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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

Thursday, 2 July 2020

Biometrics Commissioner Annual Report

[HLWS323]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I am pleased to announce that my Rt Hon Friend the Home Secretary is today publishing the sixth annual report of the Biometrics Commissioner, together with the Government's response.

The Commissioner, Paul Wiles, is appointed under Section 20 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. His responsibilities are:

- to decide applications by the police for extended retention of DNA profiles and fingerprints from persons arrested for serious offences but not charged or convicted;
- to keep under review National Security Determinations made by Chief Officers under which DNA profiles and fingerprints may be retained for national security purposes;
- to exercise general oversight of police use of DNA samples, DNA profiles and fingerprints.

His report is a statutory requirement of section 21 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

I am grateful to Mr Wiles for this report, which we have published in full.

Copies of the report will be available from the Vote Office. The Government's response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Celsa Steel

[HLWS326]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma) has today made the following statement:

I would like to update the House on a commercial agreement that the Government has concluded with Celsa Steel (UK) Ltd.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has set out a far-reaching package of support to protect jobs and the UK economy. However, in exceptional circumstances, where a viable company of strategic importance has exhausted all other options available to it, the Government has said that we will consider bespoke support on a 'last resort' basis.

There is an extremely high bar for making use of taxpayers' money in this way, and any companies seeking support from the Government should do so only as an absolute last resort.

Such circumstances applied to Celsa, which is a key supplier to the construction industry.

While commercial confidentiality prevents me from setting out detail, I can assure the House that the

Government has agreed terms that will protect taxpayers' money and ensure that the financial burden is shared with the company's shareholders and lenders.

The Government has agreed legally binding contractual conditions with Celsa on employment, climate change and tax. We have also put in place legally binding conditions on corporate governance, including restraints on executive pay and bonuses. We would expect any company seeking such support from the taxpayer to play their role in our society's shared endeavours and challenges in the same way.

More broadly, the Government has already taken wide-ranging actions to support the UK steel industry, including more than £300 million in relief for electricity costs since 2013. We have also created public procurement guidelines with annual reports on the proportion of public sector steel bought from British companies, and details of a steel pipeline on national infrastructure projects worth around £500 million over the next decade.

This agreement achieves a positive outcome and secures over 1000 jobs, including more than 800 positions at the company's main sites in South Wales.

We want to praise the commitment of Celsa's workforce and management. Our focus is now on working with all parties to secure the company's future success, as well as ensuring that the loan is repaid and Celsa continue to deliver employment, climate change, corporate governance, and tax commitments.

Contingencies Fund Advance

[HLWS324]

Baroness Barran: My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden MP, has made the following Statement:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has sought in its Main Estimate 2020-21 (Central Government Supply Estimates, 2020-21, Main Supply Estimates, HC 293 published 4 May 2020) the resources, capital and cash it requires to operate for this financial year.

The funds associated with this Estimate will not be released until the Supply and Appropriation Bill achieves Royal Assent later in the summer. The department has therefore sought a contingencies fund advance which will be repaid once Royal Assent has been obtained.

Parliamentary approval for resources of £550,327,000 and capital of £41,808,000 has been sought in a Main Estimate for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £592,135,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Local Government Finance: Covid-19

[HLWS325]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and

Local Government (Robert Jenrick) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I wish to set out to the House the further measures this Government is putting in place so that local government can continue to fulfil its essential role in the national response to Covid-19 and lead us through the next phase of recovery.

I said at the start of the pandemic that we would ensure local authorities have the resources they need. To do that, the Government has provided £27 billion to support local councils, businesses and communities; including £3.8 billion of support specifically for local authorities. This funding has allowed councils to deliver for their communities: including helping get rough sleepers off the streets, establishing our shielding programme, controlling infection in care homes and providing support for 800,000 small and medium-sized businesses.

The comprehensive plan I am announcing today demonstrates my commitment by ensuring that local councils have the certainty they need to manage their finances to the end of the financial year. The plan covers Covid-related expenditure, income losses from sales, fees and charges, and irrecoverable tax losses.

Additional funding for spending pressures

We recognise the pressures on councils and our communities have not yet passed, and today I have announced a further £500 million to help ensure that councils have the money they need to meet costs in the coming months. I would like to thank councils for the financial information they have provided, and I will continue to work with my cabinet colleagues to monitor the pressures on the sector.

This award follows two previous rounds of grant allocations. The first was primarily focussed on getting emergency support into Adult Social Care. The second round addressed both expenditure pressures and income shortfalls. With the benefit of better data, we now plan to

address income shortfalls separately to expenditure and so we have created a new formula for the additional £500 million. This formula will reflect the factors which the data returns have told us correlate most closely with expenditure, and will take account of population, deprivation and the way that service costs vary across the country. Details on allocations will be announced in due course.

Non-tax income

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on councils' income from sales, fees and charges - for which they could not have planned. To help mitigate this, the Government is also introducing a co-payment scheme to compensate local authorities for relevant, irrecoverable losses in 2020-21. Under this scheme councils bear the first 5% of losses compared to their budgeted income – reflecting the fact these income sources are by their nature volatile from one year to the next – but the Government will support those worst affected by covering 75p in every pound of losses beyond this.

Irrecoverable tax losses

I am also committed to supporting the sector through an apportionment of irrecoverable Council Tax and Business Rates losses between central and local government, to be agreed at the Spending Review. I have announced today that the repayment of collection fund deficits arising in 2020-21, will be spread over the next three years rather than the usual period of a year, giving councils breathing space in setting budgets for next year.

Taken together, these measures will give local councils sufficient confidence to continue to deliver the services their communities rely on. Nevertheless, my department will continue to work closely with councils to monitor the situation as it develops, and I will return to the House setting out any further measures necessary should a changing situation require it.

Written Answers

Thursday, 2 July 2020

Climate Change: Population

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of population growth on climate change; and what discussions they have had (1) with other governments, and (2) within intergovernmental agencies in which they are a member, about any such impact. [[HL5897](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: There is a connection between population growth, sustainable development and climate change, though unsustainable consumption remains the primary driver of climate change and environmental degradation.

The Government has placed a high priority on tackling climate change and protecting the environment and, as part of this, we have committed to double our international climate finance over the next five years. This will help developing countries reduce global carbon emissions, cope with the climate change impacts that are already locked in, and invest more in nature.

We regularly discuss all aspects of climate change and environmental degradation with other governments and intergovernmental agencies and will continue to play a leading role in international work to combat these issues. Next year we will be hosting the international climate change discussions (COP26) in Glasgow, at which we want to secure commitments to take more ambitious and urgent action.

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with faith leaders about the impact of population growth on climate change. [[HL5901](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Faith groups are key policy and delivery partners for DFID. We hold regular discussions with faith groups on all aspects of international development including on climate change.

Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission

Asked by **Lord Young of Cookham**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Earl Howe on 29 January (HL Deb, col 1439), what representations they have received regarding citizens' engagement in the proposed Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission; and what progress they have made in establishing that Commission. [[HL5961](#)]

Lord True: Further announcements will be made in the usual way.

Coronavirus: Aviation

Asked by **Lord McColl of Dulwich**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there is any scientific evidence that proves that filters in planes and air conditioning units prevent COVID-19 particles from passing through. [[HL5931](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Onboard commercial aircraft, cabin air is pre-filtered through High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters before being mixed with fresh air from outside the aircraft and returned back to the cabin. Airbus claim that "The result is that the mix of fresh and pre-filtered recirculated air supplied by the Environment Control System to passengers in Airbus cabins is very clean and virus-free."

Research published by NASA has looked at the efficiency of HEPA filters, such as those present on Airbus and Boeing aircraft. This research supports Airbus' claim, showing that HEPA filters have capture efficiencies >99.9% for particles of a similar size to that of the COVID-19 virus.

We are planning new research which aims to understand the effect air re-circulation systems have on the transmission of COVID-19 aboard passenger aircraft.

It is important to note that filters within standard air conditioning units may not be HEPA filters and therefore many not offer the same level of protection, and that air filtration alone will not stop all possible routes of COVID-19 transmission.

Cricket: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Naseby**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the continued closure of recreational cricket clubs on the development of young cricketers. [[HL6242](#)]

Baroness Barran: Sports and physical activity facilities play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active. The Government has made it clear that it will adopt a phased approach based on scientific and medical advice, and that the primary goal is to protect public health.

Officials are working very closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board on plans to deliver the safe return of club cricket as soon as possible. We are working at pace to shape guidance that will allow the safe return of competitive cricket and other team sports. Any shared sporting equipment may risk transmission, but these risks can be mitigated with good hygiene practice as being adopted across a wide range of sectors. I hope to make further progress on this in the coming weeks so that teams can enjoy a great cricketing summer.

Cyprus: Military Bases

Asked by Lord Maginnis of Drumglass

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what basis the decision to permit the development of private property within British Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus was made; whether the Turkish-Cypriot community was consulted about this decision; if not, why not; and what is their current evaluation of the validity of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, in relation to this decision. [HL5932]

Baroness Sugg: In 2014 UK Government and the Government of the Republic of Cyprus signed an arrangement on the regulation of non-military development in the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). On 9 June the next stage in this arrangement was reached which will lead to the lifting of many restrictions on land and property development within the non-military areas of the SBAs for all Cypriots.

The UK regularly engages with the Turkish Cypriots through our High Commission in Nicosia. This engagement has included discussions on non-military development, on which the views of the Turkish Cypriots were sought on several occasions both before and after its signature in 2014.

The UK's principal responsibility under the Treaty of Guarantee is to recognise and guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Cyprus.

Cyprus: Sovereignty

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any agreement with the government of Cyprus that the UK would aid Cyprus if its sovereignty were threatened. [HL5953]

Baroness Sugg: The UK, as a Guarantor Power, has a responsibility for protecting the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus. The UK's principal responsibility under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee is to recognise and guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Cyprus. The Government fulfils this responsibility through supporting the UN-facilitated settlement process, which is aimed at achieving a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality as defined by the relevant Security Council resolutions. We are also the largest troop contributor to the UN Peacekeeping Force on the island, UNFICYP.

Cyprus: Turkey

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Turkey's drilling for energy in Cyprus' sovereign waters; and whether they have received any request to join an EU maritime force in those waters. [HL5952]

Baroness Sugg: The UK has been clear from the start that we deplore Turkish drilling in the waters around Cyprus. We will continue to call for de-escalation. We have consistently stated our support for the sovereign right of the Republic of Cyprus to exploit the oil and gas in its internationally agreed Exclusive Economic Zone. We continue to consider that Cyprus' oil and gas should be developed for the benefit of all Cypriots. Ultimately, the most enduring way of resolving difficult issues such as this is to achieve a Cyprus settlement and we encourage all parties to redouble their efforts in pursuit of that.

We judge that it is critical for stability in the Mediterranean and for the integrity of the rules-based international system that disputes such as this are resolved, not through force, militarisation or coercion, but through dialogue and in accordance with international law. We will continue to work with the Republic of Cyprus and the wider region to that end. The UK has not been invited to participate in an EU Mediterranean maritime operation in the waters around Cyprus.

Department for International Development: Reorganisation

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Prime Minister on 16 June about the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (HC Deb, cols 666–8), what plans they have for the role of the Department for International Development's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Team in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. [HL6094]

Baroness Sugg: The UK government is committed to advancing and defending comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights and will continue to be a progressive voice on this issue.

The merger fuses the best of our development expertise and world-leading diplomacy together, in a new department, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. All of the things that have made the UK a world leader in development will not change i.e. our thought leadership; the scale and quality of UK development programmes; and excellence of our analysis, long term perspective and staff.

Organisational plans for the new department are currently being shaped. The full details of the merger, including the structure of the new department, will be set out in due course.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the Aid Transparency Index 2018, published by Transparency International, in particular the score for aid transparency of (1) 90.6 for Department for

International Development, and (2) 34.3 for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and what steps they are taking to ensure that the approach taken by the Department for International Development towards aid transparency is reflected in the proposed Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. [HL6095]

Baroness Sugg: DFID achieved a ‘very good’ rating in the 2018 Aid Transparency Index, with FCO classed as ‘poor’. The 2020 Aid Transparency Index was launched on 24 June and DFID remains ‘very good’ and the 2nd best bilateral donor, and the FCO has improved performance, moving into the ‘fair’ category for the first time and scoring above average for the non-specialised ministries (foreign/defence/trade) assessed. DFID and FCO both lost points because they were unable to provide sufficiently forward-looking budget forecasts due to the limitations of the current Spending Review settlement, which will be addressed in future assessments.

The UK is globally recognised for its expertise and transparency in aid spending. The new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will continue to benefit from that expert knowledge as it delivers aid programmes to some of the world’s poorest people.

We are committed to improving transparency of aid globally and maintaining our high standards for overseas spending. We will continue to be accountable to parliament and to taxpayers for how we spend UK aid, and to mandate our partners to be transparent.

Employment Schemes: Disability

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what improvements have been made to measuring the outcomes since 2017 of nationally contracted programmes that support disabled people to work. [HL5940]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The new nationally contracted employment programmes for disabled people since 2017 are the Work and Health Programme (WHP), which began in November 2017, and Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES), which began in November 2019. Both of these programmes are being delivered as Randomised Control Trials to enable us to measure the average impacts they have on participants’ employment. Both include full evaluations which will also capture the impact on wider health and wellbeing outcomes.

Separately, both of these programmes also have defined job outcomes which are used for the provider payment models and for performance management purposes.

In the Work and Health Programme, a participant is classed as achieving a job outcome when they have reached a specified level of earnings once in employment, or reach six months of being in self-employment. The specified level of earnings varies across the different regions. The national WHP and the majority of Local Government Partners have an earning threshold as 16

hours per week for 26 weeks at the National living wage. However, for the West London Alliance this is at the London Living Wage and for Greater Manchester Combined Authority at the Real Living Wage. Job outcome rates are published in the Work and Health Programme statistical publication attached.

For IPES, there are two job outcome measures used; a lower threshold income measure, which is defined as earnings equivalent to eight hours per week for 26 weeks; and a higher threshold, which is the equivalent to 16 hours per week for 26 weeks. There is not currently a statistical publication for IPES as the programme has not been running for long enough.

WHP was the first programme to utilise HM Revenue & Customs Real Time Information data in its identification, payment and validation of employment programme outcomes. This use of earnings has ensured that only sustained outcomes are paid for with participants having to acquire a pre-defined level of earnings synonymous with six months in employment, rather than a durational outcome. This has had significant advantages in terms of speed and reducing the resource required by the Department for Work and Pensions and contracted providers in tracking and evidencing outcomes.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Work and Health Programme Statistics [HL5940 attachment.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-18/HL5940>

Government Departments: Facebook

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty’s Government which Government departments have official Facebook accounts. [HL6120]

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty’s Government whether Government departments with official Facebook accounts intend to maintain those accounts, in the light of Facebook’s continued refusal to ban political advertising. [HL6121]

Lord True: The information requested is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office. This is the prerogative of individual departments.

The Government has no objections to digital media companies running political advertising, provided it is transparent, and we are bringing forward proposals to increase transparency in this area.

Immigrants: Finance

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what steps they are taking to support people who are (1) destitute, or (2) without accommodation, as a result of having no recourse to public funds (a) during the COVID-19

lockdown, and (b) after the lockdown has been lifted. [HL5905]

Lord Greenhalgh: Thanks to the hard work of local authorities, agencies and the homelessness sector around the country, nearly 15,000 vulnerable people have been housed in emergency accommodation, including hotels, since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown period. This includes people coming in directly from the streets, people previously housed in shared night shelters and people who have become vulnerable to rough sleeping during the pandemic.

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional £3.2 billion provided to local authorities as part of the wider government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding has been provided to help local authorities reduce risks to public health and to support individuals on the basis of need.

The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended.

The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times, and expects local authorities to support people who are sleeping rough, and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

On 24 June we announced that we are providing local authorities with a further £105 million to enable them to best support the nearly 15,000 people placed into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This commitment will help to ensure that as few of these people as possible return to the streets.

Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government, since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, how many cases of COVID-19 considered to have been contracted in the workplace have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations for (1) hospitals, (2) GP practices, (3) community pharmacies, and (4) prisons. [HL5208]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) provides the national reporting framework for responsible persons (usually employers in relation to employees) to report certain cases of injury, disease and dangerous occurrences to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Where an individual has contracted COVID-19 as a direct result of their work, those instances are reportable under RIDDOR under Regulation 9 (b) either as a disease attributed to an occupational exposure to a biological

agent or under Regulation 6 (2) as a death as a result of occupational exposure to a biological agent.

The table below outlines the number of COVID-19 disease cases reported to HSE between 10 April 2020 and 30 May 2020 using standard industrial classification coding to identify the number of cases reported for (1) hospitals (2) General Practitioner practices (3) pharmacies and (4) prisons. This data is 'as reported' by employers.

Specific industry sector (as reported by employer) ¹	SIC ² code	Total Covid-19 notifications	Of which:	
			Fatal notification	Non-fatal notification
Hospital activities	8610	1,526	28	1498
General medical practices	8621	51	3	48
Dispensing chemists	4773	0	0	0
Justice, judicial activities	8423	4	0	4
Grand Total		1,581	31	1,550

Footnotes

¹Industry as reported by employers.

²Standard Industrial Classification (SIC): The current system used in UK official statistics for classifying businesses by type of activity they are engaged in.

Industrial Health and Safety: EU Law

Asked by Lord Hendy

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce legislation that would result in a reduction in the level of protections for workers contained in health and safety regulations from those provided for in current regulations which implement EU Directives, such as the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992. [HL4774]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Government has given a very clear commitment to protect worker's rights now that the United Kingdom (UK) has left the European Union (EU). This includes health and safety in the workplace. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 has led to the UK having one of the best records on health and safety in the world. Health and safety requirements derived from EU law will become part of retained EU law at the end of the Implementation Period and continue to apply in the UK. There are no plans to change this.

Israeli Settlements

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the impact of

existing Israeli (1) settlements, and (2) infrastructure, in the West Bank on the viability of a future Palestinian state. [HL5726]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two state solution. We want to see a contiguous West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as part of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders. We continue to urge Israel to halt settlement expansion immediately.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the (1) government of the United States, and (2) the government of Israel, about the new boundaries of the Palestinian Territories after any proposed annexation. [HL5727]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 Alternate Israeli Prime Minister Gantz on 20 May and Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 2 June. We have also reiterated our position to the US. 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. Any changes to the status quo cannot be taken forward without an agreement negotiated by the parties themselves.

Music: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Caine

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Barran on 23 April (HL Deb, col 82), what further discussions they have held with the Music Venue Trust; and what additional support is being provided for small music venues in (1) London, and (2) other parts of the UK. [HL6150]

Baroness Barran: DCMS continues to engage with the Music Venue Trust including through:

Regular ministerial roundtable discussions;

Regular contact at official level;

Membership of the ministerially chaired Entertainment and Events Working Group.

The Entertainment and Events Working Group was established alongside a number of working groups to support the Secretary of State's Cultural Renewal Taskforce. The Music Venue Trust is an active and valued member of the Working Group, the focus of which is to produce sector-led guidance for the safe reopening of live music venues both in London and across the UK.

We continue to speak with HM Treasury colleagues to ensure that the full spectrum of government support reaches the UK's world-leading music industry.

National Security Council

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what arrangements they have in place to ensure that, following the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, there is designated ministerial representation at the National Security Council specifically to deal with international development matters and to speak for them. [HL6168]

Lord True: Membership of Cabinet Committees is decided by the Prime Minister and is regularly published on GOV.UK.

Nature Conservation: Crime

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government when Natural England's Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme will resume. [HL5889]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Natural England (NE) runs the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS) in England. WIIS makes enquiries into reports of the death or illness of wildlife, pets and beneficial invertebrates that may have resulted from pesticide poisoning.

WIIS has continued to operate in England. Routine WIIS field work was suspended in late March in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, NE has continued to deal with reported cases through desk-based investigations supported by the police and other local agents. NE will recommence field visits when this can be done safely.

Nurses: Students

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to recognise the contribution of nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic; and what plans they have to (1) end nursing student tuition fees, and (2) reimburse current debt for all nursing students. [HL5902]

Baroness Berridge: The government is extremely grateful to all students who chose to opt into a paid clinical placement in the NHS during this extremely difficult time. We have ensured that all students who do so are rewarded fairly for their hard work. Nursing, midwifery and allied health students who volunteered as part of the COVID-19 response have been receiving a salary and automatic NHS pension entitlement at the appropriate band. Time spent on paid placements as part of the COVID-19 response counts towards the requirement for students to complete a specified number of training hours in order to successfully complete their degrees.

Nursing students will continue to be required to pay tuition fees, and there are no plans for a specific debt write-off scheme for these students. Student loan borrowers are only required to make repayments from the April after they have finished their course, and once they are earning over the relevant repayment threshold. The amount borrowers are required to repay each week or month is linked to their income, not the interest rate or the amount borrowed. Repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the repayment threshold, and any outstanding debt is written off at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower.

Overseas Aid

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Department for International Development's (1) effectiveness, and (2) transparency, in spending overseas development aid. [\[HL6066\]](#)

Baroness Sugg: (1) DFID is responsible for three quarters of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) expenditure and has strong systems in place to ensure effective spend. DFID has invested significantly in ensuring that programmes are scrutinised for value for money and effective delivery. The department has a track record of spending and monitoring ODA well, including through ICAI.

(2) DFID is committed to transparency and continues to be a global leader, remaining in the 'very good' category of the 2020 Aid Transparency Index which assesses the performance of the world's major aid donors. DFID is in 9th place overall out of 47 international donors, and the 2nd most transparent donor globally.

Peat

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish the England Peat Strategy. [\[HL5886\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: In the 25 Year Environment Plan, the Government committed to publishing an England Peat Strategy to create and deliver a new ambitious framework for peat restoration in England. It will set out a holistic plan for the management, protection and restoration of our upland and lowland peatlands so that they deliver benefits for climate and nature. We intend to publish the strategy later this year.

Peat Bogs: Fires

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many peatland burning incidents have occurred in the 2019-20 burning season on (1) blanket bog and (2) other upland habitats. [\[HL5887\]](#)

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many voluntary agreements to end the burning of peatland are still in place; and what is the level of compliance with these agreements. [\[HL5888\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government has always been clear of the need to phase out burning of protected blanket bog to conserve these vulnerable habitats. We are currently looking at how legislation could achieve this and considering next steps. Real progress is being made in promoting sustainable alternatives. We have urged landowners to adopt these and continue to work with them constructively.

Burning on moorland may be carried out between 1 October and 15 April. No data is collected on the number of management fires that take place on blanket bog or other upland habitats. Natural England (NE) has recorded nine wildfires on upland sites during the 2019-20 burning season. Five of these affected blanket bog.

Voluntary Commitments to suspend burning were signed by 159 land managers (as of 24 September 2018). Of a total of 402 consents to burn, 187 have either expired or been surrendered since that time, equating to 47% of all consents.

NE does not monitor compliance with these Voluntary Commitments.

Personal Income: Scotland

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Citizens' Basic Income Feasibility Study Steering Group Assessing the Feasibility of Citizens' Basic Income Pilots in Scotland: Final Report, published on 10 June. [\[HL5580\]](#)

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Citizens' Basic Income does not target those most in need of support; it also has high costs and reduces work incentives. The Department for Work and Pensions believes the future lies in support that is increasingly tailored to the needs of the individual which Universal Credit underpins.

Population: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on population growth. [\[HL5900\]](#)

Baroness Sugg: Differences in population age structure mean that the impact of COVID-19 on population growth will vary from region to region. In many low-income countries, the indirect impacts of COVID-19, such as interruptions to education and reduced access to essential sexual and reproductive health services, will impact on people's ability to access essential services and therefore population growth rates.

The UK is working to identify and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations in low income countries.

Public Transport: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many transport authorities in England have had bailout deals agreed with the Department for Transport. [HL5915]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department made available to transport operators and local authorities in England outside London funding to keep bus and light rail services running during lockdown and help increase services as quickly as possible so that people can travel safely as we reopen the economy.

The Government has agreed a £1.6 billion support package for Transport for London to enable them to continue operating essential services safely and support the capital's gradual recovery from COVID-19.

Public Works Loan Board

Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that future lending terms for the Public Works Loan Board do not restrict councils' access to borrowing, in particular for projects to support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in areas such as (1) housing, (2) infrastructure, and (3) regeneration. [HL5936]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Local government invests billions of pounds every year to advance local priorities including economic recovery, housing, infrastructure and regeneration. The Government supports this local investment, in part by offering low cost loans to local authorities through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB).

Local government borrowing has grown substantially in recent years, led by a minority of local authorities borrowing from the PWLB to buy investment assets primarily for yield. The Government is clear that this is not an appropriate use of PWLB loans.

The Government is therefore consulting on a limited intervention to stop this activity, while preserving the ongoing availability of PWLB loans to support economic recovery and other core local priorities such as housing, infrastructure and regeneration. The Government hopes to receive responses to this consultation from across the sector.

Railway Stations: Access

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask Her Majesty's Government, since the additional £300 million funding for Access for All was provided in April 2019, what progress has there been in

each of the 73 stations ear-marked to benefit from the fund. [HL5941]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Network Rail have continued to successfully deliver the Access for All programme which is due to deliver a total of 110 accessible routes at stations between April 2019 and 2024. 11 of these projects have been completed and the remainder are at various stages of development and design. The Department and the Office of Rail and Roads are working closely with Network Rail to ensure the continued successful delivery of the programme and all projects remain on track to be completed by on schedule.

Railways: Coronavirus

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that rail companies communicate effectively with passengers about the season ticket refund process; and whether the length of time it is taking to refund such claims is acceptable in view of the Secretary of State for Transport's commitment to such refunds on 23 March so that "no one is unfairly out of pocket for doing the right thing". [HL5927]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Since 17 March over 160,000 season ticket holders have received refunds totalling over £260 million in response to COVID-19 travel restrictions. We are monitoring train operators' refund processing times to ensure that refunds are paid as quickly as possible. Train operators have allocated additional resources to process the unprecedented number of refund requests, and the majority are being paid within the industry standard processing time of one month.

We have worked with train operators to ensure they are providing clear information on their websites about the season ticket refund process including estimates of the expected claim processing time and a refund calculator, so passengers know when they should receive their refund and are reassured that the time taken to process their claim will not affect the amount refunded.

Railways: North of England

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the expected (1) timetable, and (2) programme, for the electrification of rail services in the North of England; and which railway lines they are considering for future electrification as part of (a) the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline, (b) the Governance for Railway Investment Projects process, (c) the programme to reverse the Beeching cuts, or (d) any other programme. [HL5909]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government is committed to electrification where it delivers benefits for railway users, environmental benefits, and value for

money. We have delivered hundreds of miles of electrification since 2010 and we continue to expand the electrified rail network. Electrification will play a significant role in our programme to achieve our Net Zero 2050 objective.

Network Rail is examining which parts of a decarbonised network will be most suited to electrification, and which to alternative technologies such as hydrogen and battery. We will consider the case for exploring some electrification schemes more quickly as this work progresses. The Department periodically publishes updates about schemes in the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

Rami Aman

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken in response to the arrest of Rami Aman in Gaza in April for engaging in online dialogue with Israelis; and whether they have called for his release. [HL5631]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We strongly condemn the detention of Rami Aman by Hamas. The UK retains a policy of no contact with Hamas in its entirety. Hamas has de facto control over the Gaza Strip. We monitor the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely, including reporting on human rights violations in the FCO's annual Human Rights and Democracy Report.

Sheep Meat: UK Trade with EU

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to safeguard the export of lamb products from the UK to EU markets in their negotiation for a trade agreement with the EU. [HL5957]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK Government intends to achieve a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EU by December 2020.

The Government wants a free trade deal, based on friendly cooperation. Avoiding tariffs would be beneficial to both the UK and the EU. The Political Declaration aims to achieve a zero tariff and zero quota agreement. We are working to achieve this, in the interests of farmers, businesses and consumers across the UK. This will benefit lamb producers who are exporting lamb products from the UK to the EU.

We remain optimistic and we will work hard to reach an agreement on our future relationship. This is why we have agreed to intensify talks throughout July.

Students: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of mental health support for students in (1) further, and (2) higher, education in England to deal with issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL5917]

Baroness Berridge: As my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, have both made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

Protecting students' mental health and wellbeing is a priority. This government is doing everything it can to promote good mental health in further and higher education settings.

Many further and higher education providers are bolstering their existing mental health services and adapting delivery to means other than face-to-face. Providers have responded quickly to transform mental health and wellbeing services, showing resourcefulness and there are many examples of good practice.

In addition, the Office for Students (OfS) recently announced the Student Space platform, which seeks to bridge gaps in mental health support for students arising from this unprecedented situation. Funded with up to £3 million by the OfS and led by Student Minds, it is designed to work alongside existing mental health services.

During Mental Health Awareness Week, the government announced £4.2 million for mental health charities, including Young Minds, the Samaritans and Bipolar UK. This is in addition to the £5 million Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund for mental health charities administered by Mind.

The government has also worked closely with the OfS to help clarify that higher education providers can draw upon existing student premium funding to increase their hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. Providers are able to use the funding, worth around £23 million per month for April, May, June and July, towards student hardship funds, including mental health support.

USA: Beef and Poultry Meat

Asked by Lord Lilley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides to UK travellers on the potential risks posed by eating anti-pathogen washed chicken or hormone fed beef in the United States. [HL6009]

Baroness Sugg: The UK Government does not offer advice on this specific matter to British travellers.

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