

Session 2019-20
No. 8



Monday
20 January 2020

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	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 Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Morgan of Cotes	The Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
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

Monday, 20 January 2020

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

[HLWS40]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Rt. Hon Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement.

The United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is as follows:

Sir Roger Gale MP (Leader)

Full Representatives

Hannah Bardell MP

Stella Creasy MP

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP

Earl of Dundee

Baroness Eccles of Moulton

Dame Cheryl Gillan MP

John Howell MP

Sir Edward Leigh MP

Kerry McCarthy MP

Baroness Massey of Darwen

Ian Murray MP

Lord Prescott

Virendra Sharma MP

Substitute Members

Lord Anderson of Swansea

Tonia Antoniazzi MP

Lord Balfe

Lord Blencathra

Sir Christopher Chope MP

Steve Double MP

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

Conor McGinn MP

Lord Russell of Liverpool

Tommy Sheppard MP

Lord Touhig

Martin Vickers MP

Written Answers

Monday, 20 January 2020

Airports

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy on airport expansion. [HL264]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Airports National Policy Statement was designated as government policy in June 2018 following a vote in the House of Commons. It sets out that there is a need to increase airport capacity in the South East of England by 2030 by constructing one new runway and that this need is best met by the Northwest runway scheme at Heathrow Airport.

The Northwest runway scheme is to be fully funded and delivered by the private sector. It is for Heathrow to demonstrate that it can meet its environmental obligations, that the project can be financed and built and that the business case is realistic.

Beyond Heathrow, the Government is supportive of airports across the UK making best use of their existing runways as long as they address the economic and environmental impacts and proposed mitigations. As part of the planning process for airport applications it is expected that the relevant planning body will scrutinise whether a scheme is in-line with government policy.

Cancer: Health Services

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect the NHS to meet its target of referring patients for treatment for cancer within 62 days. [HL210]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: Cancer is a priority for this Government and survival rates are at a record high. The National Health Service is finding and treating more cancers in line with the ambitions set out in the Long Term Plan. Demand continues to rise and more people are also being diagnosed than ever before. The increasing demand has created a challenge in achieving the standard that 85% of patients commence treatment within 62 days following an urgent referral.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with providers, local systems and Cancer Alliances to improve performance. This includes £200 million investment in diagnostic equipment, the implementation of optimal timed diagnosis pathways and new Rapid Diagnostic Centres and actions to increase staff in key cancer and diagnostic professions.

Further to this, at the Government's request, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with clinical leaders across the system to review our performance standards and will update on this in due course.

Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the performance of the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland during the 2019 General Election. [HL206]

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they intend to take following the claims by a whistle-blower of the inefficiency of the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland during the 2019 General Election. [HL207]

Lord Duncan of Springbank: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has not made any assessment of the performance of the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland during the 2019 General Election. The Chief Electoral Officer is carrying out a post election review which will include an internal investigation into the allegations made concerning inefficiency. The Secretary of State has asked her to report the findings of that review to him as soon as possible. The Secretary of State has the power to commission further enquiries into these matters if he were to decide such enquiries are necessary following the Chief Electoral Officer's investigations.

Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland: Finance

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the budget of the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland for the last three years for which figures are available. [HL208]

Lord Duncan of Springbank: Budget figures for the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) are available as follows:

<i>Expenditure period</i>	<i>Resource Budget</i>	<i>Capital Budget</i>
2016-17	£2.331m	£0.288m
2017-18	£1.825m	£0.355m
2018-19	£2.045m	£0.062m

In addition to EONI budget funding, the costs of Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections are met from the consolidated fund. Assembly elections are paid for from the Northern Ireland block grant and local councils pay for the administration of local district council elections.

Egypt: Children

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to prevent children in Egypt from being included in mass trials and sentenced to death. [HL262]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: It remains a long-standing policy of the United Kingdom to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We have regularly made our position clear to the Egyptian Government.

We have particular concerns in Egypt regarding Article 122 of the Child Law in Egypt and cases involving the death penalty and juveniles. Our Embassy in Cairo has raised our concerns with the Egyptian authorities and asked them to take action to release political detainees who remain imprisoned and to review mass judicial decisions.

I raised our concerns in my interim Autumn Statement on Human Rights Priority Countries on 22nd October 2019. Our ambassador in Cairo repeated these concerns in a meeting with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 23 October 2019.

Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories

Asked by Baroness Young of Old Scone

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether either the proposed (1) Nature for Climate Fund or (2) Blue Planet Fund will be open to UK Overseas Territories. [HL189]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government is committed to supporting the unique biodiversity of the Overseas Territories, which contain over 90% of the UK family's total endemic species.

A summary of responses to 2019's call for evidence on safeguarding the environment in the British Overseas Territories will be published shortly. This will be used to inform decisions on future public funding and support, which to date has supported important conservation work in marine, terrestrial and freshwater environments in the Territories. In addition, last year the UK announced an extension to the Blue Belt Programme (BBP) until 2021, with a further £7 million to provide ongoing support for protection of the diverse marine ecosystems present around the Overseas Territories.

The ocean supports the livelihoods of one in every ten people, including some of the poorest and most vulnerable worldwide. Recognising the link between ocean health and its effect on the development prospects of the most disadvantaged communities, this Government will establish a £500 million Blue Planet Fund (BPF).

Financed from the Official Development Assistance Budget, the BPF will help ODA-eligible countries. The fund seeks to protect their marine resources from key human-generated stressors including plastic pollution, overfishing and habitat loss. This new financing will build on the success of the BBP, embracing the wider ocean's role in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The scope of the Nature for Climate Fund is under development, but as set out in our manifesto, the Fund will help to drive a step change in tree planting, peatland restoration and nature recovery in England.

Gender Recognition: Children and Young People

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that clinicians at the Tavistock Centre have been too quick to give children and young people gender reassignment treatment; and what action they intend to take as a result. [HL383]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The matter is subject to an ongoing legal process and therefore the Department is unable to comment pending judicial ruling.

General Election 2019: Subversion

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to conduct an investigation into possible interference by foreign governments in the December 2019 General Election. [HL239]

Earl Howe: The government is determined to protect our democratic and electoral processes.

The government has worked with a large number of organisations to do this, including social media companies and civil society organisations, and would like to thank them for their continued support and work in this area.

As you would expect, the Government examines all aspects of the electoral process following an election, including foreign interference, and that work is ongoing.

Guantanamo Bay: Detainees

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last discussed indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay with the government of the United States; what was the outcome of that discussion; and whether they discussed the failure to release prisoners who have been cleared. [HL259]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government has made numerous representations to the United States Government over a number of years about indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay, most recently in September 2019. The United Kingdom's long-standing position remains that the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay should close. We continue to engage with the US Government on this issue, as we do on a range of national security issues.

Hebron: Demolition

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel intends to demolish the Palestinian wholesale market in the centre of Hebron in order to build housing to accommodate Israeli settlers. [HL240]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the Israeli authorities' instruction to advance planning procedures for a new settlement in Hebron. We understand that this does not signal the start of a formal planning process. However, if such plans were to advance this would be of grave concern given the sensitivities of the location. We are monitoring the situation closely.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Asked by Baroness Quin

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect HS2 to extend to (1) Newcastle, and (2) Edinburgh. [HL273]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: As currently planned, HS2 trains will run directly to Newcastle via a connection to the East Coast Mainline. HS2 Services are currently planned to run directly to Edinburgh via a connection to the West Coast Mainline, which is dependent on the completion of Phase 2b. Proposed services will offer reduced journey times with London.

In August 2019, the Prime Minister asked Douglas Oakervee to chair an independent review of HS2 to provide advice on how and whether to proceed. The Government will set out the next steps for High Speed 2 in due course.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they respond to the assessment of Lord Berkeley, former deputy chairman of the Oakervee Review into HS2, that (1) Parliament has been misled about the cost of HS2, (2) it could cost more than £100 billion, and (3) the costs are "out of control". [HL96]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Lord Berkeley's report represents his personal views. The Secretary of State commissioned the Oakervee Review to provide advice on how and whether to proceed with HS2, including examining the project's costs and benefits. Douglas Oakervee's report will inform our assessment of the estimated cost, if the Government decides to proceed. We will of course give appropriate consideration to Lord Berkeley's personal views.

Hong Kong: Politics and Government

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their understanding of the current situation in Hong Kong. [HL147]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain seriously concerned at the situation in Hong Kong. We condemn the minority of protestors who insist on using violence. It must stop. As I stated on 15 January 2020 it is essential that protests are conducted peacefully, within the law, and that the authorities respond proportionately. We have

consistently called for a robust, credible and independent investigation into events in Hong Kong. The UK is fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms under the "One Country, Two Systems" framework, which is guaranteed by the legally binding Joint Declaration. As the Foreign Secretary stated on 19 December 2019 the only way to guarantee Hong Kong's future success and stability is by respecting these and addressing the legitimate concerns of the people of Hong Kong through meaningful political dialogue. The commitments made by China in the Joint Declaration, including the right to freedom of speech and an independent judiciary, are essential to Hong Kong's prosperity and way of life. We expect China to live up to its obligations under the Joint Declaration and to its wider international human rights law obligations, as a responsible and law abiding member of the international community.

Honours

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many honours were awarded in the New Year Honours List to people in (1) London, and (2) each English city region that has a mayor, per head of population of that city or region. [HL106]

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many of each category of honours were awarded in the New Year Honours List to people in (1) Wales, (2) Scotland, (3) Northern Ireland, and (4) each of the regions of England, as a (a) number, and (b) percentage, of that country or region's population. [HL107]

Earl Howe: Statistical information held in relation to the regional breakdown of recipients on the New Year Honours List 2020 can be found below. Data is collected using county and aggregated into regional figures. Information on the number of nominations by mayoral region is not captured, as we are not able to break down the data in that way.

REGION	NUMBER OF NY20 RECIPIENTS	PERCENTAGE OF NY20 LIST	PERCENTAGE OF UK POPULATION
EAST	84	7.7%	9.3%
EAST MIDLANDS	36	3.3%	7.2%
LONDON	275	25.0%	12.9%
NORTH EAST	24	2.2%	4.1%
NORTHERN IRELAND	94	8.6%	2.9%
NORTH WEST	103	9.4%	11.2%
SCOTLAND	89	8.1%	8.4%

REGION	NUMBER OF NY20 RECIPIENTS	PERCENTAGE OF NY20 LIST	PERCENTAGE OF UK POPULATION
SOUTH EAST	141	12.9%	13.7%
SOUTH WEST	79	7.2%	8.4%
WALES	42	3.8%	4.8%
WEST MIDLANDS	59	5.4%	8.9%
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	67	6.1%	8.4%

In Vitro Fertilisation

Asked by Lord Winston

To ask Her Majesty's Government what clinical, or other follow up, is being undertaken by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority of children born after (1) embryo biopsy and preimplantation genetic diagnosis of nuclear DNA, (2) chromosome analysis following preimplantation genetic screening, (3) egg and/or embryo cryopreservation, and (4) invitro culture and transfer of embryos at the blastocyst stage of development. [HL275]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has not undertaken any clinical or other follow up in relation to the cohorts identified.

Asked by Lord Winston

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many misdiagnoses have been recorded by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority following IVF with preimplantation diagnosis for a specific pathological mutation (1) at the preimplantation stage, and (2) following blastocyst biopsy. [HL276]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority does not collect this information.

Asked by Lord Winston

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many UK clinics have been granted a licence by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to undertake screening and treatment for mitochondrial disorders; how many patients at risk of producing a child with mitochondrial pathologies have undergone treatment using IVF and nuclear or spindle transfer; and how many births have been achieved following those treatments. [HL277]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has granted a licence to one clinic, Newcastle Fertility Centre at Life, to undertake screening and treatment for mitochondrial disorders.

Five patients at risk of producing a child with mitochondrial pathologies have undergone treatment using in vitro fertilisation and nuclear or spindle transfer.

No births have been achieved following those treatments to date.

Infrastructure: Wales

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to promote infrastructure projects in Wales. [HL110]

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: The Government understands the importance of ensuring that all infrastructure projects are promoted across the United Kingdom which is why we are determined to ensure we level up the UK's cities and regions and this includes Wales.

The Government recognises that world class connectivity is increasingly essential to people at work and at home. That is why the UK Government has allocated £69 million for the rollout of superfast broadband across Wales. At Autumn Budget we announced £200 million for the hardest to reach areas and Wales will be included in the first phase of this work. We have also recently announced that North Wales have been awarded £8 million from the Local Full Fibre Networks Challenge Fund. Furthermore, the Government have committed to progress plans for the West Wales Parkway to deliver better connectivity for commuters across south-west Wales and increase opportunities for the region.

We have delivered a £50 million project to upgrade North Wales' railway, committed £125 million towards the upgrade of the Valley Lines and, subject to value for money, we are providing up to £58 million towards upgrading Cardiff Central. We will continue to look at the case for further investment in rail in Wales.

We will continue to discussions with the Welsh Government looking at the case for jointly funding cross-border road schemes such as the Pant-Llanymynech bypass and the A5-A483 Shrewsbury to Wrexham.

Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review will be conducted; and when it will conclude. [HL248]

Earl Howe: The Prime Minister has committed to undertake the deepest review of Britain's security, defence, and foreign policy. The review will examine how we strengthen and prioritise our alliances, diplomacy and development; it will consider all aspects of our defence

and security capabilities. An announcement of the timings of the review will be made in due course.

Asked by Lord Chidsey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether (1) members of the public, (2) civil society organisations including think tanks, and (3) peacebuilding and development non-governmental organisations, will be able to contribute to the Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review. [HL249]

Earl Howe: The review will engage and collaborate with a range of external stakeholders to ensure proper challenge and scrutiny. We will listen and learn from different voices across society, from the public, academics to international partners. Good practice from previous reviews and strategies will be explored when formulating the right approach.

Asked by Lord Chidsey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether local civil society organisations funded by the Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office or Conflict, Stability and Security Fund programmes in conflict affected contexts will be able to contribute to the Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review. [HL250]

Earl Howe: The review will reassess the nation's place in the world, covering all aspects of international policy from defence to diplomacy and development. Government departments will be expected to engage, collaborate and seek a wide range of inputs from a range of external stakeholders to ensure proper challenge and scrutiny throughout the process.

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that relevant sectors of civil society, including non-governmental organisations, are able to contribute to the forthcoming Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review. [HL323]

Earl Howe: The review will engage and collaborate with a range of external stakeholders to ensure proper challenge and scrutiny. We will listen and learn from different voices across society, from the public, academics to international partners. Good practice from previous reviews and strategies will be explored when formulating the right approach.

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that officials from the Department for International Development are able to contribute to the forthcoming Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review. [HL324]

Earl Howe: The review will involve officials from a wide range of Government departments including the Department for International Development. The review will reassess the nation's place in the world, covering all

aspects of international policy from defence to diplomacy and development.

Iraq: Islamic State

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the prosecution of Daesh fighters by the Iraqi courts, and (2) the state of due process in Iraq. [HL199]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have important human rights concerns relating to trials in Iraq's domestic courts, including those of persons suspected of support for Daesh. We regularly raise these concerns with the Iraqi governmental and judicial authorities – reiterating the importance of respect for international standards of due process and fair trial and our opposition to the death penalty. Separately we continue to support the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Daesh (UNITAD) in Iraq.

Islamist Extremism in Prisons, Probation and Youth Justice Review

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the murders of Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones on 29 November 2019, what plans they have to reassess the recommendations of the Review of Islamist extremism in prisons, probation and youth justice led by Ian Acheson, published in August 2016. [HL161]

Lord Keen of Elie: Following Ian Acheson's 2016 review, which included several recommendations, the Department responded to the review and took a number of steps to refresh its approach to the management of terrorist offenders in prison and on probation, for example, this included the establishment of a separation centre and the implementation of enhanced vetting for prison chaplains of all faiths.

In the wake of the London Bridge attack, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service will undertake an internal review of the recommendations made by Ian Acheson in 2016 to look again at any lessons that can be learned. We will work closely with the Home Office (lead department on counter-terrorism policy) and other security agencies.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about (1) the convictions of 4,519 persons during the five years ending in June 2019 for failing to comply with military orders declaring closed military zones, and (2) the use of regulations dating from the time of the League of Nations Mandate. [HL138]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As part of our frequent engagement with Israel with respect to its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention, officials in our Embassy in Tel Aviv have raised with the Israeli authorities both the issue of closed military zones being declared by the Israel Defence Force, and their implementation of specific laws and regulations, including ones dating from the mandate period, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Local Government: Business Interests

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Earl of Courtown on 4 November 2019 (HL380), whether they intend to instruct local authorities to maintain a public register of the disclosable pecuniary interests of officers to whom delegated authority has been granted by elected members, to ensure that local government officials maintain transparency and compliance with the Nolan Principles. [HL363]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: It is a matter for each council to put in place whatever arrangements it considers appropriate for the recording and disclosure of officers' interests. Many councils have a code of conduct which covers the handling of officer interests, or details are included in their contracts. In addition, there is a statutory requirement under section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 that officers should declare if they have any pecuniary interest in a contract awarded.

National Savings and Investments

Asked by Lord Tebbit

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what grounds, and on whose authority, the National Savings and Investments Agency makes a decision to dishonour a cheque. [HL238]

The Earl of Courtown: National Savings and Investments (NS&I) comply with the law relating to cheques. There are several circumstances in which NS&I would reject a cheque. These include the cheque being unsigned by the customer, out of date, or defaced. The Director of Savings, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of NS&I, is the authority responsible for administering this policy.

Premium Bond prize warrants are legally similar to cheques. As with cheques, they can be rejected if a duplicate has been issued. Due to an administrative error, a number of duplicate Premium Bond prize warrants were issued to customers in the October 2019 prize draw. NS&I have since updated their processes to prevent this error occurring in future prize draws.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last made representations to the government of Iran about the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; when the Prime Minister last did so directly; whether they have done so since 3 January; and in all such cases, what response they received. [HL146]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary raised his concerns about dual national detentions with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif on 6 January. The Prime Minister raised his concerns with Iranian President Rouhani on 9 January. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa called for their release in his call with Deputy Foreign Minister Araghchi on 12 January. We remain extremely concerned about the welfare of all British-Iranian dual nationals detained in Iran, including Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. We have made clear to Iran that we expect them to ensure she is treated humanely and in line with international standards. We continue to request immediate consular access.

Asked by Baroness Quin

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent representations they have made about the continuing imprisonment of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. [HL163]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary raised his concerns about dual national detentions with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif on 6 January. The Prime Minister raised his concerns with Iranian President Rouhani on 9 January. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa called for their release in his call with Deputy Foreign Minister Araghchi on 12 January. We remain extremely concerned about the welfare of all British-Iranian dual nationals detained in Iran, including Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. We have made clear to Iran that we expect them to ensure she is treated humanely and in line with international standards. We continue to request immediate consular access.

NHS: Amazon

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what length of contract has been agreed with Amazon to provide health data from the NHS. [HL126]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: This agreement is not exclusive. There are over 2,000 other organisations that are accessing and using information from the National Health Service website in a similar way.

We want to continue working with Amazon and other companies in order to ensure that citizens have access to

the best source of verified health information, and therefore this contract is intended to be open-ended. We will continue to review our relationships with Amazon and other organisations that are using information taken from the NHS website to ensure that they continue to provide the best possible service.

Offences against Children

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many council officials have been (1) charged with, (2) convicted for, and (3) are awaiting trial for, dereliction of duty for failure to support victims of grooming gangs since 1997. [HL160]

Lord Keen of Elie: Tackling the sexual exploitation of children remains a top priority for the CPS. Specialist CPS lawyers work closely with police investigators to build strong cases, resulting in many successful prosecutions of complex grooming cases for example in Rochdale, Rotherham, Oxford and Newcastle.

The CPS does not maintain a central record of defendants' occupations, nor of the specific circumstances under which a person has been charged with an offence. This information could only be obtained by an examination of CPS case files, which would incur disproportionate cost. The CPS collects data to assist the management of its prosecution functions. The CPS does not collect data that constitutes official statistics as defined in the Statistics and Registration Act 2007.

Overseas Aid

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that UK Overseas Development Aid focuses on poverty alleviation and building the capacity of recipients. [HL184]

Baroness Sugg: All UK Aid aims to support the delivery of the UN Global Goals, end extreme poverty and promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. The 2015 UK Aid Strategy aligns the government's efforts to deliver upon this commitment.

The International Development Act 2002 mandates DFID to use development assistance for poverty reduction. Internal review and approval processes ensure that programmes are focussed upon poverty alleviation and capacity building. Programme concept notes and business cases must demonstrate a focus on poverty reduction and sustainability to receive approval. All DFID programmes are reviewed annually to ensure they are achieving their aims and delivering good value to recipients and the UK tax payer.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the importance of having a dedicated department staffed with personnel with experience in

development to ensure (1) that aid is delivered effectively, and (2) the best investment on return for the UK taxpayer. [HL185]

Baroness Sugg: All Machinery of Government changes are a decision for the Prime Minister. At this point, no Machinery of Government changes have been announced for DFID. This government has confirmed its commitment to 0.7 and has set out a series of ambitious development targets in the manifesto. Development and humanitarian response are complex and take place in some of the most difficult, dangerous places in the world. The UK Government has a skilled workforce in the UK and around the world that ensures the UK takes an evidenced-led approach to aid and that our investments deliver value for money and reach the intended beneficiaries.

Palestinians: Elections

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take, including in conjunction with other countries, to ensure that the first Palestinian elections in 13 years are held; and in particular, that Palestinians in East Jerusalem are able to vote. [HL137]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Along with EU partners, we have encouraged the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights.

We welcome work towards genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians. We consider this to be crucial in view of the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. To this end, we call on all Palestinian factions to seek common ground and to work together to pursue a positive path towards new elections.

Philippines: Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of the Philippines about the four Roman Catholic bishops and four priests charged with sedition, cyber libel, libel and obstruction of justice in that country; and what steps they are taking to ensure that due process is followed. [HL260]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains concerned about reports of arbitrary arrest in the Philippines. We have not had discussions with the Philippine authorities on these specific cases, however, the Government continues to call for the promotion and protection of freedom of speech and the British Embassy in Manila continues to follow developments closely.

Freedom of speech, and wider human rights issues, in the Philippines, were raised by senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials with the Philippines Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Enrique Manalo,

during the UK - Philippine High Level Talks in London in November 2019.

Prisoners' Release: Housing

Asked by Baroness Corston

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to begin recording statistics on (1) the resettlement of offenders leaving prisons, and (2) prisoners who are released with no fixed abode. [HL111]

Lord Keen of Elie: The accommodation status for all offenders released from custody, including those under National Probation Service (NPS), Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) supervision, and offenders on community sentences, has been published since July 2018. The relevant table of data from this publication is attached for reference.

It is vital that everyone leaving prison has somewhere safe and secure to live, as a platform to access the services and support needed to make a fresh start. We have invested an additional £22 million per annum over the remaining life of the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) contracts to deliver an enhanced "Through-the-Gate" resettlement service to offenders leaving prison, to prepare them for release. Through the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, we are also investing up to £6.4m in a pilot scheme to support individuals released from three prisons: Bristol, Leeds and Pentonville. Services have now commenced in all three areas, with the first individuals now being supported into accommodation following release. Subject to evaluation, we will use the lessons from the pilot to inform future provision of accommodation for all ex-offenders. Additionally, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is working in collaboration with other Government Departments and interested parties to help to meet the accommodation needs for prisoners on their release.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table [HL111 Table .docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-07/HL111>

Quality Assurance of Government Models Review

Asked by Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations of the review of quality assurance of government models, published on 5 March 2013. [HL148]

The Earl of Courtown: The recommendations of the 2013 review of quality assurance of government models continue to be used to drive best practice in this area across government.

Individual government departments are primarily responsible for implementing the recommendations of the review. As an example of the type of action being taken in departments, HM Treasury has a working group of senior analysts ("Strength in Numbers") responsible for promoting and embedding best practice in modelling and quality assurance, adhering closely to the recommendations set out in the 2013 review. To further ensure high standards, the Government Internal Audit Agency conducts an audit of HMT business-critical models every twelve months. Findings and responses to these feed into the HMT Audit Risk Committee, which support the Permanent Secretary in managing risk, control and governance.

Some recommendations are also being addressed on a cross-government basis. Specifically, in response to Recommendation 7 an expert inter-departmental working group was established. In 2015 this working group produced *The Aqua Book: guidance on producing quality analysis for government*, which is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-aqua-book-guidance-on-producing-quality-analysis-for-government>.

The Working Group has continued to meet approximately monthly with representatives from a number of Departments and Bodies to discuss quality assurance matters, publish quality assurance resources and provide informal advice to members. A number of resources created by Departments in response to the recommendations of the Review have been made available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/aqua-book-resources>. These include guidance and research that underpin and complement the Aqua book, QA checklists and templates and other relevant materials and approaches currently used by Departments including the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, and the Department for Transport.

Further, the Office for National Statistics has recently established a Modelling Best Practice Unit within its Quality Centre, with the aim of supporting quality assurance in the modelling area across Government; officials from this Centre are members of the previously mentioned Working Group.

Railways: Japanese Knotweed

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government, for each of the last five years, (1) how many instances of infestation by Japanese Knotweed were recorded on Network Rail land and property, (2) how many complaints were received, and what was the cost to Network Rail of action taken to eradicate the species; (3) what action Network Rail takes in response to infestations and complaints about Japanese Knotweed; and (4) what action Network Rail takes in the event of this plant

spreading from Network Rail land on to adjoining land and property. [HL121]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: 1. Network Rail are currently in the process of gathering data about historical Japanese knotweed instances, however there are currently 5138 distinct sites with active treatment of Japanese knotweed.

2. The breakdown of complaints is as follows: 2019–25; 2018–62; 2017–42; 2016–72; 201573, not accounting for cases where a legal claim is made without a complaint. Some of these complaints developed into claims, with 170 claims made over the last 5 years. The total sum of these claim settlements amounts to £3.73m; this covers treatment costs as well as damages, investigation costs and legal costs. It was not possible to obtain figures for the overall expenditure on treatment, however it costs approximately £18-30 per metre square of knotweed to successfully treat it, over a period of 3 – 5 years.

3. In instances where Japanese knotweed is discovered, the location of knotweed is recorded and mapped, followed by treatment activity tailored to whether it is affecting safe operation of the railway and/or creating biosecurity issues. Measures such as boot and tool cleaning are undertaken to prevent further spreading of the knotweed. In carrying out these actions, Network Rail complies with the Lineside Vegetation Management Manual and relevant legislation.

4. In the event of Japanese knotweed having spread to third party land, Network Rail complies with UK legislation and deals with complaints as quickly as possible. If knotweed growth is visible at the boundary, or on both sides of the fence, permission will be sought from the third party for treatment and, if obtained, a management plan will be jointly agreed. Only herbicides using the active ingredient glyphosate are used in these instances.

Renewable Heat Incentive Inquiry

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Duncan of Springbank on 31 October 2019 (HL Deb, cols 1019), when the report of the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive Inquiry will be published. [HL265]

Lord Duncan of Springbank: In December 2018, Sir Patrick Coghlin Chair of the independent inquiry into the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme issued the following statement:

“I recognise that there will be considerable public interest in this issue. I'm afraid it's simply not possible to give a date by which the Inquiry report will be published. What we can say is that the report will be published as soon as reasonably possible and that the public can be assured that the Inquiry will work assiduously to ensure that is the case.”

As the inquiry was established by the previous Executive and is being supported by the Department of Finance, my Noble Friend should direct further queries about the inquiry to the NI Minister of that Department.

Social Media

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether social media platforms are adequately monitored for harmful and illegal content. [HL236]

Baroness Barran: We published the Online Harms White Paper in April last year, setting out plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

Our proposals would establish a new statutory duty of care on companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. The duty of care will ensure companies have appropriate systems and processes in place to deal with harmful content on their services to keep their users safe.

Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they have ensured that the Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief maintains total independence following the government of Bahrain's funding of his trip to that country between 8 and 10 October 2019. [HL346]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) visited Bahrain on 8-10 October 2019, marking his first official trip in the role. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office covered the cost of his flights while the Government of Bahrain provided his accommodation, as they regularly do for visiting dignitaries. We do not consider that this compromised his independence in his role as Special Envoy. Throughout his visit he met religious leaders and visited places of worship and meeting halls from the range of different faiths represented in Bahrain to discuss FoRB.

Syria: Chemical Weapons

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Chief of Cabinet to the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons played any role in redrafting the experts' report of their findings with regard to the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma, Syria. [HL115]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I refer the noble Lady to my answer of 7 January 2020 to questions HL24 and 26.

It is entirely a matter for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons how it conducts its investigations and produces its reports.

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Mayday Rescue Foundation, in its role as a UK-implementing partner, was involved in choosing witnesses for interview by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Douma Fact-Finding Mission on behalf of the UK; and whether they are aware of any investigation for possible financial irregularities in respect of that foundation. [HL116]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I refer the noble Lady to my answer of 7 January 2020 to questions HL24 and 26.

It is entirely a matter for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons how it conducts its investigations and produces its reports. The noble Lady also asked about Mayday Rescue, which is an implementing partner for the Government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. We work closely with all our implementing partners, including Mayday Rescue, to ensure they meet the tests for spending public money; this includes by ensuring that audits are commissioned on at least an annual basis. All Government aid spending is subject to robust scrutiny to ensure it represents value for money for British taxpayers.

Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the capacity of the Ulster Defence Association and other loyalist gangs to commit crimes in Northern Ireland. [HL266]

Lord Duncan of Springbank: The Ulster Defence Association and other loyalist groupings remain proscribed under Schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act 2000. The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland recently confirmed that the *Assessment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland*, published in October 2015, remains current. You may wish to refer to the assessment in conjunction with the *Second Report of the Independent Reporting Commission*, published in November 2019, for an up to date assessment of the capacity of the Ulster Defence Association and other loyalist groupings in Northern Ireland. The Independent Reporting Commission was established to monitor the progress of the Northern Ireland Executive's programme of work to end paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland.

For your convenience, links to both of these reports are provided below:

Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland - 19 October 2015

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/469548/Paramilitary_Groups_in_Northern_Ireland_-_20_Oct_2015.pdf

Second Report of the Independent Reporting Commission - 4 November 2019

https://www.ircommission.org/sites/irc/files/media-files/IRC%20-%202nd%20Report%202019_0.pdf

Travellers: Hate Crime

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given, if any, to the extension of legislation combating hatred to give specific protection to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. [HL385]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government takes all forms of hate crime, including that directed towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, very seriously. We have one the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to protect all communities from hostility, violence and bigotry, and to deal with the perpetrators of hate crime. We have asked the Law Commission to undertake a full review of the coverage and approach of current hate crime legislative provisions. This will include a review of the existing range of protected characteristics, including race. The commission is due to open a public consultation in early 2020.

Trees: Somerset

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of current tree cover in the South Somerset District. [HL154]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Through the National Forest Inventory (NFI), Forest Research, part of the Forestry Commission, gathers data on woodland in England.

The NFI shows that South Somerset District has approximately 6% woodland cover, which amounts to an area of 5,332 hectares.

More details of the work carried out and information the NFI publishes can be found here: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/national-forest-inventory/about-the-nfi/>

West Bank: Demolition

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of Palestinian homes that have been demolished in East Jerusalem and the West Bank in order to build housing for settlements; and whether that number has increased in the last two years. [HL241]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government is seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; calls into question Israel's commitment to a

viable two-state solution and, in all but the most exceptional of cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have repeatedly raised our concerns about demolitions with the Israeli authorities. Most recently, the UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN raised this issue at the UN Security Council briefing on the Middle East on 18 December 2019. We call on the Israeli authorities to cease the counter-productive policy of demolitions, and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

World Heritage Sites

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of UNESCO World Heritage sites located in the UK. [HL228]

Baroness Barran: Each of the 32 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the UK and its Overseas Territories must undertake reporting to the World Heritage Committee on a periodic basis. Additionally, each site must have and regularly update a management plan. This process is overseen by DCMS, acting on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, as State Party to the World Heritage Convention.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they protect the integrity of UNESCO World Heritage sites located in the UK. [HL229]

Baroness Barran: UNESCO World Heritage sites in the UK are protected through heritage legislation and the respective planning regimes in each of the devolved administrations. Additionally, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and others provide grant funding to sites for projects which help to protect their integrity for the benefit of present and future generations.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what powers and responsibilities Historic England have towards UNESCO World Heritage sites located in England. [HL230]

Baroness Barran: Historic England provides advice to local authorities and Government regarding the historic environment in England. They also act as advisers to the UK government for World Heritage across the UK and Overseas Territories and advise site managers and others on the implementation of the Convention.

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