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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>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 Agnew of Oulton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Department for International Development and Treasury Spokesman
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government and Wales Office
Baroness Buscombe	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Callanan	Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Duncan of Springbank	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Scotland Office
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Henley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Lord O'Shaughnessy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health, Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Whip
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office and Women and Equalities Spokesperson
Lord Young of Cookham	Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip and Wales and Scotland Office Spokesperson

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 7 November 2017

Bilateral Loan to Ireland

[HLWS232]

Lord Bates: My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Philip Hammond) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I would like to update the House on the UK's bilateral loan to Ireland.

In 2010, the Government committed to providing a £3.2 billion bilateral loan to Ireland as part of an international assistance package of €67.5 billion including loans provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union (EU), euro-area Member States and other bilateral lenders Sweden and Denmark.

The UK provided this bilateral loan in order to help put Ireland back on a sustainable path, ensure economic stability and because Ireland is a key trading partner and ally. I regard Ireland's stability to be a key component of the stability of the UK economy and the banking sector, particularly in Northern Ireland.

The loan agreements of all other creditors under the assistance package, including the UK, each have a clause requiring that Ireland makes a proportional early repayment to them in the event that Ireland repays any creditor under its assistance programme ahead of schedule.

In 2014, following a significant improvement in Ireland's access to international credit markets, all creditors, including the UK, agreed to waive these clauses to allow Ireland to repay a substantial proportion of its loans from the IMF. A written ministerial statement updating the house on that waiver was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2014, Official Report, column 2WS.

Ireland has now set out its intention to repay early and in full the outstanding €4.5 billion owed to the IMF, as well as the bilateral loans of €0.4 billion from Denmark and €0.6 billion from Sweden, and replace these with loans with Irish Sovereign Debt.

I can inform the House that I have today provided a waiver under clause 19.3 of the Credit Facility Agreement (Amended 4 October 2012) enabling Ireland to make early repayments to the IMF, Sweden and Denmark without the requirement to make pro-rata early repayments to the United Kingdom. This decision does not amend the amount or timing of interest and principle repayments owed to the UK as originally foreseen in the Credit Facility Agreement (Amended 4 October 2012).

It is clear to me that, where all other lenders provide similar waivers, granting a waiver for the UK bilateral loan delivers material benefits to Ireland's fiscal position and debt sustainability in the coming years. However, the benefits of these actions are not exclusive to Ireland, as the potential improvements also enhance the likelihood of repayment of the UK's loan.

The waiver I have agreed is conditional upon the other remaining creditors - the EU and euro area Member States - issuing similar waivers.

By repaying the outstanding amount owed to the IMF, Ireland will no longer automatically be eligible for post-programme monitoring. This has been a crucial part of ensuring the Ireland loan provides value for money for the UK taxpayer, and the IMF have given assurances that they will continue to conduct staff visits up until the end of the originally envisaged post-programme period in 2021. This coincides with the scheduled repayment of the final tranche of the UK loan.

In addition to this announcement, HM Treasury has today provided a further report to Parliament in relation to Irish loans as required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010. The report relates to the period from 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017.

A written ministerial statement on the previous statutory report regarding the loan to Ireland was laid in Parliament on 18 April 2017, Official Report, column 36WS.

ECOFIN

[HLWS229]

Lord Bates: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

A meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) will be held in Brussels on 07 November. EU Finance Ministers will discuss the following items:

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) dialogue

Ministers will have their annual meeting with representatives from the EFTA group of countries, to exchange views on how best to make economic growth inclusive.

Early Morning Session

The Eurogroup President will brief Ministers on the outcomes of the 06 November meeting of the Eurogroup, and the Commission will provide an update on the current economic situation in the EU. Ministers will also discuss the EU's common candidate for the position of Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation.

VAT e-commerce package

Ministers will consider various items which make up the VAT legislative package, including Council Regulation.

Review of the European System of Financial Supervision

The Commission will present to Ministers its legislative proposals on Financial Supervision, followed by an exchange of views.

Current financial services legislative proposals

The Council Presidency will provide an update on current legislative proposals in the field of financial services.

Insolvency

The Commission will present its proposals on resolving existing non-performing loans, preventing the build-up of future non-performing loans and measures to increase the efficiency of the general insolvency framework in Member States.

Follow-up to the G20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors and of the IMF Annual Meetings in Washington

Ministers will receive information from the Presidency and the Commission on the outcomes of the 12-15 October G20 and IMF meetings.

European Court of Auditors' annual report

The President of the Court of Auditors will present the Auditors' report on the implementation of the budget of the European Union for the 2016 financial year.

Statistical package

The Council will discuss the autumn statistical package, review progress achieved and exchange views on the prospects for European cooperation on statistics. Ministers will also be invited to adopt Council conclusions.

Finance (No.2) Bill

[HLWS227]

Lord Bates: My right honourable friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Finance (No.2) Bill will be published on Friday 1 December.

Explanatory notes on the Bill will be available in the Vote office and the Printed Paper Office and placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that day.

Copies of the explanatory notes will also be available on GOV.UK.

Forestry Commission

[HLWS231]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment (Thérèse Coffey MP) has today made the following statement.

I am today announcing new arrangements for the governance and management of the Forestry Commission. The Scottish Government is legislating to complete the devolution of forestry, with the effect that from 2019 – the centenary year of the Forestry Commission – the Commissioners' statutory remit will be only in England. The Commission, its dedicated staff and above all our 250,000 hectares of English public forests are a great national asset. I am confirming today that the Forestry Commission will be retained in England, and will continue to manage our public forests for public benefit – including supply of timber, public access, and the environment.

We will establish a new Board of Commissioners of the Public Forest Estate. Commissioners will continue to be appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice of her Ministers, who will retain a power of direction.

The Government will not allow any net reduction in the size of the Public Forest Estate, and will support the Commissioners in taking opportunities through active management of the estate to plant more woodland and increase natural capital.

We will continue our work to protect, improve and expand forests and woodlands in England beyond the PFE, as part of the Government's commitment for this to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than it found it.

We will work together with the Scottish and Welsh Governments to promote strong forest science, to sustain high standards for forestry in the UK, and to protect our trees against pests and diseases. Our world-renowned research agency Forest Research will continue as an agency of the Forestry Commission, with new governance, commissioning and funding arrangements agreed with the devolved administrations.

These arrangements provide certainty for the future of the Forestry Commission, and a strong, sustainable platform for our precious forest and woodland environments to thrive for the long term.

Local Authority Publicity Code

[HLWS224]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I issued the London Boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest with a written notice, on 2 December 2016, of a direction that I proposed to give requiring that both councils comply with the provisions in the March 2011 code of recommended practice on local authority publicity. This code restricts the frequency of publication of council newspapers, to no more often than quarterly (except for parish councils, who should not issue council newspapers more often than monthly).

I can now tell the House that I have carefully considered representations of both councils, together with other information available about both councils' publicity, the responses received to the Government's 2013 consultation "Protecting the Independent Press from Unfair Competition", and the Government's response to that consultation. I have also had careful regard to the Department's equality statement on enforcing the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity, and have considered afresh representations that both councils have made about proposals to direct their compliance with the code to restrict the frequency of publication of its newspapers. I have concluded that it would be lawful and necessary in all the circumstances of Hackney and Waltham Forest to now issue the directions as I had proposed.

As such, in accordance with my powers under section 4A(1), (2) and (3) of the Local Government Act 1986, I have today directed the London Boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest, in order to secure the councils' compliance with the requirements of the code, as follows:

- to commission or publish no more than four issues of their respective newspapers (Hackney Today and Waltham Forest News), or any equivalent newsletter, newsheet or similar communication, in the period of one year commencing 6 February 2018, and in subsequent years; and
- to ensure that the executive of both councils within 14 days of the date of the direction will take the necessary decisions in order that the councils will be in a position to comply with the requirement on publication from 6 February 2018 onwards.

I will be placing in the Library of the House copies of both directions, the letters to both councils setting out my reasons, the equality statement, and the representations of both councils.

Local Government Improvement

[HLWS228]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid), has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Local government in Dorset

I am announcing today that, having carefully considered all the material and representations I have received, I am 'minded to' implement the locally-led proposal for improving local government in Dorset. This was submitted to me in February 2017. In the Dorset area, there are currently two small unitary councils (created in the 1990s) of Bournemouth and of Poole. They are surrounded by a two-tier structure of Dorset County Council and the district councils of Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland.

I am satisfied on the basis of the information currently available to me that this proposal if implemented is likely to improve local government across the area, establishing two new councils with a credible geography, and which would command local support. The existing nine councils will be replaced by a single council for the areas of Bournemouth, Poole, and that part of the county of Dorset currently comprising the Borough of Christchurch, and by a single council for the remainder of the current county area.

I understand that all the councils in the area are already working together in joint implementation committees. However, further steps are needed to secure local consent, and I hope this announcement will facilitate the necessary discussions to conclude this.

Before I take my final decision, there is now a period until 8 January 2018 during which those interested may make further representations to me, including that if the

proposal is implemented it is with suggested modifications. It is also open to any council in the area to come forward with an alternative proposal. The final decision would also be subject to Parliamentary approval.

Once I have made my final decision on the Dorset proposal, I will also decide whether to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, Dorset councils' proposal for a combined authority to facilitate collaboration on certain matters between whatever councils are to be in place in Dorset.

Local government in Suffolk

I am also announcing today that having carefully considered all the material and representations I have received, I am 'minded to' implement the locally-led proposal I received from Suffolk Coastal and Waveney district councils in February 2017 to merge their two respective councils to become a single, new district council.

I have reached this decision on the basis that I consider:

- the proposal is likely to improve local government in the area (by improving service delivery, giving greater value for money, yielding cost savings, providing stronger strategic and local leadership, and/or delivering more sustainable structures);
- the proposal commands local support, in particular that the merger is proposed by all councils which are to be merged and there is evidence of a good deal of local support; and
- the proposed merged area is a credible geography, consisting of two or more existing local government areas that are adjacent, and which, if established, would not pose an obstacle to locally-led proposals for authorities to combine to serve their communities better and would facilitate joint working between local authorities.

I intend to assess any further locally-led merger proposals that I receive against these criteria.

Before I take my final decision on this proposed merger there is now a period until 8 January 2018 during which those interested may make further representations to me, including that if the proposal is implemented it is with suggested modifications. The final decision would also be subject to Parliamentary approval.

Pre-Council: EU Foreign Affairs Council

[HLWS230]

Baroness Fairhead: My Rt.Hon Friend The Minister of State for Trade Policy (Greg Hands) has today made the following statement:

The EU Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) will take place in Brussels on 10 November 2017. I will represent the UK.

The substantive items on 10 November will be: the state of play of preparations for the 11th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, the state of play of the EU Trade Negotiations with Mexico, and the state of

play of the EU Trade negotiations with Mercosur. Also, the Commission will present its Report on the Implementation of Free Trade Agreements.

Planning Act 2008: Development Consent Order

[HLWS226]

Baroness Sugg: My Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Maynard) has made the following Ministerial Statement.

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This statement concerns the application made by Transport for London under the Planning Act 2008, of 29 April 2016 for a proposed development known as Silvertown Tunnel.

The Application will allow for the construction of a new twin bore road tunnel to pass under the River Thames, providing a new connection between the A102 Blackwall Tunnel Southern Approach and the Tidal Basin roundabout junction on the A1020 Lower Lea Crossing, London.

Under sub-section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under sub-section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on Silvertown Tunnel on 11 July 2017 and the current deadline for a decision is 10 November 2017 having been extended from 11 October 2017 by way of my Written Ministerial Statement of 11 October 2017 (HCWS153).

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 10 May 2018 (an extension of 6 months) to enable further consideration of the effect of the scheme on air quality (including its compliance with the updated UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations published by Government on 26 July 2017).

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to give development consent.

Trade and Customs Legislation

[HLWS225]

Baroness Fairhead: My Rt.Hon Friend The Minister of State for Trade Policy (Greg Hands) has today made the following statement:

On 9 October 2017, the Government published two White Papers [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-vision-for-post-eu-trade-and-customs-policy]. These papers set out the Government's approach to legislating for the UK's future trade policy, establishing a standalone customs regime, and ensuring that VAT and excise legislation operates effectively upon EU exit.

The papers reaffirmed the Prime Minister's commitment to maintaining and maximising the UK's position as a global free trading nation, once it leaves the EU, both by boosting our trading relationships with old friends and new allies, and by seeking a deep and special partnership with the EU. The paper reiterated that, in assessing the options for the UK's future customs relationship with the EU, the Government will be guided by delivers the greatest economic advantage to the UK and by three strategic objectives: ensuring UK-EU trade is as frictionless as possible; avoiding a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland; and establishing an independent international trade policy.

The White Papers also confirmed the Government's intention to bring forward a Trade Bill and a Customs Bill before the end of the year, to put in place the necessary legal powers and structures to ensure the UK is ready from the first day after exit. This will help to provide continuity and avoid disruption for individuals, businesses, and international trading partners.

The Trade White Paper asked for comments on three specific aspects of trade policy – transparency of trade policy; trade remedies frameworks; and the design of a future unilateral trade preferences scheme. The closing date for comments has now passed and the Government will shortly issue its response. Wider engagement on our trade policy proposals will continue.

The Government has now tabled resolutions for a Customs Bill – the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill – and is today introducing the Trade Bill to Parliament.

The Trade Bill will:

- Create powers to enable the UK to transition trade agreements that currently exist between the EU and other countries, and which we are party to through our EU membership;
- Create the powers needed for the UK to implement the obligations created by becoming an independent member of the Agreement on Government Procurement, maintaining current guaranteed access for UK businesses to global procurement opportunities and offering value for money;
- Establish a "Trade Remedies Authority" to conduct trade remedies investigations and to assist with international trade disputes; and
- Enable HM Revenue and Customs to share data on trade so the Secretary of State for International Trade can carry out other functions currently fulfilled by the European Commission, and share data with other bodies carrying our public functions, such as the Trade Remedies Authority and World Trade Organisation.

The Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill will:

- Allow the government to create a standalone customs regime by ensuring that, among other things, the UK can charge customs duty on goods, set and vary the rates of customs duty, and suspend or relieve duty in certain circumstances;

- Allow the government to define how goods are classified to determine how much duty is due
- Allow the UK to set preferential or additional duties in certain circumstances, for example, preferential rates for developing countries (unilateral preferences) and additional duties relating to trade remedies following an independent investigation by the Trade Remedies Authority, and when authorised following trade disputes.

- Allow the VAT and excise regimes to continue to function whatever the outcome of the negotiations, for example, by enabling supplies of goods and services to continue to move as freely as possible.

Combined, these two key pieces of legislation represent a significant step in creating the statutory framework and powers needed to ensure that the UK is ready for EU exit, and providing certainty and continuity for businesses and consumers alike.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 7 November 2017

101 Calls

Asked by **Lord Wigley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average response time to 101 non-emergency calls for each of the past five years, broken down by each police force in England and Wales. [HL2657]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The handling of 101 calls is an operational matter for the police. The Home Office does not collect this information.

A30

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Goss Moor**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to make a decision on the outline business case to fund the A30 to St Austell link road. [HL2579]

Baroness Sugg: The Government is still considering the business case for the A30 to St Austell Link Road scheme and will announce a funding decision in due course.

Abortion: Clinics

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to protect (1) women who attend abortion clinics, and (2) staff working in such clinics. [HL2640]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: This Government is absolutely clear that rights to peaceful protest should not cause patients or staff of healthcare clinics to feel intimidated or harassed due to the actions of protesters.

The Government will carefully consider the rights of all parties involved in this issue and will explore whether any further action is needed to ensure clinic staff and patients can go about their lawful business free from harassment, offence or alarm.

Abortion: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the estimated annual cost of payments from public funds to private sector abortion clinics in England to carry out abortions for patients from Northern Ireland; whether, under equalities and anti-discrimination legislation, there is a requirement for a similar level of resources to be made available to women who choose not to end their pregnancies; what assessment they have made of the estimate by Both Lives Matter that over 100,000 people are alive in Northern Ireland today, who would not be alive had the Abortion Act 1967 been applied there; and what advice they have sought from Law

Officers about the lawfulness and the ethics of seeking to disregard in one part of the UK the lawful provisions applicable in another part of the UK. [HL2613]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: We estimate the cost of providing termination of pregnancy services in England to women from Northern Ireland to be in the region of £1 million per year. The provision of antenatal and maternity services in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter. The decision to provide such funding is separate from issues about support for other groups of pregnant women and there is no necessary connection between the two matters.

The Supreme Court in R (on the application of A and B) v Secretary of State for Health (2017) found that the Government has the power to fund abortion services in England for women lawfully resident from Northern Ireland.

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, under the extension of the Northern Ireland abortion scheme which will include the provision of free travel to women from low income backgrounds to have an abortion in England, (1) what will happen if a woman travels to England and then changes her mind about the procedure, and (2) whether there will be any financial pressure for her to go through with the abortion once she has travelled to England. [HL2630]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: Women who travel from Northern Ireland to England seeking an abortion are able to change their mind at any stage of the process regardless of whether they have been eligible for their travel costs to be met. There are no circumstances, other than where there is evidence that a fraudulent claim has been made, that the Department would seek to re-coup any money from women who travel to England for an abortion procedure but who subsequently change their mind. In line with clinical guidelines from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, all women should be informed that they have a right to delay or cancel appointments and/or the procedure should they wish.

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend, under the extension of the Northern Ireland abortion scheme which will include the provision of free travel for women on low incomes, to pay for minors to travel and have abortions in England; and whether minors resident in Northern Ireland who are eligible for free travel under the extension of the Northern Ireland abortion scheme will need to gain permission from their parents before travelling to get an abortion in England. [HL2631]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The arrangements to provide abortions in England for women from Northern Ireland include travel and, where appropriate, accommodation for all those who meet the eligibility criteria. Parents or guardians can accompany young women aged under 18 and receive help towards travel costs if they receive

qualifying benefits or meet the low income criteria. A doctor or health professional is able to provide contraception, sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment, including abortion, without parental knowledge or consent, to a young person aged under 16 years, provided that the doctor or health professional is satisfied that the conditions set out in the Fraser Guidelines are met. Health professionals should make every effort to encourage young women aged under 16 to involve their parents. If they cannot be persuaded to do so then they should be assisted to find another adult (such as another family member or specialist youth worker) to provide support.

Lord Fraser was one of the Law Lords who ruled in *Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority* (1985) that under 16s can access sexual health care without parental consent, provided the following criteria are met:

- that the young person understands the advice and has sufficient maturity to understand what is involved;
- that the doctor could not persuade the young person to inform their parents, nor to allow the doctor to inform them;
- that the young person would be very likely to begin or continue having sexual intercourse with or without contraceptive treatment;
- that without contraceptive advice or treatment the young person's physical or mental health would suffer; and
- that it would be in the young person's best interest to give such advice or treatment without parental consent.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, before making the decision to extend the Northern Ireland abortion scheme to include the provision of free travel to women resident in Northern Ireland from low income backgrounds, Members of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland and Members of Parliament in Westminster were consulted. [HL2632]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The judgement in June 2017, in the case of *R (on the application of A and B) v Secretary of State for Health*, confirmed the Secretary of State's powers to extend equal access to women from Northern Ireland. There was no legal requirement to consult on this specific aspect of the scheme and no formal consultation took place.

Affordable Housing: Greater London

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to assist the Mayor of London in his aim to increase the proportion of affordable homes being built in the capital to 65 per cent of homes being constructed there. [HL2639]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Mayor of London has overall responsibility for housing policy, delivery and regeneration in London. We will judge the Mayor of London on his record of using this money to good effect. As set out in the Housing White Paper published earlier this year, the country desperately needs more of all forms of housing, including affordable homes. This is why we agreed a record £3.15 billion of funding for affordable housing in London to deliver at least 90,000 new affordable homes by March 2021.

Agricultural Products: UK Trade with EU

Asked by Lord Jopling

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Gardiner of Kimble on 30 October (HL2090), whether their intention is that farm products will continue to move without restriction between the UK and the remaining EU-27 after the UK's exit. [HL2741]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Government has been clear that it seeks a new partnership with the EU and a comprehensive customs agreement.

Agriculture: Cooperatives

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to support the growth of co-operatives in the agricultural sector. [HL2637]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Collaboration is a powerful way for groups of farmers to share knowledge and expertise, market information and good farming practice, exercise joint purchasing power and strengthen their negotiating position within the supply chain.

As we leave the EU, we have the opportunity to explore how we can encourage greater levels of producer collaboration, including through co-operatives. Ministers and officials have discussed this with Co-operatives UK, the business network for UK co-operatives, and other industry stakeholders on several occasions.

Animal Welfare: Sentencing

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Gardiner of Kimble on 24 October (HL Deb, col 836) referring to the announcement on 30 September by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that HM Government will increase the maximum penalty for animal cruelty from the current six months' imprisonment to five years' imprisonment, and stating that they will publish a draft bill later this year, whether any Cabinet committees have given their approval for that draft bill to be published; and if so, which [HL2836]

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Gardiner of Kimble on 24 October (HL Deb, col 836) referring to the announcement on 30 September by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that HM Government will increase the maximum penalty for animal cruelty from the current six months' imprisonment to five years' imprisonment, and stating that they will publish a draft bill later this year, whether they intend to propose that that draft bill be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny. [HL2837]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Government announced on 30 September its intention to increase the maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences from the current six months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine to 5 years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. The policy was agreed by the relevant Cabinet committee. The announcement made clear we hope to publish draft legislation for consultation around the turn of the year.

Antibiotics: Drug Resistance*Asked by Lord Hunt of Chesterton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how cures and treatments in the NHS are being developed to reduce the danger in hospitals of anti-microbial resistance. [HL2590]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The UK Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy published in 2013 set out the key actions needed to tackle AMR: preventing infections, making appropriate use of the treatments available, and promoting the development of new treatments. In 2016 the government announced ambitions to halve healthcare-associated Gram-negative bloodstream infections and inappropriate prescribing of antimicrobials by 2020-2021. To promote the development of new drugs, diagnostics and alternative treatments we have established unprecedented levels of research collaboration, together with increased investment, including the £50 million Global AMR Innovation Fund. The Government is committed to working with the global finance and health community to develop a global system that rewards companies that develop new, successful antibiotics and make them available to all who need them.

Arrests*Asked by Lord Condon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any change in the number of arrests made by police officers in England and Wales in recent years. [HL2669]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: There are a number of possible factors which may have contributed to the fall in the number of arrests since the year ending March 2008. Inspections carried out by HMICFRS in 2016, as part of their police effectiveness assessments, did not

identify one single cause (PEEL report on police effectiveness).

One possible reason linked to the fall in the number of arrests is the increased use of voluntary attendance, where an individual attends voluntarily at a police station or at any other place where a constable is present without having been arrested for the purpose of assisting with an investigation. It is thought that the use of this practice has increased due to a more stringent application of the necessity test (which was introduced in 2012), where, for an arrest to be lawful, there must be reasonable grounds for believing that the arrest is necessary (PACE Code G).

There is also evidence of greater use of other outcomes, such as community resolutions, as part of efforts to reduce the number of young people entering custody. Other factors that may have had an impact on the fall in the number of arrests are discussed in the HMICFRS PEEL report 2016. See

<http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-police-effectiveness-2016.pdf>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Peel Police Effectiveness report - 2016 [peel-police-effectiveness-2016.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-30/HL2669>

Asylum: Children*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many under-18 year old asylum seekers have been admitted into the UK in each of the last 12 months. [HL2545]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office publishes data on the number of initial decisions for asylum applications from unaccompanied asylum seeking children (under-18 year old applicants) each quarter by nationality in table as_09_q of the *Immigration Statistics* release.

The latest figures are available at the following link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/638599/asylum3-apr-jun-2017-tables.ods or can be found in the table below:

Total initial decisions on asylum applications from Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Quarter	Total initial decisions	Total grants of asylum	Grants of HP	Grants of DL	Grants of UASC leave	Grants of Family or Private Life LTR or LOTR	
2016 Q3	308	256	76	21	3	156	0

Quarter	Total initial decisions	Total grants	Grants of asylum	Grants of HP	Grants of DL	Grants of UASC leave	Grants of Family or Private Life LTR or LOTR
2016 Q4	327	287	130	8	0	149	0
2017 Q1	274	242	135	4	0	102	1
2017 Q2	367	312	213	7	1	91	0

Please note the table excludes cases where the applicant was found to be over 18 and that we are due to publish our Q3 data on 30-Nov 2017.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table as_09q [PQ ref HL2545- Table as_09_q.xls]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-25/HL2545>

Aviation: Egypt

Asked by Lord Stone of Blackheath

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have reviewed the ban on direct flights between the UK and Sharm el Sheikh, in the light of such flights being available from other European states, including Italy, Germany, and Belgium. [HL2559]

Baroness Sugg: The Department for Transport carries out regular assessments of aviation security at all last points of departure airports to the UK from Egypt. The Government works closely with international partners, including airlines, airports and the Egyptian Government, on security standards. Global aviation security arrangements are kept under constant review. It is the responsibility for each Government to determine their own advice on where it is safe for their citizens or carriers to fly.

Bahrain: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to meet representatives of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy to discuss human rights issues in Bahrain [HL2478]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Embassy in Bahrain engage with a wide range of non-governmental organisations to discuss the UK's policy towards Bahrain. This includes the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy.

Bahrain: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Minister of State for the Middle East met, or had contact with, any non-governmental organisations or representatives of the Bahrain opposition during his recent visit to Bahrain. [HL2479]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for the Middle East visited Bahrain on 19 October and co-chaired the Bahrain-UK Joint working group with His Excellency Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain; where bilateral issues, including human rights, were discussed. He also had a number of official engagements with Government and non-government interlocutors, including a wide range of young influencers.

Brexit: Females

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government which issues in their negotiations with the EU have major or significant implications for women; how they plan to address such issues; and whether they intend to increase the proportion of women among their negotiators. [HL2342]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We want to make a success of these negotiations for all our citizens. We are drawing together expertise from a wide range of departments, and are working closely with the Government Equalities Office, itself responsible for equality strategy and legislation across government, including in relation to women.

Information on the composition of the UK's senior negotiating team is publicly available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biographies-of-the-civil-service-representatives-for-the-negotiations-with-the-eu>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UK's senior negotiating team
[Biographies_of_the_Civil_Service_representatives_for_the_negotiations_with_the_EU_.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-23/HL2342>

Burma: Armed Conflict

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they have taken to establish whether Burmese military officials or units which have received training from the UK have been, or are, involved in current military operations in Rakhine State; and what representations they have made to the government of Burma in that regard. [HL2437]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has not been training the Burmese army. This is prohibited under the EU Arms Embargo which we have supported. The UK was instrumental in the renewal of this measure earlier this year.

The UK announced the suspension of our practical defence cooperation with Burma on 19 September until there is an acceptable resolution to the current situation in Rakhine. This cooperation consisted of educational courses focused on governance, accountability, ethics, human rights and international law. The UK has not provided any form of combat training to the Burmese Military.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received legal advice from the Attorney General on whether the violence in Rakhine State constitutes ethnic cleansing; and if so, what assessment they have made of that advice. [HL2438]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not sought or received advice from the Attorney General on whether the violence in Rakhine State constitutes ethnic cleansing.

More than 608,000 Rohingya have fled into Bangladesh as a result of Burmese military and militia violence since 25 August. This increasingly seems to be a case of ethnic cleansing. As a consequence the international community needs to see these people able to return to their homes in Burma safely.

Burma: Arms Trade

Asked by Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of calls from civil society organisations for a UN-mandated comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar. [HL2450]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK does not sell arms to Burma.

We judge there is currently insufficient support across the UN Security Council for a global arms embargo.

We continue to support the EU's retention of its arms embargo, which prohibits the supply of equipment or the provision of any training that might strengthen the Burmese military's combat capability.

The UK was instrumental in the renewal of the EU arms embargo earlier this year.

Asked by Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for an expansion of the EU arms embargo on Myanmar to include the supply of equipment to the Burmese army. [HL2451]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to support the EU's retention of its arms embargo, which prohibits the supply of equipment or the provision of any training

that might strengthen the Burmese military's combat capability.

Burma: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial assistance they are providing for the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. [HL2449]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Fact Finding Mission (FFM) will be funded entirely by the UN regular budget through assessed contributions, to which the UK pays 4.46%. The funding for the FFM was requested through a 'programme budgetary implication' (PBI) from the Human Rights Council and is estimated to be around £2 million.

Asked by Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis, what assessment they have made of the possibility of reinstating the EU's annual submission of a resolution at the UN General Assembly criticising Myanmar's human rights record. [HL2452]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The EU Foreign Affairs Council on 16 October, issued conclusions which, in addition to suspending all Burmese military visits to the EU, noted that Member States also agreed to consider additional measures if the situation in Rakhine does not improve.

We are currently focused on the resolution on Burma which the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation has circulated at the General Assembly to ensure it is in line with the UK's position including on the protection of civilians, full humanitarian access, safe and voluntary return for refugees, swift implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission's report, and access for the UN Fact Finding Mission.

Burma: Rohingya

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have raised the issue of Rohingya communities at the UN Security Council; and what action has been taken against the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in Myanmar. [HL2486]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has played a leading role in co-ordinating international efforts on Rakhine. We have raised Burma three times at the UN Security Council (UNSC) since the most recent outbreak of violence on 25 August. On 13 September we secured the first agreed UNSC press elements on Burma in eight years. The Security Council also discussed Burma in an open session on 28 September.

The UN Security Council has called for the Burmese authorities to stop the violence and allow humanitarian

access. The voluntary and safe return of refugees is a central part of the ongoing discussions in which we are engaged at the UN Security Council.

The UK continues to call for an end to the violence, and to prevent escalation, irrespective of whether incidents fit the definition of specific international crimes.

We shall continue to keep up the pressure on Burma's government to send a clear message to their security forces to stop the violence, ensure a full investigation of allegations of human rights violations, full access to the UN Fact Finding Mission and commit to ensuring accountability for the perpetrators.

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will support a referral of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court in respect of alleged crimes against humanity in Rakhine state. [HL2487]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While it is States which have primary responsibility for investigating allegations of crimes under international law, the UN Security Council could refer Burma to the International Criminal Court (ICC). We judge this unlikely and accordingly, we believe it more effective to seek to work with the Government of Burma and international partners to resolve the situation in Rakhine state.

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will support international sanctions and prosecution of the government of Myanmar, its army, and senior military personnel responsible for ethnic cleansing. [HL2488]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We judge there is currently insufficient support across the UN Security Council to table a resolution demanding sanctions against Burma.

The Foreign Secretary secured agreement at the 16 October EU Foreign Affairs Council to the suspension of military visits to the EU and review of all practical defence engagement, and a commitment that the EU would look at additional measures if the situation in Rakhine does not improve.

We shall continue to keep up the pressure on Burma's government to send a clear message to their security forces to stop the violence, ensure a full investigation of allegations of human rights violations, full access to the UN Fact Finding Mission and commit to ensuring accountability for the perpetrators.

Care Homes

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the shortage of places in care homes for elderly people. [HL2518]

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the future number of places needed in care homes for older people, in the light of demographic changes. [HL2519]

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the disparity in charges for places in care homes between full payers and those supported by local authorities. [HL2520]

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any evidence that those paying the full costs of places in care homes for older people are subsidising those paid for by local authorities. [HL2521]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: No such estimate has been made. It is for local authorities to plan care provision based on the needs of their local populations. Nationally, the number of care home beds has been stable at around 460,000 beds in England since 2010.

In their 2015 published projections which relate to older people using social care (65+) only, the Personal Social Services Research Unit project increases in publically and privately funded care home residents of 49% and 110% respectively between 2015 and 2035.

Social care continues to be a priority for this Government. This is why local authorities in England will receive an additional £2 billion for social care over the next three years, with £1 billion provided in 2017-18 so that councils can fund more packages of care immediately. One of the three key purposes of the additional funding is to assist councils in stabilising the local provider market.

The Care Act 2014 placed a duty on local authorities in England to promote a diverse, sustainable, high quality market of care and support providers for people in their local area. Local authorities are expected to understand and articulate likely future demand for services in their area, engage with care providers to understand the likely supply of services, provide signals to the market of their intent, and as needed, intervene in the market to stimulate change and innovation in providers to better meet the needs of people and communities.

Prices for care home places are agreed between the provider, the individuals and their families who are self-funding their own care. Prices therefore vary across the country. Central Government has no say in these individual negotiations. The Department continues to support local authorities with their new Care Act duties to ensure their local market remains effective to meet people's care needs regardless of how services are funded.

The Competition and Markets Authority has an ongoing market study into the residential care market. A financial analysis paper, dated 11 September 2017, contains recent analysis of the charges in place in care homes for self-

funders and those supported by a local authority. A copy of *Care homes market study* is attached.

The full market study is due to be published at the end of November, following which the Government will issue a formal response.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Care Homes Market Study [Care Homes Market Study.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-25/HL2518>

Caribbean: Hurricanes and Tornadoes

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much money they have committed to date to assist with the recovery of the British Overseas Territories affected by recent hurricanes. [HL2421]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has so far committed £57 million towards meeting immediate humanitarian needs in the Overseas Territories. The UK has also committed to supporting the governments of the affected Overseas Territories as they carry out their impact and needs assessments and design their longer term recovery plans.

Children: Protection

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether conduct by a parent preventing a child from attending an inspected state or independent school for religious or other reasons is a factor taken into account in determining whether a child is at risk; if so, what other criteria are applied to decisions in those circumstances; and what guidance they have issued to local authorities regarding this matter. [HL2481]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Wherever local councils have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, they are under a duty to investigate. While a parent preventing a child from attending school for the reasons outlined is not in itself evidence of a child being at risk, local councils may assess whether, when linked to a number of other factors, it may contribute to a decision that the child is at risk. The statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2015) sets out the principles and parameters of a good assessment, which should take account of the impact and influence of family and environmental factors.

Under the Children Act 1989, local councils have a responsibility to provide services for the purposes of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. It is important that every local council has clear criteria for taking action and providing help across the full continuum of need.

In September 2016 we published updated statutory guidance on 'Children Missing Education' and 'Keeping

Children Safe in Education'. The new guidance reinforces the roles and responsibilities of schools and local councils when it comes to working together to prevent children missing education. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming not in education, employment or training later in life.

This risk will not apply to all children withdrawn from school and educated at home, as those receiving good home education would not be "missing" education.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Asked by The Countess of Mar

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many specialist services are available in England for the diagnosis and treatment of chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis. [HL2530]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: This data is not available.

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning many healthcare services to meet the needs and requirements of their local population including those for people with chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis (CFS/ME). In doing so, CCGs commission services that reflect the needs of local people and that support improvements in health and healthcare outcomes.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance advises that any decision to refer a person to specialist CFS/ME care should be based on their needs, the type, duration, complexity and severity of their symptoms, and the presence of comorbidities. The decision should be made jointly by the person with CFS/ME and the healthcare professional. Referral to a specialist should be offered within six months of presentation to people with mild CFS/ME, within three to four months of presentation to people with moderate CFS/ME symptoms and immediately to people with severe CFS/ME symptoms.

Community Charge

Asked by Lord Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the amount of monies due under the Community Charge which remain unpaid. [HL2515]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The department does not hold this information.

Councillors

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report *The Voice of the Councillor*, the final report of the De Montfort University and Municipal Journal Councillor Commission, published in July. [HL2643]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government welcomed the report at the time of publication noting we would carefully consider its recommendations to help inform general policy development.

Credit Unions

Asked by Baroness Primarolo

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to expand the scope of products that credit unions can choose to provide to their members. [HL2716]

Lord Bates: The Government is committed to building an economy that works for everyone and credit unions play a key role in this by offering affordable, responsible credit to some communities.

In response to the Government's 2014 Call for Evidence on the future of credit unions, the Government committed to consider potential legislative changes in the previous Parliament that would help the sector grow and thrive.

However, it is important to consider any changes carefully to avoid unintended consequences, such as bringing smaller credit unions into regulation that might not be proportionate.

The Government remains committed to supporting the sector and will continue to work with interested stakeholders to achieve this. The government is also keen for the sector to look for further opportunities to grow within the existing regulatory framework by exploring opportunities for collaboration within the sector.

Credit Unions: Finance

Asked by Baroness Primarolo

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to review Government funding provided to credit unions. [HL2717]

Asked by Baroness Primarolo

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to change Government funding to credit unions from grant funding to repayable long-term investment capital. [HL2718]

Lord Bates: The Government recognises the importance of long-term investment capital for all businesses, including credit unions, in helping them to maximise their potential.

The Government therefore supports any measures that help credit unions attract more long-term investment, helping them to boost their capital base and subsequently issue more loans.

As was made clear in the response to the Government's Call for Evidence on the future of credit unions in 2014, the Government does not intend to provide revenue support to credit unions. This approach has been tried in the past and risks offering support for unsustainable

business models which will then struggle to survive, once the support is ended. The Government will only consider grant funding in relation to specific outcomes.

The Government is supportive of increasing the level of long-term investment capital into credit unions and welcomes the role played by some private sector companies in providing this.

Cycling

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that cyclists are aware of the requirement to obey the Highway Code in respect of Rules for cyclists (59 to 82), particularly Rule 66, Rule 69, Rule 71, and Rule 72. [HL2524]

Baroness Sugg: As with all road users, cyclists need to adhere to the rules set out in the Highway Code. The Government continues to keep road safety and road traffic offences under review to ensure that the current legislative framework is adequate. This is why the Cycle Safety Review was announced on 21 September 2017. The Government also promotes road safety, including encouraging safe cycling, through its Think! campaigns and Bikeability training.

Disabled Students' Allowances

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the evaluation of Disabled Students' Allowances will include consideration of the levels of information provided by higher education providers to students claiming those allowances about the respective responsibilities of those institutions and students. [HL2415]

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the evaluation of Disabled Students' Allowances will include consideration of the benefits of issuing a guide to higher education providers about their responsibilities in relation to students claiming those allowances who fall into bands 1 and 2. [HL2416]

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the evaluation of Disabled Students' Allowances will include consideration of the need for third party advisers to have clarity of information about the respective responsibilities of higher education providers and claimants of those allowances. [HL2417]

The Earl of Courtown: The evaluation of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) will address a range of factors relating to the efficacy of support for disabled students, including the effect of recent changes to DSA policy.

Domestic Violence: Employment

Asked by Lord McColl of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage departments and non-departmental bodies to engage with, and support, the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse; and what progress has been made to date. [HL2696]

Asked by Lord McColl of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support action in the workplace to combat domestic abuse. [HL2697]

Asked by Lord McColl of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will be represented at the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse conference on 29 November. [HL2698]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office has been working closely with the Employers' Initiative to encourage employers to take further action to support victims of domestic abuse in the workplace. This includes engaging with other departments and non-departmental bodies to raise awareness of the Employers' Initiative and working with wider partners to ensure employers have the guidance and tools to offer high-quality support to victims.

The Home Office will be represented at the conference on the 29 November.

Egypt: Aviation

Asked by Lord Risby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the economic impact on the economy of Egypt of the ban on flights between the UK and Sharm El Sheikh since the ban was imposed in 2015. [HL2470]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I refer my noble friend to the response given to PQ HL2384, copied below for ease of reference:

Despite Her Majesty's Government's ban on flights to Sharm El Sheikh, British tourists continue to visit Egypt. Our Travel Advice does not advise against travel to many parts of Egypt. So far this year, UK tourists have contributed US\$153 million to the Egyptian economy. Britain is the number two western European country in terms of numbers of tourists in Egypt.

The Egyptian Tourism Minister stated in 2015 that flight suspensions following the Metrojet attack had resulted in direct losses estimated at US\$280 million a month to the Egyptian economy. This figure included the impact of flight suspensions by a number of countries.

We know the importance of tourism in Sharm El Sheikh and are in constant dialogue with the Egyptian Government. Our Travel Advice can have trade and political implications, but we do not let this determine the

advice we give. The safety of British nationals has to be our main concern.

Asked by Lord Risby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on diplomatic relations of the ban on flights between the UK and Sharm El Sheikh. [HL2473]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is a friend of Egypt – a firm security partner, business partner of choice, a practical supporter of empowering the Egyptian people, and an advocate of modernising reform. We cooperate on a range of issues both bilaterally and multilaterally, including in our shared interests of combating terrorism, countering extremism, and working to bring stability and security to Libya. I have visited Egypt twice this year, and the Foreign Secretary visited in February.

All relationships have their issues. We are in constant dialogue with the Egyptian Government about the ban on flights between the UK and Sharm el Sheikh. Our Travel Advice can have political implications, but we do not let this determine the advice we give. The safety of British nationals has to be our main concern.

Electronic Commerce

Asked by Lord Leigh of Hurley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether HMRC obtain data on the amount of goods that non-UK sellers on Amazon and eBay import into the UK; and if so, whether they reconcile that data with declared sales. [HL2456]

Lord Bates: HMRC cannot disclose details about named companies. HMRC expects intermediaries to give data to the department voluntarily upon request, and has statutory powers to require production of data where necessary.

HMRC uses data from intermediaries to identify cases where there is a risk that the taxpayer has failed to report, or has under-reported, their liability.

Asked by Lord Leigh of Hurley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many fulfilment houses had stock seized by HMRC in the last 12 months. [HL2457]

Lord Bates: In the last 12 months HMRC has seized stock from 9 fulfilment houses.

Electronic Commerce: VAT

Asked by Lord Leigh of Hurley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they treat Amazon as being in the supply chain for VAT purposes in cases where an overseas seller using its full facilities, including warehousing, advertising, taking

payment, delivering, customer refunds and questions, evades VAT; and if not, why not. [HL2458]

Lord Bates: Under EU law, for an online marketplace such as Amazon to be part of a supply chain for VAT purposes, it would need to take ownership of the goods in question and sell them on its own behalf.

At Budget 2016 the government introduced a new provision that allows HMRC to make online marketplaces jointly and severally liable for the unpaid VAT of their non-EU sellers.

Europe: Radicalism

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications of the success of extremist parties in recent European elections for the stability of the EU and the Council of Europe, especially in respect of the maintenance of human rights. [HL2633]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government opposes extremism in all its forms. We believe in the fundamental values of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and we continue to work internationally to uphold those values.

Fly-tipping

Asked by Baroness Byford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the efficacy of fast-tracking the conviction and sentencing of fly-tipping offenders, in order to enable them to be required to remove the waste, dispose of it legally, and repair any damage they have caused. [HL2666]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Certain cases can be fast-tracked through the courts in agreement between the prosecuting agency and the local Judicial Business Group. Convicted offenders can be subject to a range of sentences, including community sentences which may involve waste clearance work.

The National Fly-tipping Prevention Group provides advice and guidance on measures people can take to prevent fly-tipping. Illegally dumped waste should be reported to the local authority, then cleared swiftly so others do not add to it, rather than waiting until the offenders are prosecuted and sentenced. Local authorities should then investigate fly-tipping, and prosecute the fly-tippers where there is sufficient evidence. A cost order can be made by the court so that the clearance costs can be recovered retrospectively.

As well as tightening up the sentencing guideline for environmental offences in 2014, last year we gave local authorities the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for small-scale fly-tipping to assist them to take proportionate and prompt enforcement action.

Food: Imports

Asked by Baroness Byford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of imported food by (1) value, and (2) weight, is not able to be grown or produced in the UK. [HL2665]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Total UK imports of food and drink in 2016 were valued at £42.5 billion, and 39.5 million tonnes in weight. The proportion of these imports classified as non-indigenous was 40% by value, and 45% in volume terms.

Fraud

Asked by Baroness Stern

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the findings of their internal economic crime review will be made public; and if so, when. [HL2554]

Asked by Baroness Stern

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to combine the Serious Fraud Office with any other law enforcement agencies. [HL2555]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government is committed to strengthening the UK's response to bribery, corruption, money laundering, fraud and other forms of economic crime. The Government is continuing to review options to improve the effectiveness of the UK's response to economic crime, and any measures resulting from this work will be announced in due course.

General Practitioners

Asked by Lord Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many GPs there were in practice in the NHS in (1) 2010, and (2) 2015. [HL2512]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: Information on the numbers of general practitioners in practice is shown in the following table.

	2010	2015
Headcount (England)	39,409	40,648
Full-time equivalent (England)	35,243	34,025

Source : NHS Digital. Figures as at September 30 each year.

Hate Crime

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 18 October (HL Deb, col 616), what steps they are taking to record hate crimes against people with learning

difficulties and autism separately from crimes against people with other disabilities. [HL2830]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not currently mandate police forces to disaggregate disability hate crime.

However, forces are free to record this information locally. We are working closely with stakeholders to improve our understanding of this form of hate crime, and this work will continue to inform our policy on this matter.

Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative

Asked by The Earl of Sandwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Verma on 31 March 2016 (HL7304), how much the UK has paid to (1) the African Development Fund, and (2) the International Development Association, in relation to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative; and which qualifying countries have been unable to reduce their debt export ratio. [HL2548]

Lord Bates: In 2005, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative was supplemented by the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). The MDRI allows for the cancellation of debts to multilateral organisations and has been supported by the UK since inception.

Based on information from the World Bank Debt Relief Trust Fund and MDRI records, we calculate that the UK has provided £226 million to the African Development Fund (AfDF) and £808 million to the International Development Association (IDA) for foregone payments in relation to the HIPC Initiative since 1996.

In its September 2017 Statistical report, the IMF states that between 2001 and 2015, the average debt service to export ratio for countries which have completed the HIPC process fell from 17.5% to 6.2%. Only 7 of the 36 countries did not have lower ratios of debt to exports in 2015 than in 2001 - Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania and Mozambique – and all but two of these countries still have debt service to export ratios of below 10%.

Hepatitis

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the Written Answer by Lord O'Shaughnessy on 17 July (HL530), what support they are giving to Operational Delivery Networks which did not achieve their run rates in the period 2016–17 to meet those targets in the future. [HL2468]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: In 2016-17, Operational Delivery Networks achieved 94% of the planned treatment run rate of 10,000 patients, with all but two treating over 90% of their run rate. NHS England has a

Commissioning for Quality and Innovation scheme in place for hepatitis C virus (HCV), which provides a substantial opportunity for hospitals to earn additional income available to invest in their contribution to the sustainable rollout of HCV treatments. NHS England also invested £1 million in fibroscanning equipment to identify patients at the highest unmet clinical need. Clinical and commissioning support is provided at regional and national level to share best practice.

HM Passport Office

Asked by Lord MacKenzie of Culkein

To ask Her Majesty's Government why HM Passport Office (HMPO) has withdrawn the Parliamentary Liaison Team function and discontinued the designated parliamentary helpline; and why the recorded message from HMPO on the discontinued advice and assistance helpline gives some advice for future contacts in respect of Members of the House of Commons but does not do so for members of the House of Lords. [HL2606]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The HMPO Parliamentary Liaison team merged with the UK Visas and Immigration MP Account Management team on 3 April. The MP Account Management team answers enquiries from Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Lords. The HMPO Parliamentary Liaison line closed on 18 April. Members of the House of Lords can contact their regional MP Account Management team for all passport related enquiries.

Horticulture

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what work they are supporting on the development of artificial horticulture for the mass cultivation of vegetables. [HL2536]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The UK aims to be a world leader in agricultural technology, innovation and sustainability through the Agri-Tech Strategy which the Government published in July 2013. £160 million was committed to be co-invested with industry and address challenges in the agri-tech sector including £70 million for an Agri-Tech Catalyst that supports collaborative research projects to take agricultural innovations from the laboratory to the marketplace, and £80 million invested in four world class Centres for Agricultural Innovation. This is to develop and support the wide scale adoption of innovation and technology, developing skills and capability in the food and farming supply chain.

Hospital Beds

Asked by Lord Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many hospital beds there were in NHS hospitals in (1) 2008, (2) 2010, and (3) 2015. [HL2511]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: From April 2010, NHS England started to publish quarterly information on the numbers of available and occupied beds open overnight and day only in National Health Service organisations. Previously, annual data was published. A table showing the numbers of NHS hospital beds is attached owing to the size of the data.

There has been a long-term reduction in the number of general and acute beds open overnight because hospitals are dealing with patients more efficiently. The NHS now performs more day cases, length of stay is decreasing and more people are treated in community settings.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Average numbers of hospital beds in England [Average number of Hospital Beds England.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-25/HL2511>

Housing Improvement

Asked by Lord Dubs

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of residential basement excavations on the quality of life of those living in the neighbourhood. [HL2748]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: As part of our recent review of the planning law and regulations which relate to basement developments, we held a call for evidence which sought examples of good practice in the effective use of the current planning framework in managing basement developments. This included how the planning system can be used to mitigate any potential adverse impacts arising from such developments. We are grateful to the Noble Lord for his support and feedback around this issue.

Housing: Charities

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 23 October (HL1773), whether they have any plans to establish an independent regulator to oversee the standards of housing owned and let by charities such as the National Trust. [HL2762]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government is determined to improve and raise standards in the rented and leasehold sector. Local authorities already have strong powers to tackle rogue landlords and poor property conditions.

We have already introduced a range of additional powers through the Housing & Planning Act 2016 with Rent Repayment Orders and Civil Penalties of up to £30,000 for certain housing offences as an alternative to prosecution which came into force on 6 April 2017.

The Government is also seeking views on the regulation of letting and managing agents and the approaches government could take to implement any such regulation, and has published a Call for Evidence, 'Protecting consumers in the letting and managing agent market, which closes on 29 November 2017.

Immigration: EU Nationals

Asked by Lord Darling of Roulanish

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement by the Home Secretary on 27 July, when the Migration Advisory Committee will complete its detailed assessment of the role of EU nationals in the UK economy and society. [HL2670]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government has asked the Migration Advisory Committee to complete its report on the impacts on the labour market of the UK's exit from the EU by September 2018, though the MAC has also been invited to consider whether it could produce interim reports.

Infectious Diseases

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy on strengthening UK national resilience against infectious diseases. [HL2534]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The Department, NHS England and Public Health England have a range of plans and systems in place to detect and respond to any future outbreak of an infectious disease, including:

- well-developed epidemic intelligence to identify new health threats (animal and human);
- surveillance systems to identify and track United Kingdom and/or overseas outbreaks and assess the risk to the UK;
- compliance with the World Health Organization International Health Regulations in relation to identifying, communicating and responding to national and international health threats;
- the diagnostic capability to identify organisms and ability to develop new diagnostics that can be quickly rolled out to the National Health Service;
- the production of advice for clinicians, including diagnostic and patient management algorithms;
- a legal framework that allows for the investigation and control of infectious disease;
- the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team, which can deploy overseas to support the local response to outbreaks at source before they pose a risk to UK travellers or UK population; and
- public information, messaging and advice on infectious diseases.

Comprehensive national immunisation programmes are also in place to tackle vaccine-preventable diseases,

which are kept under review by the independent expert Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

The UK Government assesses the risk of an infectious diseases outbreak to the UK every two years. This is published in an unclassified form as the National Risk Register.

Iran: BBC

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of harassment of BBC Persian service staff and their families by the Iranian government; and what representations they have made to the Iranian government regarding these reports. [HL2493]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I am aware of recent reports of BBC staff in Iran being harassed and subject to asset freezes and similar forms of mistreatment. These reports are deeply concerning. The UK has repeatedly called on Iran to implement its international obligations to respect the right of freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly, including in cases where journalists are subject to harassment or detention for conducting peaceful activities.

Lloyds Pharmacy: Closures

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the announcement by Lloyds Pharmacies that they are closing 190 stores in England. [HL2641]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: This Government is committed to maintaining access to National Health Service pharmaceutical services. 88% of the population are within a 20 minute walk of one of 11,688 community pharmacies in England and 40% of those pharmacies are within a ten minute walk of two or more others. In addition, we have seen the numbers of internet based pharmacies increase significantly in recent years, giving patients even more choice in how they receive their NHS pharmaceutical services.

Lloyds has made a commercial decision. It is not yet clear which pharmacies will close as a result of Lloyds Pharmacy's announcement and the extent to which the company will divest the outlets it no longer wants to own. Lloyds Pharmacy made clear in their statement that they had looked carefully at the pharmacy provision in the affected areas to avoid overly impacting patients. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Lord Speaker's Committee on the Size of the House

Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what was the total cost of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House, including secretarial and administrative support, printing, and other associated costs; and under which head or heads of expenditure those costs will appear. [HL2795]

Lord McFall of Alcluith: The House of Lords Administration supported the committee by drawing on a broad range of existing experienced employees, so no additional staff costs were involved. The committee had four specialist advisers; one of them did not claim a fee, while the others have to date submitted claims totalling £2,692.80. Witnesses claimed £209.60 in travel expenses. There were no member costs involved. The print run upon publication of the report cost £3,784. These costs were met by the Committee Office and the Clerk of the Parliaments' Office.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much of the £1.25 billion of the Future in Mind funding announced in the March 2015 Budget has been spent by Clinical Commissioning Groups in local areas; and which organisations have received that funding. [HL2542]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: As set out in *Implementing the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*, the planned allocations to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) over five years from 2016/17 of the additional funding to support implementation are shown in the table.

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Planned allocation to CCGs ¹ (millions)	£119	£140	£170	£190	£214

Source : Implementing the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health (NHS England)

Note: ¹ This does not include funding for eating disorders.

For 2016/17, £119 million was allocated as part of CCG budgets as planned. In the previous year, 2015/16, £75 million was allocated to CCGs.

NHS England's Five Year Forward View for Mental Health dashboard shows how much each CCG is spending on children's mental health, as part of the robust assurance processes we have put in place.

Methadone

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many English patients were on the methadone treatment programme in (1) 2005, (2) 2010, and (3) 2015; in each of those years (a) what was the cost of the programme, (b) how many deaths from methadone abuse, whether of those on the programme or not, were recorded, and (c) how many patients on the programme ceased injecting behaviour and the use of other illicit drugs. [HL2599]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: Data on the number of English patients on the methadone treatment programme is not collected in the format requested.

Information on the cost of local drug treatment programmes is not collected centrally.

Deaths where methadone was among the substances mentioned on the death certificate are published by Office for National Statistics for residents of England and Wales for each calendar year, based on deaths registered in the year. These were 220 in 2005, 355 in 2010, and 434 in 2015.

The *Adult substance misuse statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) 2015-16* report shows that 39% of opiate users who were reviewed after six months of treatment had not used opiates in the previous four weeks. Of those who reported that they were injecting at the start of treatment, 55% reported not injecting in the previous four weeks when reviewed after six months. This data is not available in a comparable form for previous years. A copy of the report is attached.

It should be noted that these are not outcomes for every opiate user in treatment, but specifically for those reviewed at six months within that year, and that not all opiate users are injecting.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Adult substance misuse statistics [Adult substance misuse statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) 2015-16.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-26/HL2599>

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the effectiveness of the methadone prescribing treatment as a means to achieving a drug free lifestyle. [HL2600]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The Government has not made any assessment of methadone prescribing as a drug treatment in isolation. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has published several pieces of guidance on drug treatment. They recommend opioid substitute treatment with either methadone or buprenorphine, delivered alongside psychosocial treatments, as the frontline treatment for opioid (heroin)

dependency. This is the treatment with the strongest international evidence base.

The prescribing of methadone, or any other opioid substitute therapy, only starts after an assessment by a competent clinician, in conjunction with the patient and taking into account their needs and supported by local clinical governance arrangements.

Montserrat: Volcanoes

Asked by **Lord West of Spithead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the key infrastructure on the island of Montserrat, including housing, electrical power and medical facilities, has been replaced since the devastating volcanic eruptions in the mid-1990s. [HL2653]

Lord Bates: In the aftermath of the volcano which destroyed Montserrat's key infrastructure in the south of the island in the mid-1990s, DFID has supported the Government of Montserrat in developing key infrastructure in the north of the island. This has included construction of: new housing and schools, new government offices, a new power station and a new hospital. A new jetty and airport were also constructed to provide continuing access to the island.

DFID has also provided funding to maintain these buildings and has financed the installation of a modern power station, a new more efficient electricity generator, and exploratory geothermal drilling to identify a potential new renewable energy source.

Multiple Occupation: Regulation

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the regulations governing Houses in Multiple Occupation. [HL2801]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Department recently consulted on extending mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation licensing, bringing a further 180,000 properties into scope. We will make an announcement and publish the consultation response shortly.

Navy: Fisheries

Asked by **Lord MacKenzie of Culkein**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for additional naval assets to provide for increased protection to UK fisheries in both the UK territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone following withdrawal from the EU and the London Fisheries Convention. [HL2604]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra is making a full assessment of the scale and volume of sea-based patrol capability required after we leave the EU with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Ministry of Defence, Royal Navy and other agencies.

The Government has established a Joint Maritime Operational Coordination Centre to coordinate all sea-based patrol activity across marine agencies to derive maximum surveillance benefit.

NHS

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the loss to the Exchequer resulting from the actions of NHS bodies in setting up wholly owned subsidiaries. [HL2439]

Lord Bates: HM Revenue and Customs does not hold information on VAT refunds to NHS bodies broken down to this level of detail.

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they have taken to ensure that when NHS bodies set up wholly owned subsidiaries in order to claim VAT refunds, NHS staff transferred to those subsidiary companies retain their terms and conditions, including membership of the NHS Pension Scheme. [HL2440]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: National Health Service organisations are responsible for deciding locally the most appropriate structures they need to deliver services to their patients within available resources, meeting any tax liabilities that may arise. Recent guidance to NHS trusts and foundation trusts from the Department states 'the only tax advice that the Department deems acceptable is that necessary for the fulfilment of statutory functions and or to assist with compliance with tax rules beyond in house expertise. Tax avoidance schemes should not be entered into under any circumstances.'

Any NHS staff compulsorily transferred to subsidiary companies that may be set up by NHS bodies should, subject to legal advice, be covered by Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment legislation, in respect of their terms and conditions of service, and Her Majesty's Treasury's New Fair Deal guidance, in respect of their continued access to the NHS Pension Scheme.

NHS Improvement is working with the NHS to ensure adherence to relevant legislation and guidance, as well as encouraging the sharing and adoption of best practice in working with employee representatives and unions on these issues.

Note: HM Treasury's New Fair Deal guidance requires that NHS employees who transfer compulsorily from a NHS body to an independent organisation retain access to the NHS Pension Scheme in their new employment. This occurs where the function performed by the transferring employees has been outsourced by the provider or the service put to tender by the commissioner.

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to ensure that when NHS bodies set up wholly owned subsidiaries in order to claim VAT

refunds, new staff who join those subsidiary companies are (1) employed on NHS terms and conditions, including membership of the NHS Pension Scheme, and (2) classified as NHS employees. [HL2441]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: National Health Service bodies are responsible for deciding locally the most appropriate structures they need to put in place to deliver services to their patients within available resources, meeting any tax liabilities that may arise. Recent guidance to NHS trusts and foundation trusts from the Department states that 'the only tax advice that the Department deems acceptable is that necessary for the fulfilment of statutory functions and or to assist with compliance with tax rules beyond in house expertise. Tax avoidance schemes should not be entered into under any circumstances.'

It would be for those subsidiary companies to decide what terms and conditions they need to offer new staff to enable them to attract the skills and talents required to deliver their services. They would need to apply for new, eligible staff to access the NHS Pension Scheme. To be eligible, they would have to be employed under a standard NHS contract (or sub contract to a NHS standard contract) and wholly or mainly (i.e. more than 50% of their work) either directly or supporting the delivery of clinical services to patients under that contract. These new staff would be classified as employees of the subsidiary company, not the NHS.

NHS Improvement is working with the NHS to ensure adherence to relevant legislation and guidance, as well as encouraging the sharing and adoption of best practice in working with employee representatives and unions on these issues.

NHS Business Services Authority

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many approvals and letters of comfort have been given by the NHS Business Authority to enable NHS staff who transfer to wholly owned subsidiaries which have been set up for the purposes of claiming VAT refund, to continue to access the NHS Pension Scheme. [HL2442]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: National Health Service organisations are responsible for deciding locally the most appropriate structures they need to put in place to deliver services to their patients within available resources, meeting any tax liabilities that may arise. Recent guidance to NHS trusts and foundation trusts, from the Department states "The only tax advice that the Department deems acceptable is that necessary for the fulfilment of statutory functions and or to assist with compliance with tax rules beyond in house expertise. Tax avoidance schemes should not be entered into under any circumstances."

VAT status is irrelevant in respect of the application of Her Majesty's Treasury's New Fair Deal guidance which requires that NHS employees who transfer compulsorily from a NHS body to an independent organisation retain

access to the NHS Pension Scheme in their new employment.

NHS: VAT

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what dialogue they have had with QE Facilities regarding VAT avoidance schemes, in relation to wholly owned subsidiaries of NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts. [HL2443]

Lord Bates: I am unable to comment on the affairs of individual taxpayers.

North Korea: Biological Weapons

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report published by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs in October, North Korea's Biological Weapons Program, which concluded that North Korea has the potential for a large-scale biological weapons programme and that the threats "must be considered a realistic proposition and addressed by the international community". [HL2491]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the report. As a State Party to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is prohibited from developing, producing and stockpiling biological and toxin weapons. Under the Confidence Building Measures first established in 1986, States Parties are required to submit annual returns on specified activities and facilities. The DPRK has only ever submitted one such return, in 1990. This makes it difficult for the international community to have confidence that they are meeting their obligations under the Convention.

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications for UK security of any North Korean biological weapons programme, as described in a report from the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School published in October. [HL2533]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the report. It is the long-standing policy of the Government not to comment on matters relating to intelligence or national security.

Nuclear Disarmament: Conferences

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will vote on the proposals currently before the UN General Assembly concerning the dates and mandate for the 2018 UN international high-level conference for nuclear disarmament; who will represent them at the

conference; what will be their objectives for the conference; and whether they accept the Tbilisi Declaration about the conference calling on all OSCE states "to participate in the 2018 UN international conference on nuclear disarmament at the highest level". [HL2517]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We will vote against the draft resolution at the UN in December on the holding of a UN high level conference in May 2018 to review progress on nuclear disarmament. We do not believe that a Conference mandated by this resolution will lead to effective progress on nuclear disarmament. It will not address the serious threats to international peace and security posed by nuclear non proliferation nor will it take account of the international security environment. The Tbilisi Declaration was adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and not by the Government. If the Conference is held, we will consider our approach closer to the time.

Nurses

Asked by Lord Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many qualified nurses were employed in the NHS in (1) 2015, and (2) 2010. [HL2513]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: NHS Digital publishes workforce statistics. The following table shows the number of full time equivalent (FTE) nurses and health visitors working in the National Health Service in May 2015 and May 2010.

FTE	May 2010	May 2015
Nurses	280,950	281,326

Source: NHS Digital, provisional NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics.

Notes: Health visitors may be employed by NHS provider organisations, but may also be employed directly by local authorities or other care providers. Current data collections do not cover the complete range of these organisations. As a result, it is not possible to provide accurate data on the total size of the health visitor workforce.

Organic Farming

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether it is their policy to encourage organic farming and to increase the amount of land used by that sector; and if so, what actions they are taking in support of that policy. [HL2572]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Government believes that both conventional and organic farming offers opportunities for expansion and increased penetration of the domestic and overseas markets.

The Government recognises that organic farming and food can make a significant contribution helping to achieve environmental objectives, together with the additional consumer choice it offers, and supports this in England through the provision of financial aid for both conversion to and maintenance of organic status.

Police Stations

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many police stations have closed since 2010 in each force area in England and Wales; how many additional stations were opened over that period; and of those, how many are only accessible to officers and civilian staff. [HL2656]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The information requested is not held centrally.

Decisions on available resources, including the number of police stations, are a matter for the directly accountable Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of each area.

Police: Inquiries

Asked by Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury

To ask Her Majesty's Government which organisations or individuals are entitled to establish an inquiry into the conduct of a Police Authority's investigation. [HL2758]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Independent Police Complaints Commission may review or investigate the conduct of a police force, or one of its members, respectively. The policing protocol issued under section 79 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 provides scope for a PCC to commission an independent review into a force's particular investigation in order to assist that PCC in their statutory duty of scrutinising, supporting and challenging the overall performance of the force. A Chief Constable may also commission an independent review of an investigation conducted by their force.

Section 1 (1) of the Inquiries Act 2005 sets out the criteria for establishing a statutory public inquiry whereby a Minister may cause an inquiry to be held under this Act in relation to a case where it appears to him that (a) particular events have caused, or are capable of causing, public concern, or (b) there is public concern that particular events may have occurred. The Act is UK-wide. Ministers from the Devolved Administrations have the power to establish inquiries into matters within their remit. The Government also has the authority to establish a non-statutory inquiry in the form of an ad-hoc inquiry, an inquiry by a Committee of the Privy Council and Royal Commissions.

Section 54(2B) of the Police Act 1996 allows the Home Secretary to commission Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to

inspect and report on any force, or aspect of any force, or to commission them to carry out any further activities for the purpose of furthering police efficiency and effectiveness.

Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate

Asked by Baroness Ford

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether UK guidance on the use of valproate-based medicines during pregnancy has been reviewed in the light of recent findings on the intergenerational effects of that drug. [HL2424]

Asked by Baroness Ford

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to offer compensation to women and children who have been affected by the use of valproate-based medicines during pregnancy. [HL2425]

Asked by Baroness Ford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they will put in place for children born with birth defects resulting from the use of valproate-based medicines by their mothers during pregnancy. [HL2426]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: Valproate is an effective treatment for epilepsy and bipolar disorder that should only be used in girls and women of childbearing potential if other treatments are ineffective or not tolerated because of the risks in pregnancy. For some women there may be no other treatment option. Due to ongoing concerns about women's awareness of the risks, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has worked with professional bodies, voluntary organisations and patient groups to develop a set of materials to aid communication between health professionals and women and girls. The adequacy of measures taken to date is being evaluated in a Europe-wide review that started in March 2017. An expert working group of the Commission on Human Medicines has been convened to inform the United Kingdom position during the ongoing European Union review and will consider all relevant data on intergenerational effects.

The Government has great sympathy for those families who have been affected by the use of valproate in pregnancy. However, there is currently no proposal to offer compensation for those affected by the use of valproate during pregnancy in the UK. For any child born with a disability, clinical commissioning groups and local authorities, as commissioners of health and social care, must secure services to meet that child's needs.

Where a child has a very complex health need, they may need additional health support to that which is routinely available from general practitioner practices, hospitals or in the community, called continuing care. Health, social care and education should work together to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs.

Primary Health Care: Essex

Asked by **Baroness Smith of Basildon**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much investment NHS Property Services has made in Basildon Borough for primary care infrastructure, in each year since April 2013. [HL2551]

Asked by **Baroness Smith of Basildon**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much investment has been made by NHS Property Services in Essex for primary care infrastructure, in each year since 2013. [HL2552]

Asked by **Baroness Smith of Basildon**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much investment has been made by NHS Property Services in Sussex for primary care infrastructure, in each year since 2013. [HL2553]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: The table below sets out the capital expenditure by NHS Property Services (NHSPS) on health centres and primary care facilities owned by NHSPS in Sussex and Essex since the establishment of NHSPS in April 2013. The figures exclude hospital buildings from which primary care services may be provided.

	2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	2016/17 £000s	TOTAL £000s
Sussex	27	961	146	25	1,159
Essex	448	873	427	-	1,748
Total	475	1,834	573	25	2,907

There has been no such investment in Basildon Borough since the inception of NHSPS in 2013.

Private Rented Housing: Electrical Safety

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister of State for Communities and Local Government on 3 July (HC1801), what action, if any, they plan to take following the report of the working group on mandatory electrical safety checks set up under the Housing and Planning Act 2016. [HL2623]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Following Royal Assent of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, a Working Group of relevant experts was established to provide recommendations to ministers on what, if any, legislative requirements for electrical safety in the private rented sector should be introduced. The working group report has been published online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector-working-group-report>

The Government will engage further with the sector to test the recommendations of the working group to ensure that any regulation introduced is balanced and works for landlords and tenants.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

The Working Group report [171107 private rented sector working group report HL2623.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-26/HL2623>

Qatar: Diplomatic Relations

Asked by **Lord Hussain**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the impact of the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar on the ordinary citizens of Qatar. [HL2445]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We know that the closure of borders between Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar has a real impact on the movement of people and goods and on the everyday lives of people in the region. We call upon the Gulf States to find a way of de-escalating the situation and lifting the current restrictions, and are engaging with all sides in support of Kuwait's mediation efforts.

Questions for Short Debate

Asked by **Lord Pearson of Rannoch**

To ask the Leader of the House whether she intends to review the rule under which Members who ask a question for short debate have no right of reply at the end. [HL2864]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: Questions for short debate, which remain the principal means by which backbenchers are able to secure 1-1½ hour debates in the Chamber or Grand Committee, are, by design, treated as questions rather than motions. As such there is no right of reply.* Standing Order 32(2) is also clear in that members may only speak once to questions for short debate, save, with the leave of the House, to clarify a point they have made in their speech.

The speaking time limits for additional backbench contributors in the twenty-five questions for short debate we have had so far in this session have ranged from two to ten minutes. Any change to the present arrangements would of course be a matter for the Procedure Committee. I can only note that revising the procedure so that the member asking the question had a right of reply within the 1 or 1½ hour time limit would reduce the time available to other members when debates are well-subscribed.

*Paragraph 6.32 of The Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords.

Road Signs and Markings: Hedges and Ditches

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 21 July 2016 (HL1206), what estimate they have made of the percentage of road signs on the highways network that are being obscured by overgrown foliage. [HL2494]

Baroness Sugg: Highways England invests significant funds in maintaining road signs and their contracts require that vegetation is cut back as necessary.

The Department for Transport also encourages highway authorities to consider the advice as set out in the UK Road Liaison Group's code of practice, 'Well Maintained Highways'. This advises authorities to trim back trees and foliage to ensure traffic signs are kept legible.

No central assessment of road signs that are being obscured by overgrown foliage, operated either by local highways authorities or by Highways England, has been made.

Select Committee Reports: Government Responses

Asked by Lord Norton of Louth

To ask the Leader of the House what plans she has to improve the timeliness and quality of Government responses to reports from House of Lords Select Committees and Joint Select Committees of both Houses. [HL2538]

Asked by Lord Norton of Louth

To ask the Leader of the House how many reports from House of Lords Select Committees and Joint Select Committees of both Houses published between August 2010 and August 2017 did not receive Government responses within a period of two months; and how many of those reports have yet to receive a Government response. [HL2539]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: The Government values the work of the select committees of this House, and understands the importance of proper engagement with that work. Therefore the Government aims to respond to reports within two months of their publication. However, sometimes circumstances dictate that it will not be possible to provide a response within this timeframe. In such instances the relevant government department will maintain contact with the relevant select committee chairman and secretariat.

I have written to Lords ministers to reiterate the importance of providing timely responses to select committee reports. There are currently 15 government responses that have not been received by the relevant select committees within the two-month period. I am assured that ministers are working hard to ensure outstanding responses are issued as soon as possible.

Data on response times is made available by the Committee Office but has not been routinely collected for the years requested. However, as a member of the Liaison Committee, I welcome the fact that, since the 2014-15 session, government response dates have been published in the Liaison Committee's annual reports. Links to the reports containing the information for the most recent three sessions are set out below.

Session 2016-17:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldliaison/13/13.pdf> Session 2015-16:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldliaison/26/26.pdf> Session 2014-15:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldselect/ldliaison/5/5.pdf>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Session 2014-15 [2014-15 Liaison Committee.pdf]

Session 2015-16 [2015-16 Liaison Committee.pdf]

Session 2016-17 [2016-17 Liaison Committee.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-25/HL2538>

Slavery

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 16 October (HL Deb, col 398), what is their estimate of the length of time that the Modern Slavery Act will take to embed; and what measures they are taking in the meantime to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is targeted. [HL2448]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Since the world-leading Modern Slavery Act 2015 was introduced, more victims and survivors are being rescued and supported than ever before, more perpetrators are being brought to justice, and thousands of businesses have published slavery and human trafficking statements. The Government is actively monitoring progress and recently published the UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery setting out the steps we are taking to tackle this abhorrent crime, which can be accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/2017-uk-annual-report-on-modern-slavery

The Home Secretary also commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services to assess the police response to modern slavery. The report was published on 24 October and the findings will serve as a benchmark against which to measure police progress and address the issues identified. The report can be accessed via: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/stolen-freedom-the-policing-response-to-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking/>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

2017 - UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery
[2017_uk_annual_report_on_modern_slavery.pdf]

Justice Inspectors - Modern Slavery [stolen-freedom-the-policing-response-to-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-24/HL2448>

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many police officers have received specialist training to investigate allegations of modern human slavery, broken down by each of the police forces in England and Wales. [HL2658]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Data on the number of police officers who have received specialist modern slavery training are not held centrally. Through the £8.5m grant the Government has provided to support the police modern slavery transformation programme, an accredited modern slavery training course has been developed for all frontline officers and staff. This is supplemented by a specialist investigators' course for detectives. Both courses are being rolled out across England and Wales.

Social Rented Housing: Construction

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 26 October (HL Deb, col 978), what action they will take to ensure that the £156 million unused borrowing capacity for social housing is taken up and spent. [HL2744]

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 26 October (HL Deb, col 978), what proposals they have for ensuring that the £3.6 billion of local authority housing revenue account headroom is used to achieve the building of more affordable homes. [HL2745]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We want to see local authorities deliver a new generation of council house building, and are providing the tools to help them do so by:

- enabling them to increase rents by up to CPI +1per cent for 5 years from 2020, giving certainty to plan investment and confidence about future rental income to underpin house building plans; and
- providing £2 billion extra public funding to deliver more affordable homes at social rent in areas of acute affordability pressure, which local authorities will be able to bid for.

It is for individual local authorities to decide how and when to utilise their available housing revenue account borrowing, in line with their strategic approach to meeting housing need and the effective management of their Housing Revenue Account.

Social Media: Bullying

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what actions they are taking, or are planning to take, to stop the rise in malicious communications via social media. [HL2529]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: We are currently consulting on introducing a social media code of practice as part of the Internet Safety Strategy which was published on 11 October.

As laid out in the Digital Economy Act 2017, the code will seek to ensure that providers offer adequate online safety policies, introduce minimum standards and metrics and ensure regular review and monitoring. Government will continue to consult with stakeholders in the tech industry on the details of the code of practice before its introduction in 2018.

More broadly, the Government published the Hate Crime Action Plan in July 2016 to drive forward action to tackle hate crime. This action includes the recent announcement of the creation of a national online hate crime hub.

Taliban

Asked by Lord Ahmed

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are taking action to support peaceful dialogue between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States; if so, what; and what advice they have provided to the governments of those states in relation to dialogue with the Taliban. [HL2490]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government continues to support both Afghanistan and Pakistan in their efforts to build and maintain a relationship that will enhance the security, stability and prosperity of both countries and the wider region. The Foreign Secretary, other Ministers, and senior officials speak regularly with leaders from the two countries about the importance of improving relations. The most recent Ministerial contact was during the visit by the Minister for Asia and the Pacific to Kabul on 1-2 October. On 15 March the Government facilitated a meeting between Afghanistan and Pakistan at which some progress was made to address the concerns of both sides. We continue to encourage the two countries to work together to tackle the threat of cross-border militancy, improve border management and encourage increased bilateral trade. We liaise closely with the US on this agenda.

The Government is committed to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, and this will need to include the Taliban. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is active in pursuit of that goal through diplomatic outreach and our programmatic work, including direct support to Afghanistan's Higher Peace Council. Our message to all parties involved is that a political solution is the only way to achieve lasting peace and stability in

Afghanistan and the region. As President Ghani has previously said, the Taliban have a choice between peace and war. They must choose to help to rebuild Afghanistan. Whilst this work remains difficult, we are working with the Government of Afghanistan and all relevant international partners, including the US and Pakistan, to bring about a sustainable process as soon as possible.

Terrorism

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government with which parts of the question asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch on 25 October (HL Deb, col 928) they disagree; and why. [HL2645]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the question by Lord Morgan on 25 October (HL Deb, col 927), whether they will, in future publications of, or pronouncements on, the Prevent strategy, use the term "radical Islam" rather than "radical". [HL2646]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We disagree with all of your question. Since 2011, our counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST has addressed "all forms of terrorist threat to this country and our interests, whether it originates here or overseas", regardless of the ideology that inspires it.

Terrorism: Norway

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what lessons they have learned from the Utoya massacre in Norway. [HL2532]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Over recent years the Home Office has worked with the police and other emergency services to develop a strong, police-led capability to deal with large-scale firearms attacks in the UK.

We keep our preparedness under constant review and use the lessons learned from the Utoya attack in 2011 and subsequent terrorist attacks to inform the UK's approach; regularly exercising the UK's capabilities.

Tolls

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy on toll charges on public highways that cross rivers and estuaries in the UK. [HL2480]

Baroness Sugg: It is the Government's policy that those who benefit from the significant improvements brought about by estuarial crossings should help to pay for them. Successive Governments have taken the view that tolls are justified, given the high costs of constructing and

maintaining such crossings, and the time savings that users make compared to alternative routes.

Transport: Finance

Asked by Lord Taylor of Goss Moor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what projects have been awarded funding through the local major transport projects fund since 2014; what was the amount of funding awarded for each project; and what was the purpose of each project. [HL2578]

Baroness Sugg: The information in the attached table shows the Department for Transport's total final funding contributions to local major transport projects in England approved since 2014 following consideration of final business cases. Other projects in the programme are still in development. The current programme totals £2.6bn of which £1.66bn is being provided by the Department. This is in addition to the significant investment we are making to improve local transport through other funding streams, including local highways maintenance and integrated transport funding.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL2578 - Table with DfT's contributions [HL2578 - DfT's Funding Contribution to Local Major Transport Projects.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-10-26/HL2578>

Treasury: Written Questions

Asked by Lord Laird

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 23 October (HL1751) concerning a debt to them from the government of Ireland, whether they will now answer the question asked on the arrangements for repayment. [HL2454]

Lord Bates: I refer the noble Lord to the most recent statutory report which the Treasury provided to Parliament as required by Section 2 of the Loans to Ireland Act 2010. The last report was laid in Parliament on 7 November 2017 and is available in the Printed Paper Office.

Table 2.A of the report provides the details of each of the loan disbursements made to Ireland by the Treasury, and the dates on which each tranche is due to be repaid.

Table 2.A

<i>Disbursement Date</i>	<i>Loan amount</i>	<i>Loan Maturity Date</i>
14 October 2011	£403,370,000	15 April 2019
30 January 2012	£403,370,000	30 July 2019
28 March 2012	£403,370,000	30 September 2019
1 August 2012	£403,370,000	3 February 2020

<i>Disbursement Date</i>	<i>Loan amount</i>	<i>Loan Maturity Date</i>
19 October 2012	£403,370,000	20 April 2020
6 March 2013	£403,370,000	7 September 2020
6 June 2013	£403,370,000	7 December 2020
26 September 2013	£403,370,000	26 March 2021

Turkey: Detainees

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the Human Rights Watch report *In Custody: Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey*, released on 12 October, when they last raised concerns about detention abuses with the government of Turkey. [[HL2526](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have studied the Human Rights Watch Report released on 12 October. We regularly raise human rights concerns with the Turkish Government at ministerial and senior official level, including, where necessary, alleged abuses in detention. We will continue to engage with the Turkish Government at all levels on our concerns, and to monitor the situation closely.

Turkey: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 19 October (HL1775), whether they plan to ask the UN to take up the invitation by Turkey to allow inspection visits by UN officials to areas in Sapatan and its surrounding villages. [[HL2465](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: It is up to the UN to request specific inspection visits with the Turkish authorities. We work closely with UN agencies active in Turkey and other like-minded diplomatic missions to ensure that Turkey is regularly reminded of its human rights obligations.

UNESCO

Asked by Lord Hunt of Chesterton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy for the prioritisation and funding of the future programmes of UNESCO, in the light of the decision of the United States to terminate its membership; and whether they will urge the United States to rejoin. [[HL2589](#)]

Lord Bates: The UK is deeply committed to the vital issues that UNESCO works on. But we have been crystal

clear that we expect serious reform from UNESCO as an organisation. The 2016 Multilateral Development Review scored UNESCO lowest of all the agencies. This is not good enough. We will relentlessly keep up the pressure to drive up performance – and in particular to address serious concerns about financial and risk management.

The US's relationship with UNESCO is a matter for them.

Universal Credit: Housing

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether young people who were formerly on the edge of care are included in the provisions of the Universal Credit (Housing Costs Element for claimants aged 18 to 21) (Amendment) Regulations 2017; if so, why; and what is their estimate of the number of such persons who are so included. [[HL2661](#)]

Baroness Buscombe: Young people who were formally on the edge of care are included in the provisions of the Universal Credit (Housing Costs Element for claimants aged 18 to 21) (Amendment) Regulations 2017. However, if it would be inappropriate for such a young person to live with their parents, then they are exempted from these provisions, which gives the necessary protection to this group.

VAT

Asked by Lord Leigh of Hurley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what amount of VAT was not recovered from sellers who were served with notices in the last 12 months. [[HL2455](#)]

Lord Bates: In the 12 months since the joint and several liability provisions came into force, HMRC has issued 500 notices to online marketplaces through which overseas businesses sell.

In all of these cases, the marketplaces have removed the sellers from their platforms, preventing further losses of VAT through fraudulent sales.

Joint and several liability notices remain in force until the sellers become fully compliant with their VAT obligations, which includes payment of all previously owed taxes, plus interest and penalties.

To the end of August 2017, HMRC had raised assessments for unpaid VAT on those sellers totalling £43.6m, with a further £71m due to be assessed on sellers still under investigation.

The VAT paid by overseas businesses has increased from £6m in 2015 to £27m in 2016, and it is expected to continue to rise significantly in 2017.

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