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Tuesday
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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Stowell of Beeston	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and Department for Transport
Baroness Anelay of St Johns	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Baroness Altmann	Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Whip
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Bridges of Headley	Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change, Wales Office and Whip
Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Whip
Lord Dunlop	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Whip
Lord Faulks	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
Lord Freud	Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Deputy Chief Whip and Spokesman for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland
Lord Maude of Horsham	Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Nash	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Lord O'Neill of Gatley	Commercial Secretary to the Treasury
Lord Prior of Brampton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
Baroness Shields	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Verma	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 22 March 2016

HS2 Phase One: Financial Indemnity for Affinity Water

[HLWS620]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Robert Goodwill) has made the following Ministerial Statement:

I have today laid before Parliament a Departmental Minute from the Department for Transport describing the contingent liability arising from an indemnity that will be provided to Affinity Water Ltd, protecting them from financial loss as a result of any construction damage to at-risk water resources from the construction of the Phase One, London to West Midlands HS2 rail line.

HS2 construction in the Colne Valley has the potential to cause damage to the chalk aquifer from which Affinity Water sources its water supply. An appropriate mitigation strategy will be developed during detailed design of the construction works, using information from ground investigation surveys. With the mitigation strategy in place, it is considered that the risks to the aquifer will be low. However, the risk of potential damage will exist despite the mitigation measures which will be applied. Should the aquifer or the company's abstraction points be damaged, Affinity Water is likely to face a consequential financial loss. There is no existing protection for Affinity Water in respect of this loss and they would be unlikely to make a successful claim under common law. Under standard compensation arrangements, the basis for compensation would link to the loss in value or damage to a claimant's property, which for Affinity Water could include pipes or pumps. However, the water in an aquifer is not a property of Affinity Water and so they have no protection if the project causes damage to the resources on which they are dependent. Therefore, Affinity Water require the Department for Transport to carry the liability for any financial loss arising from any impact of the Phase One construction works on their abstraction points.

The worst case scenario with respect to the liability would include the cost of replacing 3 abstraction boreholes, each one is estimated to cost £20m, and also the cost of providing temporary replacement water supplies during the period for which water abstraction is interrupted. The indemnity will not be limited, however, under the worst case scenario, the projected cost of the indemnity is expected to be approximately £77m. The duration of the liability is scheduled to last for four years from 2017 – 2021, which represents the period of the construction works which might cause the potential damage. The worst-case scenario, in which HS2 must replace more than one borehole, is considered to be remote.

If the liability is called, provision for any payment will be managed through normal supply procedure. The Department will be noting this Contingent Liability in its Accounts.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Contingent Liability - Affinity Water [Contingent Liability - Affinity Water.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2016-03-22/HLWS620/>

Inverness and Highland City Region Deal

[HLWS619]

Lord Dunlop: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

In March 2015, the Government announced its intention to negotiate an Inverness and Highland City Region Deal. As well as deals across England, this followed the successful agreement of a City Deals in Glasgow and Clyde Valley. An Aberdeen City Deal was announced on 28 January 2016.

I can today inform the House that the Government has reached agreement with the Scottish Government, The Highland Council and other partners on a Heads of Terms City Region Deal for Inverness.

This Heads of Terms City Region Deal agreement provides a transformative opportunity to position the area as a region of digital opportunity and strength, thereby enabling the Highlands to be the best digitally connected rural region in Europe.

Central to this will be a significant funding package which invests up to £315m of public money into the regional economy. As part of this funding package, the UK Government will commit up to £53.1m, The Highland Council along with regional partners will commit up to £127m and the Scottish Government will commit up to £135m. This funding package will be provided over a 10 year period subject to detailed business cases, statutory processes and implementation plans.

The UK Government's contribution to the fund will support a set of proposals from the region intended to enable the Highland area to be the most digitally connected rural region in Europe by investing into extended digital coverage, including superfast broadband and mobile 4G connectivity.

It will also support a package of new innovation measures that builds on existing academic and industry expertise in Inverness, as well as business support networks across the Highlands. This will include exploring ways to support a multi-disciplinary centre focused on the commercialisation of new medical products and technologies, and a Northern Scotland Innovation Hub.

Office for Nuclear Regulation Strategic Plan

[HLWS618]

Baroness Altmann: My honourable Friend The Minister for Disabled People (Justin Tomlinson MP) has made the following Written Statement.

Later today I will lay a copy of the Un-numbered Act Paper, the Office for Nuclear Regulation's Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 before this House. The Strategic Plan will also be published on the ONR's website.

I can confirm, in accordance with Schedule 7, Section 25(3) of the Energy Act 2013, that there have been no exclusions to the published document on the grounds of national security.

Type 26 Global Combat Ship Demonstration Phase

[HLWS621]

Earl Howe: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr Philip Dunne) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today I am providing an update on our plans for the next stage of the Type 26 Global Combat Ship (T26 GCS) programme.

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR15) set out the Government's clear commitment to build eight Anti-Submarine Type 26 Global Combat

Ships, preceded by two additional Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), and to launch a concept study and then design and build a new class of lighter, flexible general purpose frigates.

Alongside work on the National Shipbuilding Strategy, we are working with industry to develop an optimised schedule for the Type 26 and OPV programmes. As part of this, we have agreed a contract with BAE Systems valued at £472 million to extend the T26 Demonstration Phase to June 2017.

This will enable us to mature further the detailed ship design, ahead of the start of manufacture, including investing in Shore Testing Facilities, and extend our investment in the wider supply chain in parallel with the re-baselining work which is continuing.

The investment in shore based testing facilities will test key parts of the ships' Power and Propulsion system and the Combat System to de-risk their future integration into the Class.

Investment in the wider supply chain will cover further key equipment purchases for the first three Type 26 Global Combat Ships including the Diesel Generators, Sonar Domes, helicopter handling equipment, Mission Bay side doors and the stabiliser and steering gear systems, and demonstrates our on-going commitment to invest in the UK's ability to design, develop and deliver complex warships to meet the Royal Navy's future capability needs.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 22 March 2016

Abortion

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many abortions took place in 2014 at 23 weeks' gestation and above. [[HL7058](#)]

Lord Prior of Brampton: In 2014, there were 682 abortions performed at 23 weeks gestation and above for residents of England and Wales. Abortions where gestation has exceeded its 24th week account for less than 0.1% of the overall total number of abortions for 2014 for England and Wales.

Ali Mohammed al-Nimr

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia in the case of the death sentence by crucifixion of Ali al-Nimr. [[HL7083](#)]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The British Government is very concerned about the case of Ali al-Nimr, and has raised this case with the Saudi Arabian authorities, most recently on 12 March, at a very senior level. Our expectation remains that he will not be executed.

Armed Forces: Recruitment

Asked by Lord Touthig

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) regulars, and (2) reserves, joined the Armed Forces in November 2015. [[HL6976](#)]

Earl Howe: In November 2015 1,180 personnel joined the UK Regular Armed Forces and 710 personnel joined the Reserves.

Association of British Insurers

Asked by Lord Wills

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many meetings (1) Treasury ministers, and (2) Treasury officials, have had with the Association of British Insurers in each of the last three years. [[HL6818](#)]

Lord O'Neill of Gatley: Treasury Ministers and officials meet with a wide range of companies and organisations to discuss relevant issues.

As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Treasury's practice to provide details of all such discussions.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are

published on a quarterly basis and are available via the gov.uk website.

Aviation: Lasers

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they intend to take to discourage the inappropriate use of lasers with potentially damaging consequences for pilots and air passengers. [[HL6944](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is exploring a number of options to address the threat from the misuse of laser pens. This is a matter we take very seriously, particularly in light of recent events that have been reported.

There is specific legislation prohibiting the use of laser pens against aircraft. Under the Air Navigation Order (2009), it is an offence to direct or shine any light at any aircraft in flight so as to dazzle or distract the pilot of the aircraft. Anyone found guilty of this offence could be liable to a fine, up to a maximum of £2,500.

It is also an offence to "recklessly or negligently act in a manner to endanger an aircraft, or any person in an aircraft". Anyone found guilty of this offence could be liable to a fine, up to 5 years imprisonment, or both.

Crime

Asked by Lord Laird

To ask Her Majesty's Government by what criteria they define a serious crime as opposed to other crimes. [[HL6938](#)]

Lord Faulks: Various definitions of serious crime are used in different contexts. Sections 2, 2A and 3 of, and Schedule 1 to, the Serious Crime Act 2007 define 'involved in serious crime' for the purposes of Part I of that Act, which relates to serious crime prevention orders. Section 81 (2) and (3) of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 defines 'serious crime' for the purposes of that Act.

Cycleways: Greater London

Asked by Lord Higgins

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the increase in road congestion and the construction of Cycle Superhighways in London, how they will ensure that fire, ambulance, and other emergency service vehicles are able to use Superhighways in the event of a terrorist attack or other major incident. [[HL7134](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: London's cycle superhighways are the responsibility of the Mayor and Transport for London (TfL). Emergency service vehicles operating under blue lights will always find the safest and fastest way possible to arrive at a major incident or terrorist attack. This could mean using any part of the

highway, including, where necessary and where the road layout allows this, part of a cycle superhighway.

Dental Health: Children

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre show a significant rise in the number of dental extractions in children under 10 over the last four years; and what action they are taking to improve dental health in that age group, including access to NHS dental services. [HL6837]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The tables below, provided by the Health and Social Care Information Centre, shows 1) the number of admissions for children (aged 0-9 years) to hospitals in England for extractions of one or more decayed primary or permanent teeth; and 2) the numbers of courses of treatment in primary care in England that contained an extraction for a child aged 0-17, both for the years 2011/12 – 2014/15.

1)

Age	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
0-4	19,033	9,082	9,585	10,001
05-Sep	24,524	25,459	26,356	26,956

Notes:

Admissions do not represent the number of children, as a child may have more than one admission within the same period.

2)

Age	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
0-17	540,626	533,694	539,908	524,163

Notes

Figures for primary care are not available broken down for under 10s.

NHS England is working to develop contractual initiatives focussed on improving the oral health of children. This is in addition to the work within the contract reform programme, which is aimed at introducing an National Health Service dental contract with a much clearer focus on preventing future dental disease and increasing access to NHS dentistry.

Public Health England (PHE) has produced a toolkit to support local authorities in their responsibility to improve dental health and reduce inequalities among children and young people in their area. PHE has also developed guidance for dental teams on preventing dental disease in young children. Advice has also recently been published by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence.

The Government will be launching the Childhood Obesity Strategy in the summer. It will look at everything that contributes to a child becoming overweight and obese, including sugar which is a cause of tooth decay.

In the Budget statement on 16 March, the Chancellor announced a soft drink industry levy. This is a bold step towards protecting our children's health.

Driverless Vehicles

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in relation to robotic machinery used on a highway, there is a legal distinction between ground-based robots and driverless cars, and if so, what is that distinction. [HL7054]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK's road traffic legislation regulates the use of mechanically propelled vehicles, including connected and autonomous vehicles, on our roads. This would cover machinery, robotic or otherwise, used on a highway, if it is intended to be used as a vehicle on a road.

Economic and Monetary Union

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether parliamentary approval would be required for any decision to join the eurozone, and if so, why the Prime Minister has stated that the UK will never join the eurozone, in the light of the fact that one Parliament cannot bind its successor. [HL6811]

Lord O'Neill of Gatley: As set out in Protocol 15, the United Kingdom is under no legal obligation to adopt the euro as its currency. Under the EU Act 2011, a decision by the UK under Protocol (No 15) leading to a decision by the Council under article 140 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union would require an Act of Parliament and a referendum result in favour before a Minister of the Crown could support it.

The Prime Minister has been clear that Britain will never join the euro.

Egypt: Aviation

Asked by Lord Marlesford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what investigations they have made, or caused to be made, into security at the airport at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt, and when they expect to be able to advise airlines flying from the UK that it is safe to resume flights to Sharm el-Sheikh. [HL7144]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government continues to work with the Egyptian Authorities towards a resumption of direct flights to Sharm el-Sheikh as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the Department for Transport remains in close contact with airlines that were operating flights from the UK to Sharm el-Sheikh.

Food Poverty

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the percentage of food poverty or insecurity that is caused by state benefits being used for purposes other than to provide necessities. [HL6812]

Lord Freud: There has been no such assessment.

Forced Labour: Children

Asked by Baroness Doocey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Faulks on 23 February (HL6039), how many of the six cases in 2014 "knowingly requir[ing] another person to perform forced/compulsory labour" involved child victims. [HL6820]

Lord Faulks: There were no juveniles (individuals aged 10-17) involved as victims of the offence of "knowingly requir[ing] another person to perform forced/compulsory labour", in England and Wales, in 2014.

Genito-urinary Medicine

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England is not being reviewed annually; what meetings have taken place between Public Health England and the Department of Health since March 2013 to review that framework; and whether the Department of Health has any plans to update that framework. [HL6825]

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government with which groups officials from (1) Public Health England, and (2) the Department of Health have met regarding local authorities not meeting their mandatory requirements for sexual health services; what steps that department will take to ensure that local authorities are meeting their mandatory requirements for sexual health services; and what steps they will take if a local authority is found not to be meeting mandatory requirements to commission open-access sexual health services. [HL6826]

Lord Prior of Brampton: Department of Health officials meet regularly with Public Health England (PHE) to discuss progress on sexual health, including the ambitions in the Sexual Health Improvement Framework (SHIF). Since the Framework was published PHE has developed Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles to support local authorities, public health leads and others to monitor the sexual and reproductive health of their local population and the contribution of local public health related systems. Trends are shown at both England and local authority level for a range of indicators that match the

ambitions in the SHIF where data is available. A further annual progress report on the Framework would duplicate this work. Whilst there are no current plans to update the SHIF, in December 2015 PHE published their *Health promotion for sexual and reproductive health and HIV, strategic action plan, 2016 to 2019*, which complements the SHIF. A copy of the plan is attached.

Departmental and PHE officials have met with the Local Government Association, English HIV and Sexual Health Commissioners Group, British Association for Sexual Health and HIV and the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health where open access sexual health services were discussed. PHE has undertaken a survey of local commissioning arrangements for sexual health.

Local democratic accountability is at the heart of the accountability of local authorities for their statutory duty to improve the public's health. PHE has a specific role in assurance of the ring-fence grant and that local authorities are meeting the grant conditions and the terms of the associated statutory regulations. PHE publishes data on outcomes from services for each local authority in England and can provide support and advice where necessary.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Health Promotion for Sexual and Reproductive Health [Health promotion for sexual and reproductive health and HIV.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-03-08/HL6825>

Govia Thameslink Railway

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 15 March (HL6698), how they intend to evaluate whether Govia Thameslink Railway has met its franchise commitment to "make improvements to passenger experience both on trains and at stations", and how in particular the effect on passengers of reduced ticket office hours will be evaluated; and whether they will invite interested parliamentarians to a meeting to discuss Govia Thameslink Railway's performance against its franchise commitments. [HL7057]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: There are a number of contractual obligations within Govia Thameslink Railway's franchise agreement designed to improve the passenger experience both on trains and at stations and there are processes in place to monitor and review compliance with these obligations. To date, Govia Thameslink Railway have delivered over 60 of these obligations, which have included the extension of Oyster Pay as You Go and Contactless Payments to Gatwick Airport, increased overnight services to Luton Airport Parkway, the introduction of weekend and late evening services on the Moorgate branch, the staffing of an additional 25 stations from the first to last train and the

issuing of tablets to customer facing staff to improve passenger information.

A separate ticketless travel monitoring regime is in place which incentivises Govia Thameslink Railway to reduce ticketless travel and maximise the collection of passenger revenue. In relation to the noble Lord's point about meeting interested parliamentarians to discuss GTR's performance, I would direct him to contact the my Hon Friend, the Rail Minister's (Claire Perry MP) office to arrange this as I'm sure she would be happy to meet.

Gulf War Syndrome

Asked by The Countess of Mar

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Earl Howe on 15 March (HL6835), whether they accept the findings of the Boston University School of Public Health that research "clearly and consistently" shows that exposure to pesticides and other toxins caused Gulf War Illness, and whether they are aware of any criticisms of this study that have been published following scientific peer review. [HL7060]

Earl Howe: The paper published by the Boston University School of Public Health is not new research but a review of the published peer-reviewed literature on the health of 1990-91 Gulf War veterans, notably that which has been published since 2008. We have carefully considered the paper, its findings and conclusions, and cannot agree that the review and studies cited demonstrate a causal association between pesticides and other exposures and Gulf War illness or specific diagnoses. We are not aware of any comments on the Boston University paper, either critical or in support.

Housing: Construction

Asked by Lord Horam

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many of the one million new homes they aim to deliver during this Parliament are expected to be built by (1) housing associations, (2) local authorities, and (3) private housebuilders. [HL7006]

Asked by Lord Horam

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many of the one million new homes they aim to deliver during this Parliament are estimated to be for (1) owner occupation, (2) shared ownership, and (3) rent; and how many of those homes for rent are expected to be for (a) affordable, and (b) social, rent. [HL7007]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Department for Communities and Local Government does not publish forecasts of house building.

Asked by Lord Horam

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the £20 billion they plan to spend on housing investment during

this Parliament will be broken down between the various categories including affordable homes for rent and starter homes to buy. [HL7008]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The £20 billion of housing investment announced in the last Spending Review includes:

- £8 billion to deliver 400,000 affordable housing starts;
- £8.6 billion to extend the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme to 2021 – supporting 145,000 families into new homes;
- £1 billion fund for small and custom builders to support delivery of up to 25,500 new homes;
- £1.1 billion public sector land programme to support release of land for 160,000 homes delivering a mix of housing; and
- £2 billion for infrastructure support and other long-term investment to unlock or accelerate a pipeline of 160,000 to 200,000 homes, included within the £12 billion Local Growth Fund, and delivering a mix of housing.

Intelligence Services: Public Records

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to release files held by the Cabinet Office on the activities of Anthony Blunt and other files on the intelligence services due for release now being sought by historical researchers, in accordance with their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Public Records Act 1958. [HL6598]

Lord Bridges of Headley: The files will be released in due course.

Iraq: Islamic State

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that chemical weapons are being used against the Turkmen community in the Kirkuk region of Iraq by ISIS. [HL7003]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: There are credible reports that Daesh have used chemical weapons in Iraq. We cannot confirm these reports with certainty, but we would condemn any such attack unreservedly. We are continuing to monitor these allegations very closely. Such behaviour would be consistent with Daesh's record of complete disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law. The Government of Iraq is investigating allegations of chemical weapon use in Iraq by non-state actors with support from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reports of the use of chemical weapons against the Turkmen village, Taza in Southern

Kirkuk, killing children and injuring 617 people, including 17 who are in critical condition. [HL7004]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We are aware of allegations that Daesh attacked the village of Taza on the morning of 8 March 2016 with a chemical agent, possibly sulphur mustard. There have been reports of multiple casualties, including the death of a young girl. We unreservedly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is supporting the Government of Iraq to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Iraq by non-state actors. The UK is at the forefront of pressing for an effective international response to the use of chemical weapons through the UN Security Council and the OPCW.

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Iraq and Kurdish Peshmerga forces in relation to defending Turkmen civilians. [HL7005]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We are aware of reports that Turkmen civilians have been targeted by Daesh in Iraq, as well as Christians, Yazidis, Muslims and others. In October the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), met the President of the Iraqi Turkmen Front to discuss the situation for Turkmen in Iraq.

We condemn in the strongest terms the targeting and persecution of all communities by Daesh. We continue to urge the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional government to do all they can to ensure the security and rights of all Iraqis.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel following reports of the Israeli navy opening fire on Palestinian fishing boats off al-Sudaniya and Gaza city, on 1 March, and what assessment they have made, if any, of the damage done on that and other occasions. [HL6971]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Whilst we have not raised this issue with the government of Israel, officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have expressed our concern previously over the Israel Defence Forces use of live fire against fishermen and also about the confiscation of their boats.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about why the Israel Defence Forces have been positioned behind the Green Line and on 1 March fired on Beit Hanun

farmland and farmers working in fields east of Juhor al-Dik. [HL6972]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We have not had any discussions with the Israeli authorities on this issue. However, we have an ongoing dialogue with the Israeli authorities about the Israeli Defence Forces use of live fire.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel following raids on the Gaza Strip on 12 March, and in particular the deaths and injuries of children resulting from those raids. [HL6974]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We have not raised this issue with the Israeli authorities. Israel, like all countries, has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are in line with International Humanitarian Law.

M4

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Welsh Government about alternative options to the M4 relief road south of Newport, including investing in additional rail services, stations and infrastructure. [HL6934]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Consideration of the case for alternative options to the M4 relief road south of Newport is a matter for the Welsh Government. However, we are working closely with the Welsh Government on the development of the next Rail Investment Strategy to ensure that relevant Welsh priorities for rail investment in Control Period 6 (2019-2024) are reflected. No decision on any major investment in Wales is made without taking into account the views of the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government will gain much greater control over the development of rail services in Wales as a result of the agreement reached between the two Governments in November 2014 to devolve executive franchising rail functions in Wales, so that the Welsh Government can lead on the procurement of the next Wales and Borders franchise from 2018. Subject to agreement on final terms, I would expect the Welsh Government to be leading on the specification of future service levels in Wales in the next franchise.

Middle East: Military Intervention

Asked by Lord Touthig

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many British air strikes in (1) Syria, and (2) Iraq, have been conducted since 2 December 2015, and what assessment they have made of their effectiveness. [HL6975]

Earl Howe: The UK military campaign in Iraq and Syria is part of a wider Coalition effort to counter Daesh. Between 2 December 2015 and 14 March 2016 there were 36 UK airstrikes in Syria and 236 in Iraq. These airstrikes have contributed significantly to the coalition's wider efforts, which are placing Daesh under increasing pressure in both Syria and Iraq. Among the targets successfully engaged by UK aircraft were oil facilities, which Daesh used to generate revenue to fund their campaign, and command and control centres. UK aircraft have also lent direct assistance to regional ground forces, which have achieved notable successes in retaking territory from Daesh.

All UK strikes are undertaken as part of a rigorous targeting process, which assesses before, during and after a strike to ensure that the Law of Armed Conflict is adhered to.

Migration

Asked by Lord Vinson

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the fact that the net long-term international migration figure for the year ending September 2015 was 323,000 rather than their ambition of tens of thousands, what is the high migration assumption in the latest ONS population projections, and what they estimate will be the increase in the UK population over the next five years. [HL6817]

Lord Bridges of Headley: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Referral Letter [HL6817 Referral Letter.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-03-08/HL6817>

Military Aircraft: Training

Asked by Lord Touthig

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the suitability of the length of the current UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) contract, and how the length of that contract compares to previous contracts for the UKMFTS. [HL6946]

Asked by Lord Touthig

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received regarding the UK Military Flying Training System contract, in particular regarding the length of that contract. [HL6947]

Earl Howe: The current UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) contract with Ascent Flight Training began in 2008 and will run for 25 years. Contract duration was a key user requirement and was endorsed prior to contract signature. Previous provision of military flying

training was delivered through an array of contracts with multiple providers and varying lengths. As such, these contracts cannot be directly compared to the single tri-service training system partner model employed by UKMFTS.

The Ministry of Defence has not received any representations regarding the duration of the overarching UKMFTS contract.

Asked by Lord Touthig

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many service personnel they estimate will be trained under the UK Military Flying Training System contract, and how that number compares to previous programmes. [HL6948]

Earl Howe: The current contracted requirement is for 180 pilots and 110 rear crew to be trained as new entrants under the UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS).

The UKMFTS solution has been designed to meet the training requirement agreed across all front line commands. This is the same process as employed for historic provision of military flying training, where the requirement has fluctuated over time. Pre-SDSR 2010, the new entrant training requirement was for 280 pilots and 170 rear crew.

Motability

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many individuals who previously claimed a motability allowance under the Disability Living Allowance have (1) lost that allowance after being reassessed for Personal Independence Payments, and (2) kept that allowance after being reassessed for Personal Independence Payments. [HL6794]

Baroness Altmann: There is not a motability allowance in Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The information requested is, therefore, not available.

Both DLA and PIP have a mobility component which can be paid at one of two rates and access to the Motability Scheme is through receipt of the higher rate mobility component of DLA or the enhanced rate mobility component of PIP.

The latest available data on PIP claims in payment, registrations, clearances and awards for both new claims and reassessed claims (for those previously in receipt of DLA) are published on Gov.UK. In particular, breakdowns of reassessed claims in payment by type and rate of awards can be found using the Stat Xplore tool on Gov.UK

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of those individuals who previously claimed a motability allowance under the Disability Living Allowance and have lost that allowance after being

reassessed for Personal Independence Payments, have (1) appealed that decision, and (2) succeeded at appeal. [HL6795]

Lord Faulks: The First-tier Tribunal - Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) administered by HM Courts & Tribunals Service - hears appeals against decisions by the Department for Work and Pensions on a range of benefits including Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Information about the number and success rates of SSCS appeals by benefit type, including PIP, is published in the Tribunal and Gender Recognition Certificate Statistics Quarterly. The most recent report can be located on the government website.

The specific information requested is not held centrally.

Multinational Companies: Taxation

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord O'Neill of Gatley on 10 February (HL5712), what other mechanisms are available to the EU to intervene on, or influence, taxation in individual member states. [HL6810]

Lord O'Neill of Gatley: Direct tax is a Member State competence. Under the Treaties, any Directives on tax are agreed by unanimity, the effect of which is to give each Member State a veto power.

Muttahida Quami Movement

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relationship between MQM and the government of India, and of whether that party is funded by that government. [HL7025]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The British Government is aware of media reports alleging that the Government of India has funded the Muttahida Quami Movement political party. The conduct of political parties in Pakistan is a matter for the Pakistani authorities. Our officials in Pakistan encourage political parties to act within the constitution and law of Pakistan.

National Patient Safety Agency

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of abolishing the National Patient Safety Agency. [HL6908]

Lord Prior of Brampton: An internal report *Abolition of the National Patient Safety Agency, Transition and closure* (July 2012) states that "In total, the savings secured through closing the Agency have been calculated to be approximately £9.3 million per annum ... The vast majority of the Agency's cost base related to personnel. A significant amount of cost saving was secured through

proactive management of headcount through restructuring and redundancy programmes."

NHS: Employment Agencies

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask Her Majesty's Government what statistical data is kept centrally by the Department of Health on the numbers and specialisations of agency staff employed and engaged by the NHS Trusts in England and Wales. [HL7038]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The Department does not collect data on the numbers or specialisations of agency staff employed and engaged by National Health Service Trusts in England. Health is a devolved matter and therefore we do not hold or collect data for Wales.

NHS: Finance

Asked by Lord Turnberg

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Health Foundation report *A Perfect Storm: an impossible climate for NHS Providers' Finances?* which reports a shortfall in NHS funding of £2.8 billion in 2015-16 and predicts a widening gap between demand and funding levels despite proposed efficiency savings. [HL7105]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The Government has listened and responded to what the NHS has said about the profile of investment it needs to deliver the Five Year Forward View, and that is why we are investing an additional £10 billion that the NHS has said it needs to implement its own plan for the future - with £6 billion frontloaded over 2015-16 and 2016-17.

For next year (2016-17) we have created the Sustainability and Transformation Fund that will give the NHS the resources it needs to transform and create sustainable services for years to come.

Delivering the Five Year Forward View, including proposed efficiencies, will put the NHS on a financially sustainable footing by enabling the NHS to live within its means, eliminating organisational deficits and ensuring a balanced NHS budget in each year. We are putting the right measures in place to help spend taxpayer's money more efficiently, and reduce variation and waste.

NHS: Vacancies

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask Her Majesty's Government what statistical data is kept centrally by the Department of Health on NHS staff shortages amongst doctors, nurses and ancillary staff. [HL7037]

Lord Prior of Brampton: Statistical data regarding National Health Service staff shortages is not kept centrally by the Department.

The Department has set up Health Education England to deliver a better health and healthcare workforce for England. They are responsible for ensuring a secure workforce supply that reflects the needs of local service users, providers and commissioners of healthcare. The annual workforce plan for England sets out their view of demand and supply in a wide range of healthcare professions, including doctors and nurses.

Nuclear Reactors

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have a plan in place to rebuild the lost capacity in the UK to design and build civil nuclear reactors. [HL6949]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Government has established a policy framework that facilitates new nuclear build in the UK. Within that framework it is for developers to propose and deliver projects. Government's focus in relation to UK capacity and capability is to maximise UK content in the supply chain for new build. To that end Government works closely with industry to develop the skills and supply chain capability to meet the demands of the new build programme, including through bodies like the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group (NSSG) and with organisations like the Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Centre (NAMRC), which helps UK companies win work in the civil nuclear sector.

Peers: Correspondence

Asked by Lord Stevens of Ludgate

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to reply to the letter from Lord Stevens of Ludgate of 19 February regarding the Cycle Super Highway Route 11 in accordance with the Cabinet Office document Handling Correspondence from Members of Parliament, Members of the House of Lords, MEPs and Members of Devolved Assemblies: Guidance for Departments. [HL7050]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: A response was sent on 16 March.

Personal Independence Payment

Asked by Baroness Doocey

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many disabled people who receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) have so far been reassessed for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and of those that have been reassessed, how many have lost the top level of mobility allowance as they move from DLA to PIP, in each case broken down by disability. [HL6989]

Baroness Altmann: The Department intends to provide detailed breakdowns of DLA to PIP reassessment outcomes in due course. The Department is working to guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we

are able to publish statistics that meet high quality standards at the earliest opportunity.

The latest available data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims in payment, registrations, clearances and awards for both new claims and reassessed claims (for those previously in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)) are published on the Gov.UK website. Breakdowns of reassessed claims in payment by type and rate of awards can be found through Stat-Xplore, a statistical exploration tool available on the Gov.UK website.

Plastics: Health Hazards

Asked by Baroness Parminter

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the consumption of microplastics on human health. [HL6917]

Lord Prior of Brampton: No such assessment has been made.

Prisoners: Mental Illness

Asked by Baroness Howells of St Davids

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the treatment of prisoners with mental health conditions, and in particular to increase the number of staff available to escort them to treatment. [HL7066]

Lord Prior of Brampton: NHS England's national specifications for prison health services are improving standards of mental health services across all prisons in England. Clear commissioning models, focusing on outcomes specific to custodial settings for improving mental health, include improving the provision of support for common mental health conditions within the prison, earlier identification of prisoners who require transfer to secure hospitals and effective communication and planning with secure hospitals to enable safe transfer.

NHS England is working closely with the National Offender Management Service to consider the demand for escorts and identify options for improvement.

Railways: Greater London

Asked by Lord Ouseley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they propose to take to improve the arrest and prosecution rates for racist attacks, abuse and graffiti on London's rail network, in the light of the 650 incidents reported since 2013, resulting in only 13 arrests. [HL6963]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government considers the safety of people using the rail network to be of paramount importance. The British Transport Police (BTP) treats racially motivated hate crimes very seriously and a daily review takes place of every hate crime from the previous 24 hours. In line with the College of

Policing's National Hate Crime Strategy, BTP is working with partners to reduce hate crime and every crime is investigated in accordance with the College of Policing Guidance for the investigation of hate crime.

In addition, the London Transport Community Safety Partnership (LTCSP), which brings together Transport for London (TfL), the police and other key stakeholders, is looking at this important issue at a strategic level to ensure a coordinated response. Both the BTP and the Metropolitan Police have stepped up operational activity to provide a visible, engaging, reassuring presence across the TfL network. TfL is also working with community organisations to engage with them on this issue and encourage reporting. TfL provides full support to the police for their investigations, through staff reporting and access to CCTV and oyster card data, to help bring any offenders to justice.

Railways: North of England

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are, or are expected to be, the fastest scheduled passenger train times (1) now, (2) following the proposed electrification and other improvement works to existing trans-Pennine lines, and (3) following the construction of HS3, between (a) Leeds and Manchester, (b) Sheffield and Manchester, (c) Liverpool and York, (d) Liverpool and Hull, (e) Manchester and Liverpool, and (f) Leeds and Hull. [[HL7055](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: (1) The fastest scheduled passenger train journeys today are as follows:

(a) Leeds-Manchester Victoria 49 minutes; Leeds-Manchester Piccadilly 51 minutes (b) Sheffield-Manchester 51 minutes (c) Liverpool-York 1 hour 54 minutes (d) Liverpool-Hull 2 hours 57 minutes (no direct service; change at Leeds) (e) Manchester Victoria-Liverpool 32 minutes; Manchester Piccadilly-Liverpool 46 minutes (f) Leeds-Hull 55 minutes

(2) The fastest journey times following electrification and other improvement works will depend on the design of the various infrastructure elements of the network. The details of the designs will not be known until December 2017 at the earliest. Once the characteristics of the designs are known, it should be possible to estimate the effects on the journey times in question. Network Rail has been set the target of achieving 40 minutes Leeds-Manchester by the end of 2022.

(3) The report of the Northern Transport Strategy published on 7 March 2016, included the shared vision of Transport for the North and central government for future journey times:

(a) Leeds-Manchester 30 minutes; (b) Sheffield-Manchester 30 minutes

(c) Liverpool-York 1 hour 15 minutes

(d) Liverpool-Hull 1 hour 35 minutes

(e) Manchester-Liverpool 20 minutes;

(f) Leeds-Hull 45 minutes.

Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Faulks on 27 October 2015 (HL2390), what steps they have taken to satisfy themselves as to the appropriateness of the award of the contract for the management of Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre to MTCNovo in the light of the failure of the Youth Justice Board, in its response to a letter from Article 39, the Howard League for Penal Reform, and INQUEST, to address issues concerning that company's limited experience of dealing with the provision of custodial care for young offenders, and legal cases in the USA that raise questions about its suitability. [[HL6723](#)]

Lord Faulks: MTCNovo is a joint venture between Management Training Corporation (MTC) and Novo Community Ltd, owned by Amey. The capability of MTC and Amey, were robustly assessed at the pre-qualification stage of the competition.

There are two current legal cases brought against the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDCO) in relation to two correctional facilities in the USA where MTC is now the operator. Both these cases are brought against the commissioning authority MDOC and relate to conditions that existed when the facilities were operated by a different provider.

Rheumatology

Asked by Lord Wills

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the number of consultant rheumatologists, and the early availability of early arthritis clinics, in England and Wales. [[HL6881](#)]

Asked by Lord Wills

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to reduce any variation in compliance with NICE standards for the treatment and management of patients with rheumatoid arthritis in England and Wales. [[HL6882](#)]

Asked by Lord Wills

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to promote early identification and referral of patients with suspected inflammatory arthritis in primary care. [[HL6883](#)]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The latest monthly workforce statistics published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre showed that, as of November 2015, there were 563 full time equivalent rheumatology consultants employed in NHS. This is an increase of 119 (26.8%) since May 2010. The recruitment and retention of staff is matter for local NHS services.

To help clinicians to identify the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and make prompt referrals to specialists, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published *Rheumatoid arthritis: The management of rheumatoid arthritis in adults* in 2009. This best practice guideline sets out the signs and symptoms of the disease and emphasises the need for early diagnosis, with urgent referral to a specialist rheumatologist on suspicion of RA. How the guidance is adhered to is a matter for the local National Health Service. The NICE guidance is attached.

NICE quality standards (QS) are important in setting out to patients, the public, commissioners and providers what a high quality service should look like in a particular area of care. The RA QS, published in 2013, is based on the NICE clinical guideline, and one of the seven quality statements recommends that people with suspected RA are assessed in a rheumatology service within three weeks of referral. However, whilst providers and commissioners must have regard to these standards in planning and delivering services, they do not provide a comprehensive service specification and are not mandatory.

In February 2015, Public Health England, in partnership with the Department, ran a local pilot campaign to raise public awareness of the signs and symptoms of RA symptoms in Nottingham City and Hardwick Clinical Commissioning Group. The aim of the campaign was to support earlier diagnosis and thereby enable treatment to begin earlier to improve the quality of life for people with the condition. The results of the campaign are currently being evaluated.

Finally, the provision of health services in the United Kingdom is a devolved matter, and therefore RA services in Wales are a matter for the Welsh Government.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

NICE guidance Rheumatoid Arthritis [CG79 guideline (updated) 20151209.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-03-09/HL6881>

Rugby: Museums and Galleries

Asked by Lord Smith of Leigh

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will support the establishment of a National Museum of Rugby League in the Northern Powerhouse area. [HL7099]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: There are a number of independent sporting museums in the UK based on individual sports including rowing, tennis and Rugby Union. Arts Council England supports a Subject Specialist Network for sporting museums that promotes and shares best practice and expertise in the field. There are currently no plans to fund a National Museum of Rugby League in the Northern Powerhouse area, however this Department is investing in the game of Rugby

League, through the £17.5m that that Rugby League will receive from Sport England between 2013 and 2017 and the £100k support for a bid for the 2021 Rugby League World Cup; announced in the Budget.

Severn River Crossing: Tolls

Asked by Lord German

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 14 March, whether they intend to continue tolling the Severn Bridges at the prevailing rate at the end of the concession until they have collected an additional £63 million above and beyond operational costs of managing the Bridges. [HL6991]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Chancellor announced in his Budget speech that tolls at the Severn Bridges will be cut by 50% at the end of the current concession. Tolls will continue at this lower level to collect the costs of £63m incurred outside of the concession.

Asked by Lord German

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 14 March, how the £63 million which will be still outstanding when the Severn Bridges return to public ownership at the end of the concession is broken down. [HL6992]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Most of the cost estimated to have been incurred outside of the concession relate to expenditure between 1992 and 2014, on capital (17%), operations including maintenance (50%) and administration (15%). The remainder was incurred before 1992 or is forecast to be spent between 2015 and 2018. More than half of the operations and maintenance expenditure was to investigate and correct cable corrosion.

Asked by Lord German

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 14 March, how long they estimate tolling on the Severn Bridges will have to continue in order to collect the additional £63 million beyond the date of the end of the concession on these bridges. [HL6993]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: This depends on traffic levels and on maintenance costs, both of which may change over time. However our current estimates suggest the £63m could take around 18 months to recoup at the toll levels announced in the recent Budget.

Skipton-Colne Railway Line

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, as part of improvements to trans-Pennine railway capacity and services, they are considering the reinstatement of the railway line between Colne and Skipton. [HL7056]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: It is for Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils, working with their Rail North and Transport for the North partners, to decide whether to progress consideration of this reinstatement as part of the Northern Transport Strategy. This consideration will be informed by the results of a recent study commissioned for the local campaign group, SELRAP, supported by a number of local authority partners, on the conditional outputs in improved local and regional connectivity that any reinstatement should seek to address.

This Government has made significant funding available to Local Enterprise Partnerships and local authorities through both devolution and the growth deals. Over £2billion Local Growth Fund will be spent on local transport schemes in the North up to 2021. We expect that local areas in the North will continue to use these processes to promote their priority local transport schemes.

Social Security Benefits: Disability

Asked by Baroness Grey-Thompson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what involvement the Department for Work and Pensions has had with disabled people and their families to inform their thinking on the forthcoming white paper on improving support for disabled people and people with health conditions. [HL6935]

Baroness Altmann: The department regularly engages with disability charities and organisations, as well as disabled people and their families and carers, at both Ministerial and official level. We proactively seek stakeholder views on current health, care and employment services to understand what works and where improvements can be made through roundtables, focus groups and face-to-face meetings. These discussions inform and provide the opportunity to test our thinking as we being to develop proposals for the forthcoming White Paper, and we will continue to engage at all levels over the coming months.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Health Services

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role of investment through local revenue raising in the development of sustainable health systems capable of detecting and responding to disease outbreaks in Sub-Saharan Africa. [HL6899]

Baroness Verma: Domestic financing has a central role to play in all countries to strengthen health systems and improve accountability. In April 2001, African Union Heads of State agreed the Abuja Declaration which set a target of allocating at least 15% of budgets to improve the health sector. Subsequently, the share of budgets allocated to health increased from 8.1% in 2000 to 9.6% in 2010. However, even at 15% of government expenditure, many

African countries would still lack the funding necessary to improve their health systems significantly. The international community therefore plays an important supporting role in strengthening health systems to contain disease outbreaks and to ensure global health security.

Syria: Diplomatic Service

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are using the current ceasefires in Syria to enable British diplomats to visit and assess the situation in the three cantons of north and north-east Syria; and if not, why not. [HL7045]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK has suspended all diplomatic relations with the Syrian regime. As such, no British diplomats have visited Syria since February 2012. Our work to support transition to a stable and inclusive Syria is conducted from outside the country, through our participation in the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), including the ISSG Taskforces on the Cessation of Hostilities and Humanitarian Access, and through our engagement with the opposition. We provide humanitarian and other support to the Syrian people through a range of partners, including Syrian civil society organisations, the UN and international non-governmental organisations.

Syria: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they are making with the governments of the United States, Russia, and others, to stabilise Syria and to make significant progress on peace negotiations. [HL6833]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK has been undertaking stabilisation activities in Syria for a number of years, through projects totalling over £100 million funded under the Conflict Pool and thereafter the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. But as the Government made clear at the London Conference on Syria in February, the post conflict stabilisation and reconstruction needs in Syria following a political settlement which ends the civil war will require a significant international response.

We are currently working with our international partners to ensure a coordinated post-conflict planning effort which is able to respond to the timeline that will – we hope – emerge from successful UN-mediated peace talks in Geneva, which are due to resume on 14 March. However, as agreed at the London Conference, it will rightly be for the UN to coordinate this work, with the support of Member States including the UK.

The UK is supporting peace negotiations through our leading role in the International Syria Support Group, as well as our support to the Syrian High Negotiations Committee. UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura intends to resume peace negotiations in Geneva from 14 March.

We hope that this effort delivers rapid progress towards political transition as envisaged by the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

Turkey: Press Freedom

Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey about human rights following the government takeover of a major Turkish newspaper. [[HL6868](#)]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We continue to monitor specific human rights cases and regularly underline the importance of freedom of expression and all fundamental freedoms as part of our broader dialogue with the Turkish government. We welcomed the EU Commission's Annual Progress Report on Turkey, released on 10 November 2015, which highlighted the need for further reforms from Turkey in those areas. As a friend and ally, we urge the Turkish government to uphold the right of media to operate without restriction. The Prime Minister, my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), did so on 7 March when he met Turkey's Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, and underlined the importance of protections for a free press and human rights in Turkey. The Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), and the Minister for Europe, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington), reiterated these messages in their meetings on 12 March with the Turkish Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister respectively.

UN Commission on the Status of Women

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are their goals and priorities for the 2016 Commission on the Status of Women at the UN. [[HL6857](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government will use the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment remain at the top of the global political agenda. We will negotiate with other United Nations Member States to agree a set of ambitious, action-oriented and forward-looking recommendations for governments around the world to accelerate progress on gender equality and ensure accountability. At the first session after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, we will press for a meaningful follow-up process that places gender equality at the heart of the new agenda while ensuring that the Commission remains the prime global forum on gender equality and the laboratory of ideas that it is today.

Furthermore, we will enhance the UK's reputation as a world leader in this area by promoting relevant national policies but also by exchanging ideas with other United Nations Member States. In line with the session's themes this year, we will be focusing on women's empowerment

and on violence against women and girls in high level discussions, events and bilateral meetings.

In addition, the Government will host and support a number of events to raise the profile of certain issues which still prevent us from achieving equality such as inequality in the workplace, discrimination in all its forms and violence against women and girls.

Lastly, but very importantly, we are working with civil society to ensure their participation remains an integral part of the Commission on the Status of Women programme and their concerns are heard at the national and global levels.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect the report of the Cross Government Working Group on Drones to be completed, and whether they intend to publish that report. [[HL7049](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Cross Government Working Group on Drones is an ongoing policy group that meets quarterly to discuss a range of cross-cutting departmental issues relating to drones. It does not routinely produce reports.

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the risk of civilian drones being used to carry out terrorist attacks and of accidental collisions, whether they are considering (1) introducing a mandatory registration system for civilian drones, and (2) introducing mandatory geo-fencing technology to prevent drones from flying over high-risk areas. [[HL7104](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I refer my Noble Baroness to my answer of the 16 March, UIN HL6659.

Warships

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many orders for major surface warships have been made since the last General Election. [[HL6977](#)]

Earl Howe: None.

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what factors led to the change of plans about keeping a warship building capability in Portsmouth as discussed prior to the last General Election. [[HL6978](#)]

Earl Howe: Following a review of its business needs, Magma Structures, the company considering commercial use of shiphall A in HM Naval Base Portsmouth, has decided it does not want to proceed with a lease. It has confirmed its intention to lease office space within the naval base in order to develop a centre of excellence for composite materials on site and to develop a broad range

of composite projects within the defence and other sectors.

Instead, the shiphall will be used by the Royal Navy (supported by BAE Systems (BAES) as part of contracts that are already in place) for maintenance works that support wider frigate and destroyer maintenance programmes on the base. It provides the ideal under cover facility to support the BAES/RN Centre of Excellence by providing a weather-protected maintenance area immediately adjacent to the operational repair facilities.

Shiphall B will be used to create a centre of excellence for minehunter maintenance. Royal Navy minehunter HMS Brocklesby moved into the hall for a year-long comprehensive maintenance programme on 9 March, marking the return of engineering to the site which has been vacant since BAES relocated its shipbuilding activities to Scotland in 2014. The upgraded facilities will provide the opportunity for vessels to be maintained on the site under cover, which allows the work to be completed more efficiently and will result in ships being returned to the operational fleet more quickly.

West Africa: Ebola

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations of the report of the Harvard Global Health Institute and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Independent Panel on Global Response to Ebola published in The Lancet online on 22 November 2015, with particular reference to the creation of a Global Health Committee of the UN Security Council. [HL6901]

Baroness Verma: The Ebola crisis demonstrated the need for reform of the international system of response to disease outbreaks, including reform of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Several independent groups have made important recommendations including the Harvard Global Health Institute and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Independent Panel. The WHO Director General commissioned an independent

Advisory Group on Reform of WHO's work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences. This group considered the Harvard and London School reports but did not include the creation of a Global Health Committee of the United Nations (UN) Security Council in the recommendations they have made to the WHO. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) supports the Advisory Group recommendations which aim to equip and empower WHO to deliver more effectively in outbreak response and to fulfil its leadership and coordination role in humanitarian crises and to do so with independent oversight. HMG will assess a progress update on WHO's implementation of these reforms at the World Health Assembly in May.

World Health Organisation

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, in the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic, of the case for the reform of World Health Organisation governance structures in order to strengthen the effectiveness of global responses to the outbreak of infectious diseases. [HL6900]

Baroness Verma: Following lessons learned from Ebola, Her Majesty's Government (HMG) supports the recommendations from the independent Advisory Group to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Director General on Reform of WHO's Work in Outbreaks and Health Emergencies. HMG welcomes the action that WHO Director General Chan has already taken in joining together WHO's disease outbreaks and emergency response departments. We also welcome commitment by the WHO to implement one workforce, one budget, one set of rules and processes, and a clear line of authority which we assess will strengthen WHO's governance structure and allow for an effective response to outbreak of infectious diseases. HMG has urged the WHO to implement the Advisory Group recommendations in full and without delay and we look forward to an update on progress with this at the World Health Assembly in May.

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