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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	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, Cabinet Office and Treasury
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Berridge	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
Lord Bethell	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
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, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
Lord Greenhalgh	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Grimstone of Boscobel	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Whip
Baroness Penn	Whip
Baroness Scott of Byfleet	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
Lord True	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
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	Whip

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 23 June 2020

High Speed 2: Safeguarding Directions

[HLWS304]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

Motions to revive the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill, known as the Phase 2a Bill, have now been passed in each House, and the Bill was re-introduced on 3 March. I look forward to the progression of the Bill as it nears its final stages.

I am today publishing revised Safeguarding Directions for the whole of the Phase 2a route. These Safeguarding Directions reflect the amendments (and therefore land requirements) which have been made to the hybrid Bill by the House of Commons as it passed through Select Committee.

Through these revised Safeguarding Directions, the Government has protected land that we anticipate at this stage will be needed to build Phase 2a of HS2 and where there may otherwise be a risk of conflicting development. Planning restrictions put in place following the issue of previous Safeguarding Directions have been removed where we no longer expect to need that land.

Crucially, issuing revised Safeguarding Directions gives people affected more clarity on the route and allows eligible property owners to access statutory blight compensation. Under the statutory blight regime, qualifying property owners are able to apply to sell their home or small business to the Government from the time that their property is subject to Safeguarding Directions.

In addition to statutory blight compensation, the Government has implemented a package of non-statutory property compensation schemes that go above and beyond what is required by law. The schemes are open to qualifying property owners across the three phases of the HS2 route including Phase 2a. They will be in place until one year after each phase of HS2 is operational.

I want to ensure that those living near the route receive the right support at all stages of the project and that those

affected are properly compensated and treated with compassion, dignity and respect.

Copies of these Safeguarding Directions will be laid in the both Libraries of the House.

Information on HS2 property compensation schemes are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2>

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Safeguarding Directions for High Speed 2 Phase 2a [200623 Ph2a SG Directions and Guidance.PDF]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2020-06-23/HLWS304/>

Student Support: England

[HLWS303]

Baroness Berridge: My honourable friend the Minister of State for Universities (Michelle Donelan) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I am today confirming the eligibility rules for EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals, and their family members, who wish to commence courses in England in the Academic Year starting in August 2021. Following our decision to leave the EU, EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals will no longer be eligible for home fee status, undergraduate, postgraduate and advanced learner financial support from Student Finance England for courses starting in academic year 2021/22. This change will also apply to Further Education funding for those aged 19+, and funding for apprenticeships. It will not affect students starting courses in academic year 2020/21, nor those EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals benefitting from Citizens' Rights under the EU Withdrawal Agreement, EEA EFTA Separation Agreement or Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement respectively. It will also not apply to Irish nationals living in the UK and Ireland whose right to study and to access benefits and services will be preserved on a reciprocal basis for UK and Irish nationals under the Common Travel Area arrangement. EU, other EEA and Swiss students, staff and researchers make an important contribution to our universities. I want that contribution to continue and am confident – given the world-leading quality of our higher education sector – that it will.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 23 June 2020

Asylum: Finance

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) financial, and (2) other forms of, support are available to asylum seekers awaiting decisions on their status. [HL5484]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: If any asylum seeker would otherwise be destitute they are provided with accommodation and a weekly allowance to cover their essential living needs, although the allowance is not provided if they are accommodated in a full-board facility.

The level of the weekly standard allowance from 15 June 2020 is £39.60. The allowance is also provided to asylum seekers who have adequate accommodation provided by their families or friends but need help to cover their essential living needs. Council tax and utilities are also paid for, and free NHS healthcare and education for their children are provided.

Biometrics: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to regulate the use of facial recognition technology to ensure that it is not discriminatory towards people from BAME communities. [HL5494]

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that commercial facial recognition technology is (1) registered, (2) accurate, and (3) not discriminatory towards people from BAME communities. [HL5495]

Baroness Barran: Uses of facial recognition technology in the UK, both private and public, are regulated by the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 that set standards for protecting personal data. Organisations have an obligation to ensure that any personal data they hold is accurate and processed in a manner that is lawful, fair and transparent.

Facial images, which constitute 'special category' data for the purposes of the legislation are subject to heightened safeguards and can only be processed if specific conditions in the legislation are met. Processing must be necessary, proportionate and justified. The legislation is enforced by the Information Commissioner's Office, which has shown a willingness to take action against commercial organisations that are acting unlawfully.

To ensure a safe use of facial recognition technology (FRT) in all sectors, the government tasked the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) to produce a Snapshot

briefing paper looking at the uses and potential implications of facial recognition technology's deployment in the UK. The paper was published on 28 May and we are considering its findings. The CDEI are currently working on a review into bias in algorithmic decision-making and will continue to examine the impacts of FRT and algorithms on society and provide recommendations on how to minimise bias.

Care Homes: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Hain

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bethell on 14 May (HL Deb, col 807), what is the average time in England between a test taking place in a care home and the results being delivered to its management. [T] [HL4555]

Lord Bethell: The care home tests are processed via the existing programme lab infrastructure, the lighthouse labs and Randox in Northern Ireland. Test turnaround times are consistent with the rest of the programme with over 97% of tests being returned within 48 hours. We continue to make progress on being able to return all results within 24 hours.

Children: Computers

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their provision of laptops for disadvantaged children includes the provision of a laptop for each child in care. [HL5560]

Baroness Berridge: The government is providing over 200,000 laptops and tablets to vulnerable and disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access. This includes devices for disadvantaged children receiving support from a social worker, including pre-school children, and care leavers.

The department has allocated devices to local authorities and academy trusts based on its estimates of the number of eligible children that do not have access to a device. Local authorities and academy trusts are best placed to identify and prioritise children and young people who need devices.

The department has prioritised orders for the most vulnerable children who need access to social services (children with a social worker and care leavers).

China: India

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current situation between the Chinese and Indian military along the Line of Actual Control; and what discussions they have had with the governments of India and China about de-escalation. [HL5606]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the recent reports of increased tensions between China and India and reports that 20 Indian soldiers were killed in an incident in the Galwan Valley on 15 June. We encourage the two sides to engage in dialogue on issues relating to the border. We are closely monitoring the situation.

China: Religious Freedom

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that priests in China have been forced to preach Chinese nationalism in return for the opening of religious spaces. [[HL5718](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of these reports. We remain concerned by the restrictions placed on Christianity and other religions in China. The freedom to practice faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Fraud

*Asked by **Lord Wills***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to open a confidential telephone hotline to encourage whistleblowing on furlough fraud. [[HL5737](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The HMRC fraud hotline service has already been updated explicitly to include the facility for the public to report fraud in relation to all relevant coronavirus relief schemes. The service has two main referral routes; the telephony service and the online reporting tool hosted on GOV.UK. HMRC took the decision to close the telephony arm of this service as a result of Government guidelines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the online reporting service can be used until such time as the telephony service can resume.

The online service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and can be completed with the same level of complete confidentiality as the telephony service. HMRC are currently exploring options to safely reopen the hotline telephony service and will do so as soon as is practicable.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Maternity Leave

*Asked by **Baroness Brady***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to carry out an equality impact assessment of women who are on maternity leave and using the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. [[HL5757](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government has taken various steps in developing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help ensure women are not disadvantaged.

Employers can claim through the CJRS for enhanced (earnings related) contractual pay for employees who qualify for either maternity pay, adoption pay, paternity

pay, or shared parental pay. Parents who have been furloughed whose period of family-related statutory pay begins on or after 25 April 2020 will have their entitlement calculated on the basis of their usual earnings, and not their furloughed wages. The amount that an employee receives in pay should not be affected due to being on furlough during the relevant 8-week period used to determine entitlement to family-related statutory payments and the earnings-related rates of Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Maternity Allowance.

In addition, the Government has ensured that women returning from maternity leave after 10 June are able to access the CJRS even if they have not been previously furloughed.

Detailed information is available in the online guidance.

Coronavirus: Screening

*Asked by **Lord Greaves***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of the COVID-19 testing kits that have been so far sent out in the post have been returned; and of those, what proportion have been (1) positive, (2) negative, (3) not indicative either way, (4) not able to be processed, (5) returned unused, and (6) not returned within the time period allotted. [[HL4827](#)]

Lord Bethell: As of 25 May 2020, 61% of COVID-19 home test kits distributed by the National Testing Programme had been returned.

Of those COVID-19 home test kits that have been returned as of 25 May 2020:

- 3.6% of home test kits received a positive result;
- 91.6% of home test kits received a negative result; and
- 4.8% of home test kits received a void result. This could be because the sample was not able to be processed, was returned unused, or not returned quickly enough.

*Asked by **Baroness Thornton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 5 May (HL3910), what was the (1) number, and (2) percentage, of returned home COVID-19 test kits that were void due to an inadequate self-swabbed sample. [[HL4869](#)]

Lord Bethell: As of 25 May 2020, 9,761 COVID-19 home test kits received a void result. This equates to 4.8% of all returned home test kits.

It is important to note that a void result can be caused by a number of factors. This includes inadequate or incorrect self-swabbing, a failure of the user to return the swab in a timely manner, or other factors that prevent the sample from being efficiently returned and processed.

*Asked by **Baroness Jolly***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve access to COVID-19 testing for key workers. [[HL5002](#)]

Lord Bethell: Anyone with symptoms can now get a test, regardless of whether they are an essential worker. Essential workers still have a dedicated access route through the essential worker self-referral portal and are able to access testing through multiple channels such as regional test sites, home testing, mobile testing units, and through the care home portal if they are care home members of staff.

Coroners

Asked by Lord Leigh of Hurley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many deceased persons are currently being held by coroners in England awaiting registration of death. [HL5383]

Asked by Lord Leigh of Hurley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current average waiting time between the arrival of a person whose death was unexplained with a coroner and issuing a death certificate. [HL5384]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry of Justice collects statistics on deaths reported to coroners on an annual basis but does not have details of deaths that are under investigation. The Office of National Statistics publishes the number of registered deaths but does not distinguish between deaths referred to coroners and other deaths so it is not possible to determine the average waiting time.

Council Tax

Asked by Lord Pickles

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the recommendations of their review, which promised to make council tax collection fairer and more efficient, launched on 10 April 2019, will be published. [HL5704]

Asked by Lord Pickles

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the new guidance to local authorities on the collection of unpaid Council Tax to end aggressive enforcement tactics, announced on 10 April 2019, will be issued. [HL5705]

Asked by Lord Pickles

To ask Her Majesty's Government which (1) organisations, (2) charities, (3) debt advice services, and (4) local authorities were consulted as part of their review on unpaid Council Tax arrears, announced on 10 April 2019. [HL5706]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Department has been working closely with a range of billing authorities, debt advice charities and civil enforcement agencies to better understand the approaches taken in local government in collecting council tax. On the basis of this work, the Department is now preparing guidance setting out the best practice that already exists in the collection and enforcement of council tax. This will be published as soon as possible.

Credit Cards: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide support to people who have fallen behind on their credit card and bill payments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL5471]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government recognises that the outbreak of COVID-19 may lead to consumers facing financial difficulty and uncertainty.

The major banks and building societies have pledged to provide relief to customers impacted by COVID-19, including deferring mortgage and other loan repayments, waiving fees on savings accounts, and increasing overdraft or credit card limits.

On 9 April the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) also announced a series of measures intended to provide emergency support to consumers who are facing temporary cash flow problems as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. These measures came into force on Tuesday 14 April.

These measures include, allowing consumers either a 3-month payment holiday or to make nominal payments towards credit cards, store cards, catalogue credit and certain personal loan agreements. It is important to note that lenders can continue to charge interest during this 3-month period. Customers should contact their lender if they are experiencing short-term cash flow problems and would benefit from these measures.

In their guidance for firms, the FCA set out their expectation that the payment deferrals described here should not worsen the arrears status of a consumer's credit file during the payment deferral period.

The Chancellor has also announced a wide package of economic support measures including the Self-employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses and consumers during this pandemic.

Department for International Trade: Disclosure of Information

Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) personal confidentiality agreements, and (2) non-disclosure agreements the Department for International Trade has signed with (a) businesses, (b) individuals, and (c) third parties advising, the department on its response to COVID 19. [HL5805]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Department for International Trade has not signed any personal confidentiality agreements, nor non-disclosure agreements with businesses, individuals nor third parties advising HM Government on its response to COVID-19.

Economic Situation: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the economic impact the restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic has had on university cities and towns; and what financial assistance, if any, they intend to provide. [[HL5472](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: We recognise that every region and community will be feeling the impacts of this crisis and we are working to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on local communities across the United Kingdom. In May, we announced measures to support students and universities. These included bringing forward £100m of research funding for vital research, and an estimated £2.6bn worth of tuition fee payments for providers to help manage cash flow.

The Government has also confirmed that providers are eligible to apply for its support packages, including business loan support schemes, which the Office for Students (OfS) the regulator in England, estimates could be worth at least £700m to the sector, depending on eligibility and take up.

We are working closely with local areas to make sure that individuals and businesses in all regions are directed to the right support during this difficult period.

Employment: Females

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to support women at work who have been affected by employment and risk concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL5563](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government has taken significant steps to protect jobs for all people, whilst minimising the risk of spreading the virus – by encouraging flexible work practices and home working, and through implementing our unprecedented Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Support Scheme.

We have provided clear Health and Safety guidance to employers, to minimise risk in the workplace. This includes identifying what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus and thinking about who could be at risk (e.g. pregnant women).

As always, equalities legislation requires that employers must not discriminate based on gender or pregnancy and maternity in the workplace – this includes discrimination in regard to decisions around access to furlough and working from home. The same applies to decisions around redundancy. It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, sex or disability.

Ethiopia: Dams

Asked by Lord Marlesford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt over the rate of filling the new Renaissance dam in Ethiopia from the waters of the River Nile. [[HL5697](#)]

Baroness Sugg: We are aware of reports on the ongoing dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. We continue to urge all parties involved to come to an agreement and that no side take any unilateral action. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry on these terms on 8 June, as did the Minister for Africa with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedu on 20 May. We welcome the resumption of talks between the Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt to work towards a peaceful resolution.

Foreign Investment in UK

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the most recent inward investment statistics. [[HL5803](#)]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: Two major FDI publication have recently been published, reflecting on European investment performance in 2019. The Financial Times' FDI Report 2020 placed the UK top in Europe, with 1,271 recorded FDI projects – more than Germany and France combined (702 and 500 respectively). This gave the UK an overall market share of 20% in Europe.

The EY UK Attractiveness Survey 2020 shows a different picture with the UK receiving fewer projects than France (1,109 to 1,197), therefore conceding the top spot in Europe. Despite the EY report recording an increase for the UK's FDI project numbers, France saw a greater increase (5% compared to 16%).

According to UNCTAD's WIR 2020, the UK remains the top destination in Europe for attracting foreign direct investment with the highest inward FDI stock in Europe, and has improved its position to being the second highest inward FDI stock in the world, behind the US. The UK's FDI stock of \$ 2 trillion has risen by 10% compared to 2018 and almost doubled from its 2010 levels.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have assessed their advice that people use their cars and avoid public transport during the COVID-19 pandemic to be (1) compatible with their target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and (2), if not, whether they would withdraw the advice. [[HL5459](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government's top priority is to ensure we protect people and businesses throughout the present health crisis. The Government's advice to avoid using public transport where possible, and instead try to walk, cycle, or drive is based on the present concern for public health.

Covid-19 has meant people have had to profoundly change the way they live, work and travel. Many people have rediscovered walking and cycling, and their benefits to both air quality and health. We are supporting that through the £225 million Emergency Active Travel Fund, which was announced on 9 May, and is the first stage of a £2 billion investment in active travel. We are also encouraging local authorities to consider rapid changes to road layouts such as pop up cycles lanes to make cycling safer and more attractive.

The COVID-19 crisis has not diminished the Government's determination to meet our net zero target and we are committed to going further and faster to tackle climate change. Transport has a central role to play in decarbonising our economy whilst delivering growth. At the end of March, we published "Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge" kicking off our work on preparing a Transport Decarbonisation Plan to ensure we meet the challenge of reaching net zero transport emissions by 2050.

High Speed 2 Independent Review

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to publish their response to the Oakervee Review of HS2. [HL5460]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Government received the Oakervee Review on 6 February 2020. The Prime Minister then updated the House shortly afterwards on 11 February, where he set out Government's response to and position on the Review's key recommendations, including a commitment to HS2. This was followed by Notice to Proceed in April, marking the formal approval for the project to begin the construction phase. The Department for Transport intends to address the other recommendations in due course.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Euston Station

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 24 February (HL1714) and 9 March (HL1715), whether the HS2-related works at Euston Station that are required irrespective of any design changes, include ground anchors to sustain the wall and structures at Park Village East and other works necessary to accommodate a three-tunnel design; and whether all design options have been subject to a full risk analysis. [HL5461]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The provision of works to specifically accommodate a three-tunnel design do not

form part of the current early HS2 works being undertaken at Euston.

In response to the Oakervee Review, the Department has commissioned a study looking into the efficiency of the future Euston station, including the station approaches. The outcomes of this study will inform the development of the designs of HS2 Euston station and approaches. The selected designs taken forward will be subject to full risk analysis as they are progressed.

Hospitals: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications of recent research by University College London and Great Ormond Street Hospital on the transmission of virus DNA within the hospital setting for their COVID-19 response. [HL5424]

Lord Bethell: The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is responsible for ensuring that timely and coordinated scientific advice is made available to decision-makers, to support United Kingdom cross-Government decisions. In fulfilling this role, SAGE considers a wide range of scientific evidence.

Our approach has been, and will continue to be, guided by the evidence and latest advice from medical experts, including the Chief Medical Officer.

House of Lords: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask The Senior Deputy Speaker what discussions have taken place about the option of on-site testing for COVID-19 for those entering the Palace of Westminster in relation to the work of the House of Lords. [HL5531]

Lord Laming: The Senior Deputy Speaker has asked me, as Chair of the Services Committee, to respond on his behalf.

Some preliminary discussions regarding on site testing for those required to attend the Palace of Westminster for the work of both Houses were held, however, NHS testing is available to all members and staff exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, by post and at sites across the country, and staff and members have been directed to these services. The nature of the work carried out on the estate and the current restrictions on non-passholders has meant that further testing on site is currently not recommended as being required. A number of steps have been taken, in line with Public Health England guidance, to mitigate the risk to members and staff required to attend in person.

Internet: Safety

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect children from online grooming during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL5252]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government is committed to tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse and recognises many parents may feel concerned about the activities and content their children are accessing during this period. Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-s-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>) has been published for parents and children outlining resources to help keep children safe from different risks online, including online grooming, and where to go to receive support and advice.

The Minister of State for Security, James Brokenshire and the Minister for Safeguarding, Victoria Atkins engaged the Internet Watch Foundation on the threat during the pandemic. The Security Minister has written to industry partners on countering online child sexual exploitation and abuse during the pandemic. He also attended a roundtable hosted by the Internet Watch Foundation with industry partners to discuss what they are seeing at this time, as well as the safeguards and protective measures they are putting in place.

The Government is continuing to engage with technology companies around the *Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, a framework of principles launched by the Five Country Ministerial partners in March. In collaboration with the Five Country governments, our partners in the technology industry have developed a new campaign to help keep children safe during COVID-19. This launched on 17 April, with parents and carers directed to online safety resources on GOV.UK, and children directed to Childline.

While some companies are working proactively to tackle illegal and harmful content and activity that occurs on their platforms, we know that more needs to be done. The Online Harms White paper sets out our plans to introduce world-leading legislation to tackle harmful content online and make the UK the safest place in the world to be online. This legislation will include a legal duty of care on online platforms, backed up by an independent regulator to hold them to account.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the plan submitted by the Palestinian Prime Minister to the United States, Russia, EU and United Nations on 9 June; and, following the remarks by the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa on 11 May (HC Deb, col 20), what steps they are taking to prevent the annexation by the government of Israel of parts of the West Bank. [HL5611]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the proposals that the Palestinian Authority has made for renewed dialogue. We urge the parties to find a means of restarting negotiations, and avoiding unilateral action. The Foreign Secretary made clear our concerns about reports that the new Israeli Government coalition has reached an

agreement, which may pave the way for annexation of parts of the West Bank, during a call with the Israeli Alternate Prime Minister Gantz on 20 May and Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 2 June. We also reiterated our concerns at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May. The UK position is clear: any unilateral moves towards annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel would be damaging to efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law. We will continue to press Israel and the Palestinians strongly on the need to return to negotiations to achieve peace and the realist action of a two state solution.

Ivory Act 2018

Asked by Lord Hague of Richmond

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to implement the provisions of the Ivory Act 2018. [HL5771]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We welcome the Court of Appeal's ruling last month upholding the world-leading Ivory Act against a claim brought by a part of the antiques industry. The Government is committed to bringing the ivory ban into force as soon as practicable.

Iyad Hallaq

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about the death of Iyad Halaq in East Jerusalem on 30 May. [HL5608]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the UK Consul General in Jerusalem and the UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv stated on 31 May, we are deeply saddened to hear about the death of Iyad Khairi Hallaq after he was shot by Israeli police in East Jerusalem. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family. We urge restraint in the use of live fire by the Israel Defense Forces. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations and if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. The perpetual cycle of violence must end.

Legal Aid Scheme: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the risk of the restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a significant loss of income for legal aid firms, what assessment they have made of the impact of the Legal Aid Agency's practice of (1) permitting only two claims a year for ongoing cases, and (2) only paying 75 per cent of such claims. [HL5500]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry of Justice recently held a consultation on increasing the limits associated

with claims for payment on account. This consultation closed on 16 June 2020.

Following this, the limit will be increased, allowing four such requests to be made in a twelve month period. This will be implemented once the necessary updates to infrastructure are completed, and the impact of this change will be kept under review.

*Asked by **Baroness Whitaker***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on legal aid firms of (1) the stay on possession proceedings for tenants until the end of August, and (2) any subsequent substantial loss of income; and what steps they are taking to ensure that such firms are paid for their work in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Procurement Policy Note 02/20: Supplier relief due to COVID-19, published on 20 March. [[HL5501](#)]

Lord Keen of Elie: MoJ is continuing to work closely with the Legal Aid Agency and HMCTS to assess the impact of Covid-19 on legal aid provision, and to support practitioners to work remotely when possible.

The Government have taken measures to support the sector include paying for virtual hearings in the same way as in-person hearings, halting pursuit of outstanding debts, relaxing some evidence requirements, and encouraging legal practitioners to use existing avenues of financial help, such as the ability to apply for early payment for work already done on a case. These measures will help Legal Aid providers adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

PN 02/20, which has been updated in PPN 04/20, requires contracting authorities to determine whether a supplier is 'at risk'. In making that determination, an authority will need to consider what steps have been taken by a public-sector provider to access other available support, because providers have no automatic entitlement to relief payments under the PPN and should not use them to supplement or duplicate the wider support measures that have been made available to UK businesses.

Data on legal aid expenditure on areas such as housing possession is released quarterly by the Legal Aid Agency, with the next release scheduled for September.

Local Government: Social Distancing

*Asked by **Lord Porter of Spalding***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have plans to amend the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow local councils in England to return to physical meetings while maintaining social distancing; and whether any proposed amendments to the regulations will include a hybrid form of meeting. [[HL5546](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local

Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 enable all local authority meetings to be held remotely and do not preclude physical meetings or a hybrid form of meeting where these can be held in accordance with public health regulations and guidance. It is for each local authority to determine what is appropriate in their specific circumstances, taking legal advice as necessary.

Multinational Companies: Taxation

*Asked by **Lord Browne of Belmont***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many businesses moved their headquarters out of the UK for tax purposes in each of the last three years. [[HL5652](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The information is not held in the form requested; businesses are not taxed in the UK by reference to where their headquarters are, and there is no requirement on businesses to tell HM Revenue and Customs that they have moved their headquarters.

NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Baroness Jolly***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce systematic regular COVID-19 testing of all NHS and care staff and patients. [[HL5199](#)]

Lord Bethell: Current clinical advice is that asymptomatic testing can be conducted in any setting where clinically appropriate, for outbreak investigation and infection control. For example, we are testing all emergency admissions to hospital, and all care home residents before they are discharged into a social care setting.

For staff, for example, an asymptomatic staff member could be tested when a patient they had been treating unexpectedly tests positive for COVID-19, in order to reduce the risk of spreading infection in healthcare organisations.

It is not always appropriate to routinely test asymptomatic staff, and so we currently suggest a more strategic and specific approach. These decisions are made by local decision makers.

NHS: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase COVID-19 testing specifically for frontline NHS staff; and what is their assessment of the survey finding that 83.6 per cent of doctors surveyed had not been tested for COVID-19 since the pandemic began. [[HL5371](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Government's overall ambition is to ensure that everyone who needs a test can get one. Increasing testing capacity is a top priority and we are working around the clock and across the country to

protect the vulnerable, support the National Health Service and save lives.

NHS staff can be tested in the NHS workplace, or by using the online portal to book a test at a Regional Testing Site, or by ordering a home testing kit.

Reaching a daily testing capacity of 200,000 was an important milestone, but this is by no means the end of our ramping up of testing. We plan further increases through the summer and into the autumn through a combination of improvements to existing labs, new partnerships and bringing on board novel tests.

North Korea: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea following reports by the United Nations of food shortages and malnutrition; what steps they are taking to provide humanitarian assistance which reaches those in urgent need; and what discussions they have had with the government of that country to urge it to use its resources to prioritise the feeding of its people. [HL5450]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We assess that North Korea's humanitarian need is likely increasing as a result of the country's border lockdown in response to COVID-19. The lockdown has prevented most aid shipments from entering the country since January and restrictions on internal movement, including for UN agencies and NGOs, has severely impacted the distribution of aid and support. The UN estimates that 10.1 million people suffer from food insecurity and are in urgent need of food assistance.

DFID is providing multilateral funds to the UN and other international organisations providing humanitarian assistance in North Korea, including the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) in response to COVID-19. As a country of concern in the GHRP, North Korea is receiving funds from this global appeal. We continue to make clear to the North Korean government that international support is available, and urge them to restore international access and monitoring for humanitarian assistance. The UK has also repeatedly called on North Korea to prioritise the well-being of its people over the development of illegal weapons programmes, through our bilateral relationship and in multilateral fora.

Offences Against Children

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 14 May 2019 (HL Deb, col 90GC), what steps they have taken to ensure better data on the scale of child sexual abuse; and what progress they have made in establishing a

national prevalence survey on child sexual abuse. [HL4942]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office collects and publishes data on crimes recorded by the police, including crimes related to child sexual abuse. These are published quarterly in the Office for National Statistics bulletin "Crime in England and Wales". The latest data are available here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2019>

The ONS have recently published additional statistics and commentary on child sex abuse. There are available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/childsexualabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019>. The most recent Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that in the year ending March 2019, approximately 3.1 million adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced child sexual abuse before the age of 16 years. This is equivalent to 7.5% of the population aged 18 to 74 years.

The ONS is currently carrying out a feasibility study to determine whether a new survey could effectively measure the current scale and nature of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse. Findings from the first stage of the research are due to be published later in 2020.

Offenders: Rochdale

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the continued presence in Rochdale of Abdul Aziz, Adil Khan and Qari Abdul Rauf on their victims and their victim's families. [HL5235]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We cannot comment on individual cases. The Home Office is in contact with the local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) panel to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

Parish Councils

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether parish councils are allowed to use the names and addresses as they appear on the electoral register to contact those living in the parish. [HL5515]

Lord Greenhalgh: There are two versions of the electoral register – the edited or open register and the full register. The edited register is publicly available for anyone to use – including to contact listed electors. However, whilst parish councils are also entitled to a copy of the full register, they may only use it to establish

whether any person is entitled to attend and participate in a meeting of, or take any action on behalf of, the parish or community.

*Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether parish councils can access the names and addresses of parishioners held by unitary and council councils, other than those already on the electoral register, so that parish councils can contact parishioners not on the electoral register. [[HL5516](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: As parish councils are not public authorities within the Data Protection Act 2018, principal authorities are prevented from sharing personal information with parish councils beyond that available on the electoral register.

Planning

*Asked by **Baroness Thornhill***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Greenhalgh on 8 June (HL Deb, col 1542), whether they are considering any further measures to take planning powers from local councils such as the creation of development corporations. [[HL5497](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government has already set out an ambitious programme to modernise our planning system. Our 'Planning for the Future' reforms will support the delivery of homes that local people need and create greener communities with more beautiful homes. Further details will be published in due course.

The Government is also going to examine and develop the case for up to four new development corporations in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, subject to public consultation, as well as explore options for regeneration around Toton, including the potential for delivery vehicles such as development corporations.

Police: Biometrics

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to create a regulatory framework for facial recognition technology. [[HL5493](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The High Court found in September 2019 that there is a clear and sufficient legal framework for police use of live facial recognition technology. The framework includes police common law powers to protect the public, data protection and human rights legislation and the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. This means they can only use it for a policing purpose where necessary and proportionate.

Post Office Horizon IT System Independent Review

*Asked by **Lord Birt***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Ministerial Statement by the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets on 10 June (HCWS280) announcing an Independent Review into the Post Office Horizon IT System and Trials, whether that Review (1) will take account of the "significant failings within Post Office Ltd over nearly two decades" identified by Mr Justice Fraser, (2) will have the power to require Ministers, Board Members, executives, staff and suppliers associated with the organisation throughout the period to appear before it, and (3) will have the power to access all relevant documentation from throughout the period. [T] [[HL5752](#)]

Lord Callanan: The findings outlined throughout the Horizon judgments provided an extensive insight as to what went wrong at the Post Office, including an independent judicial view of the facts all sides were looking for. However, the Government accepts more needs to be done. The Government now wants to be fully assured that through the Independent Review there is a public summary of the failings that occurred at Post Office Ltd, drawing on the judgments from the Horizon case and by listening to those that have been most affected, without repeating the extensive findings of Justice Fraser.

Post Office Ltd have committed to fully cooperating with the Review. The Review will have sufficient strength and breadth and deliver in a timely manner. The Chair of the review will be fully independent of both the Post Office and Government. They will draw conclusions and make recommendations as he or she sees fit.

Primary Education: Sports

*Asked by **Baroness Morgan of Cotes***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to announce a decision on the continuation of the Primary PE and Sport Premium for the next academic year. [[HL5538](#)]

Baroness Berridge: The government will confirm arrangements for the PE and Sport Premium in the 2020-21 academic year as soon as possible.

Right to Buy Scheme

*Asked by **Lord Porter of Spalding***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to extending the timeframe in which local authorities must spend retained Right to Buy receipts from three years to five years. [[HL5935](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: We have listened to concerns raised by local authorities about the effects of Covid 19 on their house building programmes and the difficulties of spending Right to Buy receipts to the three year deadlines. On 12 June, we agreed to a temporary extension of the next expenditure deadline of 30 June by six months, and wrote to local authorities to inform them of this change. More broadly, the Government has consulted on ways we can change the Right to Buy receipts system to help councils build more homes. The proposals included extending the period for local authorities to spend their receipts from three to five years, and the Government's response to this consultation will be published in due course.

Sahel: Security

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Chad in relation to security in the Sahel region; and what assessment they have made of the impact of instability in the Sahel region on the UK. [HL5607]

Baroness Sugg: The UK engages directly with Chad through our non-resident ambassador and our office in N'Djamena. The ambassador last spoke to Foreign Minister Cherif on 9 June to discuss the impacts of COVID-19, the security situation, plans for elections and other elements of UK-Chad cooperation.

The UK is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel and is clear that long-term peace and stability in this region will support UK interests, including in wider West Africa. The UK is committed to working with all partners, including the G5 Sahel countries, to support those most in need and tackle the long-term drivers of instability in the region. The Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, attended the first meeting of the Sahel Alliance General Assembly and the sixth Summit of the G5 Leaders (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) in Mauritania on 25 February. He also attended the virtual ministerial meeting of the Coalition for the Sahel on 12 June. At both meetings, he reaffirmed the UK's efforts to improve security and encourage development in the Sahel.

The UK is supporting the security response across the Sahel region, including in Chad, through three CH47 Chinook helicopters and support personnel in a non-combat role with the French-led counter-terrorism mission Operation BARKHANE. The UK is committed to helping the G5 Sahel Joint Force reach full operational capability, and has provided bilateral funding towards the provision of non-lethal military equipment and support for the human rights compliance framework. The UK is also supporting efforts to improve security in the Lake Chad Basin. The UK contributes military personnel to the P3 Cellule de Coordination et Liaison in N'Djamena, which gives the Multi-National Joint Task Force technical and strategic support. The UK is also supporting Chad by

providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to those affected by the crisis, while investing in longer-term resilience through programmes that help widen access to social protection and enable households to adapt to the changing climate. Between 2015 and 2019, the UK provided over £91.2 million to Chad in bilateral humanitarian and development aid.

Schools: Liverpool

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Liverpool City Council's decision for Year 6 pupils not to return to school on 1 June; and whether this means that local authorities can make their own decisions about when school pupils can return to school. [HL5492]

Baroness Berridge: We want to get all children and young people back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers, carers and teachers.

Thanks to the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the scientific advice indicates the transmission rate of COVID-19 has decreased and, based on all the evidence, we have been able to begin our cautious and phased approach to the wider opening of schools. This includes asking primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, Reception, year 1 and year 6 from 1 June, alongside priority groups (vulnerable children and children of critical workers).

However, we recognise that some primary schools will not have been able to open to additional children from 1 June for a number of practical reasons. We are working with local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioners across the country to identify and understand any local issues. If schools are facing particular challenges then we stand ready to support them to ensure they can open more widely as soon as possible.

In most cases the preparation for wider opening will be undertaken by the headteacher and senior colleagues of individual schools. However, relevant bodies (such as local authorities, academy trusts or governing bodies, depending on the school type) retain responsibility for key decisions and plans should be confirmed with them, particularly risk assessments of the school opening more widely, before pupils and staff return.

Shukri Abdi

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to liaise with Manchester Police and the mayor of Greater Manchester to ensure that all possible action has been taken in the investigation of the death of Shukri Abdi. [HL5454]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The tragic death of Shukri Abdi is the subject of ongoing legal proceedings and it would therefore be inappropriate to comment at this time. Our thoughts remain with her family and friends at this difficult time.

Social Rented Housing: White Papers

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to publish their social housing White Paper. [HL5632]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government will publish the Social Housing White Paper later this year and I refer the noble Lord to my answer on 16th June 2020 to Baroness Sanderson of Welton (Official Record, House of Lords, Vol. 803. Col. 2043).

Sunday Trading

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to removing restrictions on Sunday trading in England and Wales; what assessment they have made of the impact of the removal of such restrictions on the (1) (a) physical, and (b) mental, health of retail workers, and (2) quality of the (a) environment, and (b) air. [HL5458]

Lord Callanan: We are currently examining Sunday trading laws in the light of covid-19, as we did with the 2012 Olympics. This work includes understanding the impact upon workers and other stakeholders.

We will keep measures like this under review as we find ways to support supermarkets and other large shops manage social distancing, and shoppers to buy food and goods more conveniently.

Trade Agreements: Brazil

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Brazil about ensuring that UK-Brazil trade does not affect the preservation of the Amazon rainforest. [HL5800]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: Trade does not have to come at the expense of the environment. As part of our independent trade policy, HM Government is committed to upholding the United Kingdom's high environmental standards. HM Government is already working with Brazilian counterparts and other interested parties to tackle deforestation and has committed £200m through a number of International Climate Finance programmes aimed at tackling deforestation. The United Kingdom will continue to monitor the situation in the Amazon closely and to raise in our ongoing dialogue with Brazil.

Trade Agreements: Civil Servants

Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many civil servants in the Department for International Trade are dedicated to trade negotiations with (1) the United States, (2) Japan, and (3) Australia. [T] [HL5721]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Department for International Trade's Trade Policy Group (TPG) has a strong core of trade policy officials which has significantly grown from 45 to 723 (excluding the Export Control Joint Unit and Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate) since 2016. In TPG, we have dedicated teams in charge of coordinating each of our new free trade agreement negotiations, including the US, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. We have 3 Chief Negotiators and 3 Deputy Chief Negotiators currently, as well as the Government's Chief Trade Negotiation Advisor.

Trade negotiations will be progressed by teams of differing sizes depending on their complexity and the Department also works closely with experts in other Departments.

Trade Agreements: USA

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent progress has been made on negotiating a trade agreement with the United States. [HL5549]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The first UK-US negotiation round successfully concluded on 15 May. It saw the two sides hold a full discussion covering all aspects of a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. Discussions have continued between the negotiation rounds across a number of chapters.

The sessions in the first negotiation round focused on agreeing the scope, objectives and modalities of the potential chapters. Progress has been made in a number of areas, including services, investment and digital trade.

The second UK-US Free Trade Agreement negotiating round began on 15 June and will take place over two weeks.

UK Trade with EU

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the World Trade Organisation about invoking Article 24 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in the event that an agreement is not reached with the EU before the end of the transition period; and what progress they have made in establishing UK independent World Trade Organisation schedules. [HL5802]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: At the end of this year the UK will have recovered its economic and political independence. The question is whether we can agree with the EU a deeper trading relationship or whether we have a trading relationship based on the 2019 deal, without a free trade agreement (FTA), on the lines of Australia's.

On leaving the EU on February 1st 2020 the UK took up its independent seat at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The UK's independent schedules were submitted to the WTO for certification in 2018 in July (Goods) and December (Services), and when the transition period ends at the end of this year they will form the basis of the UK's independent trade policy.

GATT Article XXIV permits the establishment of FTAs and Customs Unions as an exception to the most favoured nation principle, but it has no relevance without an agreement between the WTO members in question.

Universities: Students

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of a possible reduction in the number of international students attending universities in England in the next academic year; and what plans they have to encourage more home students into universities in England in the light of any such reduction. [[HL5456](#)]

Baroness Berridge: We have been working closely with the Higher Education (HE) sector to monitor the likely impacts of COVID-19 on international student numbers. We understand that the COVID-19 outbreak and a possible reduction in the number of international students poses significant challenges.

On Monday 4 May my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced a package of measures to stabilise university admissions this autumn and ensure sustainability in HE at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

We have introduced temporary student number controls for domestic and EU students for the academic year 2020/21 to ensure a fair, structured distribution of students across providers. These measures mean that providers will be able to recruit students up to a temporary set level, based on provider forecasts, which allows additional growth of up to 5% in the next academic year. The Secretary of State for Education, will also have the discretion to allocate an additional 10,000 places, of which 5,000 will be allocated to students studying nursing or allied health courses, to ensure growing numbers that will support our vital public services. This measure will only apply to full-time undergraduate UK/EU domiciled students, with certain specified exemptions. These controls will not apply to international (non-EU) students.

The government has been clear that the UK HE sector is 'open for business', remains world class and is looking forward to welcoming both domestic and international students in the future. To support international student recruitment, we are taking steps to further promote the

new Graduate route (due to be launched in Summer 2021) which will provide an opportunity for international students who have been awarded their degree to stay and work in the UK at any skill level for 2 years. This represents a significant improvement in our offer to international students and will help ensure our HE sector remains competitive internationally.

The government has been in close communication with partners in the HE sector, who are considering educational provision for the academic year 2020/2021 and how to best reopen campuses. HE providers are autonomous institutions and will make their own judgements based on the latest public health guidance, taking account of the need to minimise risk to staff and students.

To help providers make informed decisions about their provision, the government has issued guidance, which is complemented by the Universities UK's principles for reopening of campuses to students and staff. We anticipate HE providers will be open for the autumn term with a blend of online teaching and in-person tuition that they consider appropriate and which minimises risk. HE providers will be flexible in accommodating applicants' circumstances where possible, including if they are unable to travel to the UK in time for the start of the academic year.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

*Asked by **Baroness Stern***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Ministry of Defence's proposal to fly Protector drones within UK airspace, which government body is responsible for addressing safety concerns regarding this proposal; and how are those safety considerations being assessed. [[HL5555](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Stern***

To ask Her Majesty's Government who will give the final authorisation on whether Protector drones are permitted to fly within UK domestic airspace. [[HL5559](#)]

Baroness Goldie: Final authorisation for the Protector to fly within UK domestic airspace rests with the Civilian Aviation Authority (CAA). However, the RAF's Aviation Duty Holder is responsible for ensuring the aircraft is operated safely in accordance with Military Aviation Authority regulations.

Welfare Tax Credits

*Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a tax credit system after the COVID-19 pandemic similar to the post-war credits that were introduced after the Second World War. [[HL5465](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government keeps all aspects of the tax system under review; as we exit the current crisis, we will take stock of the economy and public finances and make the right decisions at that point.

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