The Foreign Secretary also summoned Iran's most senior diplomat in the UK on 20 Feb to formally protest against the threats posed by the Iranian regime to the lives of UK-based Iran International employees.

The UK Government, law enforcement and our international partners continue to work together to respond to ensure Iran International's UK operations will resume. Targeting of UK-based journalists is an attack on freedom of speech. Media freedom is a vital part of our society and journalists must be able to investigate and report independently without fear. The UK stands in solidarity with those people under threat from Iran, both at home and around the world.

■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters

John Healey:

[\[166145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce the preferred bidder for the New Medium Helicopter contract.

Alex Chalk:

Credible suppliers were informed on 24 February 2023 that the second half of the competition will be launched later this year. It is not appropriate to speculate on any further dates before the second stage of the competition is launched.

■ Ministry of Defence: Housing

Jim Shannon:

[\[165250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to maintain boilers in housing provided by his Department.

Alex Chalk:

The new Future Defence Infrastructure Services accommodation contracts came into service on 1 April 2022. Within these contracts, there is a requirement for an annual boiler service in all Service Family Accommodation (SFA).

In Financial Year 2022-23, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) invested £73 million of the £176 million SFA improvement budget, which includes providing 600 properties with new boilers.

There are 47,396 boilers in SFA, as of December 2022, 76% (35,855) are less than 10 years old and 24% (11,541) are over 10 years old.

DIO operates a three strike boiler programme. If a boiler is over 10 years old and fails three times in 12 months, it is replaced on the third fail. Approximately 2,500 boilers are replaced annually within SFA either through the three strike programme or project upgrades.

■ RAF Wittering

Luke Pollard:

[\[164025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RAF Wittering; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard:

[\[164028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RAF Digby; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard:

[\[164030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RAF Shawbury; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard:

[\[164033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RAF Cosford; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard:

[\[165410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Mona Airfield; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[165412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RAF Valley; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[165414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at MOD St Athan; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[165416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RAF Brize Norton; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[165418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RAF Halton; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RAF High Wycombe; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RAF Welford; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RAF Weston-on-the-Green; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RAF Fairford; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RAF St Mawgan; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Alex Chalk:

I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ **Tidworth Garrison**

John Healey: [\[162471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Bhurtpore Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units are at Delhi Barracks; and how many personnel were based at that site as of 10 March 2023.

John Healey: [\[162475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units are at Jellalabad Barracks; and how many personnel were based at that site as of 10 March 2023.

John Healey: [\[162477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units are at Candahar Barracks; and how many personnel were based at that site as of 10 March 2023.

John Healey: [\[162479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at Kiwi Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at Lucknow Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at Mooltan Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Picton Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Swinton Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Ward Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Wing Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at McMullen Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Baker Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Invicta Park Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[163718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Sir John Moore Barracks, Winchester; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Alexander Barracks, Pirbright Nr Guildford; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Elizabeth Barracks, Pirbright Nr Guildford; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Gibraltar Barracks (Minley); and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Hammersley Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Lille Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Mons Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[165220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Ordnance Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Provost Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Thornhill Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Browning Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Duchess of Kent Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Saint Omer Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at New Normandy Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Normandy Barracks (South); and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[166147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Sir John Moore Barracks, Shorncliffe; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Alex Chalk:

I will write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

John Healey: [\[163705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Picton Barracks.

John Healey: [\[163707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Swinton Barracks.

John Healey: [\[163709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Ward Barracks.

John Healey: [\[163711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Wing Barracks.

John Healey: [\[163713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of McMullen Barracks.

John Healey: [\[163715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Baker Barracks.

Alex Chalk:

Picton Barracks is 40.769 hectares in size.

Swinton Barracks is 138.489 hectares in size.

Ward Barracks is 40.562 hectares in size.

Wing Barracks is 19.878 hectares in size.

McMullen Barracks is 118.365

Baker Barracks is 651.143

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of these sites, as they have not been identified for disposal.

■ Ukraine: Challenger Tanks**John McNally:**[\[163859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2023 to Question 147059 on Ukraine: Challenger Tanks, what assessment his Department made when considering the case for sending Challenger 2 Tanks to Ukraine; and for what reason 14 tanks were determined as the quantity to be supplied.

James Heappey:

The decision to send a squadron of 14 tanks delivers a coherent and combat effective capability for Ukraine.

The UK has led the world in announcing and then delivering modern battle tanks for Ukraine, unlocking dozens of additional tanks from international partners in so doing.

The UK will continue to be agile in our support to Ukraine as the conflict evolves.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Expenditure**John Healey:**[\[163703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on extending the in-service life of the Reaper drone programme as a result of the delay to the Protector drone programme.

Alex Chalk:

The cost of extending Reaper resulting from the Department's decision to delay Protector is £48.6 million. This is not an additional cost as it has been offset through utilising support funding previously allocated to the Protector programme for the same period.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Schools

Bob Seely: [\[166345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children living in the Isle of Wight who were registered at a school prior to the covid-19 outbreak and who are no longer registered for reasons other than having exceeded statutory school age.

Bob Seely: [\[166346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the number of children who were registered at schools in England prior to the covid-19 outbreak and who are no longer registered for reasons other than having passed statutory school age.

Bob Seely: [\[166347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the number of children who were registered at schools in England before the covid-19 outbreak and who, having deregistered during that outbreak, are now once more entered on school rolls.

Nick Gibb:

The information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Free School Meals

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[165185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions her Department has had with the Department for Work and Pensions on introducing automatic enrolment for free school meals for eligible children.

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[165186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing automatic enrolment in free school meals for eligible children.

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[165187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Food Strategy Report, published in July 2021, what progress her Department has made on implementing that report's recommendation on finding a viable mechanism for automatic enrolment in free school meals.

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[165188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many additional pupils in England would receive free school meals in the event that automatic enrolment was introduced.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[165189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number of pupils nationally who are eligible for, but are not claiming, free school meals.

Nick Gibb:

The Department wants to make sure as many eligible pupils as possible are claiming free school meals (FSM). Since 2010, the number of children receiving a free meal at school has increased by more than two million, thanks to the introduction of universal infant free school meals, plus generous protections put in place as benefit recipients move across to Universal Credit. Over a third of pupils in England now receive FSM in schools, compared with one in six in 2010.

FSM take-up was estimated to be 89% according to benefits data from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and December 2012/January 2013 census data. The relevant publication can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupils-not-claiming-free-school-meals-2013>.

The Department has not made a formal assessment of the number of pupils who would become eligible for FSM through automatic enrolment. The Department provides an Eligibility Checking System to make the checking process as quick and straightforward as possible for schools and Local Authorities. The Department has also developed a model registration form to help schools encourage parents to sign up for FSM and provided guidance to Jobcentre Plus advisers so that they can make Universal Credit recipients aware that they may also be entitled to wider benefits, including FSM.

The Department has previously had discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions about auto-enrolment functionality, but there are complex data, systems, financial and legal implications to such a change.

■ Further Education: Finance

Mr Toby Perkins:

[162497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students were enrolled onto Level 3 courses that are not due to receive funding after 2025 in the (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 academic year; and how many students studied the T-Level equivalent courses in the same period.

Robert Halfon:

The department does not routinely publish 16-19 enrolment data for individual qualifications. However, in the second stage consultation response on level 3 reforms, the department included enrolment estimates at 16-19 that could be impacted by the reforms to level 3 qualifications. This impact assessment is accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-in-england>.

In the reformed system, students will be able to choose to study a T Level, a programme of A levels, a mixed study programmes of A levels and alternative academic or technical qualifications, or where there is no T Level coverage, a large alternative academic qualification. The department will publish the list of qualifications in May 2024 that have been approved for funding from 2025.

Further data on T Levels can be found in the 2022/23 T Level action plan, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-action-plan>.

■ Performing Arts: Education

Anna McMorris: [163993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will consider the potential merits of extending the music education hub model to (a) dance, (b) drama and (c) other performing arts.

Anna McMorris: [163994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the reasons for changes in the level of entries for GCSE and A Level qualifications in performing arts subjects in the last two years.

Nick Gibb:

All state funded schools are required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, and this includes promoting pupils' cultural development. A cultural education, including the wider performing arts, is central to providing a high quality education for all pupils.

The Department will continue to spend around £115 million per annum in cultural education over the next three years through its music, arts and heritage programmes. With the real terms per pupil increases to core school funding and the nearly £5 billion that has been announced for education recovery, schools will continue to have the flexibility to deliver an ambitious curriculum and enrichment activities, including in arts and creative subjects.

There are no plans to assess the reasons for changes in GCSE and A level entries. The Department does regularly publish entry statistics for GCSEs, A levels and technical awards. Over the past four years, the proportion of Key Stage 4 pupils in state funded schools taking at least one arts GCSE between 2018/19 and 2021/22 has gone from 44.5% to 42%. Over the same period the percentage taking at least one arts qualification (GCSE or technical award) has gone from 52.3% to 52.4%.

The Department will be publishing a Cultural Education Plan in 2023, working with DCMS and Arts Council England. The Chair of the expert advisory panel was announced last year, and other panel members will be announced in due course. The plan will focus on how the Government can support access and participation in a wide range of arts subjects and activities, particularly for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and in underrepresented groups. It will also further support young people who wish to pursue careers in creative, cultural, and heritage industries.

The Cultural Education Plan will cover a range of arts subjects where appropriate, such as drama and dance. The Government does not intend to produce detailed plans in specific arts subjects, or to establish a Hub programme for arts subjects other than music. It is widely recognised that there is a need for Music Hubs in addressing the unique challenges in supporting young people's access to and progression in music.

■ **Schools and Multi-academy Trusts: Private Finance Initiative**

Stella Creasy:

[\[166205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, (a) what arrangements her Department has in place to help ensure that schools and multi-academy trusts who have entered PFI contracts for school buildings remain able to afford interest payments on those contracts and (b) what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of those arrangements in the context of rising inflation and interest rates.

Nick Gibb:

All private finance initiative (PFI) schools contracts have been entered into by either local authorities or the Secretary of State for Education. PFI schools contracts include an interest rate hedge which is agreed at the point of contract signature to secure a fixed rate of borrowing until contract expiry. This means that the payments made to the PFI contractor do not fluctuate as interest rates change.

An element of the payment owing to PFI contractors is typically index linked but the impact of rising inflation is not an issue that is unique to PFI contracts.

■ **Schools: Children in Care**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[166194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pathfinders for wraparound care provision in schools there will be; in which areas; how those areas will be chosen; how much funding each such pathfinder will receive; how that amount will be calculated; for how many weeks of the year that provision will be delivered; what provision will be delivered in school holiday periods, and if she will make a statement.

Claire Coutinho:

To improve the availability of wraparound childcare the government has announced that we will invest £289 million in a national pathfinder scheme in England to support local authorities to work with primary schools to set up and deliver wraparound childcare before and after school.

The department is working with schools, private providers, and local authorities to ensure that this programme is designed to meet the needs of parents. The investment will support local authorities and schools to test flexible ways of providing childcare which could include working in partnership with other schools or private providers on site.

Schools and local areas will be able to access the funding from September 2024 across two academic years, with some local authorities acting as trailblazers to roll

out the programme earlier. The funding period will run until April 2026, by which point the government expects most primary schools will be able to deliver their own before and after school provision that is self-financing and sustainable in the longer term.

The department will provide further information about the pathfinder scheme as it becomes available.

■ Students: Fuels

Angela Crawley:

[166263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2023 to Question 148721 on Students: Fuels, what recent discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on students.

Robert Halfon:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

The department discusses the additional cost of living pressures that are impacting students this year in our regular meetings with stakeholders, including the Office for Students (OfS), Universities UK and the higher education (HE) Mission Groups. The department has also consulted with the National Association of Student Money Advisers to understand the ongoing situation in relation to increased requests from students for hardship awards from their universities.

The Office for National Statistics has twice surveyed students directly on the impact of cost of living pressures. The most recent report, published on 24 February 2023, is available to view here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/bulletins/costoflivingandhighereducationstudentsengland/30januaryto13february2023>.

On 17 March 2023, the OfS published an insight brief to better understand the impact increasing living costs are having on students. The brief discusses data and research from OfS roundtable events, a poll commissioned by the OfS, and other student surveys to explore how the cost of living is affecting students and how universities and colleges are mitigating its impact.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount.

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) will provide £400 support to those households without a direct relationship to a domestic electricity supplier in England, Scotland, and Wales, who have faced increased energy bill costs since 1 October 2022. This will include students in privately rented accommodation, where they receive their energy from an intermediary (such as a landlord or letting agency) who holds a commercial electricity contract.

The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October 2022 includes the provision which requires landlords to pass any benefits they receive from energy price support onto end users, as appropriate.

Tenants should not need to take action to receive this benefit as the obligation is on intermediaries, such as landlords, to pass through the benefit and provide the information necessary to do so. If a student believes this obligation has not been met, they are advised to contact their landlord, or, intermediary to resolve this in the first instance. Within the regulations, there is also scope to pursue enforcement through civil proceedings. Further guidance on the pass-through requirement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-provided-to-intermediaries/guidance-on-the-pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-in-great-britain-provided-to-intermediaries>.

Students in purpose-built student accommodation are not eligible to receive support under the scheme, as with fixed rental fees set ahead of the academic year, they have not been exposed to unexpectedly higher energy bill costs this Winter.

For students living in university, or private halls, businesses, including those that provide student accommodation, are covered by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which provides energy bill relief for non-domestic customers in Great Britain.

The department welcomes the continued efforts of the OfS and the HE sector to look at what more can be done to support students in need of financial help.

■ Supply Teachers

Bridget Phillipson:

[166193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 31 January 2023 to Question 133599 on Supply Teachers, how much was spent on teaching staff supplied by recruitment agencies in each year since 2016.

Nick Gibb:

Information on local authority maintained school expenditure is collected in Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) returns and relates to expenditure in the financial year. Academy expenditure is collected in Academies Accounts Returns (AAR) and relates to expenditure in the academic year. This information is subsequently published on the Schools Financial Benchmarking website, and for local authority maintained schools, in the annual official statistic 'LA and school expenditure' which can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure>.

Spending on supply teaching staff comprises the following categories:

1. Supply teaching staff (supply teaching staff employed directly by the school).
2. Supply teacher insurance.
3. Agency supply teaching staff (cost paid to an agency for teaching staff that have been brought in to cover teacher absence).

These costs should be offset against receipts from supply teacher insurance claims.

Information on expenditure on agency supply teaching staff only is shown in the table below. Information for academies for the academic year 2021/22 is not yet available. The figures below are presented in cash terms and not adjusted for inflation.

Expenditure (£ million) on agency teaching staff recruitment in state-funded schools in England, by year ¹

FINANCIAL YEARS

Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
LA maintained schools ²	£554.6	£520.4	£451.2	£425.8	£410.7	£274.6	£415.0
Number of schools making a CFR return	16,774	16,106	15,052	13,959	13,158	12,655	12,221
Academic years							
Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Academies ³	£282.2	£301.8	£390.6	£368.0	£326.8	£330.1	.
Academy Trusts ³	£1.6	£2.4	£8.7	£5.1	£6.5	£10.1	.
Total academy spend	£283.8	£304.2	£399.3	£373.1	£333.3	£340.2	.
Number of academies making an AAR return	6,330	7,014	8,150	8,929	9,453	9,821	.

Source: Academies Accounts Returns and Consistent Financial Reporting returns.

¹ Year refers to financial year for LA maintained schools and academic year for academies.

² LA maintained school expenditure line E26 "agency supply teaching staff".

³ Academy expenditure line BNCH21606 "agency supply teaching staff".

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Alternative Fuel Payments

Drew Hendry:

[\[166262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of working with alternative fuel provider trade bodies to reduce the evidence requirement for householders in relation to the Alternative Fuel Payment..

Amanda Solloway:

In developing the scheme, the Government worked closely with stakeholders across the country including with the relevant trade bodies. Applicants will have to provide evidence to demonstrate use of alternative fuels as their main heating source in order to reduce the risk of fraud e.g. by receipt/delivery note. The Government was assured by the industry that most alternative fuel users are routinely provided with suitable documentation through their fuel provider.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to paragraph 3.88 of the Spring Budget, HC 1183, published on 15 March 2023, what proportion of the funding for early deployment of Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage will be classified as research and development.

Graham Stuart:

The funding announced in the budget is targeted towards supporting early deployment of Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage. Although some of this may be classified as research and development funding, the Government is not earmarking funding for this purpose.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Ben Lake:

[\[166303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether people who are applying for Alternative Fund fuel bill support can submit receipts for fuel purchased after the date on which the portal was opened.

Amanda Solloway:

Yes, receipts used as evidence of alternative fuel use as part of an application to the Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Fund must show a date of purchase between September 2022 and the end of the application window on 31 May 2023.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Succession**Drew Hendry:**[\[166261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing the estates of deceased people who were alive during the qualifying period to apply to the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding Scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

The eligibility of applicants for the EBSS Alternative Funding is determined at the time of their application. Therefore, the estates of deceased people will not be able to apply on behalf of a deceased person as an application can only be made by or on behalf of someone who is living and occupying an address.

■ Energy: Prices**Sarah Olney:**[\[162532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to provide energy bill support to low-income families who have children with disabilities.

Amanda Solloway:

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach to consumer protection from April 2024, including options such as social tariffs, as part of wider retail market reforms.

Officials are considering the options and proactively discussing these with stakeholders. As part of this work, the Government is working with disability organisations, assessing the need for specific support for disabled people including families with disabled children.

In addition, for 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. This will be split into three payments of around £300 each across the 2023/24 financial year. A separate £300 payment will be made to pensioner households on top of their Winter Fuel Payments and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment.

■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Weather**Drew Hendry:**[\[166260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the Competition and Markets Authority on the adequacy of audit systems for assessing the delivery of the cold weather priority initiative by liquefied petroleum gas suppliers.

Graham Stuart:

Liquid Gas UK is the trade association for suppliers of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Cold Weather Priority Delivery is one of the principles for the Customer Charter to

which their members agree. Liquid Gas UK provides an ombudsman scheme as an alternative dispute resolution service for customer disputes.

Officials from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero maintain regular contact with Liquid Gas UK to monitor threats to security of supply.

The Competition and Markets Authority administers the Liquefied Petroleum Gas market orders, which are intended to make it easier for customers to switch LPG suppliers.

■ Wind Power: Wales

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[165461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the document entitled Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design, whether he has had discussions with the National Grid on the proposal for a new network in Wales; and for what reason the proposed network route has changed from offshore route to onshore.

Graham Stuart:

The Holistic Network Design was produced independently by National Grid ESO as a key output of the government led Offshore Transmission Network Review. This process has identified a new network need between North and South Wales (PNSC). Detailed design work by the relevant Transmission Owner is ongoing and will consider the potential for both onshore and offshore options.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Clean Air Zones: Tyne and Wear

Seema Malhotra:

[\[165304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 7 March 2023 to Question 160287 on Clean Air Zones: Tyne and Wear, how much funding her Department has provided to Tyneside's vehicle scrappage fund.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has not funded scrappage schemes for Tyneside's Clean Air Zone.

■ Farmers: Government Assistance

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[166377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps her Department has taken to help support crop-growing farmers with higher costs due to inflation.

Mark Spencer:

We recognise that input costs have increased over the last year or so mainly due to the war in Ukraine. The Government has acted to support the agricultural sector, including crop-growing farmer, in a number of ways.

During 2022 we took several actions to support farmers respond to the increase in input costs. These included:

- Changes to guidance on farmers using manures and steps aimed at bringing about more sustainable fertiliser technologies through the Sustainable Farming Incentive,
- Increased grants for farmers and growers and boosting research and development through the [Farming Innovation Programme](#).
- The Basic Payment Scheme payment being made in two instalments to give farmers greater financial fluidity for the remainder of the agricultural transition period

Additionally in January 2023, Farming Minister Mark Spencer announced more money for farmers and landowners through both the [Countryside Stewardship](#) and the [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#) schemes, which will provide more support to the industry and drive uptake at a time of rising costs for farmers as a result of global challenges. He also confirmed an expanded range of actions under the schemes, which farmers could be paid for, would be published soon.

We are working closely with the industry to identify where further mitigations are available to tackle the challenges they face. We continue to keep the market situation under review through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments. We have also increased our engagement with industry to supplement our analysis with real time intelligence.

■ Foie Gras

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[165497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of public opinion on introducing a ban on foie gras.

Mark Spencer:

The Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare and has made clear that the production of foie gras from ducks or geese using force feeding raises serious welfare concerns. The production of foie gras feeding is incompatible with our domestic animal welfare legislation.

We are committed to building a clear evidence base to inform any potential future decisions relating to foie gras imports and sales.

■ Food Supply

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[163722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the (a) affordability and (b) availability of food in the UK; and what assessment she has made of trends in the level of those matters compared to prior to the covid-19 pandemic.

Mark Spencer:

The December 2021 UK Food Security Report examined past, current, and predicted trends relevant to food security, with chapters on UK Food Supply and Food Security at Household Level. This report serves as an evidence base for future policy work, and the Government is committing to producing such an assessment at least once every three years.

We know that rising food prices are a big contributor to the high levels of inflation that people are currently experiencing. However, we have seen a slight fall in the official food price inflation figures for January and we will watch to see if this is the start of a sustained fall in food price inflation.

Given the impact of high food prices, tackling inflation is this government's number one priority, with a plan to more than halve inflation this year, and we're monitoring all key agricultural commodities so that we can work with the food industry to address the challenges they face.

Low-income households are the most affected by high food and energy prices. This is why we have provided a package of support to help people with the rising cost of food. This includes £37 billion the government has committed to support households with the cost of living. £1 billion of this has gone towards help with the cost of household essentials.

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. UK consumers have access through international trade to food products that cannot be produced here, or at least not on a year-round basis. This supplements domestic production and also ensures that any disruption from risks such as adverse weather or disease does not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement in preparedness for, and response to, issues with the potential to cause disruption to food supply chains. We speak regularly with food industry figures, who remain confident in the food supply chain.

We continue to keep the market situation under review through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments.

Angela Crawley:[\[166266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of household food insecurity on households across the UK.

Mark Spencer:

The United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021 includes analysis of food security at household level. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has recently published new data from the Family Resources Survey on household food security,

giving a better understanding of who is most at risk. DWP has also included new questions in the family resources survey for 2021/22 which will be published in March 2023 and will further expand evidence in this area.

DWP is responsible for wider poverty policy, of which household food insecurity is one element.

■ Food: Crops

Charlotte Nichols:

[164002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an estimate of the number of farms that have stopped growing food crops in the last 12 months.

Mark Spencer:

Defra does not hold any data on the number of farms that have stopped growing food crops in the past 12 months. We produce statistical estimates of national crop areas each year but we do not track changes in land use on individual farms. Changes in national/regional areas can be seen in our annual publications but these could be due to weather, prices and numerous other factors. In addition, information is not collected on the intended end use of the crop so we cannot quantify for certain which crops are grown for food use. Our land area statistics are available at [Agricultural land use in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agricultural-land-use-in-england).

■ Pigs: Animal Housing

Caroline Lucas:

[166171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2022 to Question 98724 on Pigs: Animal Housing, what steps she has taken to explore the phasing out of farrowing crates; and if she will make it her policy to end their use as soon as possible.

Mark Spencer:

It is the Government's aim for farrowing crates to no longer be necessary and for any new systems to protect the welfare of the sow, as well as her piglets, as stated in Defra's Code of Practice for the welfare of pigs (2020).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afif Naeimi

Jim Shannon:

[161292]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the arrest of Mr Afif Naemi in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The UK unequivocally condemns the persecution of religious minorities in Iran. We are appalled by reports of the regime's increased detentions of Baha'is, including community leaders such as Mr Afif Naemi, as well as expropriation of land and destruction of homes of the Baha'i community.

On 20 December 2022, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Fiona Bruce, expressed the UK's condemnation of the sentencing of Baha'i leaders Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi to a further decade of imprisonment. We continue to work closely with our international partners to hold Iran to account for its dire human rights record and raise these issues with the regime at all appropriate opportunities.

■ Armed Conflict: Health Services**Julian Sturdy:**[\[162504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help protect healthcare infrastructure in conflict zones.

Leo Docherty:

The UK condemns attacks on healthcare and is highly committed to protecting healthcare infrastructure in situations of armed conflict. International Humanitarian Law provides for the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities. The UK champions International Humanitarian Law and calls on states and non-state actors engaged in armed conflict to respect it. In 2016, with UK co-sponsorship, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted UNSCR 2286 strongly condemning attacks and threats against medical facilities and medical personnel. The Resolution recommended that better data is collected on attacks on healthcare, resulting in UK funding for a research project at the University of Manchester to assess the impact of attacks on healthcare facilities and staff in conflict contexts.

■ Bahrain: Human Rights**Kenny MacAskil:**[\[165481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 6 February 2023 from Human Rights Watch, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy and Reprieve on Bahrain and the 2021 Human Rights and Democracy report.

David Rutley:

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister of State for the Middle East responded to the letter in question on Thursday 16 March 2023.

■ Balochistan: Armed Conflict

Pete Wishart: [\[162491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help support negotiations to end regional conflicts within the Balochistan region of Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

We regularly discuss the security situation and human rights in Pakistan at a senior level with the relevant Pakistani authorities. Resolving the ongoing security issues in Balochistan is a matter for the Pakistani Government.

■ Balochistan: Human Rights

Pete Wishart: [\[162492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the implications for its policies of the human rights situation in the Pakistani region of Balochistan, including potential occurrence of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and honour killings.

Leo Docherty:

The UK regularly engages the Government of Pakistan at a senior level on the need to respect human rights and uphold the rule of law. On 30 January, Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed the human rights situation with Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. In June 2022, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan discussed the issue of enforced disappearances in Balochistan with Minister Pirzada. We continue to encourage progress towards the criminalisation of enforced disappearances in Pakistan. We urge states to fully investigate any allegations, prosecute those responsible and provide justice to victims and their families.

■ Balochistan: Humanitarian Aid

Pete Wishart: [\[162493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide humanitarian aid and support to the Baloch people displaced by conflict in that region.

Leo Docherty:

Since 2014 the UK has provided support to the most vulnerable people in Pakistan affected by conflict, through the Multi-Year Humanitarian Programme. The £120 million programme covers both immediate relief and early recovery interventions for shelter, food and non-food items, water and sanitation, and livelihood and protection needs.

■ Belarus: Sanctions

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[163832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will implement further sanctions on Belarus for the imprisonment of Ales Bialatski and Andrzej Poczobut.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government is appalled by the brutal and ongoing repression that the Lukashenko regime conducts against its own people. We condemn the politically motivated sentencing and continued detention of Ales Bialatski and Andrzej Poczobut. The UK Government keeps all sanctions regimes under review, however we do not speculate on future designations as to do so could reduce their impact.

Since 2020, the UK has imposed over 120 sanctions designations in response to the human rights violations and repression of civil society and democratic opposition that followed the flawed presidential election result in Belarus.

■ Brazil: Mining

Andrew Selous:

[\[165244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Brazilian counterpart on preventing illegal gold mining in Brazil since 1 January 2023.

Andrew Selous:

[\[165306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held discussions with representatives of Indigenous peoples and local communities in Brazil on gold mining on Indigenous land.

David Rutley:

The UK regularly engages with the Brazilian Government, indigenous leadership, and civil society to understand the drivers and impacts of illegal gold mining and to promote human rights. In late February, His Majesty's Ambassador accompanied Sonia Guajajara, Brazil's Minister for Indigenous Peoples, to the Javari Valley to discuss these issues with the Association for Indigenous Peoples (UNIVAJA). The UK is funding a three-year initiative to reduce environmental crime in the Amazon region and supports the Challenge Fund which investigates the impact of illegal gold mining across northern Brazil.

■ British Overseas Territories: Climate Change

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[165238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the eligibility of the British Overseas Territories to obtain funding from the United Nations climate change loss and damage fund; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The UK recognises that the current impacts of climate change are leading to losses and damages including in the British Overseas Territories. The UK welcomes the establishment of new funding arrangements for loss and damage including a fund and will play an active role on the Transitional Committee set up to progress these issues. Terms of any funding arrangements are yet to be developed so it is not possible to say at this stage who will be eligible.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Marine Protected Areas****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[165237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage British Overseas Territories to join the Blue Belt Initiative; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The Overseas Territories governments have responsibility for management and protection of the marine environment. The UK's Blue Belt Programme was launched in 2016, aiming to enhance marine protection in the Territories; Ascension, St Helena and Tristan da Cunha soon joined and committed to designating marine protected areas. The Turks and Caicos Islands and Anguilla have also now joined. The Programme is open to all Overseas Territories wishing to enhance marine protection and sustainable management. A sub programme, Blue Belt Ocean Shield, provides support with enforcement to Bermuda; and a network of Territories deploying Baited Remote Underwater Video Cameras (BRUVS) has been set up.

■ **Climate Change: Finance****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[166365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage his international counterparts to provide additional finance for climate-induced loss and damage, above that of previous climate finance commitments.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

At COP27, the UK and all parties agreed to establish new funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage. It was agreed to establish a Transitional Committee (TC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to develop recommendations on the new arrangements and the UK is actively engaged with this process as a TC member. We will be encouraging all members of the TC and other parties to the UNFCCC to consider how new and additional resources, including sources and funds from outside traditional donors, can be delivered to support vulnerable countries in the future.

■ Diplomatic Service: British Nationals Abroad

Emily Thornberry:

[\[165277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK nationals were provided with consular assistance after reporting that they had been a victim of (a) domestic violence or abuse and (b) rape or other sexual assault in each calendar year from 2011 to 2022 inclusive.

David Rutley:

The number of British nationals provided with consular assistance after reporting that they had been a victim of (a) domestic violence or abuse and (b) rape or other sexual assault in each calendar year from 2011 to 2022 is:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Domestic Violence or Abuse				85	136	95	115	151	146	149	189	233
Rape & Sexual Assault	273	300	269	251	279	273	319	390	365	136	139	343

Emily Thornberry:

[\[165278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK nationals were provided with consular assistance after reporting that they had been a victim of (a) assault and (b) theft in each calendar year from 2011 to 2022 inclusive.

David Rutley:

The number of British nationals provided with consular assistance after reporting that they had been a victim of (a) assault and (b) theft in each calendar year from 2011 to 2022 inclusive is below. Pre-2016, victims of theft cases were recorded within a broader case category. As individual case records from that period have been deleted in line with data retention rules, we are unable to provide headline annual figures for 'theft' cases.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Assault	291	338	303	300	266	230	239	281	287	131	146	240
Theft						721	405	349	269	132	148	321

■ East Africa: Foreign Relations**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[163878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled, Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world, published on 13 March 2023, and with reference to the focus on East Africa in the 2021 paper, Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, for what reason East Africa is not a focus in the refreshed review; and whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the focus on East Africa in the last two years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The 2023 Integrated Review Refresh builds on existing policy, including for East Africa as set out in the Integrated Review 2021 (IR2021). IR2021 provided a comprehensive articulation of the UK's national security and international policy in the context of a world moving towards greater competition and multipolarity. IR2023 sets out the continuing priority the UK places on engagement with our wider neighbourhood, including Africa, where developments have direct consequences for the UK.

The refresh highlights that our approach in Africa will continue to be defined by a greater appreciation of the needs and perspectives of key partners across the continent, focusing on mutually beneficial development, security and defence partnerships and support for clean infrastructure and climate adaptation. The UK's humanitarian support in East Africa, totalling at least £156 million this financial year, is providing millions of people with essential services and supplies. Since 2019, the UK has allocated more than £1 billion towards humanitarian operations in East Africa.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**Dave Doogan:**[\[165470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on how many occasions Ministers in his Department met hon. Members, broken down by political party, in the last two years.

David Rutley:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) do not hold this information centrally and it can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Advisory Bodies**Seema Malhotra:**[\[163825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156161 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Advisory Bodies, if he will publish an indicative timeline of when the panel's membership will be known.

David Rutley:

Potential Panel members have been shortlisted and have been contacted and asked to confirm acceptance. The names of the organisations will be published on FCDO website by 30 April 2023 ahead of the first meeting of the group.

Seema Malhotra:[\[163826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156161 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Advisory Bodies, whether his Department has made an assessment of the expected cost of the panel.

David Rutley:

The panel members have agreed to participate on a voluntary basis. The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Advisory Panel will be run by FCDO employees and utilises FCDO facilities.

Seema Malhotra:[\[163827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156161 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Advisory Bodies, whether he has an indicative agenda for the meetings of the panel.

David Rutley:

The agenda will be aligned to commitments and targeted actions set out in FCDO Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Action Plan, taking account of feedback from suppliers during the call for applications. Future agenda's will be shaped with input from panel members on how best to deliver actions and improvements collaboratively with FCDO.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Technical Assistance**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[163877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much from the public purse his Department spent on technical assistance programming delivered by UK-based organisations for (a) official development assistance spending and (b) non-official development assistance spending in 2021.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The International Development Strategy sets out how we will channel world-class British expertise to support partner countries by providing advice and exchanging lessons and evidence of what works. This supports good policy - the 'best buy' in development. We leverage partnerships across government, research, business and civil society to provide this.

FCDO takes a portfolio approach to programme management as a programme may be delivered through different delivery options and funding arrangements. We do not hold central records of the level of technical assistance included within our total programming and this could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Gender: Equality

Sarah Champion:

[\[163868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the target to spend 80 per cent of Official Development Aid on gender equality will meet Gender Equality (a) marker 1 or (b) marker 2.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

FCDO's new International Women and Girls Strategy commits to at least 80% of FCDO's bilateral aid programmes having a focus on gender equality by 2030, using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality markers, marked as significant (1) or principal (2).

■ Gold: Mining

Andrew Selous:

[\[165245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on tackling illegal gold mining across the world.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government is committed to responsible gold extraction, for example, through encouraging compliance with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Mineral Supply Chains from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. The UK has funded OECD projects in West Africa and Colombia to promote local capacity building and uptake of the OECD guidance. The UK has also funded European Partnership for Responsible Minerals projects in the Great Lakes region in Africa to increase the proportion of responsibly sourced minerals, working across the whole of the supply chain. In April, we are preparing to discuss responsible mining with industry leaders at the Ghana Responsible Gold Mining Summit as part of Ghana's commitment to eradicate illegal mining.

■ Horizon Europe

Richard Thomson:

[\[164048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the timeline is for the negotiations between the UK Representatives and European Union counterparts on UK association to Horizon Europe.

Leo Docherty:

The terms for UK association to EU Programmes (including Horizon Europe) were agreed under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement in December 2020. The EU subsequently refused to finalise association, linking it to the unrelated issue of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Following the agreement of the Windsor Framework, we welcome that the EU has shown openness to discussions and we look forward to

working constructively together. Any revised terms would need to reflect the financial reality that we have missed over two years of the seven-year programme.

■ Iran: Detainees

Sir Chris Bryant:

[\[165232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will impose targeted sanctions on those responsible for Iran's state hostage-taking.

Sir Chris Bryant:

[\[165233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) the US Administration and (b) EU counterparts on the imposition of sanctions on (i) Ali Ghanaatkar, (ii) Ali Rezvani and (iii) Amened Sadat Zahbipour for their role in Iran's state hostage-taking; and if he will impose sanctions on those individuals.

David Rutley:

The UK will never accept our nationals being used as political leverage. Working with our international partners, including the USA and European Union, we continue to press Iran to end this abhorrent practice. In December 2022, the UK sanctioned ten officials connected to Iran's judicial and prison systems. This includes six individuals linked to the Revolutionary Courts which have been responsible for egregious sentences on British nationals. In January, we sanctioned Iran's Prosecutor General and deputy Prosecutor General, two of the most powerful figures in Iran's judiciary and responsible for the trial process and sentencing. The UK sanctions over 300 Iranian individuals and entities, including in relation to human rights violations, counter-proliferation, regional activity and terrorism. This includes 60 new human rights designations since October 2022. We do not speculate on future designations as doing so could reduce their impact.

■ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Jim Shannon:

[\[163755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps the Government has taken to respond to violations of freedom of religion or belief by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

David Rutley:

The UK unequivocally condemns the persecution of religious minorities in Iran. We are appalled by reports of the regime's increased suppression of religious minorities. We raise freedom of religion and belief at all appropriate opportunities with Iran and we continue to take action with the international community to press the regime to improve its poor human rights record. The UK has already sanctioned the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in its entirety alongside multiple IRGC Commanders responsible for human rights violations in Iran. We continue to work closely with our international partners to hold Iran to account for its actions.

■ Kenya: Food Supply**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[163881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act on the ability of small-holder farmers using indigenous seeds and informal seed trading practices in Kenya to (a) escape poverty, (b) purchase seeds in a cost effective way and (c) avoid the overuse of fertilisers and pesticides.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Agriculture is the backbone of Kenya's economy, employing 40% of the population and providing 65% of export earnings. Supporting the sector and integrating small-holder farmers into value chains is a priority for both the Government of Kenya and the UK.

The UK Government understands that through the Seed and Plant Varieties Act, the Government of Kenya is seeking to promote the use of new high yielding, climate resilient crop varieties. This has the potential to help farmers purchase seeds, increase yields and reduce poverty. It will also remain important to protect the rights of indigenous farmers to conserve traditional crop varieties and promote organic fertilisers and bio-pesticides.

■ Malawi and Mozambique: Storms**Patrick Grady:**[\[166256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support communities affected by Cyclone Freddy in (a) Malawi and (b) Mozambique.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is working closely with the Governments of Malawi and Mozambique to respond to Cyclone Freddy. In Malawi, we are supporting the Emergency Operations Centre established in Blantyre and working closely with partners to rapidly identify the needs of those affected. We are looking at options for further UK support including to help those still stranded, to help manage trauma cases and to extend our support to tackle the ongoing cholera outbreak. In Mozambique, we are providing shelter and dignity kits for up to 30,000 people and providing extra funding to reduce the cholera risk.

■ Members: Correspondence**Kenny MacAskil:**[\[165482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 17 February 2023 from 12 Members of both Houses of Parliament on Bahrain and the 2021 Human Rights and Democracy Report.

David Rutley:

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister of State for the Middle East responded to the letter in question on Thursday 16 March 2023.

■ **Myanmar: UN Agencies****Brendan O'Hara:**[\[166250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether UN agencies operating in Myanmar that receive UK funding are prohibited from buying goods and services from military-owned companies in that country.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is committed to targeted sanctions which impose a cost on those profiting from, or supporting, the Myanmar military's campaign of violence against the civilian population.

On 28 February 2022 the UK updated our Overseas Business Risk Guidance to make it clear that UK businesses should conduct thorough supply chain diligence to ensure that commodities do not reach the military. Organisations involved in the delivery of essential humanitarian aid delivery are able to apply for licences for goods and services which may be impacted by targeted sanctions.

■ **Rainforests: Environmental Protection****Andrew Selous:**[\[165248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking diplomatic steps to support the partnership between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Brazil to reduce deforestation.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is committed to working with partners to halt and reverse forest loss globally by 2030. Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Brazil are home to some of the world's most important forests, which must be protected to meet our goal of keeping within 1.5 degrees of temperature rise. The UK is committed to working with forest countries to ensure that we collectively deliver on the commitment made by 145 governments at COP26 in Glasgow to halt and reverse forest loss while delivering sustainable development and promoting an inclusive rural transformation.

■ **Seafood: Northern Ireland****Richard Thomson:**[\[164042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) nephrops, (b) salmon and (c) other seafood will be among the goods for which there will be free-flowing trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain under the Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework removes any requirement to provide export declarations, or any equivalent information, for businesses moving goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. This assures unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the UK market on a permanent basis.

■ Tropical Diseases: Disease Control**Lisa Nandy:**[\[166203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support progress on the World Health Organisation's 2030 Roadmap for Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The United Kingdom was pleased to endorse the Kigali Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) at its launch, to support continued progress on delivery of the World Health Organisation 2030 road map on NTDs. The FCDO will continue to invest in research and innovation in new drugs and diagnostics for diseases of poverty, including NTDs, through world-leading Product Development Partnerships (highly successful public-private partnerships for developing health technologies such as vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics) and other research organisations. Since January 2021, the FCDO has invested over £42 million into delivering services to prevent and treat NTDs, as well as strengthening health systems so they can provide these essential services.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Richard Thomson:**[\[164015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the infrastructure that would be required at the Border Control Post at Cairnryan in relation to the movement of goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain under the proposed Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework removes any requirement to provide export declarations, or any equivalent information, for businesses moving goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. This assures unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the UK market on a permanent basis, with controls applied only where strictly necessary to manage our international obligations, such as for movements of endangered species.

Richard Thomson:[\[164037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what physical checks on (a) food safety, (b) animal health and (c) plant health will be necessary at Border Control Posts in Great Britain in relation to the movement of goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain under the proposed Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework assures unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the UK market on a permanent basis, with controls applied only where strictly necessary to manage our international obligations, such as for movements of endangered species.

Richard Thomson:[\[164038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which authority will check any non-Northern Irish products which enter Great Britain from ports in Northern Ireland under the proposed arrangements in the Windsor Framework.

Richard Thomson:[\[164047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will provide guidance on what changes if any the Windsor Framework will make to the checking of products exported from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework ensures unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the UK market on a permanent basis. It removes the requirement to provide export declarations, or any equivalent information, for businesses moving goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, with controls applied only where strictly necessary to manage our international obligations, such as for movements of endangered species. In those very narrow range of cases where any process applies, it will be UK authorities responsible for managing them (with the relevant UK authority as specified within the relevant regulations).

Richard Thomson:[\[164039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the source of funding is for any checks on non-Northern Irish goods at Scottish ports under the proposed arrangements in the Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework does not change the arrangements for goods moving from Northern Ireland directly to Great Britain which do not qualify for unfettered access.

Richard Thomson:[\[164040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the movement of (a) cattle, (b) sheep and (c) other livestock are covered by the green lane in relation to the movement of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland under the proposed Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

As was the case with the arrangements in place before Brexit, the Windsor Framework respects that the island of Ireland has for decades been treated as a single epidemiological unit, which involves specific requirements for the movement of livestock. The UK and EU had already agreed in 2021 a variety of arrangements to simplify the movements of livestock, and we will continue to work closely with the

livestock sector in Great Britain and Northern Ireland to support the smooth flow of livestock movements.

Richard Thomson: [\[164041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department will set a definition for which products will qualify officially as Northern Ireland goods with unfettered access to Great British markets following the announcement of the proposed Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The definition of Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods is set out in the Definition of Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Richard Thomson: [\[164044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will provide guidance on the Northern Irish Retail Movement Scheme in relation to (a) operations, (b) funding and (c) delivery implications.

Leo Docherty:

Further detail and guidance on the arrangements for green lane trade will be provided in due course.

Richard Thomson: [\[164045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to implement a Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme in relation to mixed shipments.

Leo Docherty:

Further guidance on the agrifood green lane will be provided in due course. We will work with industry to ensure the full benefits of the Windsor Framework can be delivered.

Richard Thomson: [\[164046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish an economic assessment of how much new Not for EU labelling on higher risk goods will cost traders in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales as a result of the proposed Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

Proportionate arrangements for the labelling of products, including product-level labelling for a subset of high-risk products, ensures that internal trade moving in the green lane stays within the United Kingdom. These will be introduced in a phased way and we will support businesses in adapting to these new arrangements.

Richard Thomson: [\[164055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish guidance on the scope of (a) Scottish food safety and (b) standards rules that

would apply to retail goods moving from Scotland to Northern Ireland through the green lane proposed in the Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

UK public health and safety standards will apply for all retail food and drink moved in the green lane within the UK internal market. The Government will provide further guidance in due course.

■ **USA: Embassies**

David Mundell:

[\[162144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the refurbishment of the residence at the UK embassy in Washington DC will be completed by June 2023.

David Rutley:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, along with our suppliers, continue to work hard to deliver the important project of restoring our prestigious Residence in Washington DC, to a high standard, as soon as we can.

Our ambition is to complete the refurbishment work in June 2023. It is important that we ensure that the works carried out are of a high standard, and are sympathetic to Sir Edwin Lutyens' 1928 design.

■ **Venezuela: Mining**

Andrew Lewer:

[\[165504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterparts in (a) Brazil and (b) Colombia on tackling illegal mining in Venezuela.

David Rutley:

UK ministers and senior officials regularly discuss regional security and environmental issues with the Brazilian and Colombian Governments. Whilst we have not recently discussed illegal mining in Venezuela, Secretary of State Thérèse Coffey met with the Brazilian Minister for Indigenous Peoples in January to discuss tackling illegal mining in the Amazon region, one of the key drivers of deforestation. During a recent visit to Colombia, I [Minister Rutley] met with President Petro and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss shared priorities, including the UK's support to tackling environment and security issues. In my statement at the UN Security Council on 11 January, I [Minister Rutley] welcomed Colombian Government-led efforts to secure a ceasefire with armed groups, many of which are fighting for control of illicit economies, including illegal mining in Venezuela.

■ West Bank: Palestinian Islamic Jihad

Nicola Richards: [\[143915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of reports the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group now controls large parts of the West Bank.

Nicola Richards: [\[143917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Palestinian Authority counterpart on the security situation in the West Bank following the strengthening of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

David Rutley:

We continue to closely monitor the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The UK has proscribed Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as a terrorist entity since March 2001. PIJ and other terrorist groups must cease all actions that are violent or provocative, or that put civilian lives at risk. The UK continues to provide the Palestinian Authority (PA) with professional support in helping develop its security institutions. This provision includes training and other technical assistance to the PA Ministry of Interior and PA security forces, to support the development of capable, responsible security forces that respect human rights and are accountable to the Palestinian people. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, reinforced the UK's support for a two-state solution in his meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Foreign Minister Riad Malki, during his visit to Israel and the OPTs on 10-13 January.

■ Windsor Framework

Richard Thomson: [\[164035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the legislation required to implement in full the Windsor Framework will be (a) primary or (b) secondary legislation.

Leo Docherty:

We will set out further details on the specific nature and form of legislation to give effect to the Windsor Framework domestically in due course.

Richard Thomson: [\[164036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will publish specific documents for each nation of Great Britain on the potential impact of the proposed Windsor Framework on devolved responsibilities.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework was presented to Parliament on 27 February. The UK will take forward implementing measures as necessary, providing the basis for these new arrangements to enter into force, which will be accompanied by supporting documents in the usual way.

■ Windsor Framework: Fisheries

Richard Thomson:

[\[164043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the Windsor Framework with the requirements for documents to help prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Leo Docherty:

Under the Windsor Framework, Northern Ireland fishing vessels can continue to fish and land their catch in the same way as they do today.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Admissions

Sir George Howarth:

[\[162488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2023 to Question 150402 on Accident and Emergency Departments, how many and what proportion of visits to accident and emergency departments were for Type 3 services in England per service provider, in each month since 2019.

Will Quince:

Data on National Health Service attendances at accident and emergency (A&E) is collected and published by NHS England. The proportion of attendances at type 3 departments, by provider and month and the number of attendances at Type 3 departments, by provider and month is attached.

Attachments:

1. [Attendance of type 3 departments](#) [Type 3 Data by Provider.xlsx]

■ Brain Cancer: Drugs

Ian Byrne:

[\[165515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the APPG on Brain Tumours' recent report entitled Pathway to a Cure – Breaking down the Barriers, published in February 2023, what steps his Department is taking to encourage pharmaceutical companies to pursue the development of brain cancer drugs in the UK.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 March 2023]: The Department of Health and Social Care welcomes the All-Party Parliamentary Group's report and will consider the detailed recommendations, which will be worked through with the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology, and UK Research and Innovation and the Medical Research Council, and with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

The Government recognises that the life sciences sector is one of our most important industries, helping to grow the economy, establish the United Kingdom as a science

and technology superpower, and drive innovative solutions to healthcare challenges. The Government's Life Sciences Vision sets out our plan to support the life sciences industry. This includes work to harness the National Health Service's unique health data and genomic research assets to drive advances in life science research and innovation.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including brain tumours. As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas. The level of research spend in a particular area, is driven by factors including scientific potential and the number and scale of successful funding applications.

■ Brain: Tumours

Ian Byrne: [\[165516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department (a) has provided and (b) plans to provide by 2030 ring-fenced funding for research into childhood brain tumours.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 March 2023]: There are currently no plans in place for future ring-fenced research funding for childhood brain tumours.

It is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. The Department of Health and Social Care funds research through the NIHR and the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including childhood brain tumours. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

Ian Byrne: [\[165517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to accept the recommendations of the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Brain Tumours entitled *Pathway to a Cure: Breaking down the Barriers*, published in February 2023; and whether he will make funding available for that purpose.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 March 2023]: The Department of Health and Social Care welcomes the All-Party Parliamentary Group's report and will consider the detailed recommendations, which will be worked through with the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology, and UK Research and Innovation and the Medical Research Council, and with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including brain tumours. As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas. The level of

research spend in a particular area, is driven by factors including scientific potential and the number and scale of successful funding applications.

■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[163838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure women receive timely breast cancer screenings.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department recognises the importance of timely breast screening, to support this we has invested £10 million for breast screening units to deliver 28 new breast screening units and nearly 60 life-saving upgrades to services, so more women can be checked for signs of cancer, speeding up diagnosis and treatment. We are restoring the NHS Breast Screening programme to pre-pandemic levels continues. The majority of services removed their backlogs of invitations by the end of December 2022, with the remaining services being monitored and supported nationally and regionally. In addition, steps are being taken to remove barriers to attending breast cancer screening such as promoting the use of text message alerts to remind women of upcoming appointments and the roll out local and national media campaigns.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[166201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide funding to increase the number of staff in the breast cancer screening workforce.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England is continuing to take forward priorities identified in the Cancer Workforce Plan Phase 1 by investing an additional £50 million in 2022/23 to further expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce, including to support the earlier diagnosis of cancer.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[166202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help create convenient, flexible routes into breast cancer screening services.

Neil O'Brien:

We have invested £10 million for breast screening programme which will provide 28 new breast screening units to be targeted at areas with the greatest challenges of uptake and coverage, including Wigan. This will provide extra capacity for services to recover from the impact of the pandemic, boost uptake of screening in areas where attendance is low, tackle health disparities and contribute towards higher early diagnosis rates in line with the NHS Long Term Plan.

■ Breast Cancer: Wigan

Lisa Nandy:

[\[166200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the uptake of breast screenings in Wigan constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

In the Wigan locality the Cancer Screening Improvement Lead (CSIL) has undertaken a wide range of activities and interventions to increase the uptake of breast screening. Some examples of the work being undertaken in Wigan include:

- general practitioner (GP) practice visits and training sessions for practice staff in line with the screening round plan. On-going work with GP Practices to contact non-responders/DNAs. Sharing list of DNAs with GP Practice;
- practices who have received a visit around the time their patients are due to be called have seen an improvement in uptake from one to 17% when compared to the previous screening round;
- targeted intervention with the lowest performing practice in Wigan by sending postcards to non-responders to ascertain the barriers to attendance, including information on how to rebook an appointment. This has resulted in at least a 3% increase in attendance compared to the previous screening rounds;
- additional training sessions to Primary Care Network Nurses and new GP assistants;
- a number of interventions to support patients with learning difficulties to access screening;
- work with local community groups, e.g., Women's Institute, local veteran centre, local parish councils, Wigan and Leigh Council for Voluntary Service, local disability groups, LGBTQ+ groups;
- accompanied a local outreach nurse to visit local sex workers and the gypsy/traveller community; and
- delivered awareness sessions within the community at a variety of venues.

The Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust has also benefited from the additional national £10 million invested in breast screening services and will be receiving an additional static screening unit.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Martyn Day:

[\[162519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the Scottish Government on the 10-Year Cancer Plan.

Helen Whately:

There have been no specific discussions.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[164022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for cancer treatment.

Helen Whately:

To support elective recovery and reduce waiting times, including for cancer treatment, the Government has taken steps by working with NHS England to publish the 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlogs in elective care' in February 2022. To deliver this plan, the Government plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to help drive up and protect elective activity, including cancer diagnosis and treatment activity. This will further be supported by the additional £3.3 billion of funding in each of the next two years announced at the Autumn Statement to support the National Health Service.

■ Contraceptives

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[166161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to progress update by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health on its Access to contraception inquiry, published in September 2022, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of that report.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department welcomed publication of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health's inquiry report on access to contraception. We recognise that there is more to do to improve women's reproductive health and have published a new Women's Health Strategy for England. As part of the strategy, we are investing £25 million in women's health hubs, so that women can get better access to care for essential services including contraception.

We will consider the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health's report as we take forward work to improve sexual and reproductive health services in England.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[166114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2022 to Question 93438 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, for what reasons the postponed 1 March meeting has not yet been rearranged.

Maria Caulfield:

The meeting has not yet been rearranged due to diary pressures, but a new date will be organised in the near future.

■ Dental Services: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [\[165199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many adults there were for each full-time equivalent NHS dentist in Lincolnshire in each of the last five years.

Sir John Hayes: [\[165200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to tackle dentistry shortfalls in Lincolnshire; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Hayes: [\[165201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the causes of dentistry shortfalls in Lincolnshire.

Neil O'Brien:

The following table summarises the headcount of National Health Service dentists per 100 thousand population including adults and children, which are not available separately.

FINANCIAL YEAR	HEADCOUNT OF NHS DENTISTS PER 100K POPULATION IN LINCOLNSHIRE
2017/18	39.8
2018/19	41.0
2019/20	42.3
2020/21	38.4
2021/22	39.3

We are taking measures to increase access to NHS dentistry. We are working with Health Education England and NHS England to understand how Centres for Dental Development could be delivered to improve access in areas where there is currently a shortage in provision.

In September 2022, we announced 'Our plan for patients' which sets out how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to NHS dental care, including in Lincolnshire, whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dental practices. These changes have been implemented, including through regulations that came into effect on 25 November 2022. NHS England is holding further discussions with the British Dental Association and other stakeholders for additional reforms of the NHS Dental System planned to take place this year.

NHS England is responsible for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population. Many of the dentistry commissioning functions undertaken by NHS England will transfer to integrated care boards from April 2023, supported by an Assurance Framework to provide assurances on commissioning.

■ Dental Services: Somerset

David Warburton:

[\[162529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of dental practices that offered NHS dental services in (a) Somerton and Frome constituency and (b) Somerset in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 16 March 2023]: The information is not held centrally.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Emily Thornberry:

[\[160231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 148573, tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 20 February 2022.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 March 2023 to Question 148573.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Julian Knight:

[\[163803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department is allocating to support research on how to reduce the use of recreational drugs.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department of funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including recreational drugs, it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. In September 2022, the Department and the Joint Combating Drugs Unit, in partnership with NIHR, launched a £5 million innovation fund to reduce demand for illicit substances. The fund will be run in three phases, phase one will focus on the development of potential interventions, phase two on testing and evaluation of these interventions, and phase three on scale up of interventions that are evaluated as effective in phase two.

On 8 March 2023 the Department announced £734,000 funding to support five projects through phase one.

■ Drugs: Prices

Sir John Hayes:

[\[165202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to avoid overcharging by suppliers of (a) antibiotics and (b) other drugs; what cases of overcharging have been identified in the last 12 months; what recent discussions he has had with drug manufacturers on overcharging mechanisms; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The Department regularly engages with industry regarding medicine pricing. Suppliers of branded medicines need to agree a maximum price with the Department before launching any product or line extension in the United Kingdom. On the very rare occasions where we identify that a supplier has exceeded their maximum allowed price, we work with the company to ensure that prices are restored and where necessary, any excess sales are recovered through standard operational processes.

The Government relies on competition to drive down prices of generic medicines including most antibiotics. This has led to some of the lowest prices in Europe and allows prices to react to the market. In an international market this ensures that when demand is high and supply is low, prices in the UK can increase to help secure the availability of medicines for UK patients. In secondary care, tendering for antibiotics on a frequent basis ensures best value and supply resilience is optimised.

Where companies are found to be abusing their dominant position by charging excessive and unfair prices, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) can take action against businesses and individuals engaged in anti-competitive conduct. Specifically with regard to antibiotics, the CMA is working to establish the facts of what is currently happening in the antibiotic market. They stand ready to take action if there is evidence of anti-competitive behaviour that breaks the law.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Pneumonia**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[167184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 1 November 2019 to Question 4411 on Electronic Cigarettes: Pneumonia, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the prevalence of lipoid pneumonia since the introduction of vaping.

Neil O'Brien:

It is not possible to assess the trends in the prevalence of lipoid pneumonia since the introduction of vaping. This is because there is insufficient data to identify this trend.

The evidence of respiratory risk from vaping is the subject of a Systematic Review in Chapter 10 of the report Nicotine Vaping in England 2022.

■ General Practitioners**Sir George Howarth:**[\[162489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2023 to Question 150403 on General Practitioners, who is responsible for collecting data on the proportion of GP appointments which are for minor ailments.

Neil O'Brien:

This is not currently a specific responsibility of the Department or NHS England.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[166160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the Sexual and Reproductive Health Action Plan; and what information his Department plans to publish on the implementation of that plan.

Neil O'Brien:

We published an HIV Action Plan in 2021 setting out our actions during 2022-2025 to move towards ending new human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmissions, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and HIV-related deaths within England by 2030. In 2022 we published the Women's Health Strategy for England setting out our 10-year ambitions and actions to improve health for women and girls. We remain committed to improving sexual and reproductive health in England and are considering the next steps for delivering the best outcomes.

■ Health Education: Children and Young People

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to educate young people on food and exercise choices.

Neil O'Brien:

As part of the Department's policy on childhood obesity, the Better Health Families programme promotes healthy eating and being active amongst children, as well as supporting families and parents of young children.

The Better Health Schools programme is designed to empower children to make better choices by establishing healthier habits and modelling healthier behaviours, including on nutrition and physical activity. It does this by providing teachers with curriculum-linked lesson plans, pupil-led campaigns, whole-school activities, and information to help support their teaching around nutrition, physical activity and mental wellbeing. The programme also includes materials that help children continue healthy choices at home and encourage dialogue within families. The resources, many of which are approved by the PSHE Association, are free to use.

■ Health Professions: Migrant Workers

Navendu Mishra:

[\[166379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to continue to recruit health workers from nations classified as red list by the World Health Organisation.

Will Quince:

The Code of Practice for International Recruitment guarantees stringent ethical standards when recruiting health and social care staff from overseas. The code aligns with latest advice from the World Health Organization (WHO) and prohibits active international recruitment from 'red-list' countries on the WHO Health Workforce

Support and Safeguards list, except where a Government-to-Government agreement is in place.

However, the Code is mindful of an individual's right to migrate and individuals from countries on this list can make direct applications for vacancies in the United Kingdom health and social care sectors if they do so independently and of their own accord.

■ Health Professions: Overseas Workers

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[166367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many (a) junior doctors, (b) consultants and (c) nurses have left the NHS to work in healthcare services abroad in each of the last five years, and whether he has made an assessment of the consequences for his policies of changes in the levels of staff leaving the NHS workforce to work abroad.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally, and no specific assessment has been made.

■ Health Professions: Private Sector

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[166366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) junior doctors, (b) consultants and (c) nurses have left the NHS to work in private healthcare in each of the last five years; and whether he has made an assessment of the consequences for his policies of changes in the levels of staff leaving the NHS workforce to work in private healthcare.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally and no specific assessment has been made of the impact of policies on moves into the private sector.

■ Health: Screening

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[166400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, if he will publish a timetable for the digitisation of the NHS Health Check.

Neil O'Brien:

The Digital NHS Health Check will be an innovative national tool that aims to increase participation in the cardiovascular disease prevention service. The Department is in the process of procuring the Alpha Phase of the Digital NHS Health Check which will focus on testing different ideas and solutions, such as the approach to biometric testing, how to invite eligible individuals and feed results back. We are working towards a live version of the digital health check being available in Spring 2024.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Simon Lightwood:

[\[166401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that it meets its 75 per cent target for the uptake of the NHS Healthy Start scheme by March 2023.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) operate the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. The NHSBSA is committed to increasing uptake of the scheme to ensure as many children as possible have a healthy start in life. The NHSBSA promotes the Healthy Start scheme through its digital channels and has created free tools to help stakeholders promote the scheme locally. The NHSBSA has also reached out to stakeholders to see how it can support them to promote the scheme.

■ Hospices: Children

Peter Dowd:

[\[162511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he has made an assessment of the potential impact of removing the NHS England Children's Hospice Grant on the delivery of services in those hospices.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made. NHS England determines the best use of its financial settlement to deliver services. Funding arrangements for children's hospices beyond 2023/24 have not yet been agreed. Palliative and end of life care is commissioned locally by integrated care boards in response to the needs of their local population.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Daisy Cooper:

[\[160429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been spent on the New Hospital Programme in (a) 2020, (b) 2021, (c) 2022 and (d) 2023 to date.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[160430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the estimated cost of the New Hospital Programme was in (a) 2020, (b) 2021, (c) 2022 and (d) 2023 to date.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[160431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the cost of the New Hospital Programme.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: The Government has committed an initial £3.7 billion for the first four years of the programme. This was part of a multi-year capital

funding settlement in 2020 and, as with any multi-year investment, future funding will be set out in further detail at future Spending Reviews.

The budget for the New Hospital Programme came into effect on 1 April 2021 and the total spent in 2021/22 was £646 million. This figure includes resource expenditure and capital expenditure from this date but does not include any prior year expenditure. Capital expenditure includes Public Dividend Capital funding to schemes, legacy costs relating to Health Infrastructure Plan schemes and resource adjustments. Spend for the 2022/23 financial year will only be available at the end of the financial year.

Estimates on costing of the New Hospital Programme are part of ongoing discussions with HM Treasury as part of the cross-government assurance process of the New Hospital Programme's Programme Business Case.

■ Mental Health Services: Artificial Intelligence

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[166295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the efficacy of AI therapeutics for mental health treatment.

Maria Caulfield:

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Health and Care Award has provided £123 million to 86 AI technologies. The Award was created to accelerate the testing and evaluation of some of the most promising AI technologies that can support clinicians in stroke diagnosis, cancer screening, cardiovascular monitoring and managing mental health conditions.

One such technology funded by the Department's AI in Health and Care Award is Wysa, a digital health app that uses an AI chatbot and a series of self-care exercises to provide mental health support and help people develop strategies to manage their mental health.

The app is being tested to see if it can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression in people who are referred to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies as well as help identify people who are experiencing severe mental health difficulties so they can be provided with additional support.

■ Mental Health Services: Software

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[166294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the efficacy of the use of apps in mental health treatment compared to talking therapies.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Early Value Assessments are specifically looking at promising technologies with an emerging evidence base for clinical effectiveness, including apps for use within mental health

treatment as one of its pilot topics. NICE has released guidance for guided digital Cognitive Behavioural Therapy tools for children and young people with symptoms of low mood and anxiety, which conditionally recommends these products for use once they have generated further evidence and achieved the NHS England Digital Technology Assessment Criteria. NICE have also recently launched a consultation on guidance for digital technologies to support adults with depression or anxiety, to gather views before a conditional recommendation is made.

■ **NHS England: Public Appointments**

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[166162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on appointing a clinical women's health lead for NHS England.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England are continuing to work with the Women's Health Ambassador and the Department with the aim of appointing a Women's Health lead in due course.

■ **NHS Trusts: Fines**

Matt Western: [\[162533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS trusts spent on paying fines in the last financial year.

Will Quince:

This information is not collected or held centrally by either the Department or NHS England.

■ **NHS: Staff**

Sir Robert Neill: [\[163771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the merger of NHS England and Health Education England on the implementation of the NHS long-term workforce plan.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[163772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the merger of Health Education England and NHS England will not impact the implementation of the NHS long-term workforce plan.

Will Quince:

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan has been developed jointly by NHS England and Health Education England (HEE), reflecting their close working relationship irrespective of the merger. The merger builds on cooperation and joint working between HEE and NHS England and will help ensure that the merged organisation performs its functions as effectively as possible, including on the implementation of the Long-Term Workforce Plan.

The Department will continue to monitor and track the performance of the new NHS England through the NHS England mandate.

■ **Obesity: Children**

Matt Vickers: [\[166392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to help tackle childhood obesity.

Neil O'Brien:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish on 20 January 2023 to Question [119899](#).

■ **Obesity: Health Services**

Rachael Maskell: [\[167183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle obesity in adults.

Neil O'Brien:

In addition to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 27 February 2023 to Question 151337, the weight loss drug Semaglutide (Wegovy) will be available on the National Health Service within three months of its launch in the United Kingdom with eligibility in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommendations to ensure clinically and cost effective use.

■ **Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Public Appointments**

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[166163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to appoint a new Medical Consultant in Reproductive and Public Health at the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

Neil O'Brien:

Clinical expertise on reproductive and public health is sought as and when required through existing relationships or specifically commissioned work. The Department has no plans to appoint a new Medical Consultant in Reproductive and Public Health at the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities at this time.

■ **Ophthalmic Services: Special Educational Needs**

Sarah Jones: [\[166307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve access to eye care for people with learning disabilities.

Sarah Jones: [\[166308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to conduct a public consultation to inform the (a) structure, (b) funding and (c) commissioning of a potential model of eye care in special schools.

Sarah Jones:

[166309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for publication of the independent evaluation of the NHS England special schools eye care service.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Long Term Plan made a commitment to ensure that children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism in special residential schools have access to sight checks in school. To fulfil that commitment, NHS England commenced a proof-of-concept programme in 2021, piloting sight testing and the dispensing of glasses in special schools.

This programme is currently subject to independent evaluation, which includes engagement with a wide range of parents, special schools and other stakeholders with an interest. We expect the evaluation to have concluded by May 2023. The evaluation of and learning from this work will inform decisions about how the eye care needs of people with learning disabilities should be commissioned.

The Department will also be hosting a roundtable currently scheduled for 28 March 2023, to discuss eye care services for people with learning disabilities.

■ Patients: Digital Technology

Rachael Maskell:

[163811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2023 to Question 157671 on Patients: Digital Technology, if he will set out for which patient cohorts that the use of wearables is being piloted; and what data is being tracked for this purpose, including any further information about these pilot initiatives.

Neil O'Brien:

The information requested is not held centrally. Examples of pilots and patient cohorts include the NHS's Digital Health Partnership Award has supported two wearables-based projects that remain in progress. Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust is trialling the use of smartwatch data via the Fitbit device, through the Digitally Enhanced Rehabilitation in Cardiac Patients programme, in conjunction with Connected Life and Google Health, to improve rehabilitation services for those who have had a heart attack or heart surgery.

The National Health Service in Plymouth is leading work using the Parkinson's Kinetograph wearable, which is worn for six days to monitor patient's movements at home. This information enables clinicians to look for signs that medicines need changing or that other interventions such as physiotherapy are required.

■ Protective Clothing: Contracts

Angela Rayner: [\[156974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide an update on his Department's plans for responding to the Humble Address Motion of 6 December 2022 on Government PPE contracts.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 7 March 2023]: The Department wrote to the Committee in February to update on progress. The Committee published the letter and we remain on course to provide the information as framed in our letter.

■ Public Health

Rachael Maskell: [\[166280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's Guidance on Public health grants to local authorities: 2023 to 2024, published on 14 March, what steps he is taking to prioritise public health.

Neil O'Brien:

In 2023/24, the total Public Health Grant to local authorities will be £3.529 billion, increasing to £3.575 billion in 2024/25. This will provide every local authority with real-terms funding protection over the next two years.

This is part of a wider package of specific public health investment up to 2025 of £170 million to improve the Start for Life offer available to families, and £516 million to support improvements in the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment. This means that overall, the Department investment in local authority public health services will grow by over 5% in real terms over the next two years.

Our ambition is to improve healthy life expectancy by five years by 2035 and reduce the gap between areas where it is highest and lowest by 2030.

We have announced that we will publish a Major Conditions Strategy and interventions set out in the strategy will aim to alleviate pressure on the health system, as well as support the government's objective to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce ill-health related labour market inactivity

■ Sexual Offences: Victims

Daisy Cooper: [\[162539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Strategic direction for sexual assault and abuse services, Lifelong care for victims and survivors: 2018-2023, published on 12 April 2018, if he will commission a review of that strategy document.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England's strategic document will be continued for 2024. During 2023/24 NHS England will co-produce an updated strategy with partners and lived experience groups, to incorporate the responsibilities of integrated care boards.

■ **Shellfish: EU Law****Anthony Mangnall:****[R] [163883]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the review by Seafish entitled Review of the application of the Official Control Regulations for shellfish, published June 2021, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of that review's findings; and what progress has been made by the Food Standards Agency on implementing the Review's recommendations.

Neil O'Brien:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has assessed the recommendations set out in the Seafish Review and in collaboration with shellfish stakeholders has prioritised those considered workable within the existing legal framework. Proposals which require legislative change are not considered feasible at the present time. To date, the FSA has introduced two new criteria for handling high results, updated protocols to confirm that appropriately validated alternative test methods can be used for official control purposes and communicated that local authorities can delegate official control sampling to third parties.

The FSA is also working on further revisions to its approaches, including reviewing the timeframe for resampling and reopening production areas after high results. This work is complex and takes time. It is imperative that any changes introduced ensure continued food safety and maintain the confidence of consumers and trading partners.

■ **Sleep****Jim Shannon:****[166232]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's 2019 consultation on Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s, whether he plans to publish national guidance on sleep.

Neil O'Brien:

Through 'Advancing Our Health: Prevention in the 2020s', the Government committed to review the evidence on sleep and health, and that review was completed by Public Health England. The Department has no current plans to publish national guidance on sleep.

■ Suicide Prevention Fund**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:****[166296]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many organisations will benefit from funding through the Suicide Prevention Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Grant Fund.

Maria Caulfield:

As the Chancellor announced in the Spring Budget, we will assign an extra £10 million over the next two years for the voluntary, community and social enterprise Suicide Prevention Grant Fund. Further information about the fund will be set out in due course.

■ Tobacco**Daniel Kawczynski:****[163856]**

To the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of 9 March by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Official Report, column 186WH, whether tobacco control measures in the Major Conditions Strategy will be in addition to the Tobacco Control Plan.

Neil O'Brien:

In the coming weeks, the Government will unveil a set of proposals to realise the Smokefree 2030 ambition and respond to the recommendations in the Khan Review. This will be separate to the Major Conditions Strategy.

■ Vaccination: Hospitals**Esther McVey:****[161285]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to correspondence from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Primary Care and Public Health to the Rt. hon Member for Tatton on 2 March 2023, on what evidential basis his Department has concluded that its plan for an integrated covid-19 booster and flu vaccination programme will minimise hospital admissions from both viruses.

Maria Caulfield:

COVID-19 and flu vaccination are offered to those most at risk to help protect against serious illness and to reduce hospitalisation. Studies on reduced hospitalisation as a result of vaccination are available at the following links:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1141541/Greenbook-chapter-14a-9March2023.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19>

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advice is that co-administration at the same appointment is appropriate where operationally expedient, however, people are advised not to delay either vaccine in order to have them together.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

Sir Christopher Chope:

[166116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March to Question 156040 on Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, whether the same restriction applies to the letters of 3 February and 1 March from the Hon Member for Christchurch; and what steps he is taking to ensure that Rt Hon and Hon Members can monitor individual constituency claims made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

The restrictions noted in response to Question 156040 do not always apply to letters from hon. Members. Where hon. Members have permission from their constituent to request further information about their claim, it may be possible to include personal data within a response to a letter. However, the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme is administered by NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) and the hon. Member should contact NHSBSA directly, since the Department does not hold individual case information.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[166128]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023 to Question 162117 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (a) principals and (b) dependents were housed in bridging hotels on 15 March 2023 following their relocation to the UK under that scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

All those resettling under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), have recourse to public funds and the right to work and study.

We are working intensively across government, and in partnership with local authorities across the country to both bring down the number of people in bridging hotels and help families move into more sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible so they can put down permanent roots. Local authorities currently receive integration tariff funding of £20,520 per person, over three years, for each Afghan family they resettle and provide full integration support to for this duration.

Statistics on individuals resettled or relocated under the Afghan schemes is available in the [Immigration System Statistics, year ending December 2022](#)(opens in a new tab) release.

■ Anti-social Behaviour

Henry Smith:

[\[904160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Suella Braverman:

We are committed to tackling ASB and the House will be aware that we are committed to recruiting 20,000 additional police officers which will take us to the highest number we have ever had.

We expanded the Safer Streets Fund to include the tackling of ASB as one of its primary aims.

We have also last year published the ASB Principles to establish a strong and effective partnership response to ASB.

■ Asylum

Rachael Maskell:

[\[162235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to open up safe routes for people seeking refuge to come to the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people fleeing war and persecution. Between 2015 and December 2022, just under half a million (481,804) people were offered safe and legal routes into the UK.

In addition to dedicated resettlement schemes for Syria, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Ukraine, the UK has welcomed refugees and people in need around the world through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship, the Mandate Resettlement Scheme, and Family Reunion.

It is not right that control of national borders should be suspended to allow people who have already reached safety in countries with fully functioning asylum systems, to travel further to another country as a matter of preference. This undermines the broader immigration system, and encourages people to fund criminal gangs and to risk their lives trying to get to the UK in unseaworthy vessels or packed dangerously into cars and lorries. Moreover, it diverts our finite resources from those who are most in need of assistance.

As outlined by the Prime Minister, as we tackle illegal migration, we will be able to bring forward more safe and legal routes.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[904175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress her Department has made on reducing the use of hotels as contingency accommodation for asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

This government does not want to continue the use of hotels for a day longer than necessary. We are as frustrated as the public are at the cost to the taxpayer.

Our strategy is to limit hotels wherever possible by increasing dispersal accommodation agreed with local authorities and by making use of large sites. We are working with the MoD to make use of disused military sites.

Migrants will be housed in decent, but not luxurious accommodation, that does not create a pull factor to the UK.

The Government can't build it's way out of this challenge, nor can the UK taxpayer afford to do so. The only sustainable answer is to deter individuals from making this dangerous, unnecessary and illegal journey, as we will be doing through our Illegal Migration Bill.

■ Asylum: Interviews**Jessica Morden:**[\[904181\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of waiting times for asylum interviews.

Robert Jenrick:

Activity is underway to reduce the waiting time to be interviewed through a number of process improvements, including conducting shorter, more focused interviews and giving more flexibility over the process of making asylum decisions.

I am pleased to report we are on track and have doubled the number of caseworkers on cases. We have also prioritised those eligible for removal through a new dedicated unit staffed by 400 new specialists considering claims from Albanian illegal migrants.

■ Drugs: Organised Crime**Julian Knight:**[\[163802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of police operations in tackling county lines.

Chris Philp:

This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities. This is why, through the 10-year Drug Strategy, we are bolstering our County Lines Programme, investing up to £145m over three years to tackle the most violent and exploitative distribution model yet seen. By 2025, we expect this to result in over 2,000 more county lines closed, through a sustained attack on the distribution model.

We know our County Lines Programme is delivering. Since the County Lines Programme was launched in 2019, police activity has resulted in over 3,500 lines closed, 10,000 arrests, and 5,600 safeguarding referrals. This includes over 1,000 line closures since April 2022 against the Drugs Strategy commitment. The latest National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC) assessment of County Lines

also shows a reduction in the total number of potentially active lines per month, with numbers reported to have fallen from between 800-1,100 in 2019/20 to 600 in 2020/21.

As part of our County Lines Programme, the NCLCC also regularly coordinates weeks of intensive action against county lines gangs, which all police forces take part in. The most recent of these took place 27 February - 5 March and resulted in 276 lines closed (68% increase on the last Intensification Week), as well as 1,658 arrests and over 30kg worth of Class A drugs, £2m in cash and 404 weapons seized.

■ **Dungavel House Immigration Removal Centre**

Neale Hanvey: [\[165452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) asylum seekers, (b) children and (c) pregnant women were detained at the immigration detention facility at Dungavel in each year since it opened; and for how long each was detained.

Neale Hanvey: [\[165454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the value was of the contracts awarded to GEO Group for the operation of the Dungavel House immigration removal centre in each year of the operation of those contracts.

Neale Hanvey: [\[165455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the value was of the security contract for the operation of Dungavel House immigration removal centre in each year since 2001.

Neale Hanvey: [\[165458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the annual budget was for maintaining and operating the immigration detention facility at Dungavel in each year since 2001.

Robert Jenrick:

Contact takes place between Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) and relevant local stakeholders, as necessary, on issues relating to the day to day running of the centre. Although immigration is not a devolved matter, we will keep the Scottish Government informed of any significant changes to the operation of this IRC.

The Annual Budget for Dungavel House IRC forms part of the budget for the wider detention estate and is not disaggregated. Published figures for the average cost of a detention bed per day can be found at the link: Immigration Enforcement data: Q4 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The Home Office publishes statistics on people entering and leaving immigration detention in the 'Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release'. The number of people entering detention each quarter are in table Det_D01 of the 'Detention detailed datasets', where the data can be broken down by age and first place of detention. The number of people leaving detention each quarter are in table Det_D03

of the 'Detention detailed datasets', where the data can be broken down by length of detention.

The Home Office does not publish by place of detention: asylum-related detentions, length of detention of people leaving detention, or a breakdown of pregnant women detained.

However, data on the total number of asylum-related detentions each year is in table Det_01 and data on the total number leaving detention by place of detention is in table Det_04c of the 'Detention summary tables'. The latest data relate to the end of December 2022.

Data on the total number of pregnant women detained in the immigration detention estate each quarter is published in table PWD_01 of the 'Immigration Enforcement data: Q4 2022'. This data is only available from July 2016 and goes up to the end of September 2022. For data prior to 2010, see the archived Detention tables.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Workplace Pensions

Chloe Smith:

[\[166169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an estimate with Cabinet colleagues of the number and proportion of firefighters who have received compensation for firefighter pension arrears in accordance with the firefighter pension scheme immediate detriment framework as of 2 March 2023.

Chris Philp:

The firefighters' pension scheme is locally administered by each of the separate employing fire and rescue authorities in England.

The Home Office does not have any role in the administration of firefighters' pensions and does not hold data on the number of firefighters who have received their pensions paid under the terms of the immediate detriment framework.

■ Fraud

Julian Knight:

[\[163788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has provided funding for the development of (a) technologies and (b) training to help tackle fraud.

Tom Tugendhat:

We are providing over £30 million to City of London Police over the next three years to refresh and upgrade the Action Fraud service.

Improvements are being made on an ongoing basis, with the new service expected to be fully operational by 2024. The upgrade will improve the support services and reporting tools for victims, provide greater intelligence to policing for investigations, and allow for greater proactive disruption of fraudsters at scale.

The Government is also increasing law enforcement investigative capacity to tackle fraud. The Spending Review has allocated £400 million to tackle economic crime, including fraud.

This is in addition to the funding that the Home Office commits each year to the National Economic Crime Centre in the NCA, and police forces.

■ Immigration: Scotland

Neale Hanvey: [\[166376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has received representations from the Scottish Government on the potential merits of the devolution of immigration policy.

Robert Jenrick:

We continue to engage on immigration matters with every nation of the UK in collaboration with the Devolved Governments and Territorial Offices.

However, immigration is and will remain a reserved matter.

Carol Monaghan: [\[904179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of her immigration policies on the (a) population of and (b) labour market in Scotland.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK's immigration system enables individuals to enter UK for work purposes from all parts of the world where they have a suitable job offer and meet our criteria. This is helping fill skills gaps, boosting our economy and through specific visa offers, such as the Health and Care visa, supporting our public services.

There is no compelling argument that Scotland should have a different immigration system to the rest of the UK. Indeed it's economy benefits from the simplicity and clarity of having one single system for our country. Scotland's economically active rate is closely aligned with UK average. Minor variations are accounted for in the Scotland specific Shortage Occupation List.

■ Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner: Public Appointments

Tony Lloyd: [\[162487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to appoint a new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

Robert Jenrick:

The role of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) as set out in the 2015 Modern Slavery Act is to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of slavery and human trafficking offences and the identification of victims.

The Home Secretary recognises the importance of the role of Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and has launched a new open competition to recruit for this role.

The advert for the role went live on 23 February 2023 and can be found on the public appointment section on gov.uk with an estimate timeline for the appointment.

The competition will be conducted as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring we take the necessary steps to recruit the best person for the role.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[166127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what process her Department follows when an enquiry received through the HM Passport Office line for hon. Members is passed to the escalation team.

Robert Jenrick:

When a passport-related enquiry is received via the MP Hotline to escalate an application, where possible, HM Passport Office will prioritise the case in line with its policies. The customer's details will be added to an escalations log, pending the receipt of the evidence required. Once received, the information is urgently passed onto the team that specialise in these cases to liaise directly with the customer if necessary and issue the passport once all checks have been satisfactorily completed.

■ **Passports**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[166126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of passport applications that will need to be submitted between 15 March 2023 and the end of the year; how many applications there were in the same period last year; and whether she plans to amend staffing arrangements to meet the service delivery targets in place.

Robert Jenrick:

With approximately 5 million people having delayed their passport application due to the restrictions upon international travel caused by COVID-19, the elevated demand for passports will continue throughout 2023.

HM Passport Office has processed more than two million applications across January and February, with over 99.5% of standard UK applications being processed within ten weeks and 95.5% being processed within three weeks.

Given the exceptional cause of this demand, the exact volumes and profile of when this will arrive is less predictable than in a normal year. The current expectations are that demand will be within 6.1 million and 7.1 million between the weeks ending 19 March 2023 to 31 December 2023. Between 15 March 2022 and 31 December 2022, HM Passport Office received 6,484,414 passport applications.

■ Patrol Craft: UK Border Force

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[156934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent on unplanned maintenance and repair of Border Force Cutters in each of the last five years as of 1 March 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

Vessels become non-operational either to rectify minor faults which only take a short period of time or because they are going into planned maintenance.

Border Force Maritime Command factor into the yearly budgets maintenance and repair costs to ensure our Maritime teams remain fully operational.

■ Police: Crimes of Violence

Damien Moore: [\[165493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that police officers accused of violence by women are appropriately investigated.

Chris Philp:

The Government has been clear that police officers must be held to the highest standards and that those who commit acts such as domestic and sexual abuse must be rooted out.

By law, allegations of serious assaults, serious sexual offences or abuse of position by police officers must be referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) for consideration.

The Government is currently carrying out a review into the process of police officer dismissals which, among other areas, is investigating the consistency of decision making in cases of police-perpetrated violence against women and girls (VAWG). Part 2 of the Angiolini Inquiry will also examine issues in policing such as vetting and recruitment practices and police culture, and the safety of women.

All forces are also currently checking officers and staff against the Police National Database so that they can take action on any intelligence or allegations that require further investigation.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Rachael Maskell: [\[162237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to enable the parents of children who have come to the UK from Afghanistan under the UNHCR scheme, and are currently fostered by British families, to come to the UK so that they can resume their parenting roles.

Robert Jenrick:

The UNHCR refer refugees who have fled Afghanistan under Pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), based on assessments of protection needs and vulnerabilities. Those we resettle under Pathway 2 (and the ACRS as whole) may be accompanied by their immediate family members, including spouse or partner and dependent children under 18 years.

Seema Malhotra:[\[163820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156972 on Refugees: Afghanistan, whether this information applies to pathway (a) one and (b) two.

Robert Jenrick:

Yes, I can confirm that it does.

Seema Malhotra:[\[165319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan citizens have been accepted onto Pathway 2 of the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme in principle.

Robert Jenrick:

We anticipate receiving referrals from UNHCR for up to 2,000 refugees during the first year of pathway 2, although this number will be kept under review. We will continue to receive UNHCR referrals to the scheme in coming years.

We are pleased to have now welcomed the first arrivals to the UK under ACRS Pathway 2, and we will continue to welcome many more people as we receive further UNHCR referrals.

The Home Office is working to assure information relating to all the individuals relocated on case working systems. Once this work concludes, the Home Office will include all Afghan resettlement statistics in its [quarterly Immigration Statistics publications](#).

■ Refugees: Housing**Rachael Maskell:**[\[162233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on taking steps to place obligations on local authorities to provide housing for a set number of refugee families.

Robert Jenrick:

As the Prime Minister set out in his statement to Parliament on 13 December 2022, the UK will establish an annual cap on the number of people who come to the UK via safe and legal routes which will depend on a variety of factors, including Local Authorities' capacity to support them.

In introducing this cap, we will consult with Local Authorities first to understand their capacity and ensure that we have the resource to properly support and integrate people into our communities, before Parliament votes and commits to a final number.

The UK's resettlement schemes are only possible thanks to the commitment of over 350 Local Authorities and community sponsors across the UK.

■ Slavery

Hilary Benn:

[165223]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has provided guidance to people reporting that they are victims of trafficking or modern slavery of the potential impact on them of Clause 2(3) of the Illegal Migration Bill.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK government remains committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery and supporting victims.

The Illegal Migration Bill will crack down on the opportunities to abuse modern slavery protections, by preventing people who come to the UK through illegal and dangerous journeys from misusing modern slavery safeguards to block their removal.

We are working on developing guidance regarding the operation of these measures, including any potential impacts and how they relate to victims of Modern Slavery, to be introduced when it is appropriate to do so once the Illegal Migration Bill has progressed through Parliament.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Fines

Steve Reed:

[166244]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the average sum court fines issued in each year since 2010.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on average fine amounts issued at all courts in England and Wales between 2010 and 2021 across the following data tools:

- 2010-2016: [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2020](#).
- 2017-2021: [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2021](#).

The average fine amount issued at courts has increased between 2010 and 2021, from £223 in 2010 to £497 in 2021.

This information for the annual year of 2022 is due for publication in May 2023.

■ Family Courts

Sarah Olney:

[\[166299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recourse is available to parties in Family Court proceedings if the Family Court does not follow its own guidance with respect to pseudoscience and appeals are not being allowed.

Mike Freer:

The use of expert evidence in the family court is a judicial matter, with parameters set in legislation and procedure rules, particularly section 13 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Part 25 and Practice Directions 25A to 25G of Family Procedure Rules 2010.

Where an individual believed that a wrong or unsafe decision has been made by the court, there are routes of appeal and individuals can apply to have an order varied. In some cases, the appeal judge may consider an application for permission to appeal on paper and refuse. However, parties can ask for this decision to be reconsidered at an oral hearing unless the court has already determined that the application is totally without merit and therefore cannot be reconsidered.

■ Funerals

Christopher Pincher:

[\[163762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department holds data on the average time taken for a funeral to take place following a death in England.

Mike Freer:

The Government does not have operational responsibility for the provision of funeral services and as such does not collate the information centrally.

■ Judges: South East

Caroline Lucas:

[\[163873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time equivalent District Judge posts are unfilled in the Kent, Surrey and Sussex region.

Mike Freer:

Increasing judicial capacity is a priority for the government and we continue to work with the judiciary to ensure we have the capacity required. The Judicial Appointments Commission carry out a national programme of District Judge recruitment every 12 months. The last exercise seeking 100 District Judges closed in October with appointments due to be made this summer. We recruit nationally and the Senior Presiding Judge decides deployment. This means there is not a set number of vacancies in a particular region however local capacity and issues such as part time working and retirements inform the Senior Presiding Judge's decisions on the deployment process.

In the last District Judge deployment round – which took place in autumn 2022 – 5 District Judges were appointed to the Kent, Surrey and Sussex region. Whilst

deployment is a judicial decision, we expect there to be a need for additional District Judges in the region from the next recruitment round.

The department and HMCTS are working in close partnership with the judiciary to ensure adequate levels of District Judges across England and Wales, with a 17% increase in recruitment at the last exercise.

■ Judiciary: Conduct

Ellie Reeves: [\[165472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had recent discussions with the Lord Chief Justice on his commission of qualitative research to determine the level of any inappropriate behaviour within the judiciary.

Mike Freer:

It is standard practice not to comment on discussions between Ministers and the judiciary. The Lord Chief Justice and Senior President of Tribunals have statutory responsibilities for the welfare of the judiciary. They have set out the work they are leading in a joint message that was published on the judiciary website on 19 January.

■ Magistrates: Recruitment

Julian Knight: [\[163805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of magistrates.

Mike Freer:

The recruitment of more magistrates is one of the Government's top priorities for the magistracy. The Ministry of Justice has invested over £1 million in a programme of work to support the recruitment of 4,000 new and diverse magistrates over the next few years. On 17 January 2022, we launched a digitised, more efficient, recruitment process alongside an inclusive marketing strategy which aims to target a wider, more diverse audience, attract more applicants and recruit more from under-represented groups. As of 31 October 2022, 4,321 people have applied.

On 10 March 2022 we increased the mandatory retirement age of all judicial office holders, including magistrates, to 75. We expect this to retain an additional 2,000 magistrates yearly. In addition, retired magistrates under 75 were invited to apply for reinstatement. 786 have been approved.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Nationality and Borders Act 2022

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[166257\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of post-legislative scrutiny of the Nationality and Borders Act.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out in the Guide to Making Legislation

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-making-legislation>), any post-legislative scrutiny usually takes place three to five years after Royal Assent. It will be for the Home Office to discuss the publication of any post-legislative scrutiny memorandum with the Home Affairs Select Committee in the coming years.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Buildings: Safety****Matthew Pennycook:****[162523]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State for Housing and Planning in the Delegated Legislation Committee of 18 July 2022 on the Draft Building Safety (Leaseholder Protections) (Information etc.) (England) Regulations 2022, Official Report, column 10, whether his Department secured the appropriate memorandum from the Law Officers providing for approval of a retrospective law in accordance with Cabinet Office guidance.

Lee Rowley:

As set out in paragraph 21.27 of Erskine May and paragraph 2.13 of the Ministerial Code, by long-standing convention, observed by successive Governments, the fact of, and substance of advice from, the Law Officers of the Crown is not generally disclosed outside Government.

■ Elections: Fraud**Matt Western:****[162534]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people who committed voter fraud in Warwick and Leamington constituency in the 2019 general election.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [23255](#) on 1st July 2022.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**Fleur Anderson:****[162312]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps the Government has taken to (a) ensure that all UK households know about the new voter ID requirement and (b) increase the number of people in possession of a valid ID; and what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of carrying out an all-household mailing, to help ensure that households know about the photo ID requirements for voting.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [124038](#) on the 19 January 2023.

Grahame Morris:[\[165271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many people have applied in England for the Voter Authority Certificate as of 1 March 2023; how many applications have been rejected for a Certificate; and whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of voters that will need a certificate.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the UQ response [here](#), to the Cabinet Office [published](#) survey on levels of ownership of photographic identification, and to the New Burdens funding methodology for the Elections Act 2022 available [here](#).

Information regarding applications for Voter Authority Certificates is [published](#) online. The rejection of an application is a matter for the relevant Electoral Registration Officer.

Housing: Heating**Martyn Day:**[\[162520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) a ban on installing gas boilers and (b) encouraging developers to install heat pumps in all new homes after 2025.

Lee Rowley:

The Government has previously announced it intends to consult on the Future Homes Standard later this year.

Housing: Smoke Alarms**Catherine West:**[\[162525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to require homes in England to have interlinked smoke alarms.

Lee Rowley:

Building Regulations require that buildings include appropriate provisions for the early warning of fire. To meet the guidance on fire safety in Approved Document B, all new dwellings, and existing dwellings undergoing building work, should have interlinked fire alarms.

Land: Reform**Stephen Morgan:**[\[162536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing polices for land reform in England to help improve transparency in land ownership.

Rachel Maclean:

Part 11 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill includes relevant provisions and is under consideration in the House of Lords.

■ Leasehold

Stella Creasy:

[\[165252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps the Government is taking to protect leaseholders from charges arising from (a) external wall reviews and (b) other professional services related to a relevant defect that had not previously been formally identified.

Lee Rowley:

Where the defects identified from external wall reviews, and other professional services, fall under the classification of 'relevant defects', then the charges arising from such reviews and services will be covered by the leaseholder protections under the Building Safety Act 2022 and will count towards the capped costs qualifying leaseholders would pay if the building owner is not liable for all costs.

Where developers or building owners are not currently funding cladding remediation, and where recommended by a Fire Risk Appraisal of External Wall construction (FRAEW), the Building Safety Fund will fund eligible remedial work directly related to addressing life safety fire risks associated with cladding for high-rise residential buildings. The costs of an FRAEW will be reimbursed to the applicant if it meets the Building Safety Fund's eligibility requirements.

■ Local Government: Elections

Grahame Morris:

[\[165270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what proportion of the funds allocated to local authorities holding elections in May 2023 are for the purpose of retraining officers at polling stations to determine recognisable photos.

Grahame Morris:

[\[165272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance his Department has produced on the criteria by which a photographic ID is deemed recognisable of the individual holding that identification.

Grahame Morris:

[\[165273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of voter ID measures on the number of minority and ethnic voters expected to exercise their right to vote.

Cat Smith:

[\[165280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an estimate on the number of eligible voters who may be unable to vote at

polling stations due to the new Voter ID legislation because of a lack of (a) acceptable ID and (b) awareness of the new requirements.

Cat Smith: [165282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of applications for voter authority certificates have been rejected; and what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who will require a voter authority certificate.

Cat Smith: [165285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who will apply for a voter authority certificate; and how many and what proportion of those people have been issued with a certificate.

Cat Smith: [165286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Driving License 2021 data published on 13 January 2023 which showed that 53 per cent of Black people and 76 per cent of White people had a driving licence, if he will make a comparative assessment of the potential impact of the new voter identification requirement on the ability of people in those two groups to provide sufficient identification to vote; and if he will take steps with his Cabinet colleagues to help ensure that people of all ethnicities are equally able to vote.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the UQ response [here](#), to the Cabinet Office [published](#) survey on levels of ownership of photographic identification, and to the New Burdens funding methodology for the Elections Act 2022 available [here](#).

Information regarding applications for Voter Authority Certificates is [published](#) online. The rejection of an application is a matter for the relevant Electoral Registration Officer.

■ Private Rented Housing: Standards

Dan Carden: [166333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of setting timescales for landlords to respond to complaints about damp and mould in the private rented sector.

Dan Carden: [166334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the finding in research published by Generation Rent on 14 March 2023 that local councils in England found 1106 private rented homes with dangerous levels of damp and mould in 2021-22.

Dan Carden:

[166335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that councils are able to help protect tenants who have complained about damp and mould in private rented accommodation from retaliatory evictions. .

Dan Carden:

[166336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to help improve the standards of properties in the private rented sector.

Rachel Maclean:

I refer the Hon member to the answer to UIN [152295](#) given on 1 March 2023.

Our forthcoming reforms to private renting will improve conditions more broadly for properties in the sector, in line with our mission to halve the number of non-decent rented homes by 2030. We will introduce a Decent Homes Standard for private rented homes for the first time, and we will also abolish section 21 evictions to strengthen tenants' ability to complain about damp and mould without fear of retaliatory evictions. We will continue to consider all options necessary to make sure that tenants' concerns on damp and mould are taken seriously.

We are providing £14 million of funding to local authorities through our Pathfinder programme to help trial new approaches to enforcement action and promote the sharing of best practice to improve standards in the sector.

■ **Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations**

Alison McGovern:

[162505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department intends to publish information on its plans to extend the voluntary Right to Buy scheme to housing association tenants.

Rachel Maclean:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [139221](#) on 13 February 2023.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Somerton and Frome**

David Warburton:

[162528]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department has taken to support rough sleepers in Somerton and Frome constituency during the winter 2022-23.

Felicity Buchan:

This Government remains committed to ending rough sleeping and tackling homelessness. In September 2022, we published a bold, new strategy, *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good*, which is available [here](#). The strategy sets out cross

government action and how we are investing £2 billion over three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

This includes allocating up to £500 million over three years to 303 local authorities across England through the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25. In the financial year 2022/23 Mendip was allocated £398,230 from the Rough Sleeping Initiative. This funding is giving local authorities the resources to offer accommodation, support, and a route off the streets for people sleeping rough in Somerton and Frome.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Julian Knight:

[\[163793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to support people affected by Troubles related crimes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill - which is continuing its passage through Parliament - will establish an Independent Body to conduct reviews into Troubles-related deaths and serious injuries, with the primary objective of providing information to families, and victims and survivors.

This legislation seeks to ensure that the process for dealing with the past focuses on measures that can deliver positive outcomes for as many people directly affected by the Troubles as possible - as well as for society in Northern Ireland as a whole - before opportunities to do so are lost forever.

■ Travel Requirements: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[166385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his announcement on Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) on 9 March 2023, whether he has had further discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of the ETA scheme on the tourism industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Government remains committed to working with a wide range of stakeholders, including Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland, to ensure the ETA requirement is communicated effectively. We will achieve this through targeted messaging, using a variety of channels, thereby mitigating against any risk of it being seen as an increased barrier to cross-border tourism on the island of Ireland

Those entering the UK, including those crossing the land border into Northern Ireland, will continue to be required to follow the UK's immigration rules. This includes any ETA requirement when it is introduced, if it is applicable to them.

■ Travel: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[166384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on travel on the island of Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

Those entering the UK, including those crossing the land border into Northern Ireland, will continue to be required to follow the UK's immigration rules.

As now, the UK will not operate routine immigration controls on the Common Travel Area, with none whatsoever on the Ireland-Northern Ireland land border.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ 5G: Infrastructure

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[166174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that new 5G infrastructure is equally distributed throughout the country.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[166175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department are taking to improve 5G infrastructure in Suffolk.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[166176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department are taking to improve 5G infrastructure in rural areas.

Julia Lopez:

This Government is taking steps to improve both 4G and 5G coverage across the country. With industry, we are investing £1 billion in the Shared Rural Network, to extend 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025.

We have also steps to make it easier and cheaper for operators to deploy 5G. This includes reforming the planning system in England. Alongside this, measures within the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022, will support upgrades of sites to 5G.

Our forthcoming Wireless Infrastructure Strategy will articulate a clear vision for how advanced wireless infrastructure, including 5G, can become an integral part of the fabric of the UK's economy and society by 2030. We will set out how we will continue to drive 5G deployment across the UK.

■ Broadband: Leicestershire**Dr Luke Evans:****[165420]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress her Department has made on delivering fast and reliable broadband in (a) Bosworth constituency and (b) Leicestershire.

Julia Lopez:

In January 2019, only 0.2% of premises in the Bosworth constituency had access to fast, reliable gigabit-capable broadband (speeds over over 1,000Mbps). That figure has leapt to over 67% today. During the same period, gigabit-capable coverage across Leicestershire has risen from 1.7% to over 70% today.

We are committed to increasing this coverage further through Project Gigabit, the Government's £5 billion mission to deliver lightning-fast, reliable broadband across the UK. As part of this, we have begun launching procurements that give subsidies to broadband suppliers to build gigabit-capable infrastructure to premises that will not be reached by suppliers' commercial plans alone.

Up to 2,900 premises in the Bosworth constituency are likely to be included in our Leicestershire and Warwickshire procurement, which is expected to launch in the coming weeks.

The Bosworth constituency has also made good use of our Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, which provides a subsidy of up to £4,500 for residents and businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband. More than 50 premises in the constituency have claimed and received payment for a voucher through the scheme, with a value of almost £85,000.

Alongside this, Leicestershire County Council is delivering a GigaHubs project, funded by Building Digital UK, which includes 12 sites in the Bosworth constituency. The sites will act as hubs bringing gigabit-capable broadband into the heart of hard-to-reach communities for the first time, making it more commercially attractive for suppliers to deliver gigabit connectivity to the surrounding communities.

■ Broadband: Northern Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[166152]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2023 to Question 161241 on Broadband, if she will hold discussions with Innovate UK on taking steps to highlight the access of Northern Ireland businesses to gigabit-capable broadband to help increase (a) inward investment and (b) the growth of small and medium enterprises in that region.

Julia Lopez:

Innovate UK is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the national funding agency investing in research & innovation which is sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). Its main purpose is to invest in and facilitate research and innovation activities across the United Kingdom.

Innovate UK works closely with partners across government, including the Department of Business and Trade, to support attracting and retaining inward investment in Northern Ireland. This includes showcasing Northern Ireland's excellent digital connectivity, including the widespread availability of gigabit-capable broadband, which is a key driver in Northern Ireland's attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest.

■ Semiconductors

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[166258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February to Question 137859 on Semiconductors, whether he plans to publish the UK's semiconductor strategy in this parliamentary session.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has been reviewing the UK government's approach to the semiconductor sector and intends to set out its plans for the sector in the forthcoming UK Semiconductor Strategy. The Strategy will be published as soon as possible.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[166259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of the technology sector on the forthcoming UK Semiconductor Strategy.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has been reviewing the UK government's approach to the semiconductor sector and intends to set out its plan for the sector in the forthcoming UK Semiconductor Strategy. This has been developed through extensive engagement with industry experts, representative bodies and the wider global community. The Department continues to engage regularly with the sector on the strategy and related issues.

■ STEM Subjects: Employment

Chi Onwurah:

[\[165337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Government's target to increase the proportion of STEM graduates in the Fast Stream to 50 per cent on skills shortages in STEM sectors; and what steps her Department is taking to reduce staff shortages in STEM dependent sectors.

George Freeman:

Last week, the Department published the UK science and technology framework, which sets out our goals and vision for science and technology in an enduring framework that will see us through to 2030. This includes a vision to build on the UK's already amazing talent and skills base. Initial work under the framework will include:

- Developing a DfE Skills Dashboard in 2023, to understand the supply and demand of science and technology skills for the technologies that we plan to prioritise.
- Taking forward the Prime Minister's ambition for all young people to study Maths to 18.
- Working across government, with educators and employers, to develop the pipeline of individuals entering priority computing and digital sectors.
- Finding and attracting the next generation of AI leaders from around the world, showcasing our fantastic offer and matching them to specific opportunities in the UK.
- Continuing to roll out a network of 21 employer-led Institutes of Technology (IoTs), which will offer higher level technical training. IoTs also have a remit to help widen participation at higher technical levels from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

The Fast Stream is administered by the Cabinet Office and therefore the Department has made no relevant assessment.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Information Officers

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[163864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department spent on communications staff in (a) 2022-23 and (b) 2023-24.

Mr Alister Jack:

Departmental spend on communications staff for April 2022 to February 2023 was: £1,123,199.

The Department has not yet incurred any expenditure on communications staff for 2023-24.

■ Scotland Office: Publicity

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[163865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department has spent on public information campaigns to advise the public on Government policies in (a) 2022-23 and (b) 2023-2024.

Mr Alister Jack:

Departmental spend on public information campaigns for April 2022 to February 2023 was: £38,343.

The Department has not yet incurred any expenditure for public information campaigns for 2023/24.

■ Scotland Office: Special Advisers

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[163866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many Special Advisers his Department employs.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office has four Special Advisers.

It may be helpful for you to know that this information is publicly available and published annually in the Scotland Office Annual Report and Accounts. The most recent report is available here: [Scotland Office Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22](#).

TRANSPORT

■ Abellio Greater Anglia: Timetables

Kate Osamor:

[\[165392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department gave Greater Anglia a formal written derogation to not consult on their May 2022 train timetable changes.

Huw Merriman:

No derogation was granted to Greater Anglia in relation to the May 2022 train timetable. Operators continue to respond to changing passenger demand levels and travel patterns and it is important they have the flexibility to do so. We will only be in a position to reintroduce meaningful consultations once demand has stabilised.

■ Aston Station

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[163815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the quality of the facilities and infrastructure at Aston railway station.

Huw Merriman:

As with all stations on the West Midlands Trains network, Aston station is subject to regular audits and inspections as part of a Service Quality regime under the National Rail Contract. Along with nearby Witton, Aston station serves the local football stadium at Villa Park and I know their CEO has recently written to my Rt Hon Friend the Transport Secretary to discuss increasing capacity at the station on matchdays. It is fully accessible, with lift access from the platforms to street level and, as well as having CCTV and ticket purchasing facilities, has recently been fitted with new digital customer information screens.

■ Bus Services: Disability

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[163978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish a timetable for the introduction of the Accessible Information Regulations for buses in England.

Mr Richard Holden:

We plan to require the provision of audible and visible information on local bus and coach services across Great Britain and intend to introduce the Accessible Information Regulations shortly.

We have no plans to publish a timetable prior to introducing these Regulations.

■ **Cycling and Walking****Rachael Maskell:**[\[163808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to meet the Government's target for 50 per cent of journeys in towns and cities to be undertaken through active travel by 2030.

Jesse Norman:

The Government's ambitions for walking and cycling up to 2025 and 2030 are outlined in the second statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) which was published in July 2022. Many of the steps the Government is taking to boost walking and cycling were also outlined in the Government's Gear Change plan, published in July 2020. A total of around £3 billion of Government funding is projected to be invested into active travel over this Parliament. This includes at least £100m of dedicated capital funding over the two-year period 2023/24 to 2024/25, and an expected £850m of dedicated capital funding over the first three years of this Parliament.

■ **Cycling and Walking: Finance****Gavin Newlands:**[\[163773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department's funding for active travel projects will meet or exceed the Scottish Government's equivalent spending on a per capita basis.

Jesse Norman:

Local transport policy and funding, including funding for active travel, is a devolved matter for the Scottish Government. In England outside London, the Government is projecting investment of around £3bn in active travel over the current Parliament. Amounts per capita in future years will vary significantly from one part of the country to another depending not only on local investment decisions but also on final decisions on capital and revenue budgets for active travel for the next two financial years, which have not yet been taken.

Rachael Maskell:[\[163807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the budget for active travel has been reduced from £3.8 billion to £3 billion over this Parliament.

Jesse Norman:

The Department does not recognise the reduction that the Honourable Lady refers to. The figure of £3.8 billion was a projection of total investment from a wide range of

Government funding streams over the five-year period of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), published in July 2022. The Department has had to make savings across all modes of travel to meet inflationary pressures caused in part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Despite this, the Department continues to invest very significantly in active travel and will continue to do so.

Gill Furniss:

[\[166293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2023 to Question 147240 on Cycling and Walking: Finance, when he plans to publish the findings of his Department's cycling and walking investment strategy active travel investment model.

Jesse Norman:

The active travel model was developed in 2019 and published in 2020 to underpin the development of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), which was published in July 2022. The publication of the full results of the modelling was delayed because of the pandemic and other pressures. The Department is considering next steps, including what further modelling might be needed to inform the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3).

■ Cycling: Finance

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[166157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate his Department has made of the funding required to double cycling activity from 0.8 billion cycle stages in 2013 to 1.6 billion cycle stages in 2025.

Jesse Norman:

The amount of funding required depends on a wide variety of factors including the uncertainty over the long-term impact of the pandemic on cycling activity. A total of around £3 billion of Government funding is projected to be invested in cycling and walking up to 2025.

■ Driving Instruction: Plymouth

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[165196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of driving instructor tests in Plymouth.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency operates a 12-week booking window for approved driving instructor (ADI) part 2 [driving ability] tests, and part 3 [instructional ability] tests. A 'book to hold' system is in place for people booking a test outside of that window. The book to hold list is assessed daily to monitor demand.

In Plymouth, as of 15 March 2023:

- there is availability for the ADI part 2 test within the booking window;

- no part 2 tests booked to hold; and
- one part 3 test booked to hold.

■ Driving Tests: Barnet

Theresa Villiers:

[\[166158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to retain the driving test centre in New Barnet and ensure that it is not closed down.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is committed to providing its customers with the best service possible. The DVSA continually reviews its estate to ensure it represents good value for money and is efficient.

■ Electric Vehicles

Zarah Sultana:

[\[165448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to help ensure electric cars remain an affordable option for those people planning to purchase a lower emitting vehicle.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to keeping the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) affordable for all consumers. Government grants have been in place for over a decade to help reduce the up-front purchase price of EVs. These grants remain available for the purchase of zero emission vans, trucks, wheelchair accessible vehicles, taxis and motorbikes.

Once purchased, EV owners benefit from lower operational and maintenance costs including favourable taxation policies.

The Government is also committed to ensuring EV charging remains affordable for all EV drivers. Most EV drivers charge overnight at home where they can access cheap and flexible tariffs. This is a trend that the Government expects will continue. The Government continues to support and encourage innovations to ensure that EV drivers, who do not have their own home chargers, can benefit from cheaper domestic electricity tariffs, such as cable gulleys and peer-to-peer charging schemes allowing owners to rent out their home chargepoints.

■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries

Matt Western:

[\[162535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on proposals for a gigafactory in Coventry.

Jesse Norman:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with the Chancellor to discuss a range of issues.

■ Electric Vehicles: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[165474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has taken steps to ensure that sufficient wheelchair-accessible electrical vehicle stock is available after 2030.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone can transition to zero emission vehicles. Government grants are available to support the transition to wheelchair-accessible electric vehicles and are designed to reduce the upfront purchase price and encourage growth in this market.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[165475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to support the transition to wheelchair accessible electric vehicle stock for taxi (a) firms and (b) drivers by the Net Zero target date of 2030.

Jesse Norman:

The Government's Plug in Taxi (PiTG) grant scheme supports taxi firms and drivers to transition to zero emission vehicles.

To be eligible for this grant, manufacturers must demonstrate that the vehicle has been approved as a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

The PiTG scheme offers a discount on the price of eligible taxis of up to a maximum of £7,500 or £3,000, depending on the vehicle's range, emissions and design.

■ M23: Accidents

Sarah Champion:

[\[163768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many traffic officer vehicles have been involved in accidents in a live lane on smart motorway sections of the M23 in the last six months.

Mr Richard Holden:

Given the very small number of accidents involving traffic officer vehicles across the strategic road network, it is not possible to provide information at the individual motorway level, as individual persons could be identifiable from the response.

■ Maidstone Line

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[163954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of changes in demand for services on the Maidstone East line into central London stations.

Huw Merriman:

The Department monitors the performance of all train operators, including Southeastern, very closely and regular discussions take place covering all aspects of

their services including levels of demand. Officials are working closely with Southeastern to understand changes in travel patterns and fluctuations in demand across all routes including services on the Maidstone East line.

Southeastern have two timetable changes a year, in line with the rest of the rail industry. Any changes made are kept under review and can be adjusted, where appropriate, to reflect fluctuations in demand. Southeastern will continue to listen and keep stakeholders informed of developments. The Department will continue engagement with industry to ensure passengers and taxpayers remain at the heart of changes implemented.

■ Manchester Airport: Nepal

Navendu Mishra:

[\[166380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of opening a direct flight between Manchester Airport and Kathmandu on (a) jobs, (b) investment, (c) tourism and (d) higher education in the UK.

Jesse Norman:

Department for Transport Ministers and officials hold regular discussions with airlines, airports and international partners to facilitate global connectivity.

It is for individual airlines to determine whether to take advantage of the rights and routes available to them within any air services agreement. Market conditions, such as the availability of indirect routing options, often affect the commercial considerations of airlines.

■ Midland Main Line: Electrification

Dan Jarvis:

[\[166237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's planned timeframe is for electrifying the Midland mainline to Sheffield.

Huw Merriman:

The next phase of MML electrification is already underway with overhead line equipment being installed between Kettering and Wigston.

We continue the development of HS2 East, for which MML electrification is essential. We intend to publish the RNEP shortly which will confirm the latest position on all Network Rail schemes including electrification of the MML to Sheffield and Nottingham.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:

[\[166312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department will publish a response to the consultation entitled Managing pavement parking published on 31 August 2020.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[166313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help tackle unauthorised pavement parking.

Mr Richard Holden:

Local authorities already have a range of powers to help them tackle inconsiderate pavement parking, including via Traffic Regulation Orders. In addition, my Department consulted on further measures to address in 2020 and received over 15,000 responses. We have been considering all views expressed, including from those with vision impairments, and the options for managing pavement parking. We will publish the formal consultation response and announce next steps as soon as possible.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[166314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of his Department's 2020 consultation on pavement parking on the Pavement Parking Bill.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[166315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to outline his Department's next steps following the pavement parking consultation in 2020.

Mr Richard Holden:

We are reviewing the outcome of the consultation and the various options for tackling pavement parking in order to ensure that local authorities have the most appropriate tools at their disposal. We will publish the formal consultation response and announce next steps as soon as possible. There is no future stage currently scheduled for the Pavement Parking Bill that was introduced into the House of Lords on 20 January 2020.

■ Railways: Hertfordshire

Daisy Cooper:

[\[162537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has received representations from Hertfordshire County Council requesting advice on whether it has a legal obligation to sell land to developers for the purpose of developing a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at Park Street in St Albans on the site of the former Radlett Aerodrome.

Huw Merriman:

Neither me, nor my Department have received any representations from Hertfordshire County Council requesting advice relating to a strategic rail freight interchange at the former Radlett Aerodrome.

■ Railways: Modernisation**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[166172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to take steps to seek private investment to help fund improvements at (a) Ely and (b) Haughley rail junctions.

Huw Merriman:

We are carefully reviewing the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline for England and Wales (including the potential for alternative fund contributions), following the Autumn Statement. We remain committed to publishing an update on RNEP and this will confirm the status of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement and Haughley Junction upgrade project.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[166173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to provide funding for improvements at (a) Ely and (b) Haughley rail junctions.

Huw Merriman:

We are carefully reviewing the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline for England and Wales, following the Autumn Statement. We remain committed to publishing an update on RNEP and this will confirm the status of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement and Haughley Junction upgrade project.

■ Road Traffic Control**Sarah Champion:** [\[163764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether system redundancy allows National Highway's CHARM system to continue operation seamlessly in the event of a systems failure.

Mr Richard Holden:

The CHARM system has been designed with system redundancy to move promptly to a backup system.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Prosecutions**Gareth Thomas:** [\[165192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to section 1 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988, if he will take steps to amend the 14-day notice period for serving notice of intended prosecution to 28 days; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Richard Holden:

We keep all traffic offence legislation under review.

■ Speed Limits

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[163813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is his policy that speed restrictions on national roads can be introduced for reasons other than vehicle safety.

Mr Richard Holden:

Traffic authorities, including National Highways for the strategic road network, set local speed limits in situations where local needs and conditions suggest a speed limit which is lower than the national speed limit. The Department issues guidance to English authorities on setting local limits.

Enforceable speed limits can be set for reasons other than road user safety: for example, variable mandatory speed limits can smooth traffic flow and reduce congestion. And where limits for air quality are in danger of being exceeded, compliance with those air quality limits could be an important factor in the choice of speed limit.

To achieve compliance with a new speed limit there should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement beyond their routine activity, unless this has been explicitly agreed.

■ Taxis: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[165466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles in England.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[165471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that local licensing authorities offer disability equality training to taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.

Mr Richard Holden:

Last year the Department consulted on updated taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) best practice guidance for licensing authorities, which provided strengthened recommendations on the provision of an inclusive service.

The guidance recommended licensing authorities ensure there are sufficient wheelchair accessible vehicles within the fleets they regulate to fulfil the demand from disabled passengers. It also recommended that licensing authorities require taxi and PHV drivers to undertake disability awareness training to give them the skills, knowledge, and confidence to provide disabled people with appropriate assistance.

The Department's response to this consultation will be published in due course, along with a substantive version of the updated guidance document. In the meantime, we remain committed to mandating the completion of disability awareness training by taxi and PHV drivers when Parliamentary time allows.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[165468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local licensing authorities publish data on the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles available in their local area in the context of section 167 of the Equality Act.

Mr Richard Holden:

Following the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 receiving Royal Assent in April 2022, we published guidance to support local licensing authorities to fulfil their new duty to maintain and publish a list of wheelchair accessible vehicles in their area.

We will monitor compliance with s167 of the Equality Act through the Department's annual taxi and private hire vehicle statistics.

■ **TransPennine Express: Standards**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[163759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of Transpennine Express performance in terms of (a) punctuality, (b) overcrowding and (c) other criteria related to their provision of services to the public.

Huw Merriman:

Rail North Partnership, through which the Department and Transport for the North jointly manage TransPennine Express's (TPE's) contract, constantly monitors its performance and is in frequent contact with TPE's senior management and operational teams. Rail North Partnership uses the contract to hold TPE to account for its performance when failure is within its control.

Ministers recently met First Rail and TPE management to make clear TPE's service must improve. Rail North Partnership is working with TPE on a recovery plan aimed at building back a reliable service. Ministers will assess the plan's ability to deliver the improvements TPE recognises are needed.

■ **Transport: Finance**

Julian Knight:

[\[163800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding his Department is allocating to transformational transport schemes over the next two financial years.

Jesse Norman:

As part of the government's largest capital programme commitment ever, the Department will be investing over £40 billion in transformational transport schemes over the next two financial years across the country.

■ Travel: Disability

Cat Smith:

[165255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the rights of disabled travellers are being met by transport companies; and what penalties are in place for transport providers who do not meet their obligations to disabled travellers.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department works with representative organisations and regulators to ensure the rights of disabled people are understood and observed, with regulators generally responsible for enforcement, rather than the Department directly.

Transport providers which fail to meet legal standards face a range of sanctions. These vary from fines of up to £1,000 for taxi and private hire drivers convicted of refusing a disabled person carriage, to licence restrictions or revocations for bus and coach operators found to have breached accessibility requirements.

Maritime operators, and individuals with responsibility for the operation of the vessel, face a range of sanctions depending on the severity of the legislative breach. This includes cautions, improvement notices, and notifications of concern. For the most serious breaches, criminal proceedings may be enacted, which may result in unlimited fines. For airports and airlines, enforcement options may include improvement plans, formal undertakings and ultimately court action if they fail to meet satisfactory standards.

TREASURY

■ Business Rates and Corporation Tax: Tax Yields

Matt Vickers:

[163904]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total receipts from (a) Business Rates and (b) Corporation Tax were in (i) 1990-91 and (ii) 2021-22.

Victoria Atkins:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes these tax revenue statistics, which are set available on the ONS website here: [Home - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk).

■ Capital Gains Tax

Daisy Cooper:

[163939]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to process applications for a refund of overpaid Capital Gains Tax within 60 days, in line with the period of time allowed for Capital Gains Tax to be reported and paid from the date of conveyance before a late filing penalty is applied.

Victoria Atkins:

Customers are required to report and pay, where due, Capital Gains Tax on the sale of UK residential property within 60 days of completing a property sale.

Sometimes customers overpay and seek a refund. HMRC aims to process refunds as quickly as possible.

■ **Childcare: Finance****Munira Wilson:**[\[166375\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the policy costings of his decision to introduce 30 hours a week of free childcare for eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years are not included within HM Treasury's document entitled Spring Budget 2023: Policy Costings; and if he will publish those costings.

John Glen:

The Policy Costings document sets out the assumptions and methodologies underlying costings for tax and annually managed expenditure (AME) policy decisions, where those policies have a fiscally significant impact on the public finances. These costings were submitted to the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) for scrutiny and were certified as part of the forecast process.

The Policy Costings document and process does not cover changes to Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) set at Spending Review 2021, including new childcare measures set out at Budget, as DEL spending is typically more predictable than AME. Forecasts for DEL spending are submitted to the OBR separately, and set out in Table 4.1 of the [Budget document](#), which includes new childcare measures.

■ **Cost of Living****Angela Crawley:**[\[166265\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2023 to Question 148722 on cost of living: ethnic groups, what recent discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on (a) students, (b) ethnic minorities, (c) low-income households and d) people earning the national average wage.

John Glen:

The Government understands that people are worried about the cost of living challenges ahead. In the Spring Budget, the Chancellor has taken a further step to support all households with rising costs by extending the Energy Price Guarantee at £2,500. This brings the total support over 2022-23 and 2023-24 to help households and individuals with higher bills to £94 billion – an average of £3,300 per UK household.

Treasury Ministers have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the policy process and delivery. In accordance with our principles of transparency, details of ministerial meetings with external organisations

on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at [HMT ministers' meetings, hospitality, gifts and overseas travel - GOV.UK.](#)

■ Customs

Richard Thomson:

[162540]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to comments made to the BBC on 7th December 2022 by the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Exports), with which individual EU Member States his Department has discussed simplifying customs arrangements since the UK left the EU.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs officials maintain an open dialogue on customs matters with the European Commission, as well as individual Member States and their customs authorities. This includes the UK/EU Trade Specialised Committee on Customs Cooperation and Rules of Origin, which is a joint forum between the UK and the EU that meets annually under the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

The TCA provides for a range of customs cooperation between the UK and EU, including on facilitating transit movements and ensuring that traders are clear on how to move goods smoothly between our respective borders.

■ Development Aid: Migrant Camps

Stuart C McDonald:

[166254]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential link between the level of UK aid spending between 2020 and 2021 on the spread of antimicrobial resistance and the risk of drug-resistant infections in refugee camps in low and middle-income countries.

John Glen:

In 2021, the UK was the third largest development donor in the G7 as a percentage of GNI, spending over £11 billion on aid. The UK is committed to the global eradication of antimicrobial resistance and supports a wide range of activities to do this.

Through our £265m ODA Fleming Fund, the UK builds partnerships with LMICs to strengthen AMR surveillance, diagnostics and laboratory capacity. The Global AMR Innovation Fund (GAMRIF), another UK aid fund, supports early-stage innovative research in underfunded areas of AMR research and development for the benefit of people in low- and middle-income countries.

We have also used our aid budget to reduce the risks of antimicrobial resistance by helping prevent the emergence and spread of infectious diseases. Between April 2020 and December 2021, in partnership with Unilever the UK reached over 4 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) with handwashing messages to prevent the spread of infection in countries such as Bangladesh, Cameroon, Syria, South Sudan and Yemen. The UK also supports the work of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organisation for Migration and the Red Cross Movement, each of which include work on water, sanitation and hygiene as part of their programming and support displaced persons, including refugees and migrants in camps.

■ Doctors: Workplace Pensions

Wes Streeting: [166290]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) total cost and (b) estimated financial benefit to doctors is of the policy to abolish the lifetime allowance on pension savings.

Andrew Griffith:

As published on Budget Day, the total cost of the removal of the lifetime allowance charge from April 2023 and full abolition from April 2024 will be £2.75 billion over the scorecard period. This can be found on page 14 of the Policy Costings document.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1142824/Costing_Document_-_Spring_Budget_2023.pdf

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [166297]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish a breakdown of the specific spending on the plan to increase the availability of mental health and musculoskeletal resources and expand the Individual Placement and Support scheme.

John Glen:

The breakdown of spending on mental health and musculoskeletal resources, and employment advisors in health settings, including expansion of Individual Placement and Support, announced at Spring Budget 2023 is set out in the Budget document which is available here: [Spring Budget 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1142824/Costing_Document_-_Spring_Budget_2023.pdf) (lines 12 and 13, Table 4.1 on page 76). The figures in the table have been adjusted to include Barnett consequentials.

■ Financial Services: Small Businesses

Karen Bradley: [166207]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with the Prudential Regulation Authority on the potential impact of the proposals in its Consultation Paper 16/22 on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards page 96 paragraph 3.17 on the capital requirements of challenger banks that lend to small and medium-sized enterprises against commercial premises.

Karen Bradley: [166208]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact that proposals to remove the SME support factor in the PRA Consultation CP 16/22 on the

Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards para 4.131 p 144 - para 4.127 p146 on UK competitiveness.

Karen Bradley:

[166209]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with the Prudential Regulation Authority on the potential impact of the proposals in its Consultation Paper 16/22 on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards, page 96 paragraph 3.17, on the cost to small and medium-sized enterprises of raising funding against commercial premises.

Andrew Griffith:

The PRA is currently consulting on its proposals for Basel 3.1. This includes its proposals for deleting retained EU law including those which relate to the prudential rules on secured and unsecured SME lending. The detailed implementation of the Basel package however, has been delegated to the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) as the UK's expert regulator. The PRA is also consulting and has requested information from firms on specific measures including those relating to lending to SMEs.

The Government continues to work closely with the PRA and businesses to understand the impact of its proposed changes, including for the international competitiveness of the UK and the impact on SME lending. This includes monitoring the EU's proposals, which also have not yet been finalised.

■ Financial Services: Technology

Sir Stephen Timms:

[165191]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what preparations he has made to legislate for the long-term regulatory framework for Open Banking once the Joint Regulatory Oversight Committee reports in 2023.

Andrew Griffith:

UK Open Banking has been a great success story with over 7 million people in the UK now regularly using this technology to manage their money and to make payments.

The Government is committed to maintaining the UK's leadership in this field and sustaining momentum. We wish to build on the initial success of UK Open Banking to help unlock and realise further benefits for consumers, businesses, and the wider economy.

HM Treasury is working closely with the relevant regulators through the Joint Regulatory Oversight Committee to develop recommendations on the design of the future Open Banking entity. HM Treasury is also leading work to develop a long-term regulatory framework for this technology, underpinned by any necessary legislation.

The Committee will release its recommendations in the coming weeks following joint statements in March and December 2022 which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-statement-by-hm-treasury-the-cma->

[the-fca-and-the-psr-on-the-future-of-open-banking/joint-statement-by-hm-treasury-the-cma-the-fca-and-the-psr-on-the-future-of-open-banking](#) and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-statement-by-hm-treasury-the-cma-the-fca-and-the-psr-to-update-on-the-future-of-open-banking/joint-statement-by-hm-treasury-the-cma-the-fca-and-the-psr-to-update-on-the-future-of-open-banking>.

■ Horizon Europe

Chi Onwurah: [166211]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Spring Budget, HC 1183, how much funding has been allocated for participation in Horizon Europe in the next three years; and whether the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology will be responsible for this funding.

James Cartlidge:

Following the recent Machinery of Government changes, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) has responsibility for the funding set aside at Spending Review 2021 for association to Horizon Europe, subject to clarity on UK association to EU programmes on fair and reasonable terms.

■ Pensions: Tax Allowances

Alan Brown: [166270]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of how many people will benefit from the abolition of the lifetime allowance cap in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28.

Andrew Griffith:

Information on the abolition of the lifetime allowance can be found in the Pension Tax Limits Policy paper [Pension Tax Limits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Abolition of the Lifetime Allowance cap also provides certainty that money saved into a pension will not be subject to a cap on lifetime tax-relieved pension savings, even for those who may not currently be modelled as hitting it.

■ Public Sector: Workplace Pensions

Dr Caroline Johnson: [R] [165480]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people are enrolled in a public sector pension scheme but do not yet receive a pension under that scheme; and if he will publish a breakdown of those figures by (a) employer and (b) age.

John Glen:

Membership data as of the last quadrennial valuation reports for each scheme is available on [gov.uk](#). The Treasury does not hold age data or a breakdown by individual employer for each public sector pension scheme centrally and does not plan to collate or publish such data.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[R] [\[165484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of public sector pensions in each of the next 20 years.

John Glen:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's [Fiscal Risks and Sustainability Report](#) forecasts expenditure on unfunded public service pensions is expected to fall from around 2% of GDP in 2021/22 to 1.8% of GDP in 2041/42.

■ Revenue and Customs: Finance

James Murray:

[\[165518\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Spring Statement 2022, published on 23 March 2022, CP 653, in which year the £161 million investment in HMRC to increase compliance and debt management capacity will be spent.

Victoria Atkins:

The £161 million of funding allocated to HMRC at the Spring Statement to increase compliance and debt management capacity in HMRC through supporting taxpayers seeking to pay off accrued tax debts and tackle the most complex tax risks, commenced in the 2022/2023 financial year.

James Murray:

[\[165519\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the announcement in the Spring Budget 2022 Policy Paper, published on 17 November 2022, in which financial year the £79 million funding for HMRC to allocate additional staff to tackle cases of serious tax fraud and address tax compliance risks among wealthy taxpayers commenced.

Victoria Atkins:

The £79 million of funding allocated to HMRC at Autumn Statement 2022 to tackle more cases of serious tax fraud and address tax compliance risks among wealthy taxpayers is set to commence in the 2023/2024 financial year.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[166272\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many full-time equivalent advisers are employed by HMRC to handle calls on national insurance contributions and the state pension in each year since 2009.

Victoria Atkins:

The HMRC Personal Tax (PT) Operations unit is responsible for administering the National Insurance (NI) Helpdesk. We typically have not kept staffing numbers for specific helplines since we employ a variable workforce model, where our staff may switch between answering phones, processing correspondence, and replying to webchat inquiries throughout the day.

However, this year we installed a new telephonic platform, ODIGO, and based on data extracted from the platform, we have deployed an average of 600 FTE per day as of 17 March to handle all NI-related contacts.

For your reference, information about the PT Operation unit's performance in terms of customer service going back to 2016 is included in HMRC's quarterly performance reports on GOV.UK.

The HMRC quarterly performance reports can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports#reporting-year-2022-to-2023>

■ Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[163893]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Department for Education on funding available to repair or replace defective elements of the schools estate.

John Glen:

HM Treasury Ministers regularly discuss public spending matters with other government departments, including on the condition of the school estate. The 2021 Spending Review confirmed £19.5 billion of capital funding to support the education sector between the financial years 2022-23 and 2024-25, including reaffirming our commitment to rebuild 500 schools over 10 years. In December, the Department for Education confirmed the latest tranche of 239 schools to be included in the programme.

■ Small Businesses: Tax Allowances

Chi Onwurah:

[166214]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Spring Budget, HC 1183, point 4.51, what analysis was undertaken by his Department when determining the qualifying criteria for the additional tax relief for small and medium sized enterprises; on what evidential basis this is estimated to cost (a) £40 million in 2023-24 and (b) £285 million in 2024-25; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of this policy on capital investment for small and medium sized enterprises that fall beneath the 40 per cent threshold.

Chi Onwurah:

[166216]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Financial Statement of 15 March, what the evidential basis is for Research and Development tax credit changes helping 20,000 cutting-edge companies.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government recognises the value of R&D intensive SMEs to the UK's wider innovation ecosystem, and at Autumn Statement 2022 committed to working with

industry ahead of Budget to understand whether further support is necessary for R&D intensive SMEs.

It is the most R&D intensive loss-making companies that are most affected by the AS22 rate changes, and which the additional tax relief is seeking to target.

The Government has estimated around 20,000 SMEs will benefit from this scheme per year. This estimate and the estimated cost of the measure are based on HMRC administrative data. The costing has been independently certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility and the process to calculate the costing can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1142824/Costing_Document_-_Spring_Budget_2023.pdf

Further detail on the economic impact of the scheme will be published in the tax information and impact note ahead of being legislated for in an upcoming Finance Bill, in the usual way.

The Government will keep the scheme design under review to ensure it is effective and delivering value for money.

■ Students: Scotland

Angela Crawley:

[166264]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2023 to Question 148721 on Students: Fuels, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of rises in the cost-of-living on students in Scotland.

John Glen:

The government recognises the additional cost of living pressures, which can also impact students.

In this financial year, the government has provided households with support on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. At Spring Budget, the government announced the Energy Price Guarantee would be maintained at £2,500 for the next three months from April, saving households an additional £160, bringing total government support for energy bills to £1,500 for a typical household since October 2022.

The Scottish Government is well-funded to deliver all its devolved responsibilities, receiving around 25% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK.

It is for the Scottish Government to allocate its funding in devolved areas as it sees fit, including support for Scottish students, and it is accountable to the Scottish Parliament for these decisions.

■ Tax Avoidance

Stephen Morgan: [\[162288\]](#)

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

Victoria Atkins:

Promotion or operation of mass marketed tax avoidance schemes is not in and of itself a criminal offence. However, there are a range of offences which might be committed by those who promote tax avoidance schemes or advise on their use.

On that basis, to date, a number of individuals are currently under criminal investigation by HMRC for offences linked to schemes subject to the Loan Charge.

In addition to schemes subject to the Loan Charge, since 1 April 2016, more than 20 individuals have been convicted for offences relating to arrangements which have been promoted and marketed as tax avoidance, including offences related to disguised remuneration. These have resulted in over 100 years of custodial sentences, the majority of which relate to promoters.

HMRC are committed to continuing to tackle promoters and operators of tax avoidance schemes. Spring Budget announced a consultation to strengthen the deterrent further by introducing a new criminal offence to make it abundantly clear promoters must stop and, building on a package of recent reforms, to ensure directors can be disqualified from companies which promote avoidance.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Finance

David Linden: [\[166318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time was for access to work funding applications to be considered in the latest period for which data is available.

Tom Pursglove:

The Access to Work average wait times, from application to a decision being made, for February 2023, was 58 working days.

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

David Linden: [\[166319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date the longest outstanding access to work funding application was submitted to his Department.

Tom Pursglove:

The longest outstanding Access to Work application was received on 19th January 2022. This application is currently on hold at the request of the customer to allow them time to gather information to support the application.

■ British Sign Language Act 2022**Ben Everitt:**[\[162542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps he has taken to implement the British Sign Language Act 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The British Sign Language Act 2022 gained Royal Assent in April 2022 and does three things:

- It recognises British Sign Language as a language of Great Britain in its own right;
- It places a duty on the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to report on the promotion and facilitation of British Sign Language by ministerial departments; and
- It places a duty on the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to issue guidance to ministerial departments on the general promotion and facilitation of British Sign Language across their public communications - such as public announcements, consultations, plans, strategy, social media and press conferences.

On Friday 17 March, 17 successful candidates (in 16 posts, one is held by a tactile signer as a job share) were appointed to the new British Sign Language (BSL) Advisory Board, which will advise the Government on key issues impacting the Deaf community.

The Board's remit will be:

- Advising on the use of BSL in public communications and policy delivery; and
- Advising on how to tackle key issues facing Deaf people, such as how to increase the numbers of BSL interpreters.

Establishing the Board is a key step in implementation of the Act. Work continues across Government to ensure that the departments named in the schedule to the Act are aware of their reporting duty. They will report on their use of BSL in public communications at the end of the first reporting period on 28 June. The first meeting of the departments driving the Act took place in February.

■ Carers: Poverty**Rachael Maskell:**[\[163809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the proportion of carers living in poverty compared to the rest of the population; and what steps he will take to tackle poverty amongst that cohort.

Tom Pursglove:

No assessment has been made. The department publishes poverty statistics in the [Households Below Average Income publication](#), but this does not include analysis of the proportion of carers in poverty.

The Government is committed to supporting unpaid carers to balance their caring alongside work, and to do so in a way that supports their own health, wellbeing and finances. This is the best way to tackle poverty amongst unpaid carers.

This starts with employers embracing HR policies that support unpaid carers to enable them to continue working when they become carers. As an example, the Government is supporting a Private Members' Bill which will introduce a new entitlement to one week of Carer's Leave as a day one right.

The benefit system can also provide additional income for unpaid carers who meet the relevant qualifying conditions. For example, unpaid carers receiving Universal Credit can also receive additional amounts (the carer element) worth around £2,000 a year. The 55% taper rate in Universal Credit and any applicable work allowance will also help to ensure that people are better off in work and able to increase their incomes.

We would encourage any carer in financial need to check whether they have applied for all the benefits they are entitled to, including means-tested support. This can provide additional weekly income and access to extra cost of living support. Full details of all of the DWP benefits are available on GOV.UK. Help and advice can also be sought from bodies such as Carers UK, Carers Trust, and Citizens Advice through their Help to Claim support.

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services, including support for unpaid carers. Local authorities are required to undertake a Carer's Assessment for any unpaid carer who appears to have a need for support and to meet their eligible needs on request from the carer.

■ Cost of Living Payments**Jonathan Ashworth:****[166238]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of households eligible to receive the second Cost of Living Payment 2022 that have not received it as of 15 March 2023.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions has published management information on the total number of means-tested benefit Cost of Living Payments made. As of 14 November 2022, 7,300,000 means-tested benefits Cost of Living payments, second payment, had been made.

It is not possible to determine how many or what proportion of people are due a second Cost of Living Payment but have not received it, as entitlement may not have

been established at the time the payments were made. We will periodically make payments to people who have later been found to be eligible and have not yet received a payment. The payments will continue to be made automatically in the same way the qualifying benefit or tax credit is paid.

In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, the number of Cost of Living Payments made in specific constituencies is the subject of an upcoming statistical release, and cannot be released before that publication is ready, subject to usual quality assurance.

■ **Cost of Living Payments: Gloucester**

Richard Graham:

[\[166188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of (a) the number of residents that will be eligible and (b) the cost to the public purse of (i) cost of living payments and (ii) disability cost of living payments in Gloucester constituency in 2023-24.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions published an impact assessment analysing the impact of the Social Security (Additional Payments) (No. 2) Bill which made provisions to deliver means-tested benefit Cost of Living Payment worth up to £900 and the disability Cost of Living Payment worth £150 to support people in the financial year 2023/24.

In the impact assessment, the department estimated that the number of benefit units eligible for the means-tested payment in 2023-24 in Gloucester constituency is 15,000. The number of individuals eligible for the disability payment was estimated to be 11,900.

The impact assessment did not formally assess the cost to the public purse of administering these payments on a constituency basis. Assuming the caseloads outlined above are correct and all families receive the stated amount, the cost to the public purse of (i) cost of living payments would be £4.5 million and (ii) the cost of the disability cost of living payments would be £1.8 million.

The full impact assessment can be found [here](#).

■ **Earnings Rules**

David Linden:

[\[166324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4.146 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether an equality impact assessment of the proposed change to the Administrative Earnings Threshold has been conducted.

Guy Opperman:

Yes.

■ Housing: Natural Gas**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[164014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will commence an investigation into the causes of the recent gas explosions occurring within residential properties.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the authority responsible for regulating gas safety in residential properties and the gas distribution networks. Gas related incidents are monitored to identify industry trends and address safety risks from domestic gas use.

HSE investigates the most serious gas explosions to identify the immediate and underlying causes, to prevent recurrence, and to identify breaches of health and safety law in order to hold duty holders to account.

■ Social Security Benefits: Applications**Seema Malhotra:**[\[163821\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons his Department uses paper based application systems for (a) Work Capability Assessments, (b) Attendance Allowance and (c) Personal Independence Payments.

Seema Malhotra:[\[163822\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his Department's policy to introduce online application portals for (a) Work Capability Assessments, (b) Attendance Allowance and (c) Personal Independence Payments.

Tom Pursglove:

Paper based applications have traditionally been the way that the DWP has taken applications for benefit claims. The department is modernising Health and Disability benefit services, including by providing new digital options for claimants to apply.

a) The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) determines entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the additional health-related amount of Universal Credit (UC). Claimants are invited to participate in a WCA as part of a claim to ESA or a declaration of restricted ability to work in UC. Claimants can apply for New Style ESA/UC through existing New Style ESA and UC online application portals via gov.uk. Additionally, we are testing a digital Work Capability Questionnaire (UC50) in UC.

b) Online claims are currently being tested, with a very limited group of people, within Attendance Allowance, with a view to this becoming more widely available in due course.

c) The Health Transformation Programme is transforming the entire PIP service, including introducing a digital PIP service with the option to apply online. We are currently operating a small-scale test of this new apply service, taking a small number

of claims to begin with, before we gradually and carefully increase the number of people who can use it. We have already introduced a digital version of the PIP2 health questionnaire, which is now offered to the majority of those making a claim.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Universal Credit**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[165378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress his Department has made on correcting the automated process to add Universal Credit claimant's data to their state pension records; and when that process will be completed.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has been working with HMRC to resolve this issue. We expect NI records to be fully updated by HMRC, by the end of the financial year 2023/24.

■ **Universal Credit: Children**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[165360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that the child element of Universal Credit and associated entitlement for all children is not withheld when verification is pending for one child.

Guy Opperman:

Claims for multiple children are considered as a whole. Therefore, where multiple children are added to a Universal Credit claim simultaneously and verification is pending for one of the children, a claimant is supposed to re-declare all verified children to ensure that they receive the Child Element for the verified children.

■ **Universal Credit: Payments**

Angela Crawley:

[\[166267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department are taking steps to ensure that Universal Credit claimants receive even weekly payments, including in five week months.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has no plans to change either Universal Credit assessment periods or payment structures. The approach reflects the world of work, where the majority of employees receive wages monthly. Paying in this manner will encourage claimants to take personal responsibility for their finances and to budget on a monthly basis which could save households money.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

TRANSPORT

■ Railways: Wales

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[165308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish his Department's expenditure on Network Rail operations in Wales in each of the last five years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Huw Merriman:

Network Rail's expenditure for Wales in the past five years (excluding interest, tax and centrally managed costs) was as follows shown in £m:

2 021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	
Operating Costs	184	177	163	141	122
Traction electricity, industry costs and rates	18	19	19	19	17
Renewals	222	203	163	161	186
Enhancements	10	16	116	230	177
Total	434	414	460	551	502

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Enhancements	10	16	116	230	177
Total	434	414	460	551	502

The higher level of enhancement costs in earlier years is mostly due to the Great Western Electrification Programme.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement – Signature

Secretary of State for Department for Business and Trade (Kemi Badenoch):
[\[HCWS647\]](#)

Today the UK has signed a Digital Trade Agreement (DTA) with Ukraine to support Ukraine's economy and post-conflict reconstruction and cement the UK's position as a global leader in digital trade.

Ukraine's recovery from Putin's illegal and barbaric war will be a symbol of the power of freedom and democracy over autocracy. The UK-Ukraine Comprehensive Digital Trade Agreement is one way in which this Government is doing everything in our power to support Ukraine's brave fight. Trading digitally is particularly important in the current conflict, where damage to Ukrainian infrastructure makes it harder to trade physically. Digital tools and technologies can ensure that Ukraine can continue to access vital goods and services.

Ukraine identified greater digitalisation of the economy as one of their main areas of focus for recovery and modernisation. This is why we have worked tirelessly together to deliver a modern digital treaty that is the deepest and most comprehensive ever negotiated. Following signature, it will be laid before Parliament and published online. The Agreement should come into force later this year once both the UK and Ukraine have completed our respective domestic procedures.

This Agreement will enhance UK-Ukraine cooperation on cybersecurity, make it easier to provide digitally delivered goods and services, guarantee the free flow of financial and other trusted data, and enhance collaboration on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. The UK's services exports to Ukraine are increasingly digitised, with UK exports of digitally-delivered services amounting to £132 million in 2020 – 73% of all UK services exports to Ukraine. This DTA will enable UK and Ukrainian businesses to trade in each other's markets more easily, and help Ukrainian businesses grow and recover from the impact of this cruel war.

The dream of a new Ukraine is not only one of freedom and democracy, but also one of prosperity driven by a modern digital economy and the UK is proud to play its role in making this dream a reality.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Resilience Update

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Oliver Dowden): [\[HCWS654\]](#)

Today, I can confirm that the Government has launched phase one of the Emergency Alerts system - a UK-wide capability based on Cell Broadcasting technology developed

by the Cabinet Office and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in conjunction with Mobile Network Operators.

The system launch commenced on Sunday 19 March and will allow emergency responders to send Emergency Alerts, with a distinctive message appearance and tone, to every compatible mobile device within a selected geographical area at very short notice, providing a highly flexible capability for prompting quick action from the public. In order to test the technology, the pilot will focus only on notifying the public of the most serious severe weather and flooding risks over the first three months, followed by a review process.

This system will transform the United Kingdom's emergency warning and informing capability - providing a means to provide urgent information to nearly 90% of mobile phones within a defined area. This area can be as limited as an electoral ward, or expanded as far as the whole of the United Kingdom. The technology has been used successfully in a number of other countries, such as the United States, Canada and Japan, where it has been proven to save lives. Ahead of the launch, the government has worked in partnership with the Devolved Administrations and Local Resilience Forums to ensure that relevant emergency responders across the United Kingdom have an understanding of the capability.

There will be a very high threshold for its use based on strict criteria centred on an immediate risk to life. Despite this, members of the public will be able to opt-out of the system if they do not wish to receive Emergency Alerts. The system is secure, with alerts only able to be sent by authorised governmental and emergency services users.

We have worked closely with our devolved partners to ensure the capability is available throughout the UK and this close collaboration will continue throughout the pilot phase. The UK Government will issue alerts for incidents in England, or that relate to reserved matters. Alerts to be released in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland will be communicated in advance to resilience officials in the relevant devolved government. On matters that are devolved, Ministers from the relevant administrations may approve the alert.

A communications campaign will lead up to a UK-wide national message on 23 April. This will seek to maximise public awareness and familiarise people with the format and style of the message. Our research shows that other countries have found such test messages to be highly effective in improving public understanding. This alert will be simultaneously broadcast to all compatible devices and will be sent in both English and Welsh to recipients in Wales.

This important development will allow us to validate the effectiveness of the system and build familiarity and trust, laying the foundations for the potential wider use of Emergency Alerts in the future.

DEFENCE**■ Ajax Payments Update****Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Alex Chalk):**[\[HCWS652\]](#)

I wish to provide a further update on the Ajax equipment project being delivered as part of the Armoured Cavalry programme.

The Ajax Platform

Ajax is part of our £41 billion investment in British Army equipment and support over the next decade, delivering critical modernisation to address the threats of today and the future. The Ajax Programme will deliver 589 vehicles to the British Army made up of 6 variants allowing the Army to operate in all weathers, 24 hours a day.

The range and capabilities of the sensors on the platform and the on-board software will deliver a step-change in the surveillance capability of the Army. Ajax will provide a world leading competitive advantage, from its suite of cutting-edge sensors, modular armour packs and its 40mm stabilised cannon.

Recovering the programme

The Ministry of Defence have openly acknowledged the problems previously faced by the Ajax programme. Alongside General Dynamics, the Ministry of Defence has successfully completed User Validations Trials to validate the design modifications which have addressed the noise and vibration concerns, allowing the commencement of programmed Reliability Growth Trials on 31 January.

Reliability Growth Trials are a standard part of the acquisition process for military equipment of this nature. These trials stress test the durability of the vehicle's platform and components through a series of battlefield missions that represent years of activity on the platform. Since starting, the AJAX, APOLLO, ATLAS and ARES variants have driven over 2,260 kilometres through different terrains, completing a variety of representative battlefield tasks such as operating across a range of speeds and terrains, firing weapon systems, using the vehicles systems and communications and completing specialist tasks such as vehicle recoveries and repairs using the integrated crane. Reliability Growth Trials are progressing well. No fundamental design issues have arisen to date. These trials are part of a broader trials programme aimed at validating that contracted vehicle requirements are met.

The MOD have developed with General Dynamics a revised schedule for the delivery of vehicles that is, subject to contract amendment, robust, realistic, and achievable. Revised key delivery milestones set a meaningful Initial Operating Capability of a trained and deployable squadron. This is scheduled to be achieved between July and December 2025. Full Operating Capability will be met when the Army has trained and converted forces to the Ajax platform to deliver Armoured Cavalry capability to the Deep Reconnaissance Strike Brigade and its two Armoured Brigade Combat Teams. This is scheduled to be achieved between October 2028 and September 2029.

The ability to deliver against this new schedule has been extensively scrutinised and assured within the department and externally. A recent review by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority concluded the programme's successful delivery is feasible, re-grading the Ajax programme from Red to Amber.

Resuming Contract Payments

The Ministry of Defence remains clear it will only accept vehicles that comply with General Dynamics' contractual obligations. The department has withheld payments for work completed and had not made a payment since December 2020. Given the satisfactory progress against the programme, the department will resume payments this month, starting with a payment of £480 million. This is approximately half of what has been held back since December 2020. Restarting payments to General Dynamics reflects the fact that the programme continues to return to a firm footing and supports the delivery of the schedule to deliver operational capability. The payment will cascade to the UK-wide supply chain of more than 230 companies, reinforcing confidence the programme is progressing and providing for more than 4000 jobs, including hundreds in South Wales.

Future payments will be made against the new schedule and its milestones, conditional on the delivery of compliant and deployable Ajax vehicles and continued progress of remaining trials activity. We have a robust firm price contract for the delivery of 589 vehicles, which will ensure that General Dynamics are incentivised to deliver against agreed outcomes. As such, the whole programme remains within its originally approved budget.

Learning Lessons

The Ajax programme is turning a corner, but this does not remove the need for the department to identify and learn lessons. We have always been clear that we will not shy away from taking action to change the culture and processes across Defence as necessary. We look forward to receiving the finalised report from Clive Sheldon KC on the Ajax Lessons Learned Review and publishing it as soon as practicable.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Second Meeting of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement Partnership Council

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):

[\[HCWS650\]](#)

The next meeting of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement Partnership Council will take place in London on 24 March 2023, with delegations attending in person and by video conference.

The meeting will be co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP and Vice President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič.

The agenda will include:

1. Opening remarks by the co-Chairs and adoption of the agenda

2. Energy

1. Electricity trading (Article 312 TCA)
2. Security of supply cooperation and working arrangements for TSOs (Articles 315 and 317 TCA)
3. EU Green Deal Industrial Plan

3. Regulation

1. MoU on Financial Services
2. Working Groups (Article 9 TCA)
3. Intellectual Property
4. UK Retained EU Law Bill
5. Bill of Rights Bill

4. Security

1. Cooperation on cybersecurity (Article 703 TCA)
2. Cooperation on counterterrorism (Article 768 TCA)
3. Passenger Name Records (Article 552(4) TCA)

5. Union Programmes

6. AOB

7. Concluding remarks by the co-chairs

■ Tenth Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):

[\[HCWS651\]](#)

The next meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee will take place in London on 24 March 2023, with delegations attending in person and by video conference.

The meeting will be co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP and Vice President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič.

The agenda will include:

1. Welcome and opening remarks from the co-chairs
 - 1.1. Formal adoption of the agenda
 - 1.2. Stocktake of Specialised Committee activity 21 February 2022 – 24 March 2023.
2. Update on Withdrawal Agreement Implementation in accordance with Article 164 of the Withdrawal Agreement
 - 2.1. Citizens' Rights
 - 2.2. The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland / The Windsor Framework
3. Decisions and Recommendations for Joint Committee adoption

3.1. Decision No X/2023 laying down arrangements relating to the Windsor Framework

3.2. Recommendation No X/2023 on market surveillance and enforcement

3.3. Recommendation No X/2023 on Article 13(3a) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland

Joint Declaration to be made by the Union and the United Kingdom

3.4. Joint Declaration No XX/2023

3.5. Joint Declaration on the application of Article 10(1) of the Windsor Framework

3.6. Joint Declaration on Article 13(3a) of the Windsor Framework

3.7. Joint Declaration number X

3.8. Joint Declaration on the VAT regime for goods not being at risk for the Union's internal market and on the VAT arrangements for cross border refunds

United Kingdom Unilateral Declarations and Union Unilateral Declarations taking note

3.9. Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom Involvement of the institutions of the 1998 Agreement (Annex 1 to the Decision No X/2023 laying down arrangements relating to the Windsor Framework)

3.10. Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on market surveillance and enforcement

3.10.1 Unilateral Declaration by the Union taking note of the Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on market surveillance and enforcement

3.11. Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on export procedures for goods moving from Northern Ireland to other parts of the United Kingdom

3.11.1. Unilateral Declaration by the Union taking note of the Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on export procedures for goods moving from Northern Ireland to other parts of the United Kingdom

3.12. Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on the democratic consent mechanism in Article 18 of the Windsor Framework

3.12.1. Unilateral Declaration by the Union taking note of the Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on the democratic consent mechanism in Article 18 of the Windsor Framework

3.13. Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on strengthening enforcement action for goods moved in parcels from another part of the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland

3.13.1. Unilateral Declaration by the Union taking note of the Unilateral Declaration by the United Kingdom on strengthening enforcement action for goods moved in parcels from another part of the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland

4. AOB

5. Concluding remarks

HOME OFFICE**■ Publication of the 5th annual report of the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group****The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp):** **[HCWS649]**

My Noble Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am pleased to announce the publication of the 5th annual report of the Biometrics and Forensic Ethics Group. The Group provides Ministers with independent advice on matters relating to ethical issues in forensic science and biometrics and considers issues in data ethics.

I would like to thank the Group for their valuable advice concerning the use and retention of human biometric identifiers, and regarding the use and implementation of projects involving both large and complex datasets.

The Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group have continued to show commitment to advising the Home Office Biometrics Programme on matters regarding changes to biometric regulations and biometric enrolment.

I am grateful to the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group for maintaining strong relationships with internal Home Office teams in order to establish a strong presence and to identify a range of projects, within their remit, which can benefit from expert ethical guidance.

The Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group annual report can be viewed on the website of the Group at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/biometrics-and-forensics-ethics-group> and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ English Freeports Update****Minister for Levelling Up (Dehenna Davison):** **[HCWS653]**

Today I have the pleasure of announcing that Thames Freeport has received final government approval, in a massive boost to South Essex and the wider region. This is a pivotal landmark for the Freeports programme and comes less than 4 months after I announced the first group to receive approval. The speed of progress sends a clear message: the Government is backing these areas to grow and thrive.

Freeports form an important part of this Government's economic strategy and will catalyse investment through a combination of tax reliefs, public funding, and government support. These measures will drive growth, create jobs and, in turn, transform opportunities for local communities: a real example of levelling up in action.

The Thames Freeport will now receive up to £25 million in seed funding and potentially hundreds of millions in locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. This is alongside generous tax reliefs and a simplified customs

procedure, all backed by a package of trade and innovation support for businesses located there.

Armed with these tools, the Thames Freeport will drive investment in and around the ports of South Essex and Ford's world-class Dagenham Engine Plant. This will bring jobs of the future – in sectors such as advanced manufacturing and hydrogen – to local communities.

And this is only the beginning. Across government, we are working closely with the English Freeports to support them to achieve their objectives and deliver transformational benefits for their local areas.

We also recently announced two successful Green Freeports in Scotland and we will be announcing the outcome of the Welsh competition shortly. Discussions continue with our stakeholders in Northern Ireland about how we can extend the benefits associated with the Freeport programme there.

This is an incredibly exciting time for UK Freeports and the wider levelling up agenda as we start to see local areas bring their plans to life with big private investments, upgrades to local infrastructure, and bold regeneration initiatives in those areas that need a boost, creating real impacts for local people.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner 2021

Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS646\]](#)

I have today laid before the House of Commons a copy of the Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Rt Hon Sir Brian Leveson. The report covers the activities of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO), the Office of Communications Data Authorisations (OCDA) and the Technology Advisory Panel (TAP) for 2021. I will also be sending a copy of this report to Scottish Ministers as required under section 234(8) of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA).

This report demonstrates the Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring a high level of compliance with the regulations governing the use of investigatory powers. Sir Brian Leveson oversees the use of investigatory powers by over 600 public authorities, including the intelligence and security services and law enforcement agencies. He notes that he is continually impressed with the dedication and professionalism of the officials working within those bodies and that regulatory compliance continues to be treated as a high priority.

The Annual Report contains a reference to an error identified in the Home Office's arrangements for warrants authorised out of hours. IPCO were notified of this error immediately upon its discovery in November 2021 and the Home Office immediately put in place arrangements, which the Investigatory Powers Commissioner was content with, to rectify the problem.

As required under section 234(6)(b) of the IPA, I wish to notify the House that there is material considered too sensitive for the open report on which I have been briefed separately. I am satisfied that, following consultation with relevant government departments and agencies, the contents of this report are not prejudicial to national security or ongoing investigations.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the current and previous Commissioners and their staff for their work. In particular, I am pleased that Sir Brian Leveson agreed to another three-year term from 21 October 2022. I also note the appointment of Dame Muffy Calder as the new Chair of IPCO's Technology Advisory Panel and welcome the expertise she and her colleagues will provide on emerging technology.

Maintaining public trust and confidence in the exercise of the investigatory powers vital for national security and public safety is a top priority for the Government. This report demonstrates the high quality of the oversight of our intelligence and security agencies' use of the most intrusive powers. I am satisfied that our oversight arrangements are amongst the strongest and most effective in the world.

I commend this report to the House.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Help to Claim

Minister of State for Employment (Guy Opperman):

[\[HCWS648\]](#)

I am today announcing that the current Help to Claim support arrangements have been extended to 31st March 2024. Help to Claim provides tailored practical support to individuals to make their Universal Credit Claim on-line.

Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland will continue to deliver independent support following a further £22.2 million investment. The provision will continue to cover England, Scotland, and Wales for 12 months, and ensures that free confidential and impartial support is available to help people make a new Universal Credit claim and manage their claim, up to receiving their first correct payment.

Since April 2019, Help to Claim has supported over 800,000 people, with 9 in 10 people rating their overall experience as good or very good and would recommend it to friends and family.

From April 2023, the support will continue to be provided through telephony and digital channels. For those individuals who are unable to access support via these channels, they will continue to be able to go to their local Jobcentre, where staff will identify the right support to meet their needs. This is already available to those individuals who choose to seek support from the Department directly in making a claim to Universal Credit.

The Department is committed to providing the best possible support for all our claimants, including the most vulnerable in society, in both making and maintaining their claim.

The Department is currently considering the support required from April 2024.