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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN ANSWERS**

**Written Answers.....1**

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<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Baroness Barran</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
<b>Baroness Berridge</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Bethell</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
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<b>Baroness Sugg</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
<b>Lord True</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Answers

Friday, 10 July 2020

## Apprentices: Travellers

Asked by **Baroness Whitaker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they intend to apply the findings and recommendations of the report by the Social Mobility Commission Apprenticeships and social mobility: fulfilling potential, published on 24 June, to members of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. [[HL6270](#)]

**Baroness Berridge:** Apprenticeships are an excellent way to access a wide range of rewarding careers and offer considerable value to individuals. We welcome the Social Mobility Commission's finding that apprenticeships boost employment and reduce the gap in earnings between people from disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are supporting employers, apprentices and training providers during this challenging time, and we remain committed to ensuring that high-quality apprenticeship opportunities are as accessible as possible to all people from all backgrounds, including young people from Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. We have worked with some of the country's most influential employers through our Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network to promote best practice in recruiting and supporting apprentices from diverse backgrounds. Our Apprenticeships Support and Knowledge programme also supports schools across England to provide disadvantaged students with information on apprenticeships.

We are committed to levelling up opportunity across the country. We are focused on how we can make sure more people and businesses can take advantage of apprenticeships in the future, especially small and medium sized businesses in disadvantaged areas. We continue to listen to employers, providers and apprentices, to see how we can build on our reforms so that they continue to support people from all backgrounds and the economy more broadly.

## Arts: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Aberdare**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to announce sector specific support for the commercial arts sector. [[HL6193](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** On 5 July, DCMS announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of sectors, including performing arts and theatres, museums and galleries, heritage sites, live music venues and independent cinema.

We want this package to support organisations across the cultural, heritage and creative sectors, and will publish further detailed guidance as soon as possible in July.

## British Nationals Abroad: Homicide

Asked by **Lord Falconer of Thoroton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Murder of British Nationals overseas. [[HL6216](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, National Police Chief's Council, and Chief Coroner's Office for England and Wales are in the final stages of reviewing the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on Murder, Manslaughter, and Infanticide Abroad. An updated MoU text will be published on Gov.UK once this process is complete.

## British Overseas Territories: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Randall of Uxbridge**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) financial, and (2) other, assistance they have offered each of the UK Overseas Territories as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL6373](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** The safety and security of those in the British Overseas Territories (OTs) is a UK Government priority. Multiple government departments, led by DFID and the FCO, have been working with OT Governments to respond to the pandemic.

It is first and foremost for the OTs to make full use of their financial resources in order to address their needs. The UK Government will consider requests for further support/funding on a case-by-case basis. All UK financial support is subject to robust governance and needs assessments.

To address immediate healthcare, access and security needs, FCO has reallocated £15m of 2020/21 CSSF and £5m of 2020/21 International Programme funds to COVID-19 support. DFID is providing an initial £10m from its budget to mitigate immediate non-health impacts in the three ODA-eligible OTs, and has earmarked an additional £20m to mitigate short to medium term impacts of the outbreak on these OTs.

To date, the UK Government has procured and delivered medical supplies to all the inhabited OTs (except Pitcairn, which has had no confirmed cases of COVID-19), delivered testing systems to 6 territories and boosted testing capabilities in three other OTs. Health professionals from Public Health England are providing advice and support to each OT, and the Government has supported OTs to recruit medical personnel.

MoD and Home Office have provided in-territory security support to Turks and Caicos Islands through a Security Assistance Team and an additional 29 military personnel have reinforced TCI's Maritime Police Unit to counter illegal migration. A further Security Assistance Team is supporting the Cayman Islands to assist planning

on security, logistics, COVID-19 and hurricane response. RFA ARGUS arrived in the Caribbean earlier than planned to provide support to the OTs during the hurricane season; she could also provide support for COVID-19 impacts if required.

The UK Government has arranged four flights to the Caribbean, including two paid for by the Cayman Islands Government, and a flight to the South Atlantic, flying residents of the Overseas Territories home from the UK as well as repatriating British Citizens and other nationalities from the Bahamas, Bermuda, Turks and Caicos Islands, the Cayman Islands and St Helena. The Government has also repatriated people from Ascension and the Falkland Islands using regular RAF flights.

### Cabinet Office: Advertising

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they have spent on paid for sponsored advertising in (1) the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, (2) the Times, (3) the Telegraph, (4) the Express, and (5) in total, since 23 March; what is their planned future spend for such advertising; and which department is responsible for overseeing such advertising and its cost. [HL6555]

**Lord True:** The Government has developed a strong national campaign to provide information and reassurance to the public about COVID-19. As part of this, we have utilised advertising in over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for overseeing these advertising costs. Cabinet Office publishes expenditure, including on public information campaigns, on a rolling monthly basis on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk) as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

### Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry

*Asked by Lord Lexden*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 25 February (HLWS118), when they will give their response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's report on Westminster, published on 25 February. [HL6172]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse investigation report, 'Allegations of child sexual abuse linked to Westminster', was published on 25 February and is available at <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/westminster/executive-summary>. The Government is considering the report's recommendations carefully and will respond in due course.

### Children in Care

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the need for children to be taken into care or classified as "in need" of child support. [HL6285]

**Baroness Berridge:** The government wants every child to be in a stable, loving home that is right for them.

One of the key principles of the legislation that underpins the UK's child protection system is that children are best looked after within their families.

The government is funding several programmes that seek to reduce need and support more children to stay at home in stable family environments, where this is in the child's best interests. We are investing £84 million over five years as part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme and over £17 million to support families through the Supporting Families: Investing in Practice programme. The government has also committed £1.085 billion to the Troubled Families Programme to achieve significant and sustained improvement for families with multiple, high-cost problems by 2021.

Good social work practice is key to helping families who need support to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. This is why we have invested over £100 million since 2017 on child and family social worker development programmes to ensure every social worker has the skills and knowledge they need.

Across the government, we are tackling the problems that cause children to be in need in the first place. This includes better supporting those with alcohol-dependent parents, the introduction of landmark legislation for those affected by domestic abuse, preventing young people being drawn into serious violence, and unprecedented investment in early years education and support for children and young people's mental health.

### China: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the letter sent to the government of China's State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs by the UN Special Rapporteurs on 19 June on (1) the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, (2) extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, (3) the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, (4) the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, (5) the situation of human rights defenders, and (6) expressing concern about the imposition of new security laws in Hong Kong. [HL6107]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the letter sent to the Government of China's State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs by the UN Special Rapporteurs on 19 June, and have repeatedly set out our concerns on the issues raised in the letter. We remain committed to promoting human rights in China, and our continued multilateral and bilateral activity demonstrates this. On 30 June at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UK led a formal Joint Statement with the support of 27 international partners, setting out our deep concern on Hong Kong and the situation in Xinjiang. This statement, delivered through UK leadership, underlines the strength and breadth of international concern. As the Foreign Secretary said in Parliament on 1 July, the enactment by China of a national security law for Hong Kong is a grave and deeply disturbing step. The law's imposition by Beijing on the people of Hong Kong constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. On the same day, the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office summoned the Chinese Ambassador to make clear the UK's deep concern at China's actions.

### Civil Service: Political Impartiality

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to amend the law on impartiality in the Civil Service. [HL6226]

**Lord True:** Part 1 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRAGA) provides the statutory basis for the Civil Service Code, and states that the Code must require civil servants to carry out their duties with impartiality. As set out in section 7(5), this requirement does not extend to Special Advisers. The Government has no plans to amend this.

### Cycling and Walking: Coronavirus

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they have given to local authorities about carrying out consultations with local communities ahead of the implementation of travel schemes funded from their emergency active travel fund for local authorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic announced by the Secretary of State on 23 May, in view of the eight week deadline for the implementation of such schemes; and what steps they are taking to ensure that the use of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders by local authorities in such schemes does not bypass local democratic accountability. [HL6237]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** To help authorities deliver at pace, new emergency legislation came into force on 23 May 2020 to help speed up the Emergency Traffic Order process in cases where measures are being introduced to deal with the effects of coronavirus. The main change is to how orders are advertised, which can now be done via digital means. It is for the Traffic

Authority to decide which type of Order to use to introduce changes and to comply with the relevant regulations. Orders can be Emergency, Permanent, Temporary or Experimental.

The Department has reminded local authorities of the need to consult businesses and other stakeholders before introducing road space reallocation measures in their proforma for Tranche 1 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund. It is for local authorities, to take decisions at the local level, on where and how to consult wider local communities.

### East Midlands Rail Franchise

*Asked by Lord Bradshaw*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 16 March (HL2045), how many of the 2,300 responses to the East Midlands Rail Franchise consultation supported the proposal to split the Norwich-Liverpool services at Nottingham. [HL6210]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Out of the 2,300 total responses, 1,148 expressed a view on this question, of which 398 supported the proposed change (with 750 opposed).

### Eritrea: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 24 June (HL5743), how they have verified reports that the government of Eritrea is targeting the Red Sea Afar people during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL6275]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 24 June (HL5743), what response they have received from the government of Eritrea following their raising of "concerns about human rights in Eritrea with the Government at every opportunity". [HL6276]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK has not been able to verify reports that the Government of Eritrea is targeting the Red Sea Afar people. The UK is informed by reporting from the UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea who regularly monitors the human rights situation in the country. Her latest report noted the reported marginalization of the Afar people. The UK strongly supports the important work that she does in challenging the Government of Eritrea to improve its human rights record. This was reiterated by the UK in our statement at the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 30 June. The Government of Eritrea acknowledges that there are areas of human rights concerns where there is room for improvement but progress to date remains limited. Eritrea remains a priority country for the FCO under our annual human



rights reporting, and we will continue to monitor the situation there.

## EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Roads

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the health and safety standards on roadbuilding projects funded by the EU Trust Fund for Africa. [HL6272]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK exercises oversight of UK funding directed through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa through the Fund's governance mechanisms. Individual projects such as roadbuilding are assessed for project and contextual risks and in relation to essential standards, including those for health and safety.

## Female Genital Mutilation

*Asked by Viscount Craigavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the report by the United Nations Population Fund, State of the World Population 2020: Against my will, published on 30 June, what assessment they have made of whether female genital mutilation can be eliminated by 2030. [HL6407]

*Asked by Viscount Craigavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the United Nations Population Fund, State of the World Population 2020: Against my will, published on 30 June. [HL6408]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK government welcomes UNFPA's 2020 State of the World Population report which shines a light on harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM. The report highlights that respect for human rights and efforts to shift harmful social norms are central to the efforts needed to end FGM by 2030.

The UK is a longstanding supporter to the UN Joint Programme to Eliminate FGM and our £50 million UK aid package includes support for social norms change and the promotion of rights, laws and policies that protect women and girls from FGM. The UK will continue to support efforts and work with our partners to advance gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the Africa-led movement to end FGM by 2030.

## High Speed 2 Railway Line

*Asked by Viscount Astor*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether HS2 Ltd has made changes to the design and scope of the HS2 Phase One programme since Royal Assent in 2017. [HL6195]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Since Royal Assent for Phase One in 2017, and in line with best practice for any

major infrastructure investment, HS2 Ltd has undertaken and completed a comprehensive review of scope ahead of HMG awarding Notice to Proceed in April 2020. This review concluded that the high-level design and scope of the programme was appropriate for meeting the scheme's business case objectives. Overall, the maturity of design for the scheme has developed significantly, moving from high-level designs for the scheme in 2017 to shovel-ready designs for the major civils works in 2020. In some cases, this maturing design has resulted in localised changes in specification, design and scope. However, these changes do not impact on the overall commitment to meet the scheme's objectives.

## High Speed 2 Railway Line: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what analysis was carried out to determine the potential long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HS2 passenger demand before the Notice to Proceed for HS2 Phase One was published. [HL6205]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The long-term impact of COVID-19 on rail demand will not become clear for some time. The Notice to Proceed decision for HS2 Ltd was supported by the published Full Business Case which included tests of resilience against a range of demand scenarios encompassing plausible impacts of COVID-19 on passenger demand.

## High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what methodology was used by HS2 Ltd to estimate the costs of the HS2 Phase One line of route between London and the West Midlands. [HL6203]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** HS2 Ltd has used a range of methodologies to estimate the cost of Phase 1 including New Rules of Measurement (NRM), Rail Method of Measurement (RMM), and Civil Engineering Standard Method of Measurement (CESMM). The estimates are tested through benchmarking techniques and ultimately validated through the contracted prices secured with suppliers.

## High Speed 2 Railway Line: Wendover

*Asked by Viscount Astor*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether HS2 Ltd used (1) HS2: A Guide to Tunnelling Costs, published by HS2 Ltd on 11 June 2015, and (2) the Infrastructure Cost Review by HM Treasury and Infrastructure UK, published on 21 December 2010, as benchmarks for estimating the costs of the Wendover Short-Mined Tunnel proposal. [HL6196]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** HS2 Ltd used both of the reports referred to at (1) and (2) as guides to the

development of cost estimates for the tunnels on the Phase One route. Both reports are principally focussed on bored tunnels, and their application to cost estimate development for a mined tunnel would be limited. HS2 Ltd did however develop a bottom-up cost estimate of a mined tunnel in the Wendover area, to aid options analysis.

When proposals for a mined tunnel at Wendover were re-submitted to the Department by mbpc Ltd on behalf of Wendover Parish Council after Royal Assent had been granted, HS2 Ltd subsequently undertook a separate comparative line by line cost analysis of the mbpc proposal, prior to the Department rejecting the mined tunnel proposal in 2018.

Producing a further bottom-up estimate with contractor involvement (following the Main Works Civils Contracts award in July 2017) was rejected in October 2018 on the grounds of cost, and this was communicated in writing to the constituency MP at that time.

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what methodology was used by KPMG during the independent external consultant review of the Wendover Short Mined tunnel proposal on the HS2 proposal on the HS2 Phase One line of route. [[HL6204](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** In spring 2018, the Department instructed KPMG to undertake an independent review of the presented options, both from HS2 Ltd and from mbpc Ltd (on behalf of Wendover Parish Council) for the route of the railway in the Wendover area. The Department asked the review to examine and consider both options, and to consider whether the information provided by mbpc Ltd was sufficient to justify a re-evaluation of the consented scheme. The review included a comparative assessment of the cost, schedule and technical viability of both presented options.

### **Hong Kong: Human Rights**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the "serious concern" expressed by several UN Special Rapporteurs that the proposed changes to the Hong Kong special administrative region's legal system and enforcement mechanisms proposed in the Decision of the National People's Congress, do not include assurances that the measures will be fully compliant with international human rights law, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [[HL6108](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We remain deeply concerned about the situation in Hong Kong. As the Foreign Secretary said in Parliament on 1 July, the enactment by China of a national security law for Hong Kong is a grave and deeply disturbing step. The law's

imposition by Beijing on the people of Hong Kong constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. On the same day, the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office summoned the Chinese Ambassador to make clear the UK's deep concern at China's actions.

With regard to the law's compliance with international human rights law, as the Foreign Secretary set out in his statement, the national security legislation contains a number of measures that directly threaten the freedoms and rights protected by the Joint Declaration. This includes the potentially wide-ranging ability of the Chinese authorities to take jurisdiction over certain cases without any independent oversight, and to try those cases in the Chinese courts. This violates paragraphs 3(3) and 3(5) of the Joint Declaration, and directly threatens the rights set out in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political rights, which, under the Joint Declaration, are to be protected in Hong Kong. This represents an assault on freedom of speech and the freedom of peaceful protest for the people of Hong Kong.

### **Local Government: Elections**

*Asked by Lord Tyler*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to change the rights of EU citizens resident in the UK to stand and vote in local elections before the local government elections in England and Wales in 2021. [[HL6336](#)]

**Lord True:** The May local elections were postponed until 2021 due to Covid-19.

In that context, the UK Government can confirm that resident EU citizens will remain able to vote and stand in the rescheduled May 2021 local elections in England (including London Assembly elections) and the May 2021 Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales. Those elected to office will be able to serve their full term and this will also apply to those elected before 2021.

The franchise for local elections are devolved in Scotland and Wales.

The UK Government has been clear that the issue of local voting rights of EU citizens living in the UK needs to be considered alongside the rights and interests of British expats living abroad. The Government has signed bilateral voting rights agreements with Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg in 2019, and with Poland in May 2020. We continue to work on further bilateral voting rights agreements with other EU member states.

### **Mali: Politics and Government**

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking through the UN Security Council negotiations on the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali to refresh the international community's support for the Agreement

for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in order for the social and political reforms contained within it to be delivered. [HL6234]

**Baroness Sugg:** On 29 June the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2531, renewing the mandate of UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until June 2021. The UK worked with partners to secure a mandate that ensures that the mission helps drive forward the implementation of Mali's 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation as a priority. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State responsible for the UN, participated in the UN Security Council Debate on MINUSMA on 11 June and stressed the importance of fully implementing all requirements of the peace agreement. Our deployment of 250 troops to MINUSMA, planned for later this year, will also increase the Mission's capacity to fulfil its peacekeeping and civilian tasks, helping it to perform its role in support of the peace process.

### NATO: Protective Clothing

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what use they have made of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre's civil emergency response mechanism as a means of sourcing personal protective equipment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and whether they have made any requests for assistance to the Centre. [HL3770]

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what use they have made of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency in attempting to procure personal protective equipment for the NHS. [HL3771]

**Lord Bethell:** To date, seven allied and nine partner nations have requested international assistance through the NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC). In chronological order of requesting, these are: Ukraine, Spain, Montenegro, Italy, Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Colombia, Slovenia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Bulgaria, Tunisia and Iraq. Many of these requests were for personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also asked for airlift support. The United Kingdom has not requested assistance through the EADRCC but we have responded to a small number of requests, including from Ukraine, Georgia, North Macedonia and Moldova, where PPE and medical equipment has been supplied. In these cases, equipment has been procured locally in the country concerned and within the constraints of our domestic response.

As part of the COVID-19 PPE team seconded to work with the Cabinet Office on PPE procurement, teams from Defence Equipment and Support have been using the

NATO Support and Procurement Agency framework to order PPE for the National Health Service.

### Public Sector: Contracts

*Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures have been put in place for enhanced monitoring of contracts awarded using the exemptions in Regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL6217]

*Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many contracts awarded using the exemptions in Regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 during the COVID-19 pandemic have been published more than 20 days after being awarded. [HL6218]

**Lord True:** The information requested is not held centrally. Details of central government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

The Government has rigorous controls in place to challenge spend robustly and ensure that the actions of central government contracting authorities are open, fair and transparent.

Cabinet Office commercial spend controls aim to improve the value public spending delivers by leveraging expertise from Cabinet Office's central functional teams in commercial contracting to scrutinise all contract awards with a value greater than £10m. These contract awards are subject to approval by the Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Minister of State, Lord Agnew.

### Rail Review: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why a decision was made to delay the Williams Review of rail services to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the rail sector, when the Notice to Proceed for HS2 Phase One was published without any such assessment. [HL6206]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Our wider ambitions for rail reform across the industry are unchanged, and the Department is committed to delivering on the detailed, evidence-based priorities which were established as part of the Williams Rail Review. However, in light of the current impact of COVID-19 and its potential consequences, we need to look again at how best to deliver these ambitions: to create a railway where passengers know who is in charge, that delivers value for money and that the UK can be proud of.

Following the decision to proceed with HS2 Phase One in February, continuing with the technical step of 'Notice-to-Proceed' remains the right course of action. Issuing Notice to Proceed provided much-needed certainty for the construction industry and wider supply



chain during the current uncertainty and allows construction of this transformational scheme to truly begin.

Work on HS2 is only taking place where it is practical and safe to do so and construction activity remains consistent with Public Health England's guidance. We are continuing to work closely with HS2 Ltd and its contractors to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the scheme as the situation develops.

### **Sudan: Overseas Aid**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government which UK Government funded projects in Sudan, if any, have been cancelled as a result of prioritising COVID-19 related programmes. [\[HL6273\]](#)

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK has not cancelled any programmes in Sudan as a result of COVID-19. We are committed to supporting the Sudanese response to the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering vital humanitarian assistance to those most in need. The UK is committed to supporting Sudan's transition to a stable, prosperous democracy.

### **Syria: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 18 June (HL5354) which outlined potential delays to "the provision of goods to Syria's pharmaceutical industry", what steps they are taking to mitigate (1) any damage to that country's ability to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, and (2) any impact of sanctions on Syrian civilians. [\[HL6211\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is working closely with the UN and our humanitarian partners to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Syria and sustain life-saving services there. On 30 June, the International Development Secretary announced a UK pledge of at least £300 million for the Syria crisis in 2020. The funding will help stop the spread of the virus in Syria by supporting health workers with training, medical supplies and sanitation.

As previously stated in my Written Answer (HL5354), medical equipment and medicines required to fight the COVID-19 pandemic are not subject to direct restrictions on export, supply, financing or use in Syria.

### **Syria: Sanctions**

*Asked by Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the same exceptions to sanctions applicable to international humanitarian organisations also apply to healthcare

agencies that are part of the government of Syria. [\[HL6212\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We can confirm that healthcare agencies that are part of the Syrian regime are not designated under EU sanctions.

### **Technology**

*Asked by Lord Mann*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what data exploitative technologies they are aware are in use in the UK; and what steps they are taking to ensure that such technologies cannot be exploited by anti-abortion activists. [\[HL6014\]](#)

**Baroness Barran:** The Government takes both the protection of personal data and the right to privacy extremely seriously. Organisations that are processing people's data for the purposes of providing online services should comply with data protection laws, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations.

In February 2019, DCMS announced a programme of work to consider how online advertising is regulated in the UK and in January 2020, a call for evidence was launched to gather views on online advertising standards. The UK Government also established the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, an independent advisory body, which provides advice on how we maximise the benefits of data-driven technologies.

### **Veterans: Mental Illness**

*Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the incidence of mental health problems among former armed forces personnel; and how much funding they have allocated to assist with mental health provision for such people. [\[HL6300\]](#)

**Lord Bethell:** Veteran mental health needs are very often no different to those of the general population. Data in England has shown that most patients suffer from common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety and readily make use of the mainstream mental health services provided throughout the United Kingdom.

For veterans that do need specialist support, the Government is fully committed to providing high quality evidence-based services. The National Health Service in England has set up two dedicated veterans' mental health services, the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service and the Complex Treatment Services. These services benefit from over £12 million per year investment. The forthcoming Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service will see even more investment and will provide crisis care and therapeutic inpatient support for those who need urgent and emergency care.

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