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Tuesday
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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness 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
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, 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
Baroness Fairhead	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
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 and Social Care
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Whip
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport, Whip
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Young of Cookham	Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 16 January 2018

ETIAS Watchlist

[HLWS397]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service (Nick Hurd) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Government has decided not to opt-in to the proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794 for the purpose of establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) watchlist.

As the UK does not participate in ETIAS itself, we do not expect to have direct access to the watchlist through this process. The Government also notes that there are a number of issues still to be resolved with regard to how the watchlist will be hosted by Europol and how it will function. As such, it is not clear whether opting-in could place any additional obligations on the UK. For these reasons, the Government has decided not to opt-in to the amending Regulation at this time.

Not opting in will not affect the operability of the Europol Regulation for the UK.

Foreign Affairs Council: 11 December 2017

[HLWS398]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Alan Duncan), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 11 December, which was followed by a FAC (Development). The Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini. The meeting was held in Brussels.

Ministers met the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, in the margins of the Council. The meeting was an opportunity for the European Union to reiterate its united and clear messages on the status of Jerusalem as future capital of two states, the importance of preserving a two-state solution and, on regional issues, the need to continue implementing the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal).

Foreign Affairs Council

EU Foreign Ministers discussed the Middle East, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), G5 Sahel Force and jointly, with Development Ministers, EU-Africa relations. Development Ministers discussed Aid for Trade.

The HRVP, in her introductory comments, also spoke about Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Libya, her visit to Burma and Bangladesh and the Eastern Partnership Summit. I spoke about the historic

opportunity in Zimbabwe and the need for the right policy mix to respond to developments there.

Middle East

The Council held discussions on the latest developments in the wider Middle East. I set out the UK position on Jerusalem, settlements, final status and the two state solution. Member States agreed to continue to respect the international consensus on Jerusalem including on the location of their diplomatic representations until the final status of Jerusalem is resolved. Ministers considered how the EU could limit escalation and preserve stability in the region, as well as consolidate progress in countries such as Lebanon.

Ministers expressed their concern at the serious deterioration of the situation in Yemen, which was witnessing the onset of a grave humanitarian catastrophe. They agreed to continue working to re-invigorate UN-led efforts towards a political solution to the conflict in Yemen in line with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Ministers recalled the continued EU support for the efforts of UN Special Envoy de Mistura in Syria.

Ministers underlined the importance of continuing and strengthening the EU's engagement on Iraq. The HRVP and the Commission are expected to present a proposal for a new strategy in January 2018.

Sahel

Ministers representing the Sahel countries set out their security and humanitarian needs. EU Ministers agreed that more needed to be done given the shared interests in the region.

EU-Africa relations

In a joint session with Foreign and Development Ministers, Ministers underlined the importance of the EU-Africa Summit and the need to continue working with African partners in an inclusive way.

Development - Aid for trade

The Council discussed the updated strategy on aid for trade which aims to improve the integration of developing countries into the international trading system and to enable trade and investment to contribute to reducing poverty.

Ministers agreed a number of measures without discussion: The Council adopted a decision establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO); The Council adopted conclusions on DRC; The Council adopted conclusions on Thailand; The Council extended sanctions against the DRC The Council agreed rules of procedure for the Joint Committee established by the Cooperation agreement on partnership and development between the European Union and the Afghanistan; The Council adopted a decision to support the global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade ('iTrace III'); The Council took note of the 19th Annual Report on EU exports of military technology and equipment; The

Council decided to provide support to the African, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions to participate in the high-level fissile material (such as highly enriched uranium or plutonium) cut-off treaty expert preparatory group consultative process; The Council approved a draft EU-China statement on climate change and clean energy; The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report on the Bêkou EU trust fund; The Council adopted conclusions on the 2016 Report on the Gender Action Plan II.

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

[HLWS396]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

Today marks the publication of the UK's fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2022) by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence, with support from the Stabilisation Unit.

The National Action Plan (NAP) is the UK Government's five-year strategy that captures how we will meet our Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1325, demonstrating how we will ensure better protection and empowerment of women in conflict situations overseas through our diplomatic, development and defence engagements alongside our bilateral and multilateral partners.

The UK is a global leader on Women, Peace and Security, taking the lead on drafting resolutions on this issue in the UN Security Council in the UN Security Council. In 2017 the FCO's first ever Special Envoy for Gender Equality was appointed as part of wider UK ambition to eliminate all forms of gender inequality. The UK has continued work to increase women's participation in conflict resolution in some of the most fragile countries in the world, including in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Syria. Along with Bangladesh and Canada, the UK launched the Women, Peace and Security Chief of Defence Network at the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference in Vancouver in November 2017. The promotion of women in mediation in conflict resolution and countering violent extremism will continue at the Commonwealth Summit and beyond.

The UK continues to tackle gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls as the most prevalent form of gender-based violence. We continue to champion the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative to end sexual exploitation and abuse, working closely with our international partners.

This NAP has been developed based on lessons learned from the previous three UK NAPs, extensive consultation and new research and evidence on WPS. Key changes are:

- The NAP covers a longer, five-year period, enabling greater opportunity for the UK and implementing partners to demonstrate impact against our long-term objectives and outcomes
- The NAP provides a vision of what the UK wants to achieve on WPS, not a fixed country-level implementation plan. This will enable us to respond flexibly to local realities and changes in the contexts, and to adapt programmes and activities to global and local developments
- We have set out seven strategic outcomes, linked to the four pillars of UNSCR 1325, where the UK can demonstrate a comparative advantage and expect to see real progress over this period.
- We have retained inclusion of focus countries, recognising that this helps the UK to raise issues and work in partnership with governments, and to improve domestic and international visibility. We have increased the number from six to nine. They are: Afghanistan, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria
- The NAP 2018-22 sets out more clearly how it fits with wider HMG policies and strategies to ensure complementarity with other Government efforts.

We are grateful to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security for their active engagement on this important issue and would, in particular, like to thank Baroness Hodgson for her dedicated work in this area. We would also like to thank the civil society network, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), and the LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security for the contribution they have made to the process of revising the NAP.

We will continue to consult with Parliament and civil society, including through the annual report on progress on the implementation of the NAP. The FCO will convene a new WPS steering group, chaired by Lord Ahmad, to bring together NGOs and academics with senior officials to provide accountability and leadership on this agenda. We will commission an external evaluation for a mid- and end of term assessment of how the strategic outcomes have been included through HMG's planning and delivery processes.

A copy of the NAP has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, and is available on gov.uk.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Report [FINAL NAP PDF.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2018-01-16/HLWS396/>

Written Answers

Tuesday, 16 January 2018

Acts

Asked by **Lord Norton of Louth**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) sections of, and (2) Schedules to, Acts of Parliament passed since 2010 have not been commenced. [HL4562]

Lord Young of Cookham: The Cabinet Office does not maintain a central database of Schedules to Acts of Parliament that have not been commenced. All legislation is available at www.legislation.gov.uk.

Asylum

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many incoming transfers under the Dublin III Regulation (regulation 604/2013) were made to the UK in 2017; and how many times the discretion under Article 18(1) of the Regulation was used in 2017. [HL4443]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The discretionary clauses under the Dublin III Regulation can be found at Article 17 of the Regulation, with Article 17(2) being the relevant criteria for coming transfer requests

The Dublin III Regulation is a long-standing mechanism between EU Member States to determine responsibility for examining asylum claims. It is not an application route for transfer to the UK. At present we do not publish data on cases covered by the Dublin Regulation. Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency, regularly publishes Member State figures, which can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report.

The Commission has data up to, and including 2016. This shows the UK processed over 6,000 Dublin requests in 2016: over 4,200 outgoing requests to other Member States and almost 1,800 incoming requests. 2017 data is not yet available. Under the Dublin III Regulation, Member States have two months from receiving a request from another participating Member State to accept or reject responsibility for processing the asylum claim. Once a Dublin request has been accepted (or legal matters have been resolved), the Regulation provides that the sending Member State has six months to enact the transfer. The Home Office works closely with EU Member State partners to enact transfers as soon as possible and ahead of the six month timeframe.

Asked by **Lord Scriven**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average duration of the asylum procedure in the UK over (1) the last 12 months, and (2) the last three years. [HL4496]

Asked by **Lord Scriven**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average duration of the asylum procedure at first instance in the UK over (1) the last 12 months, and (2) the last three years, for (a) Syrian nationals, (b) Afghan nationals, and (c) Iraqi nationals. [HL4497]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Information regarding the average duration of the asylum procedure is not recorded and held in a reportable format. However the information relating to the percentage of initial asylum decisions made within the published service standard can be found on table Asy_10 of the Asylum Transparency data published on 30th November 2017 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-transparency-data-november-2017>).

An extract of the table can be found below;

Quarter Application Received	Service Standard	Total Applications Received	Straightforward Applications Received	Non-straightforward Applications Received	Of those Straightforward Applications received, the number completed within Service Standard	Of those Straightforward Applications received, the percentage completed within the Service Standard
2017 Q1	6 months	6,731	4,140	2,591	4,093	98.9%

Information relating to the average time taken to make an initial decision is not recorded in a reportable format. However, information relating to the amount of initial decisions made in (1) the last 12 months, and (2) last three years for (a) Syrian nationals, (b) Afghan nationals, and (c) Iraqi nationals can be found in the Asylum data tables immigration statistics July to September 2017 volume 2 on table as_06;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2017-data-tables>

An extract is contained in the table below;

Year of application	Country of nationality	Total main applicants	Total initial decisions*
2014	Afghanistan	1,138	1,017
2015	Afghanistan	2,259	1,690
2016	Afghanistan	2,329	1,297

<i>Year of application</i>	<i>Country of nationality</i>	<i>Total main applicants</i>	<i>Total initial decisions*</i>
2014	Iraq	595	526
2015	Iraq	2,234	1,914
2016	Iraq	2,672	1,723
2014	Syria	1,968	1,850
2015	Syria	2,524	2,314
2016	Syria	1,376	1,000

**It should be noted that the Total initial decisions made may not correlate to the year in which the claim was made.*

Asylum: Detainees

Asked by Lord Ramsbotham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average duration of detention for adult asylum seekers in the UK in 2017. [HL4493]

Asked by Lord Ramsbotham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average duration of detention for all minors seeking asylum in the UK in 2017. [HL4494]

Asked by Lord Ramsbotham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average duration of detention for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the UK in 2017. [HL4495]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Information on the length of detention of people leaving detention is available in tables dt_06_q and dt_09_q of the detention tables in the latest releases of 'Immigration Statistics, July to September 2017', available from the Home Office website at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662536/detention-jul-sep-2017-tables.ods.

The table includes a breakdown of adults and child detainees who have previously claimed asylum at some stage. However, we cannot identify those minors which were unaccompanied. Figures for Q4 2017 will be released on 22 February 2018.

People leaving detention by length of detention, January to September 2017

<i>Length of detention</i>	<i>Total Detainees</i>	<i>Of which: Adult asylum detainees</i>	<i>Child asylum detainees</i>
*Total	20,730	10,222	24
A: 3 days or less	5,514	2,044	21
B: 4 to 7 days	1,483	855	2
C: 8 to 14 days	2,604	1,086	1

<i>Length of detention</i>	<i>Total Detainees</i>	<i>Of which: Adult asylum detainees</i>	<i>Child asylum detainees</i>
D: 15 to 28 days	3,619	1,550	0
E: 29 days to less than 2 months	3,494	1,875	0
F: 2 months to less than 3 months	1,566	978	0
G: 3 months to less than 4 months	794	546	0
H: 4 months to less than 6 months	813	631	0
I: 6 months to less than 12 months	680	536	0
J: 12 months to less than 18 months	100	75	0
K: 18 months to less than 24 months	41	31	0
L: 24 months to less than 36 months	20	15	0
M: 36 months to less than 48 months	2	0	0
N: 48 months or more	0	0	0

Figures are provisional

Asylum detainees: People detained solely under Immigration Act powers who are recorded as having sought asylum at some stage

The median length of detention for adults, who had claimed asylum at some point, between January and September 2017, was between 15 and 28 days. There are a small number of detainees who have been detained for long periods of time, which would skew the mean value. The median is therefore the most suitable average for these data.

Detention Centres

Asked by Lord Lipsey

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many immigration detention estate Independent Monitoring Board reports for 2016 they responded to; and when they intend to respond to the rest of those reports. [HL4481]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government has responded to the Brook House immigration removal centre and the Cedars pre-departure accommodation Independent Monitoring Board annual reports for 2016.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Immigration will review the remaining Independent Monitoring Board reports for the immigration detention estate and respond in due course.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent estimate they have made of the number of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs); what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of

EDMOs; and whether they have any proposals to change (1) the regulations relating to EDMOs, and (2) the way in which EDMOs operate in practice, in order to increase their ease of use. [HL4462]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) enable a local housing authority to put an empty property back into use. The property must have been empty for at least two years and be a blight on the local neighbourhood. It is for local housing authorities to decide when to use these powers and Government does not collect data on the number of EDMOs that have been issued. The number of empty homes is at its lowest since records began. In May 2010 over 300,000 homes in England had been standing empty for longer than 6 months. As of November 2017 the number of long-term empty properties had fallen to 206,236. There are no current plans to make any changes to the way in which EDMOs operate.

Environment Agency

Asked by Lord German

To ask Her Majesty's Government which functions of the Environment Agency they are proposing to transfer to the Canal and River Trust. [HL4593]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are proposing to respond to the Canal & River Trust's recent proposal for the transfer of EA navigations imminently. As such, I am unable to comment further.

Financial Reporting Council

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Memorandum of Understanding between the Financial Reporting Council and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills dated July 2010 describes the Financial Reporting Council as a private body. [HL4540]

Lord Henley: The Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Financial Reporting Council will need to be reviewed and updated in due course. The memorandum was signed before the Office of National Statistics' confirmation in 2014 that the Financial Reporting Council is a public body and was based on the expectations at that time. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy confirmed last year that it expected the Financial Reporting Council to remain a public body.

The reference to the Financial Reporting Council being a private body does not affect the operation of the Memorandum.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government for how long the Financial Reporting Council has been classified by the

National Accounts Classification Committee as a central government public body. [HL4541]

Lord Henley: The Financial Reporting Council was classified as a public body by the Office for National Statistics on 31st October 2004. Following a review, in 2014 the Office of National Statistics reconfirmed the Financial Reporting Council's classification as a public body and in 2017 the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy confirmed it is expected to remain as such.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Financial Reporting Council has met all the obligations required of public bodies, in particular relating to (1) procurement, (2) recruitment, (3) remuneration, and (4) the Freedom of Information Act 2000, since its establishment; and if not, for how long, if at all, it has met all the obligations in each category. [HL4542]

Lord Henley: The Financial Reporting Council has met all the obligations placed upon it by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Financial Reporting Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in respect of certain functions under Part 42 of the Companies Act 2006 by sections 1228(3) and 1252(3). The Financial Reporting Council's Freedom of Information Scheme has been approved by the Information Commissioner and it acts in accordance with this scheme. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will continue to review whether the current scope of application of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is appropriate given the way in which the Financial Reporting Council's responsibilities have developed and the confirmation that it will remain a public body.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government who receives the proceeds of successful legal actions brought by the Financial Reporting Council against any of the Big Four accountancy firms; and whether any of those proceeds are allocated to accountancy firms trade associations. [HL4543]

Lord Henley: Fines imposed on accountancy firms by the Financial Reporting Council as part of an audit enforcement action must be paid by the Financial Reporting Council to the Secretary of State. Any costs awarded to the Financial Reporting Council in recognition of the enforcement costs funded by the recognised audit supervisory bodies must be paid to those bodies. This arrangement applies only in respect of fines paid under the Statutory Auditors and Third Country Auditors Regulations 2016.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have given any guarantees to the Financial Reporting

Council to cover legal costs for cases brought against accountancy firms. [[HL4544](#)]

Lord Henley: The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has not given any guarantee to cover the legal costs of cases brought against accountancy firms.

The Department has given the following undertaking for the 2017-18 financial year. It relates to audit investigations and sanctions work resulting in a statutory fine under the Statutory Auditors and Third Country Auditors Regulations 2016. Those regulations require the fine to be paid to the Secretary of State. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy would establish a programme of grant payments to cover any loss of funding to the Financial Reporting Council, which would otherwise have been funded from the fine income.

Greece: Refugees

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees regarding (1) the work needed to improve conditions for refugees in the camp at Moria on Lesbos, and (2) the resettlement or repatriation of other refugees on the islands and mainland of Greece. [[HL4474](#)]

Lord Bates: The UK government is supporting the European Union, who, with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partners, is working tirelessly with the Greek government to improve conditions for refugees.

EU efforts include supporting the government to accelerate procedures to reduce the time asylum seekers stay on islands such as Lesbos, transferring vulnerable people to the mainland and improving accommodation on the islands.

The UK provides expert staff to strengthen EU efforts in two areas: accelerating asylum processes, and supporting the Greek authorities to improve conditions for migrants in the hotspots.

The UK also continues to work with UNHCR on resettling vulnerable refugees directly from regions affected by conflict. The UK has welcomed over 9,300 vulnerable refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme since it began in 2014.

Hate Crime: Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Vinson

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 6 December 2017 that she would write to the Director of Public Prosecutions (HL Deb, col 1051), whether she has done so; and if so, what was the response. [[HL4576](#)]

Lord Keen of Elie: I would refer his Lordship to the answer to HL4421 from Lord Pearson, which was tabled on 21 December 2017, a copy of which has been made available in the Library of the House.

High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the review of fire safety regulations and precautions, which arose from the fire at Lakanal House in south London in 2009, will be published. [[HL4469](#)]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: I refer the Noble Lord to my answer of 19 December to PQ HL 1281, following which a note setting out the action the then Government took in response to the coroner's recommendations following the fire at Lakanal House has been placed in the Library of the House.

I would also refer the Noble Lord to the Secretary of State's statement made on 18 December, which I repeated on the same day. The Government is now working with industry experts to complete work on clarifying the approved documents on fire safety.

Local Government: Borrowing

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government why local authorities can borrow from the Public Works Loan Board to buy commercial property but not to fund the construction of social housing. [[HL4488](#)]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Under the Local Government Act 2003, local authorities have the freedom to borrow and invest, without government consent, provided that their borrowing is affordable. This is known as the Prudential Framework. Local authorities can borrow from the Public Works Loan Board to fund the construction of social housing. However, this is only where they have headroom to do so under the Housing Revenue Account borrowing caps and provided that any such borrowing is prudential.

We have listened to local authorities who asked for additional borrowing to build more housing. We recently announced that we will raise the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap by a total of up to £1 billion in areas of high affordability pressure for local authorities who are ready to start building new homes. Local authorities will be able to bid for increases in their caps from 2019-20 to 2021/22.

This will complement measures to support local authorities to build more homes through a longer term rent deal that provides a stable investment environment to deliver new homes. This is alongside an additional £2 billion to deliver more affordable housing for social rent in areas of acute affordability pressure. This will help to deliver the new generation of council house building which the Prime Minister announced recently.

Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Asked by Lord Hain

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times the Trustees of the Mineworkers Pension Scheme have asked Ministers for meetings to re-negotiate the surplus sharing arrangements of the Scheme since privatisation of the industry; what were the responses to those requests; and what was the reasoning behind the response in each case. [HL4555]

Lord Henley: The Mineworkers' Pension Scheme Trustees have requested changes to the surplus-sharing arrangements on two occasions (2000 and 2006). On each occasion, the Government considered that the existing arrangements were working well and fair to all parties. Since then, the scheme has continued to deliver bonuses to members.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Reorganisation

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the change of name of the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, what is their estimate of the cost of the resulting changes to signs, badges, stationery, and other matters. [HL4551]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Building the homes our country needs is an absolute priority for this government. The name change for the department reflects this government's renewed focus to deliver more homes and build stronger communities across England.

Any necessary changes will be done in a cost-efficient way with expenditure being kept to a minimum. This would of course be a fraction of the cost of splitting up the Ministry as proposed by the opposition.

National Security: USA

Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of the United States relating to the current preparation of the UK national security strategy. [HL4457]

Lord Young of Cookham: The US and UK are very close allies and partners, with a uniquely broad and deep security relationship. The Government engages regularly and at all levels with the US authorities on national security issues vital to the UK's security and prosperity, and will continue to do so.

Office for Students

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the comments by Viscount Younger of Leckie on 16

January 2017 (HL Deb, cols 22–3), what guidance will be issued to the Office for Students; whether that guidance will be published in the form of an annual letter; and if not, what form it will take. [HL4522]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: We will issue annual guidance to the Office for Students, including the allocation of government Grant in Aid and government priorities for higher education for the following academic year. It is likely that this guidance will take the form of a letter.

Where appropriate, the government may issue supplementary guidance during the course of the year.

Partnerships: Scotland

Asked by Lord Robertson of Port Ellen

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action, if any, they are taking to regulate the operation of Scottish limited partnerships. [HL4605]

Lord Henley: The Government conducted a Call for Evidence on Limited Partnership law in 2017. We are actively considering options for reform and will announce next steps shortly.

Asked by Lord Robertson of Port Ellen

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the National Crime Agency about the operation of Scottish limited partnerships. [HL4606]

Lord Henley: As part of the recent call for Evidence on Limited Partnership law, government officials have discussed the operation of Scottish Limited Partnerships with the National Crime Agency, and received evidence from the Agency.

Asked by Lord Robertson of Port Ellen

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether ministers have had discussions with the government of Scotland about the operation of Scottish limited partnerships. [HL4607]

Lord Henley: In addition to official level engagement my hon. Friend the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility (Margot James) has had an exchange of correspondence with the Scottish Government on the issue of Scottish Limited Partnerships.

Asked by Lord Robertson of Port Ellen

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action, if any, they are taking to prevent the use of Scottish limited partnerships for money laundering and the avoidance of legal limits on financial activity. [HL4608]

Lord Henley: The Government conducted a Call for Evidence on Limited Partnership law in 2017. We are actively considering options for reform and will announce next steps shortly.

Peers: Correspondence

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Prime Minister intends to reply to the letter from Lord Rooker to the Prime Minister dated 21 November 2017 in respect of the duty of care towards Government employees, with reference to the case of the late Dr Matthew Puncher. [HL4570]

Lord Young of Cookham: The correspondence was responded to on 9th January 2018 on behalf of the Prime Minister by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care.

Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use by the CPS of the phrase “insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction” in cases where there is no evidence at all against the accused; and what guidance they have given, or intend to give, to the CPS in respect of such use. [HL4533]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Code for Crown Prosecutors (the Code) sets out the general principles Crown prosecutors must follow when they make decisions on cases.

The full Code test has two stages. Crown prosecutors must be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction against each suspect or defendant on each charge. If the case does pass the evidential stage, Crown prosecutors must proceed to the second stage and decide if a prosecution is needed in the public interest.

The Crown Prosecution Service has adopted the wording recommended in the 2016 report of Sir Richard Henriques for public announcements of decisions not to charge an individual, namely that “the case failed to meet the evidential test”. That terminology is not a comment on the strength or weakness of the evidence in any particular case.

The test applied by prosecutors continues to be that set out in the Code.

Syria: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to use all possible means, including cooperation with Russia, to achieve full humanitarian access to Eastern Ghouta, Syria. [HL4556]

Lord Bates: Humanitarian access to Eastern Ghouta is severely constrained by the Assad regime. Where access allows, our partners including the UN and NGOs are providing life-saving food, protection, and healthcare. The recent medical evacuation of 29 people in urgent need of treatment, whilst positive, does little to meet overall humanitarian need in Eastern Ghouta. The UK continues to demand full and sustained humanitarian access in order to deliver aid to those in need, and for further medical evacuations to take place. We are doing all we can diplomatically to achieve this, including calling on Russia to use its influence with the Assad regime.

Trident

Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made on the programme to replace the UK nuclear deterrent. [HL4459]

Earl Howe: I refer the noble Lord to the statement I made to the House on 20 December 2017, (HLWS371) stating that the sixth report on the progress of the replacement programme was published and placed in the Library of the House. The report 'The United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Dreadnought Programme, 2017 Update to Parliament' sets out that construction of the first of the new Dreadnought class submarines is under way and the build programme remains on time and within cost.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HLWS371 - Future Nuclear Deterrent 2017 Update
[20171220_HLWS371_Future_Nuclear_Deterrent_2017_Update_t
o_Parliament.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-08/HL4459>

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