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**Thursday
9 January 2020**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Written Statements.....1

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

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	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	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Berridge	Whip
Lord Bethell	Whip
Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
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, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Northern Ireland Office
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Sater	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

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Written Statements

Thursday, 9 January 2020

Contingencies Fund Advance

[HLWS21]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

I hereby give notice of the Department for Transport's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The Department requires an advance to meet its cash requirements pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate 2019-20.

The Department is operating within the budget agreed in the Main Estimate, however, we will be seeking an increase in our net cash requirement in the Supplementary Estimate. Accessing the contingency fund is to allow the department to move cash around the group to support existing expenditure consistent with existing Parliamentary Estimates and does not represent additional spending.

When the Main Estimate was submitted for approval, part of Network Rail's (NR) grant-in-aid was excluded. The grant funding for NR in Control Period 6 was agreed shortly before the Main Estimate was finalised and in the transition from loan funding to grant funding the full value of the required grant was not captured in the Department's Net Cash Requirement. It was the Department's intention that the final classification and cash requirement would be covered by the Supplementary Estimates process.

The advance will be repaid immediately following approval of the Supplementary Estimate. We have taken steps to review our processes and capture lessons learned, to prevent any similar issues from happening again.

Parliamentary approval for additional cash of £3.6 billion will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Transport. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at up to £3.6 billion will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Direct Payments Funding

[HLWS24]

The Earl of Courtown: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Rishi Sunak) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The Treasury has confirmed £2,852 million of funding across financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 to replace funding from the European Union and allow delivery of Direct Payments 2020 for farmers at the same level as the 2019 scheme.

The 2020 Direct Payment scheme across the EU is funded from the next Multiannual Financial Framework, which means that in the UK, the 2020 scheme will be funded domestically by the UK government. To provide

certainty for farmers, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the devolved administrations, the Treasury has announced that the following funding will be allocated:

- £1,751 million in 2020/21 and £92 million in 2021/22 for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
- £449 million in 2020/21 and £24 million in 2021/22 for the Scottish Government;
- £231 million in 2020/21 and £12 million in 2021/22 for the Welsh Government; and
- £279 million in 2020/21 and £15 million in 2021/22 for the Northern Ireland administration.

This funding will be ringfenced for Direct Payments and is based on an exchange rate of €1 = £0.89092, the same rate as used for Direct Payments 2019.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse: Children outside the UK

[HLWS22]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has published its latest report, which can be found at www.iicsa.org.uk.

This report relates to its investigation into Children Outside the UK. I pay tribute to the strength and courage of the victims and survivors who have shared their experiences to ensure the Inquiry can deliver its vital work.

Government will review this report and consider how to respond to its content in due course.

I would like to thank Professor Jay and her Panel for their continued work to uncover the truth, expose what went wrong in the past and to learn the lessons for the future.

Media Matters: iNewspaper

[HLWS23]

Baroness Barran: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Sport, Media and Creative Industries, Nigel Adams MP, has made the following Statement.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has today written to Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT) and JPI Media Publications Limited, the current and former owners of the i newspaper, to inform them that the Secretary of State for DCMS is 'minded to' issue an Intervention Notice. This relates to concerns the Secretary of State has that there may be public interest considerations - as set out in section 58 of Enterprise Act 2002 - that are relevant to the recent acquisition of the i newspaper by DMGT and that these concerns warrant further investigation.

A ‘minded to’ letter has therefore been issued to the parties on one public interest ground specified in section 58 of the Enterprise Act 2002:

- (2B) The need for, to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable, a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers in each market for newspapers in the United Kingdom or a part of the United Kingdom

It is important to note that the Secretary of State has not taken a final decision on intervention at this stage. In line with the statutory guidance on media mergers, the ‘minded to’ letter invites further representations in writing from the parties and gives them until 13 January to respond. The Secretary of State plans to make her final decision, which needs to be made on a quasi-judicial basis, on whether to issue an Intervention Notice no later than week commencing 20 January.

If the Secretary of State decides to issue an Intervention Notice, the next stage would be for Ofcom to assess and report to the Secretary of State on the public interest concerns and for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to assess and report to her on whether a relevant merger situation has been created and any impact this may have on competition. Following these reports, the Secretary of State would need to decide whether to refer the matter for a more detailed investigation by the CMA under section 45 of the Enterprise Act 2002.

DCMS will keep Parliament updated on progress with this media merger case.

Northern Rail

[HLWS20]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

Passengers in the north have had to put up with unacceptable services for too long. We understand how frustrating this has been for people and we are taking action to make sure that performance improves.

On 16 October 2019 I informed the House, through the Transport Committee, that I had issued a request for a proposal to the current Northern franchisee, Arriva Rail North (ARN) and to the Operator of Last Resort as the first phase of securing options for the continuation of passenger services on the Northern franchise. This was triggered by concern over the financial position of ARN.

It has now been confirmed to me from the most recent available financial information that the franchise will only be able to continue for a number of months. The proposal I requested from ARN is being evaluated. Following completion of this process I will consider whether to award ARN a short-term management contract or whether to ask the Department of Transport’s own Operator of Last Resort to step in and deliver passenger services. Longer-term decisions on the franchise will be made in the light of the recommendations of the Williams Rail Review.

My decision on which short-term option to choose will be made in accordance with the key principles set out in the statement on how I use my rail franchising powers. This includes:

- protecting the interests of passengers
- ensuring business and service continuity
- preserving the interests of taxpayers by ensuring value for money
- the continued quality of the franchise proposition;

In order to inform this decision, the Department will assess the extent to which each option performs against these principles. Our value for money assessment will be based on a number of criteria, including which option returns most money to the taxpayer, the risks attached to each, and the value of any improvements in passenger services. I intend to announce my decision before the end of January 2020.

To clarify, the current financial position of the Northern franchise will not impact on the railway’s day-to-day operations. Services will continue to run and there will be no impact on staff.

Town of the Year Competition

[HLWS25]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today I am announcing the opportunity for towns across England to compete in a new Town of the Year competition. The competition aims to celebrate towns’ achievements in areas such as entrepreneurship, technology, community, enterprise, and integration. This will help deliver on the Prime Minister’s bold agenda for the future, making this decade a time of renewal for towns and communities.

In the months ahead, I will complete a countrywide tour of all the 100 areas receiving funding under the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. This will ensure these places are receiving the practical support and investment they need on the ground so we can help local communities to deliver real change.

£16 million of funding has now been delivered to local authorities to help develop new innovative proposals in the 100 areas across England, as part of the Towns Fund. Each place will have the opportunity to bid for funding of up to £25 million.

To assist with this, I will establish a new ‘Towns Hub’ within my department, which will work to develop each town’s investment proposals. The hubs, based across the country will have a named representative from the department, supporting local people on the development of their plan. They will also evaluate the emerging town investment plans, share best practice across towns and build on the Towns Fund investments for potential future support to towns from across government.

Finally, today I am also announcing a new expert-led advisory panel, which will be convened to advise on how we can revitalise our towns over the next year. The specialists, including entrepreneurs and people who have delivered real change, will help shape this government's policy to support the growth agenda.

These announcements reaffirms out the Government's ambition to level up the country. It sets out how we will help restore the fabric of our towns and cities and give local people far more control in how they are invested in, and to hear directly from people in these communities on the specific support and investment they need.

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