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**Thursday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers..... 1

[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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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	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, Department for Transport
Baroness Anelay of St Johns	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Whip
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, Wales Office
Lord Bridges of Headley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
Baroness Buscombe	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Dunlop	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office and Northern Ireland Office
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Henley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions, Whip
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Mobarik	Whip
Lord Nash	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Commercial Secretary to the Treasury
Lord O'Shaughnessy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health, Whip
Lord Price	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Prior of Brampton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Baroness Shields	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Young of Cookham	Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Answers

Thursday, 23 March 2017

Armed Forces: Hong Kong

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the contribution made to Britain by the former Hong Kong Armed Forces from 1857 until 1997, whether, and if so when, they will grant UK passports to the remaining soldiers of the Hong Kong Military Service Corps and the Hong Kong Naval service who did not receive a UK passport following the handover of Hong Kong to China. [[HL6053](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have agreed to undertake a thorough assessment of this matter and are currently considering representations.

Asylum: Children in Care

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many offers to accommodate unaccompanied young asylum seekers they have received from local authorities; and how many of those offers they (1) have accepted, and (2) propose to accept. [[HL6050](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) arriving in the UK has increased significantly in recent years. This has led to a handful of local authorities caring for a disproportionate number of UASC, principally in those local authority areas where unaccompanied children are first encountered and assessed by the local authority under the Children Act 1989. That is why we introduced the National Transfer Scheme for UASC in July 2016. The National Transfer Scheme is a voluntary scheme which is designed to ensure a more equal distribution of UASC across the country and ensure children are given all the support they need. The National Transfer Scheme has also placed unaccompanied children transferred to the UK under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 into local authority care. Following a full consultation with local authorities under section 67 local authorities reported they had capacity for 400 places. Every region in England is participating in the National Transfer Scheme and we are working closely with the Devolved Administrations to ensure they are able to accept cases under the National Transfer Scheme. We are very grateful for the way in which local authorities have stepped up to accept UASC under the National Transfer Scheme. We will continue to work closely with local authorities to take up offers of placements to help ease the burden on those local authorities caring for a disproportionate number of UASC.

Developing Countries: Food Supply

Asked by Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by Dominique Burgeon, Director of the emergency division of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, that more than 100 million people worldwide are facing malnutrition and severe hunger. [[HL6092](#)]

Lord Bates: We remain deeply concerned about the global humanitarian situation. We are continuing to step up our support to provide lifesaving treatment for acute malnutrition, food, water and emergency healthcare to those affected. In Somalia for example our assistance will provide emergency food assistance for up to 1 million people, life-saving nutritional support to more than 600,000 starving children and pregnant and nursing women and safe drinking water for 1 million people. We have also issued an urgent call to action to the international community to do more.

Developing Countries: Smoking

Asked by Lord Palmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government which countries the UK will be supporting as part of its international support for smoking control; and when that work will start in each country. [I] [[HL6070](#)]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) Secretariat held an application process to select 15 low to middle income countries to receive support to develop their tobacco control plans.

The FCTC Secretariat will inform successful applicants by the end of March 2017, and publish the results on their website. The project will commence work with those selected countries in year two of the project.

EU Immigration: Turkey

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of developments in Turkey, what assessment they have made of the feasibility of applying the EU-Turkey Statement on refugees and migrants, in the form originally prescribed. [[HL6043](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK remains committed to working with our European partners and Turkey to ensure that the EU-Turkey deal is implemented in an effective and sustainable way.

It is clear that the deal continues to represent an important opportunity to effectively manage migratory flows, tackle people smugglers, and prevent people from making perilous crossings.

The EU Commission published its Fifth Report on the Progress in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement on 2nd March 2017. The Report concludes that

the Statement is continuing to produce tangible results despite difficult circumstances, with an average daily arrival of 43 illegal migrants compared to 1,700 per day in the month before the Statement.

We continue to believe that Turkey offers sufficient protection, in both its law and its practise, to justify the return migrants from Greece under the EU-Turkey deal. Turkey has modernised its legal framework for the protection of refugees, and the UK has been monitoring the situation closely since the attempted coup. To date, there has not been any evidence of deterioration in the protections or conditions available to refugees.

Forced Marriage: Trials

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made by the Attorney General in his review of the alleged mishandling by the Crown Prosecution Service of forced marriage trials. [HL5954]

Lord Keen of Elie: The UK Government is committed to tackling the brutal practice of forced marriage. The Attorney General has spoken with the Director of Public Prosecutions about the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) long term strategy to increase the number of prosecutions for 'honour based' violence.

The CPS is committed to improving its response to these crimes. It has implemented an action plan relating to 'honour-based' violence and forced marriage which will be taken forward by the CPS Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Team, working in close partnership with the police and third sector experts. Further to the action plan, a joint protocol was published in December 2016 outlining the CPS and police commitment to the successful investigation and prosecution of these crimes. The protocol enables police and prosecutors to quickly understand the action they must take when a crime is reported to the police and referred to the CPS for a charging decision, ensuring the safety of the victim is at the heart of the process.

The Attorney General will be updated on the implementation of the action plan and joint protocol at regular intervals.

Further Education

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what contingency plans are in place to ensure that further education students studying with private providers are able to complete their studies, in the event that the private provider closes down. [HL6024]

Lord Nash: Our priority when a private provider is no longer delivering courses is to ensure any learners affected can continue with their studies with minimal disruption.

The Skills Funding Agency, working with the Student Loans Company, will seek to identify suitable alternative

providers or colleges where learners can complete their studies. We are committed to offering a solution for each learner in such cases.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the event that a further education provider closes down, a student who had taken out loans to cover the cost of the course would be reimbursed. [HL6025]

Lord Nash: Where a Further Education provider closes down, the Government will take steps to ensure that any government-funded learners who are affected are given an opportunity to transfer to another provider to complete their study.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment checks are made on private further education providers before public money is given to them to run further education courses; and whether the Government require a bond to be established to ensure that public money provided in student loans is protected. [HL6028]

Lord Nash: To be eligible to receive Advanced Learner Loans funding, all providers must be listed on the Skills Funding Agency's (SFA) Register of Training Organisations.

The Register includes due diligence, for example, compliance with legislation and capacity and capability questions designed to assess the ability of the provider to deliver contracts to the required standard and determine if they are financially robust. The SFA considers a provider's track record of delivering education and training. For providers delivering just loans-funded provision, a financial health assessment of 'good' or 'outstanding' is required.

Once providers have met the entry criteria, and approved to offer loan-funded provision to learners, they are subject to a range of further measures and controls. These include reviews of their financial health, audit and assessment of their qualification achievement rates. Providers are also required to comply with robust funding and performance rules.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 9 March (HL5562), how, assuming that signalling is designed appropriately for the relevant speed, operating at a speed of 320km/h rather than 360km/h would reduce capacity on the high speed line. [HL5993]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Reducing the maximum speed of trains from 360km/h to 320km/h would result in trains taking longer to complete their overall journey. This means that, unless we buy more train sets, we will not be able to run as many train services on HS2 and therefore capacity will be reduced.

In my previous answer [HL5562], reduced capacity was also in the context of running tilting trains at 300km/h on the HS2 network. Mixing tilting trains running at 300km/h on HS2 with non-tilting trains running at 360km/h would also reduce capacity because it would reduce the number of train paths available per hour. Furthermore, the response to our market sounding of rolling stock manufacturers has indicated that tilting trains offer reduced seating capacity per train set compared with non-tilt.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the benefits of including the Handsacre connection from HS2 to the West Coast Main Line once HS2 Phase 2A is completed. [HL6081]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The inclusion of a link at Handsacre to allow HS2 trains to pass onto the West Coast Main Line is contained in the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Act 2017. Furthermore, the Government has given a specific assurance to build the Handsacre link before the launch of Phase One services.

The Phase 2a strategic outline business case, published in November 2015, includes Handsacre Junction in our assessment of the benefits of the 2a scheme, and the Full Y scheme. Handsacre Junction would allow us to serve stations along the West Coast Mainline such as Stafford. Government also sees the potential benefits of serving Stoke-on-Trent in support of the wider development plans of the Northern Gateway Development Zone and the ambitions of the Midlands Engine. The Secretary of State has therefore asked HS2 Ltd to take forward more detailed work on train planning for options to serve Stoke via Handsacre Junction, including operational feasibility in both 2027 and 2033.

However, we do not break down the economic benefits of different parts of the scheme, including Handsacre Junction.

Home Office: Assets

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what land or buildings owned by, leased by, or under the control of, the Home Office they are seeking to dispose of, and for what purposes. [HL6069]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Our estate is comprised of a wide range of premises, including administrative offices, Border Force sites, Immigration Removal Centres and other land holdings. We keep the Home Office estate under review to ensure that it meets the needs of the business. In line with central guidance, surplus property is first offered to other departments for reuse, free schools, or transfer to the Homes and Communities Agency for much needed new homes or development. It is then offered to the open market. Leasehold properties are also exited via lease break options and lease expiry opportunities.

Hungary: Asylum

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Hungary about the law under which any asylum seeker will be automatically detained. [HL5918]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We have made no representations to the Hungarian government since their parliament adopted amendments to its asylum laws on 7 March. The UK respects Hungary's right to determine its own asylum system in line with international law. We continue to monitor the situation.

Immigration: EU Nationals

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will introduce a bill guaranteeing the right of EU nationals who were legally resident in the UK at the time of the EU referendum to remain in the UK. [HL6077]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Securing the status of EU nationals in the UK, and UK citizens in the EU, is one of the Government's twelve key objectives for exit and we are looking to reach agreement on this point as early as possible once formal negotiations begin.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made regarding abuse towards, and denial of human rights and due process of law to, Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli security forces; and what action they intend to take. [HL6002]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK continues to have strong concerns about reports of ill treatment of Palestinian minors, particularly those in Israeli military detention. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv meet with the Israeli authorities regularly to advocate improvements to practices relating to Palestinian children in detention, most recently on 9 March.

John Frank Training

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of John Frank Training going into liquidation on 30 November 2016, what support is being given to students to recoup their loans. [HL6026]

Lord Nash: The Skills Funding Agency and Student Loans Company are working closely to support learners. Possible alternative providers have been identified for all Advanced Learner Loans funded learners previously at John Frank Training Limited. This transfer process is progressing with learner involvement.

In the event a learner does not transfer, we are considering what might be done to avoid these learners being unfairly disadvantaged.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of John Frank Training which left no assets, despite recording a profit of £1.3 million in the first half of 2016. [HL6027]

Lord Nash: To be eligible to receive Advanced Learner Loans funding, all providers must be listed on the Skills Funding Agency's (SFA) Register of Training Organisations. The Register includes due diligence, for example, compliance with legislation and capacity and capability questions designed to assess the ability of the provider to deliver contracts to the required standard and determine whether the provider is financially robust.

The SFA considers a provider's track record of delivering education and training.

For providers delivering only loan-funded provision a financial health assessment of 'good' or 'outstanding' is required.

Once providers have met the entry criteria, and approved to offer loan-funded provision to learners, they are subject to a range of further measures and controls. These include reviews of their financial health, audit and assessment of their qualification achievement rates. Providers are also required to comply with robust funding and performance rules.

An administrator has been appointed to investigate the finances of John Frank Training Ltd. It would not be appropriate to comment further at this time.

Nuclear Weapons: Safety

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government which body is now responsible for nuclear weapons safety, in place of the Nuclear Weapons Safety Committee and the Warhead Safety Co-ordinating Committee. [HL6104]

Earl Howe: Ultimate responsibility for nuclear weapon safety lies with the Secretary of State for Defence. Specific individuals are authorised as responsible for nuclear weapon safety for each life-cycle of the weapon: development and assembly; transport; naval base support; and deployment at sea. These individuals operate under regulation by the two nuclear safety regulators; the independent Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator and the statutory regulator, the Office for Nuclear Regulation. In addition, the Secretary of State receives independent advice on overall nuclear safety issues, including on nuclear weapons, from the Defence Nuclear Safety Committee, an advisory non-departmental public body.

Parliament: Internet

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 7 March (HL5612), what is the industry standard categorising service; who within the Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS) is responsible for the service; whether there is a contract or other service level agreement between PDS and the service; whether PDS pays for the service, and if so, how much is paid annually; whether the service reports to PDS in respect of its activities and decisions, and if so, how; whether its classification of websites is advisory or mandatory; whether Parliament is free to over-ride its classification of religion-based hate websites; and if so, why there are no plans to unblock the "Religion of Peace" website. [HL6074]

Lord McFall of Alcluith: The Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS) uses the Check Point URL filtering service to categorise websites, and currently blocks a range of categories of website from the Parliamentary Estate, including "Hate/Racism". PDS does not control which websites are put into which category by the filtering service; this is an automated process conducted at an industry level.

It is not possible to provide an accurate figure regarding the annual cost of the service as it is one of a number of services provided within a contract. With over one billion websites to categorise, it is not practicable for the filtering service to report to PDS in respect of its categorising decisions for particular websites. While it would be possible for PDS to unblock a website that has been included in a blocked category, there are no plans to unblock the "Religion of Peace" website, which has been included in the "Hate/Racism" category, because the site does not appear to have been incorrectly categorised.

Railways: Speed Limits

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 9 March (HL5562), what assessment they have made of advice from SNCF quoted in the March edition of Railway Gazette International that operating above 320 km/h incurs significantly higher track maintenance costs. [HL6073]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: HS2 Ltd has collaborated with several high speed rail Infrastructure Managers, including SNCF, to ascertain the implications of running trains at 360km/h.

Using recommendations based on experiences of managing High Speed Lines in Europe, HS2 Ltd intends to incorporate specific components in the track design which will improve the system performance whilst

utilising an Infrastructure Management System that determines asset performance and condition at all times.

The combination of these factors and the use of innovative maintenance activities, that go beyond current best practice, should reduce the maintenance implications of running at these speeds.

Red Arrows

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Military Aviation Authority is responsible for regulating Red Arrows displays; whether they have any plans to limit Red Arrows displays so that they only take place over Ministry of Defence land; if so, when this limitation will come into effect; and which Red Arrows displays planned for this year will be cancelled as a result. [HL5946]

Earl Howe: The Military Aviation Authority (MAA) regulates the flying activity of the Red Arrows (Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team (RAFAT)). There are circumstances where military display flying may be required to abide by additional restrictions imposed by those responsible for organising or directing flying displays. The MAA has no plans to restrict RAFAT to display flying exclusively over Ministry of Defence occupied land; however, all flying display venues are subject to a risk assessment conducted by both the event organiser and the Duty Holder responsible for RAFAT to ensure that it is appropriate for the flying display activity to take place.

Refugees: Syria

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are on track to meet their target of resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees into the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme by 2020. [HL6048]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Work continues with local authorities and International Partners to deliver the Government's commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees over the lifetime of this Parliament and we are on track to do this. Progress on resettlement will be indicated in quarterly immigration statistics. The last set of statistics, published on 23 February showed that 5,454 Syrians were resettled to the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme between October 2015 and December 2016.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Pay

Asked by Lord MacKenzie of Culkein

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the study report into the remuneration package for deck and engineer officers of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has been

finalised and accepted; and whether it has been, or will be, published in full. [HL6108]

Earl Howe: The study into the remuneration package for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and wider Royal Naval engineering officers has been finalised and accepted.

Due to commercial sensitivities the report cannot be published in full.

Schools: Asbestos

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the responses made by local authorities to freedom of information requests made by Lucie Stephens regarding reported incidents of asbestos exposure in schools; and what guidance they have given, or plan to give, to local authorities about the publication of such reports. [HL6161]

Lord Nash: The Department takes the issue of asbestos in schools very seriously. The evidence from the freedom of information requests of incidents of asbestos disturbance in schools, reported by local authorities, demonstrates exactly why the Department is committed to supporting and challenging schools, local authorities and academy trusts to fulfil their responsibility to manage asbestos safely in their schools.

We have recently updated and improved our published guidance for schools, which clearly states that if accidental exposure to asbestos has occurred, the duty holder must inform the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This is a legal requirement and the HSE may investigate if major issues are raised where a duty holder's compliance with their legal duties is called into question. The guidance also provides information for duty holders on the consequences of not complying with regulations and is available to all local authorities and schools.

We also recently carried out a data collection in schools on how they manage asbestos to understand how they were complying with their duties, and have published the findings. In future we plan to seek further assurances from duty holders to ensure that asbestos management is compliant with legislation and guidance across their education estates.

West Coast Railway Line

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 9 March (HL5562), whether the journey time of four hours and 17 minutes for the Pendolino to Glasgow allows for the same "minor line speed improvements on the northern West Coast Main Line" as for the four hour journey time quoted for Phase 1 non-tilt. [HL5994]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The minor line speed improvements on the West Coast Main Line (WCML),

mainly north of Preston, would increase the maximum permissible speed for non-tilting rolling stock to towards the maximum permissible speed for tilting rolling stock.

These improvements would not therefore have any effect on the journey time of four hours and seventeen minutes for Pendolino services between London and Glasgow.

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