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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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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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<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
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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
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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, 14 July 2020

Amendments to the Withdrawal Agreement

[HLWS357]

Lord True: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Rt Hon Michael Gove MP), has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

At its second meeting on 12 June 2020, the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee, co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, adopted one Decision to correct errors and omissions in the Withdrawal Agreement (Decision No. 1/2020).

Decision No. 1/2020 makes technical changes to Part I Annex I - Social Security Coordination and Part Five - Financial Provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The changes to Part I Annex I add in two decisions made by the Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems to the list of Decisions and Recommendations already set out. Decision No. F3 specifies how the amount of family benefits should be calculated for a recipient. Decision No. E7 states that, as of 3 July 2019, the transmission of data between the institutions shall be carried out by electronic means through the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) system and based on the exchange of Structured Electronic Documents. These decisions were approved by the EU on 19 December 2018 and 27 June 2019 respectively.

The changes to Part Five include amendments to Articles 135, 137, 143, 144 and 150 that reflect the actual date of the UK's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020. An additional amendment was made to Article 145 to provide legal certainty to UK beneficiaries in respect of grants made under the Research Fund for Steel and Coal until the closure of these projects.

The Decision was published by the UK and the EU on 14 July 2020.

Annual European Union Finances Statement

[HLWS358]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I am today laying before Parliament, "the European Union Finances 2019: statement on the 2019 EU Budget and measures to counter fraud and financial mismanagement" (CP 256). This is a routine annual publication and is the thirty ninth in the series.

The statement gives details of revenue and expenditure in the 2019 European Union (EU) Budget, recent developments in EU financial management and measures to counter fraud against the EU Budget. It also includes a

chapter and annex on the use of EU funds in the UK over the period.

The document also provides an updated HM Treasury estimate of the value of the financial settlement, which was made legally binding by the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. Exit from the EU on 31 January 2020 resulted in some UK and EU payments that would originally have been paid post-withdrawal being paid while the UK remained a Member State. HM Treasury estimate that the current value of the financial settlement is £30.2bn. This remains within the Government's reasonable central range of £35-39bn, adjusted to take into account the UK's 31 January 2020 exit date. In Annex E, HM Treasury provides an updated summary of the financial settlement, other costs set out in the Withdrawal Agreement and short-term public expenditure costs.

Children's Social Care Update

[HLWS360]

Baroness Berridge: My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (Vicky Ford) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

On 24 April 2020 regulations were introduced to provide local authorities and children's social care providers with temporary flexibilities to support them to focus on core safeguarding duties during the coronavirus pandemic. We made no amendments to primary legislation, and the vast majority of statutory duties in secondary legislation remained unchanged. The regulations – the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 – are due to lapse on 25 September 2020.

When the regulations were introduced, we faced exceptional circumstances, with social workers and others facing decisions that they had never faced before. There was an urgent need to take action to ensure that local authorities and others supporting children and young people could focus on core safeguarding responsibilities should the worst-case scenario come to pass. We needed to prepare for very significant rates of staff sickness coupled with family illness potentially leading to many more children needing to be found emergency care. We were aware that the coronavirus pandemic would have a real impact on the lives of children and families, and that this would be a difficult time for them.

Protecting vulnerable children has been at the heart of the Government's response to the virus. These regulations formed part of that response, alongside keeping schools and other settings open for vulnerable children, substantial additional investment, and additional support direct to children, young people, and their families.

The Government has always been clear that these temporary amendments should be used only when absolutely necessary and only if consistent with the overarching safeguarding and welfare duties that have

remained in place. Our guidance sets out clear safeguards about how and when they should be used:

- where staff shortages, due to sickness or other reasons, make it difficult or impossible to meet the original requirements.
- where making use of flexibilities to take a different approach is the most sensible, risk-based response in light of other demands and pressures on services, this might involve focusing services on those most at risk.
- where there is a consequential reason to make use of flexibilities, for example, due to limited capacity in other providers or partners making it difficult or impossible to comply with the original requirements.

Our monitoring has shown that the majority of the regulatory flexibilities have been rarely used and only when needed in response to coronavirus.

Our approach to monitoring is based on a triangulation of information we are gathering from a range of delivery partners to understand which of the regulations are being used and why. We are actively seeking regular feedback from a variety of sources including local authorities, social workers, charities, Ofsted, and other key partners. We will continue to engage on this scale whilst the regulations remain in place.

Our monitoring data shows that the regulations are being used infrequently. Out of 128 local authorities we have spoken with in June and July, 87 have used at least one regulation, although many have only used them on a limited number of occasions and in a limited number of areas.

The most used related to the fostering and adoption regulations, notably allowing medical reports to be considered at a later stage in the adoption and fostering process though still prior to approval. This has minimised delays in approving adopters for children needing a new, forever, family. Similarly, relaxations around panels have allowed for the continued recruitment of foster carers and a continued functionality of processes.

Virtual engagement with children and families has often been used alongside face to face visits and, in some cases, this has resulted in greater levels of contact between children, young people, parents, and carers – and improved engagement from some young people.

Senior leaders in children's social care have set out to the Government and Ofsted how they have approached the use of the temporary regulations and explained that they have robust sign-off processes in place for when a regulation has been used. Ofsted report that local authorities have said decisions on the use of the regulations are being made with the child at the heart of the case, in line with the principles in the guidance, including assessing risks and working on a collaborative basis.

We have always been clear that these temporary amendments will remain in place only for so long as they are needed.

The extraordinary measures the Government has taken over the last few months means that we are now in a much better position to ease the restrictions that everyone has faced. Given the lower level of coronavirus now present, there is a significantly reduced need for local authorities and providers to use these flexibilities. I therefore intend to update guidance immediately to make it clear that there should no longer be a need to use most of these flexibilities and will be writing to local authorities and providers accordingly. Where they do use flexibilities, local authorities and providers should ensure that they have strong justification.

I would also like to provide further clarity about the future of these flexibilities and am today announcing that, subject to a short period of consultation, the overwhelming majority of these regulations will expire as planned on 25 September.

The Government believes that there may be circumstances in which some services continue to face specific and exceptional challenges into the autumn. As more children are seen by schools, and social distancing eases further and hitherto hidden harms come to light, we must be prepared for the potential additional demands that may still be placed on services.

I am therefore minded, subject to consultation, to extend a very small number of temporary changes for a further period. These regulations specifically address the following points.

- *Medical reports*

In order to become a foster carer or adoptive parent, one needs to provide a medical report from a General Practitioner. As restrictions are eased and schools return, we expect that there may be more children needing care than is usual, and therefore there will be a higher need for potential adopters and foster carers. Our National Health Service still faces significant challenges as we enter a period of recovery. Therefore, I am minded to extend the amendments that allow more time for General Practitioners and other health professionals to provide information to support the process of approving much needed potential adopters and foster carers. This does not remove the requirement for medical reports to be provided but moves the time during the process that the report must be provided before the child is placed with the foster parent or adoptive parent.

- *Virtual visits*

We must be able to keep essential services, such as social worker visits, operating during any local lockdowns, and in cases where households are being required to self-isolate due to a case, or suspected case, of coronavirus, or contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, in line with medical advice from the NHS test and trace service. Therefore, I am suggesting that it may be appropriate to continue to enable visits in these situations to happen virtually. However, in all other situations I would expect face to face visits to take place. Moreover, in my view the flexibilities regarding timing of these visits should lapse, as the provision for virtual visits

should now provide sufficient flexibility on the basis that workforce capacity, the original reason for these flexibilities being introduced, is now no longer the concern that it was.

- *Ofsted inspections*

Ofsted inspections have not taken place since March so Ofsted will need a period of catch-up before it can resume normal service. As announced last week, Ofsted are planning to carry out a phased return to routine inspections. This will include risk-based assurance visits to children's social care settings, based on the previous inspection judgement, the amount of time since a setting was last inspected and other information Ofsted hold about the setting. These assurance visits will occur between September 2020 and March 2021. At this point full graded inspections will recommence. I am therefore recommending that the suspension of the existing frequency regulation for Ofsted inspections be extended until 31 March 2021, to allow Ofsted to provide the most assurance, to the sector and the wider public, about the safety and care of children.

A short consultation will launch later this week to inform final decisions and I would encourage all interested parties to respond. Should a new Statutory Instrument be proposed to extend any flexibility beyond 25 September 2020, Parliament will be provided with the customary 21 days opportunity to scrutinise the regulations before they come into force.

Our guidance has been clear that the regulatory flexibilities should only ever have been used with senior management oversight and that all decisions should be recorded. I am, however, considering how additional safeguards on the use of the flexibilities could be employed. Our consultation will therefore seek views on this question.

As inspections resume, Ofsted will want to be assured that any flexibilities have been used in the best interests of children, following careful risk assessment and with clear records of decisions made by local authorities and providers. As such, local authorities and providers must maintain a focus on child-centred practice and continue to record their decisions and ensure that these records are available for Ofsted. Inspectors will want to see the best possible practice for children. Whilst routine inspections have been suspended, Ofsted has continued to inspect where they have been made aware of safeguarding concerns. They have acted swiftly and have taken action to restrict children going into a home or stop a home operating in 23 cases. They have continued to start proceedings to cancel the registration of homes or managers where this is the right thing to do. And while they have prioritised registration of new children's homes, they have still refused to register people they did not think were suitable.

Throughout this pandemic, social workers, charities, and others working to support our most vulnerable children and families have worked tirelessly to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need. I would

like to place on record my personal gratitude, and that of the whole Government, for everything they have done and continue to do. I would also like to acknowledge the extremely difficult circumstances many children and families have faced during this pandemic.

Protecting vulnerable children remains our top priority, as it does for local authorities and children's social care providers across the country. As the country begins to return to a more normal way of life, it is absolutely right that this also applies to children's social care.

Director General of National Crime Agency (Reappointment of Lynne Owens)

[HLWS350]

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

I have reappointed Lynne Owens to be the Director General of the National Crime Agency for a further two years from January 2021. The Director General holds an extremely important position in UK Law Enforcement, leading and coordinating the response to Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). SOC affects more UK citizens than any other national security threat and costs us more than £37 billion every year.

It is customary to advertise the post of DG NCA to attract the very best talent available from as wide a field as possible – and, under normal circumstances, I would pursue this approach. However, this year is different for two important reasons. First, the UK is facing a threat unparalleled in peacetime from the coronavirus pandemic, and the NCA is playing a key part by working closely with its law enforcement partners to ensure that we are stopping the organised criminals who despicably try to use the crisis to their advantage.

Second, the way in which the UK tackles SOC is at a crucial stage in its development. The Independent Review of SOC conducted by Sir Craig Mackey has concluded, and the findings are being explored by the Home Office. The Government will announce its response later in the year, but developing the capabilities and role of the NCA will be key to that response. The NCA must continue with its excellent work, but it must also strive to develop and improve to ensure we stay ahead of the threat from SOC.

There is an overwhelming need, therefore, for an experienced leader at the NCA to provide stability while we tackle the coronavirus pandemic and to ensure effective delivery of this Government's manifesto commitment to strengthen the Agency. I have no doubt that in Lynne's reappointment we will continue to see the work of a fantastic leader. During a career in law enforcement over 30 years, she has built up a wealth of experience holding a variety of different positions from frontline policing to Chief Constable of Surrey and, of course, Director General of the NCA.

Finance Bill: Legislation Day

[HLWS353]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My right honourable friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman) made the following Written Ministerial Statement yesterday.

The Government will introduce the Finance Bill following the next Budget.

In line with the approach to tax policy making set out in the government's documents 'Tax Policy Making: a new approach', published in 2010, and 'The new Budget timetable and the tax policy making process', published in 2017, the Government is committed, where possible, to publishing most tax legislation in draft for technical consultation before the legislation is laid before Parliament.

The Government will publish draft clauses for the next Finance Bill, which will largely cover pre-announced policy changes, on Tuesday 21 July 2020 along with accompanying explanatory notes, tax information and impact notes, responses to consultations and other supporting documents. All publications will be available on the gov.uk website.

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management

[HLWS351]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Rt. Hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice) has today made the following statement:

I recognise the immense impacts that flooding and coastal erosion can have on homes and businesses across the country. That is why this government is committed to reducing the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy from flooding and coastal erosion – as shown by our £2.6 billion investment in flood and coastal defences since 2015 to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

At the Budget we committed to double our investment in the flood and coastal defence programme in England over the next six years to £5.2 billion which will better protect a further 336,000 properties by 2027. In addition to this record funding, I am today announcing a further investment of up to £170 million to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes to boost jobs, businesses and economic growth as part of the economic recovery from coronavirus. These projects will commence in 2020 and 2021 to drive growth and unlock a range of benefits for local economies across the country – from Sheffield to Bude.

As part of the government's continuing action to tackle climate change, we have today set out a package of measures to better protect and prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion for the long-term. I have today published a new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Policy Statement for England which represents the most substantive update to our national

effort to tackle flood and coastal erosion risk in a decade - since the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

I am announcing further details of the £200 million programme which will support 25 local areas to drive innovation to increase resilience to flooding and coastal erosion – and I am proposing to take forward changes to the Flood Re scheme which will accelerate uptake of property flood resilience measures.

The long-term Policy Statement sets out the government's ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. It outlines five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.

These actions will, not just, reduce the likelihood of flooding and coastal erosion but will also reduce the impacts if flooding does happen. They will work together to increase resilience across the country. The Policy Statement will encourage wider and more comprehensive action by all those with a part to play to drive down flood risk from every angle through these five policies:

i. Upgrading and expanding our national flood defences and infrastructure

We will continue to build the new flood defences that the nation needs, investing in more permanent, demountable and temporary defences – building on the success of our £2.6 billion investment to better protect 300,000 properties since 2015. As announced at the Budget, over the next six years, we will invest a record £5.2 billion in the flood and coastal defence programme in England. This will better protect a further 336,000 properties and reduce national flood risk by up to 11% by 2027.

ii. Managing the flow of water more effectively

We will deliver an integrated approach to managing water to better protect communities from flooding and provide wider benefits for water resource management and the environment. As part of this, we will increase the number of water management schemes within and across catchments to reduce flood risk and help manage drought risk. We will also do more to tackle surface water flood risk.

iii. Harnessing the power of nature to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk and achieve multiple benefits

We will double the number of government funded projects which include nature-based solutions to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk. We will strengthen links between natural flood risk management and wider environmental and social benefits and explore how we can do more to deliver multiple benefits.

iv. Better preparing our communities

We will ensure that every single home currently at high risk of flooding is better protected or better prepared. We will maintain and enhance our planning policies that

direct new development away from areas at risk. We will ensure our communities and businesses have the information they need to take ownership of their resilience. Our policies will help to ensure that buildings, important infrastructure sites and key public services are better prepared to manage flood risk. We will work together to support communities, including when flooding happens and in recovery.

v. Enabling more resilient places through a catchment-based approach

We will adopt a catchment-based approach which means considering the full range of actions that could be taken in an area, upstream and downstream, by a variety of bodies to improve resilience. We will transform the current approach to local flood and coastal erosion risk planning so that every area of England will have a more strategic and comprehensive local plan by 2026 which drives long-term local action and investment. In areas facing significant coastal erosion and impacts from sea levels rising, we will support local areas to implement long-term plans to manage risk.

Alongside the Policy Statement, the Environment Agency will shortly lay before Parliament its National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The Strategy which will provide direction to the work of risk management authorities on the ground and includes strategic objectives to improve the resilience of the nation through to 2100.

The new £200 million innovative resilience programme will test and demonstrate actions which are needed to deliver the ambition outlined in the Policy Statement. As well as delivering innovative actions in 25 selected areas, the evidence gained from the programme will enable successful approaches to be identified and implemented more widely.

In July 2019 Flood Re published their first Quinquennial Review into the scheme - a legislative requirement every five years - and made a number of proposals to government. Having carefully considered these proposals I am today announcing that we will consult on a number of them, including some proposals which go further in order to increase the uptake of Property Flood Resilience and better support customers and insurers to recognise the benefits. The proposals will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme and incentivise the use of property flood resilience measures to make properties more resilient to flooding.

The actions the government is committing to today will strengthen our approach to tackling flood and coastal erosion risk for the long-term and demonstrates the UK's world-leading work to tackle climate change. They will improve our health and wellbeing, enhance our environment and support our economic recovery. Taken together this means that our country will be significantly more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and will ensure that every place can thrive in a changing climate.

Future Trading Relationship with Australia: Update on Negotiations

[HLWS356]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss MP) has today made the following statement.

Trade negotiators from the UK and Australia held the first round of negotiations for a UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between 29 June and 10 July 2020.

We are now one step closer to an ambitious, wide-ranging free trade agreement with one of our oldest friends. An FTA with Australia can bring investment, better jobs, higher wages and lower prices just when we need them the most.

Both teams of negotiators recognised the unprecedented circumstances we find ourselves in and reiterated that more global trade is essential to support post-Covid economic recovery.

Negotiations were conducted virtually and covered discussions on all areas of a comprehensive trade agreement.

The discussions covered the following areas:

- Anti-Corruption and Transparency
- Competition
- Cross-cutting general provisions
- Customs
- Digital/e-commerce
- Environment
- Financial Services
- Trade in Goods and Trade Remedies
- Good Regulatory Practice
- Intellectual Property
- Investment
- Labour
- Procurement
- Rules of Origin
- Services, including Movement of Natural Persons and Professional Business Services
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- State Owned Enterprises
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- State to State Dispute Settlement
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Telecommunications

We also had positive exploratory discussions on Clean Growth, Development, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Innovation.

Discussions between negotiators were productive and reflected our shared ambition to secure a comprehensive deal to boost trade and investment between our like-minded economies.

Teams discussed their respective objectives and agreed a forward plan for future talks. Our positive discussions in round one have laid the groundwork for the UK and Australia to achieve high-quality outcomes across the agreement.

The UK and Australia are aligned in many areas which will enable us to make quick progress across many chapters. In discussions, both countries emphasised a desire to be particularly ambitious in areas including services, digital trade and in supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to benefit from the opportunities that increased trade provide.

The Government is committed to negotiating a comprehensive agreement with Australia and we look forward to making further progress. We will explore the option of face-to-face negotiations when it is safe to do so. The Government will make its next statement on progress following the second round of talks, currently planned for September.

Higher Technical Education Reform

[HLWS354]

Baroness Berridge: My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today, I am pleased to launch the government's new reforms of higher technical education in England.

Take up of higher technical education in England is low and has been falling, leading to skills shortages across our economy. Employers are struggling to access the higher technical skills they need to grow and thrive and learners are missing out on the opportunities that a higher technical education can bring. To build a more prosperous, productive and fairer country that needs to change.

We are already taking action to strengthen technical education, with the rollout of T Levels, investment in our further education colleges and up to £290 million for flagship Institutes of Technology. Now we need to take the next step in levelling up our skills system and reverse the generational decline in higher technical education.

Our vision is for higher technical education to be a popular and prestigious choice that delivers the skills employers and learners need. We want to encourage more students to continue studying after T Levels or A levels, and we want higher technical education to attract workers of all ages looking to upskill and retrain.

At the moment, there are thousands of higher technical qualifications, with no national assurance that they provide the skills employers need. Some qualifications and courses are excellent, but overall there is low awareness and varying quality. The range of terminology, qualifications and provider types creates a complex

landscape that is hard for employers and learners to navigate.

We will be establishing a high-quality system of higher technical education where learners and employers can have confidence in high-quality courses, whether they are taught in a further education college, a university or an independent training provider. The reforms being set out today are a vital first step in achieving that.

We will introduce a national scheme to approve higher technical qualifications that provide the skills that employers need, starting with digital qualifications, and followed by health and science and construction qualifications. This scheme will be delivered through the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, and the Institute will be guided by employer-led national standards.

We want providers offering high-quality higher technical courses to have access to industry standard facilities and equipment, teachers with relevant industrial experience and pedagogical expertise, and close links to employers. At the heart of this are our flagship Institutes of Technology and our National Colleges. We will work with the Office for Students and Ofsted, drawing on their regulatory expertise, to ensure that higher technical education best meets the needs of learners and employers and provides value for money.

Finally, we will raise the profile and understanding of the best higher technical education courses through a government-backed brand, a communications campaign and improvements to information, advice and guidance.

Reforming and growing higher technical education will be a long-term endeavour. We will continue to develop and implement our reforms carefully and work closely with everyone who shares our goal of improving higher technical education. Together we can transform higher technical education and better support learners and employers across England.

HMICFRS Report on National Crime Agency's Criminal Intelligence Function

[HLWS355]

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

The National Crime Agency (NCA) leads the fight against serious and organised crime (SOC). It has the power to task other law enforcement partners and a capability, with local to international reach, to disrupt the impact of SOC on the UK.

This is the sixth HMICFRS inspection of the NCA and examines the effectiveness of its criminal intelligence function. The focus is specifically on capabilities, resourcing, alignment with the 2018 SOC Strategy and the National Strategic Assessment (NSA), ability to provide a single, authoritative, strategic assessment of

threat, and compliance with national intelligence standards and existing legislation.

I have asked HMICFRS to publish the report on my behalf. It will be published today and will be available online at www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The inspection found that the NCA is meeting its statutory obligation to provide a criminal intelligence function and has the resources and systems in place to effectively manage information. Some deficiencies were identified in relation to PND license provision, the need for timely submission of regional threat assessment and ensuring staff and systems are equipped to adequately manage sensitive intelligence. HMICFRS made four recommendations which, once addressed will improve procedures and strengthen the Agency's criminal intelligence capability.

It is for the NCA's Director General to respond to these recommendations, in line with the requirements of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

HS2 Safeguarding

[HLWS352]

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

I am today publishing additional Safeguarding Directions to protect a site in Leeds which we anticipate may be needed to build Phase 2b of the HS2 project.

The site is not currently in use. Any future planning application affecting the land that has been identified in the Safeguarding Directions and associated map would first need to be discussed with HS2 Ltd, and if necessary the Secretary of State, before being determined for as long as the Safeguarding Directions remain in place.

The owner of the site has been made aware of the Safeguarding Directions prior to their publication as has the local planning authority, Leeds City Council. By protecting the site now, the Government guards against potentially conflicting development, which could otherwise disrupt the construction of HS2, and/or increase the costs of building the new railway.

I am not publishing updated Safeguarding Directions for the remainder of the future Phase 2b route at this stage.

The final scope and phasing of HS2 Phase 2b will be determined following publication of the Government's Integrated Rail Plan, which is expected to be published by the end of the year.

The Government periodically reviews land requirements needed for the project and updates the extent of safeguarding accordingly. It is anticipated that land requirements for Phase 2b HS2 will be updated prior to the deposit of a relevant hybrid Bill.

I am placing a copy of the Safeguarding Directions in the libraries of both Houses.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Safeguarding Directions [200714 - Safeguarding directions.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2020-07-14/HLWS352/>

Planning Update: Cultural Venues and Holiday Parks

[HLWS359]

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:

Planning update: preventing loss of cultural venues and planning conditions for holiday parks

Introduction

The Nation's cultural and tourism industries are vitally important to the economy and the communities they serve. Many businesses in the sector have, and are continuing to face, severe disruption due to Covid-19. This Statement comes into effect immediately.

Preventing loss of theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues

The Covid-19 pandemic presents particular challenges for organisations that depend on engaging with audiences and visitors in person. It has forced thousands of cultural institutions to close their doors, including theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues across the country. This is why my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture Media and Sport announced £1.57 billion in financial support for the sector on 5 July to help these venues survive this period, and enable them to re-open when it is safe and economically viable to do so.

However, Covid-19 will continue to prevent the full reopening of a number of these venues for some time. This means that previously viable businesses face unprecedented financial difficulty. The Government recognises that the temporary closure of theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues due to Covid-19 has the potential to lead to permanent loss of important cultural and economic assets, and is determined that otherwise viable facilities are not lost forever.

The purpose of this Written Ministerial Statement, is to set out how local planning authorities should approach decision-making to prevent the unnecessary loss of these venues. With immediate effect, local planning authorities should have due regard to their current circumstances when considering whether to grant planning permission for a change of use or demolition of a theatre, concert hall or live music performance venue that has been made temporarily vacant by Covid-19 business disruption.

Where an alternative use or demolition for a long-term vacant theatre, concert hall or live music performance venue is proposed, local planning authorities should consider the application in the normal way. The Theatres

Trust is a statutory consultee under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/595) for applications seeking to develop any land where there is a theatre and will have an opportunity to comment on any application relating to theatres.

This policy remains in place until 31 December 2022 unless superseded by a further statement.

It is also our intention to make an amendment to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/596) to remove permitted development rights for demolition of theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues.

Caravan and Holiday parks

The Government also recognises that the tourism industry will need to be able to adapt to secure its financial future. In response to Covid-19 the majority of UK businesses closed in March 2020, including caravan and holiday parks. This has had a significant impact on the financial viability of over 2,200 businesses in this sector that employ around 46,000 staff. These parks are a mainstay of their local economies, providing employment and supporting local services and businesses.

Caravan and holiday parks in England were able to reopen from 4th July 2020. Extending their operation beyond the usual summer season will be invaluable to

parks as the sector begins to recover. We are aware that current planning conditions may limit their open season. The temporary relaxation of these planning restrictions can play a vital role in helping local businesses to get up and running again.

The National Planning Policy Framework already emphasises that planning enforcement is a discretionary activity, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control. Given the current situation, while local planning authorities must have regard to their legal obligations, they should not seek to undertake planning enforcement action which would unnecessarily restrict the ability of caravan and holiday parks to extend their open season.

Where local planning authorities consider it appropriate to require an application to vary relevant planning conditions (where for instance there is a risk of flooding or where parks are situated close to protected sites) they should prioritise the application and make an early decision to provide certainty to caravan and holiday park operators. In doing so, they should consider the benefits of longer opening season times to the local economy as it recovers from the impact of Covid-19.

This Written Ministerial Statement only covers England.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 14 July 2020

Agriculture and Trade

Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in agreeing common frameworks with the devolved administrations, in particular in regard to (1) trade, (2) agriculture, and (3) fisheries, policies. [HL6315]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Defra is working closely with the Devolved Administrations to agree the common frameworks that we will need for those returning EU powers that intersect with Devolved competence. We have made significant progress in developing the policy content of the frameworks mentioned and these will be shared for parliamentary scrutiny at the appropriate stage of policy development. The set of principles, including the need to ensure that frameworks support the UK's international trade obligations, agreed at the Joint Ministerial Committee for EU negotiations in October 2017 guide Defra and the Devolved Administrations in the development of these frameworks.

Airports: Redundancy

Asked by **Lord Browne of Belmont**

To ask Her Majesty's Government in what discussions, if any, they are currently involved to explore ways of reducing airport job losses in the UK. [HL6298]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The aviation sector can draw on the unprecedented package of economic measures we have put in place during this time. These measures include: HMRC's Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, including VAT deferrals; the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; HMT and the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility; and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme for large and small businesses.

If airlines or airports find themselves in trouble as a result of coronavirus, even following the Government's cross-economy wage and financial interventions, the Transport Secretary and Chancellor have confirmed that we are prepared to enter discussions with individual companies seeking bespoke support as a last resort, having exhausted all other options. Any intervention would need to represent value for money for taxpayers.

The recent announcements about proposed redundancies will be very distressing news for employees and their families. Government recognises the challenges facing the aviation industry and remains committed to an open dialogue with the sector and unions, to minimise the damage to industry and retain jobs. We encourage airports and unions to engage constructively with each other,

striving to provide employees with as much certainty as possible during this challenging time.

Asylum: Finance

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds can obtain soap and other essentials; and what plans they have, if any, to provide such people with mobile telephones whilst they are in the process of applying for asylum. [HL6318]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Asylum seekers receiving support under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 are generally provided with accommodation and a cash allowance to cover other essential living needs, including hygiene products. For those in section 98 Initial Accommodation and hotel or hostel accommodation, hygiene products are provided to them.

The level of the cash allowance provided takes into account communication needs, including the cost of buying and using a mobile phone. As a result of the Covid-19 crisis a higher proportion of asylum seekers than usual are being accommodated in full-board hostels and hotels. We are looking at practical ways of providing internet access to this group and other ways to enable them to communicate effectively.

Brexit

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reconsider their decision not to extend the Brexit transition period. [HL5717]

Lord True: None. At the second meeting of the WAJC on 12 June, the UK formally notified the EU that it will neither accept nor seek any extension to the Transition Period.

The deadline for extension has now passed.

The UK will regain its economic and political independence on 1 January 2021 at the end of the transition period and uphold a key demand of the British people.

Buildings: Insulation

Asked by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have set a date by which prohibited aluminium composite material cladding is to be removed from buildings; and if so, what is that date. [HL6615]

Lord Greenhalgh: For the removal of unsafe ACM cladding from high-rise residential buildings the Government has provided £600 million in funding. We have made progress, and as a result of our action, across all sectors, 209 buildings have either completed

remediation or have had their ACM cladding systems removed. It is our ambition that all remaining building owners have works on site by the end of 2020, with completion of remedial works by the end of 2021.

Businesses: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take following reports that many black-owned businesses struggle to find investors. [HL6334]

Lord Callanan: The Government's access to finance schemes are open to all businesses and BAME-led businesses benefit from them. The Department's ministerial team is actively engaging with the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) business community on a regular basis to cover multiple issues, including access to finance.

The Future Fund provides government co-investment to innovative businesses. As of 21 June, the Future Fund had approved 252 applications for investment worth £236 million. Companies with BAME only and mixed ethnicity management teams accounted for over 55% of these applications, valued at £118.5m.

The British Business Bank's Start Up Loans programme had delivered more than 71,500 loans to entrepreneurs by the end of March 2020, providing more than £586 million of funding. Of these, 20 per cent of the total were to applicants from a BAME background, compared to approximately 15 per cent of the UK's population who are from a BAME background (2011 census).

Climate Change: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce UK consumption emissions in line with the report by the Committee on Climate Change Reducing UK emissions: 2020 Progress Report to Parliament, published on 25 June. [HL6286]

Lord Callanan: The UK follows the agreed international approach for estimating and reporting greenhouse gas emissions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, which is for countries to report the emissions produced within their territories.

Nevertheless, as the CCC highlight, we recognise the importance of also monitoring emissions on a consumption basis i.e. including emissions embedded in imports, and we publish data on this annually. Our consumption emissions fell by 21 per cent between 2007 and 2017, and by 3 per cent between 2016 and 2017.

We will formally respond to the Committee on Climate Change's detailed recommendations in October.

Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government to publish the reasons for developing a bespoke COVID-19 contact tracing application; whether they sought to collaborate with the developers of such applications in operation in other countries; if not, why not; and what lessons they have learned from the decision not to continue with their initial approach to the development of such an application. [HL6433]

Lord Bethell: We are working with other countries to exchange ideas and like the United Kingdom, many countries are working on solutions that best support their local systems while taking into account cultural and societal differences.

The challenges we have faced are not unique to us and have been experienced by a number of countries, including some who rolled out the app and then had to change their approach. It is only right that we test our approach and make sure we deliver a product that works.

Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the studies, published by Trinity College Dublin on 15 and 26 June, which found that the COVID-19 contract tracing application's performance was "similar to that of triggering notifications by randomly selecting from the participants, regardless of proximity" and that "there is only a weak dependence of detection rate on distance"; and what steps they intend to take in response. [HL6449]

Lord Bethell: Rigorous testing has been undertaken through the development of the app, including the Isle of Wight pilot and multiple field tests.

We continue to work with and learn from international partners across the world, especially countries which have launched apps using the Apple and Google Exposure Notification framework that Trinity College Dublin tested. We continue to collaborate closely with Apple and Google on refining their application programming interface.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 3 June (HL4782), what assessment they have made of the research referenced in the original question; and what assessment they have made of the impact a cycle of a 50-day lock down followed by a 30-day relaxation would have on (1) the UK's COVID-19 infection rate, and (2) the UK's public finances. [HL5377]

Lord Bethell: No specific assessment has been made of the research by Dr Rajiv Chowdhury et al. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has reviewed

and considered papers that look at the concept of, and different thresholds for, reimplementing lockdown. SAGE provides Ministers and officials with evidence-based scientific advice in emergencies based on a range of sources.

As stated in my previous answer of 3 June, we have published the statements and the accompanying evidence to demonstrate how our understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data emerges. At all times, we have been consistently guided by scientific and medical advice.

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' advice that there is a lack of information on the modes of COVID-19 transmission in the UK, what steps they are taking to close that knowledge gap. [HL6149]

Lord Bethell: The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and is the largest public funder of health research in the United Kingdom.

As part of the NIHR-UK Research and Innovation rolling call for rapid research proposals, two highlight notices were issued in May inviting COVID-19 research proposals on transmission, and priority groups – transmission, risk factors and seroprevalence.

These highlight notices have been issued following advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and to help address gaps in knowledge about transmission of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Applications are being considered for funding, including on the quality of the science proposed and its relevance to the highlight notices. Successful proposals will be announced as soon as possible.

Coronavirus: Screening

Asked by Baroness Thornton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of collecting a sample for COVID-19 testing through self-swabbing home test kits in comparison to tests administered by medical professionals. [HL3911]

Lord Bethell: International peer reviewed evidence, and real-world assessments from the Department's testing programme has shown that swab tests taken by non-clinically trained individuals are just as effective as those taken by clinicians. Instructions on how to perform these types of tests are included wherever individuals are asked to undertake self-swabbing.

Countryside: Education

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to require all schools to ensure that children know

the Countryside Code and the need to adhere to it. [HL6305]

Baroness Berridge: Maintained schools are required to teach the national curriculum as part of their wider school curriculum. Details of the national curriculum subjects and content of programmes of study for each can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum.

Academies are not required to follow the national curriculum, though they are expected to teach a curriculum that is similar in breadth and ambition, and are required by their funding agreements to teach English, mathematics, science and religious education.

All schools are required to teach a balanced and broadly based curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

While it is not a prescribed topic in the national curriculum, all state-funded schools have the flexibility within their school curriculum to teach about the Countryside Code if they choose to do so, through for example:

- Citizenship teaches young people about their responsibilities as adults also includes opportunities for active citizenship, for example, forms of volunteering to support a cause or their local community.
- As part of the science curriculum, children are taught about the scientific concepts that relate to the environment. In primary science, pupils are taught about habitats of plants and animals and about how environments can change. This can include positive and negative impact of human actions, such as nature reserves or littering. This is further developed in secondary science, where pupils are taught about ecosystems and biodiversity.

Criminal Proceedings: Travellers

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in rectifying the absence of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers from official monitoring systems across the criminal justice system since the publication of the Lammy Review. [HL6545]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry of Justice is committed to improving collection and publication of data to identify and tackle any disparities in the Criminal Justice System.

In England and Wales, there are 18 ethnic groups recommended for use by government when asking for someone's ethnicity. It is recognised that these ethnic groups do not represent how all people identify. People are encouraged to write in their ethnicity using their own words if they do not identify with any groups in the list.

Criminal justice organisations of England and Wales have adopted a revised Self-Defined 18+1 data standard

to deliver greater precision when recording the defendant's ethnicity status. This 18+1 standard added the option of "Gypsy or Irish Traveller", however it does not include "Roma" and relies on self-identification by a defendant, who may choose to withhold this information.

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) integrated the capability to collect data using the 18+1 standard into its systems from June 2018.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) have also now extended the ethnic categorisation within the Youth Offending Team Case Management System to the 18+1 standard, meaning that "Gypsy or Irish Traveller" is now recorded as a separate ethnic group in addition to the other 18 ethnic groups recorded. This will enable the YJB to explore and better understand the experience throughout the Youth Justice System for GRT individuals and identify areas for potential work.

W3 (White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller) ethnicity has been available in nDelius, the probation service's case management system, since its inception in 2013 following the "Gypsy or Irish Traveller" ethnicity option being included in the 2011 Census.

The Ministry of Justice has produced guidance for all criminal justice staff on working with GRT communities. This covers the importance of recording ethnicity and how to overcome the issues of low recording.

Deportation

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many deportations (1) were halted in 2018, (2) were halted in 2019, and (3) have been halted to date in 2020; and what was the reason in each case. [HL6321]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Providing the information requested would require a manual check of individual records which could only be done at disproportionate cost.

The Home Office publishes data on people in detention and returns from the UK in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release':

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>).

Figures covering the second quarter of 2020 will be published in the next Immigration Statistics release on 27 August 2020. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar' (https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=release-date-oldest).

Disease Control: Research

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date the cross-departmental governance board, referenced in their paper UK Biological Security Strategy, published on 30 July 2018, was set up. [HL6388]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK Biological Security Strategy Governance Board was set up in October 2018. The Governance Board is supported and informed by the UK Biological Security Strategy Working Group.

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date the cross-departmental governance board, referenced in their paper UK Biological Security Strategy, published on 30 July 2018, had its first meeting. [HL6389]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK Biological Security Strategy Governance Board first met in December 2018. The Governance Board is supported and informed by the UK Biological Security Strategy Working Group.

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many meetings the Biological Security Strategy Governance Board had with the Minister for Security in (1) 2018, (2) 2019, and (3) 2020. [HL6390]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK Biological Security Strategy Governance Board has not directly met the Security Minister but has been briefed on the work of the Biological Security Strategy.

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many officials from the Ministry of Defence were members of the Biological Security Strategy Governance Board in (1) 2018, (2) 2019, and (3) 2020. [HL6391]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Ministry of Defence's representation on the Biological Security Strategy Governance Board consists of either one or two representatives, depending on the meeting agenda. This has not changed since 2018.

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many meetings the Biological Security Strategy Governance Board had with the Secretary of State for Defence in (1) 2018, (2) 2019, and (3) 2020. [HL6392]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Governance Board has not met with the Secretary of State for Defence.

Energy Performance Certificates

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the conclusion of the report by the Committee on Climate Change Reducing UK emissions: 2020 Progress Report to Parliament, published on 25 June, that "Energy Performance Certificate ratings have had issues with inconsistent or inaccurate estimations and measurements, leading to the likelihood that homes that do not meet efficiency standards can be rented", what plans they have to strengthen the Energy Performance Certificate system. [[HL6287](#)]

Lord Callanan: Since 1 April 2020, The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 require that, subject to certain exemptions, all domestic private rented sector landlords in scope improve their properties to a minimum energy efficiency standard of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band E.

An EPC Call for Evidence ran from 26 July 2018 to 19 October 2018 and sought evidence on how EPCs performed against three attributes: quality, availability, and encouraging action to improve energy efficiency. The forthcoming Summary of Responses will outline the evidence received, including on effectiveness of EPCs. Alongside this, we will publish an EPC Action Plan to maximise the effectiveness of EPCs as a tool for the future.

Additionally, BEIS is in the process of updating the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) – the methodology used to generate EPC scores. SAP is updated in line with the updates to Part L of the Building Regulations, usually every 3-5 years. The next version of SAP (SAP 10), was consulted on in 2017 and is due to come into force with the updated version of Part L of the Building Regulations.

This SAP update together with the EPC Action Plan will help ensure home energy performance assessments are as accurate as possible.

Energy: Conservation

Asked by *Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to retrofitting existing buildings to make them more energy efficient. [[HL6292](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government has a number of policies and proposals to improve the energy performance of buildings, for example:

- In his Summer Economic Update, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £2bn Green Home Grant scheme that will support homeowners and landlords in England to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, reducing energy bills and carbon emissions, and supporting a green economic recovery. The funding will be spent on paying for accredited tradespeople to install a range of measures, for example insulation, to improve the energy

performance of their homes. Further detail on the range of measures will be announced in the coming days, before the full launch.

- The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), which installs energy efficiency measures is funded at £640 million per year, is now entirely focused on providing support to low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.
- The Private Rented Sector Minimum standard regulations introduced on 1 April 2018 will improve the energy performance of rented properties. The regulations require landlords of domestic and non-domestic rental properties to bring their properties to EPC Band E or above. We recently consulted on raising the minimum energy standards for non-domestic privately rented properties to meet a preferred target of EPC B by 2030, and plan to publish the Government Response later this year. We will consult on tightening the minimum energy standards for domestic privately rented properties in due course.
- Public sector organisations can access the funding for decarbonisation projects, including certain retrofits through the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme. The capital pot for England stands £385 million by the end of 2020/21.
- The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings. These actions include the deployment of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating as part of an ambitious programme of work required to enable key strategic decisions on how we achieve the mass transition to low-carbon heat and set us on a path to decarbonising all homes and buildings.

Environment Protection: Employment

Asked by *Baroness Eaton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that local training is available to enable communities to benefit from the low-carbon jobs the Local Government Association report Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery, published on 11 June, estimates will be supported by England's net zero transition by 2030 and 2050. [[HL5989](#)]

Baroness Berridge: We want to make the skills systems more responsive to employer skill needs both locally and nationally and we have been working with employers in all sectors including those in the green economy sector to jointly design and deliver policies and programmes to do this.

This includes key reforms to apprenticeships, making them longer, better, with more off-the job training and proper assessment at the end. With employers in control of developing standards, they can be assured that apprentices will get the skills employers need. There are range of apprenticeships standards in the Agriculture,

Environmental and Animal Care pathway such as Crop Technicians, Forest Operatives, Ecologists and Environmental practitioner, which is used by employers of all types seeking to promote sustainable growth.

We are also making technical education more responsive to the needs of communities and employers, with the introduction of T Levels this September, proposals to reform higher technical education and investment in Institutes of Technology – flagship providers that will help to drive regional growth in key areas like engineering and advanced manufacturing and meeting higher level technical skills needs.

Erasmus+ Programme

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial losses and impact on the Higher Education sector should the UK fail to agree continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme. [HL6200]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The UK's participation in the next Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027) is a matter for our ongoing negotiations with the EU. The government remains open to considering participation in elements of the next Erasmus+ programme, provided that the terms are in the UK's interests. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt the outcome of those negotiations.

Eritrea: National Service

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 18 February (HL1258), why they described those National Service workers employed by Segen engineering as “civilian”; whether those workers were recruited through national military conscription in Eritrea; and how they categorise which workers are (1) civilians, and (2) part of the military. [HL6274]

Baroness Sugg: The Eritrean Government has justified civilian and military national service on grounds of the security threat posed by Ethiopia, but we have yet to see concrete proposals for reform following the peace declaration. According to our information, every Eritrean young person completes their 12th and final year of school at the national service military training centre at Sawa where they do both military training as well as academic study. At the end, they take exams which leads to some going to college, some receiving vocational training, while others join government ministries or the military. All jobs in Eritrea in the public sector are done by Eritreans on national service, and these include the civil service, teachers, doctors, construction and the military. Sustainable reform of national service needs to happen in tandem with improvements to the economic

situation and job creation. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Forced Marriage

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to bring forward measures to safeguard against predatory marriages, particularly those involving older people. [HL6614]

Lord Keen of Elie: A registration official has a duty to stop proceedings if they are of opinion that either of the parties to a marriage does not have the capacity to marry. The Government has no current legislative plans to change the existing safeguards.

The Law Commission is currently reviewing how and where weddings take place, including the formalities and safeguarding checks required before a marriage is conducted. The Government looks forward to publication of the Law Commission's consultation paper in September.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Environment Protection

Asked by Lord Randall of Uxbridge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development on the delivery of (1) conservation, and (2) environmental, projects overseas. [HL6372]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Tackling climate change in collaboration with international partners remains a high priority for this Government. By aligning our efforts, the creation of the new Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office will allow us to seize the opportunities ahead, as we prepare to take on the G7 presidency and host COP26 next year. Further details on how the new Department's strategic priorities will be implemented, including through a blend of bilateral and multilateral assistance, will be set out in due course.

Foster Care

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to deal with the shortfall of people coming forward to be foster parents. [HL6329]

Baroness Berridge: It is vital that local authorities can find the right carers to meet the needs of vulnerable children. To help unlock fostering capacity during the COVID-19 outbreak, we have made amendments to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. These changes aim to make it easier to identify potential placements, particularly in emergency

situations, and so that new foster carers can be assessed and approved without unnecessary delay.

An independent review of foster care in England in 2017 highlighted that England does not have a shortage of foster carers overall but there are geographical gaps in provision, particularly for specific needs.

The department commissioned behavioural insights research which commenced in November 2019, to explore the barriers and motivations of prospective carers and seek recommendations for more targeted approaches in local recruitment. We will share these findings with fostering services and recruitment managers.

The department also recently funded 7 feasibility studies in commissioning and sufficiency planning, bringing together local authorities with their partners to explore innovative practices, including collaborative approaches to foster care recruitment. We are also exploring whether digital approaches could help us in supporting local authorities to improve matching of children to carers.

We have committed £125,000 from June to October to fund a new FosterlinePlus service, through which prospective foster families will be able to access the support and information they need to offer caring homes for some of our most vulnerable children.

We supported the Fostering Network's Foster Care Fortnight in May through social media channels. We also recently launched updated fostering pages to make information more accessible to potential carers, and they are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent>.

Hammouda al-Sheikh

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the 10-year prison sentence given to Hammouda al-Sheikh. [HL6269]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made representations on this particular case.

Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Report on short scrutiny visits to Immigration removal centres by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 12 May, why nine detainees were released from the Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre without a confirmed address to go to during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL6319]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We do not comment on individual cases.

With regard to support provided to foreign nationals released from detention during the current pandemic I

refer the Right Honourable Lord to my answer of 27 May 2020 which can be found at:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-questions-answers/?page=1&max=20&questiontype=AllQuestions&house=commons%2Clords&uin=HL4210>

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether HS2 Ltd used the same methodology to estimate costs on the (1) Area South, (2) Area Central, and (3) Area North, sections of the HS2 Phase One line of route. [HL6288]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: HS2 Ltd has utilised a number of methodologies to ensure that its cost estimates are robust, consistent, and appropriate. These principles are put in place to enable a common approach for benchmarking across the three Areas of the Phase One line of route, and in order to demonstrate value for money.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Noise

Asked by Viscount Astor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that HS2 Ltd's Noise Model is verified for accuracy against other domestic and international High-Speed Rail services. [HL6278]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The local and route-wide sound, noise and vibration effects arising from the operation of HS2 were set out in the Environmental Statements for Phase One and Phase 2a. The predictions used in the assessments were based on noise and vibration models extensively validated against measurements of existing high-speed trains in the UK and abroad and supplemented with reasonably foreseeable worst case assumptions about the noise emitted by HS2 trains. Both Houses scrutinised such effects before passing the High-Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) 2017.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Wendover

Asked by Viscount Astor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the proposed HS2 Phase One viaducts at Wendover on (1) traffic flow, and (2) the future development of the A413. [HL6279]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: HS2 Ltd have been in consultation with the local authority Buckinghamshire Council about the impact of the Small Dean Viaduct at Wendover on A413 traffic flow. Agreed arrangements have been made so that the flow of the traffic underneath the viaduct will not be adversely affected. This has also been satisfied by road safety regulations.

In 2019 HS2 Ltd undertook a review of the design of the Small Dean Viaduct spanning the A413 south of

Wendover with consideration for futureproofing the A413 for future growth. Currently the A413 is single carriageway. Public feedback has been taken through engagement events. In response to the study HS2 Ltd have confirmed that the building of the viaduct will not inhibit any future road widening of the A413. The outcome from this design review has shown that the dualling of the A413 can still be carried out with the viaduct in place, outside the remit of the HS2 programme. Moreover, the building of the viaduct will not inhibit future local authority development plans.

The outcome of this study has been reviewed by the local planning and highway authorities who are satisfied with this review and have no objection to the planned design of the proposed highway and viaduct design.

Asked by Viscount Astor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the conclusions of the British Tunnelling Society in their 2019 article for Tunnels & Tunnelling International entitled 'Tunnelling costs and production rates benchmarked', which concluded that tunnelling costs decrease per unit length with increasing overall tunnelling length, and (2) the implications of these conclusions for estimates of the cost of the Wendover Short-Mined Tunnel Proposal on HS2 Phase One. [HL6280]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport has incorporated the Infrastructure and Projects Authority top-down benchmarking methodology for tunnelling, developed in partnership with the British Tunnelling Society, as part of the Transport Infrastructure Efficiency Strategy benchmarking initiative.

The proposal for the short-mined tunnel at Wendover was rejected by the Government in 2018. We do not believe that this historical decision would have been any different had this methodology been applied at the time. The decision to reject the proposed short-mined tunnel at Wendover was based on the estimated cost of mitigating the poor ground conditions in the area of the proposed tunnel.

Housing: Standards

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Greenhalgh on 29 June (HL5657), whether the Future Homes Standard consultation meets the requirements of section J of the Cabinet Office's Consultation Principles, as updated on 19 March 2018. [HL6302]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it. In October 2019, we launched the first stage of a two-part consultation on Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations. We proposed an ambitious uplift in the

energy efficiency of new homes through the introduction of a Future Homes Standard from 2025. We expect that homes built to the Future Homes Standard will have carbon dioxide emissions 75-80 per cent lower than those built to current Building Regulations standards, which means they will be fit for the future, with low carbon heating and very high fabric standards.

The Government's Consultation Principles, promoted by Cabinet Office, provide departments with guidance on conducting consultations. Section J of that guidance states that an explanation should be provided where it is not possible to publish a response within 12 weeks of the consultation.

The Future Homes Standard consultation closed on 7 February and received over 3300 responses from organisations and individuals, many of which were detailed or provided supporting evidence that requires further consideration. This level of response exceeded expectations and is over ten times the amount of responses that were received for our previous 2012 consultation about changes to the building regulations that relate to the energy efficiency of buildings (part L).

Since the Future Homes Standard consultation closed, the department has been faced with the biggest public health emergency in living memory: a pandemic which has forced action across all of Government, resulting in unprecedented response, from shielding the most vulnerable, to keeping business running, preventing the loss of jobs, and supporting our public services. Every part of this Department has been rapidly mobilised to support those in need, from saving lives, protecting the vulnerable to supporting our NHS.

Our analysis of the Future Homes Standard consultation is ongoing and the Government remains committed to publishing a response in as timely a manner as possible, in line with principle J of the Cabinet Office principles.

Immigration

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many applications for settled or pre-settled status in the UK are yet to be concluded. [HL6322]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office publishes data on the EU Settlement Scheme in the 'EU Settlement Scheme statistics': (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics>).

Data on the number of applications and concluded applications are published in Tables 1 and 2 of the monthly EUSS statistics tables (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics-may-2020>).

Additional information on the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to 28 August 2018 to 31 May 2020.

The latest published information shows more than 3.6 million (3,612,400) EU Settlement Scheme applications

had been received up to 31 May 2020. In the same period 3.3 million (3,319,000) applications had been concluded, of which 57% were granted settled status and 41% granted pre-settled status.

Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review

Asked by Lord Browne of Ladyton

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to make the Written Ministerial Statement that provides notification that work on the Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review has been formally paused. [HL6617]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government paused its Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy in April due to the pressing need to focus on COVID-19. We have formally recommenced the Review, building on the work done since February. Deputy National Security Advisor for the Integrated Review (IR) Alex Ellis, has written to Parliamentary Committees (Joint Committee on National Security Strategy, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Development) informing them that the IR has formally recommenced. There are no current plans to make a Written Ministerial Statement. Work is underway to update the GOV.UK website with up to date information on the IR.

Isa Muazu

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the handling of the case of Isa Muazu who was deported to Nigeria in December 2013. [HL6320]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I am unable to comment on individual cases on the grounds of data protection principles and operational independence of the police and courts.

The Home Office will however always ensure that cases such as these are handled with extreme professionalism to ensure that decisions are lawfully made in the best interests of the British public.

All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Each individual assessment is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant caselaw.

The Home Office only seeks to return those whose claims have been unsuccessful and who, by definition, do not need our protection and are not at risk on return. We work closely with other countries to ensure people are returned safely and with dignity.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about (1) the arrest of Saifuddin Najajreh, Khalaf Shakarneh, and Amin Al-Sulaibi, and (2) the subsequent impact of that detention on their education. [HL6266]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made representations about these cases.

Music: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what feedback stakeholders have given on the economic viability for live music venues to operate under social distancing guidelines. [HL6632]

Baroness Barran: We appreciate that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge for live music venues. We are committed to reopening creative businesses, including live music venues, as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport recently set out a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the live entertainment and outdoor events sectors back up and running as soon as possible. The ministerially-chaired Events and Entertainment Working Group was established to support the Secretary of State's Cultural Renewal Taskforce, and it focuses on developing Covid-19 secure guidance to enable the safe reopening of the live entertainment and outdoor events sectors.

However, the Government recognises some live music venues will have difficulty operating financially under social distancing guidelines. On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State 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 cultural and creative sectors, including live music venues.

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made any assessment of international examples of sector-specific support for live music during the COVID-19 pandemic; and, if so, whether they intend to provide similar support. [HL6633]

Baroness Barran: While we are aware of examples of sector-specific support made available in other countries, the Government's response has been one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world.

On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State 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 cultural and creative sectors, including the live music sector.

Music: Education

Asked by Lord Lingfield

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment has been made of trends in the number of pupils learning lesser-played instruments such as the (1) bassoon, (2) French horn, and (3) double bass, through school music tuition. [HL6229]

Baroness Berridge: The government believes all pupils should have access to an excellent, well-rounded education and the arts and music are central to this.

The government does not hold information on individual school music tuition. However, music is included in the national curriculum and is compulsory in all maintained schools from the age of 5 to 14. Post-14, all pupils in maintained schools must be offered the opportunity to study at least one subject in the arts.

Music: Young People

Asked by Lord Lingfield

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are providing for (1) secondary schools, (2) music hubs, and (3) national youth music organisations, to give young people opportunities to play in classical music ensembles and orchestras. [HL6228]

Baroness Berridge: All pupils should have access to an excellent, well-rounded education, and music education is central to this.

The government invested over £300 million of ring-fenced funding in music hubs in 2016-20, to ensure all children, whatever their background, have access to a high-quality music education, including learning to play musical instruments and having the opportunity to play and sing in ensembles.

On 3 January 2020, we announced a further £80 million investment in music hubs for 2020-21. Alongside this investment, charities that help young people learn about different styles of music are also set to receive a further £1 million to support the next generation of musicians. These programmes are In Harmony, National Youth Music Organisations (NYMOs) and Music for Youth.

Performing Arts: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Aberdare

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the proportion of (1) theatres, (2) live music venues, (3) concert halls, and (4) arenas, for which it would be more expensive to open under social distancing restrictions than to remain closed. [HL6190]

Asked by Lord Aberdare

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) theatres, (2) live music venues, (3) concert halls, and (4) arenas, about the average capacity needed to make a profit. [HL6191]

Asked by Lord Aberdare

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they estimate live arts performances to resume (1) with, and (2) without, social distancing restrictions. [HL6192]

Baroness Barran: As part of continued engagement with our sectors, DCMS Ministers, and officials have spoken to many organisations in the arts and culture sectors directly, as well as arms-length bodies and sector representatives.

Through this engagement we know that the capacity needed to make a profit varies not just between the sub-sectors, but also between individual organisations and on an even more granular level, what those organisations programme. These considerations, as well as costs relating to staffing, fixed costs, maintenance, production costs, and loans, also impact upon the size of the possible finance gap an organisation may have when considering when and whether to reopen.

Following the establishment of the Cultural Renewal Taskforce, on 23 June the Prime Minister announced that from 4 July theatres will be permitted to reopen for rehearsal, pre-production and broadcast, although not yet for live performance with an audience. Alongside the work that we are doing with representatives of the entertainment and events industry to develop supporting guidance, this represents the first steps in the roadmap to recovery for our nations' theatres.

The Government remains committed to supporting the cultural sector through this pandemic and getting the curtain up at venues for live performances across the country as soon as it is safe to do so.

Post Office: ICT

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 23 June (HL5752), in what ways, if at all, the Horizon judgments considered the extent to which individuals were responsible for the failings of the Post Office. [HL6290]

Lord Callanan: The Horizon Judgments did not attribute individual responsibility for the system failings. The Judgment on the first "Common Issues" trial, concerned the terms and interpretation of the contract between postmasters and Post Office, and the second "Horizon Issues" trial, concerned the function and reliability of the Horizon Point of Sale system.

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. The Post Office has accepted that, in the past, it got things wrong in its dealings with a number of postmasters. Under the leadership of its new CEO, the Post Office is now committed to applying the lessons learnt from the litigation to build and strengthen the relationship with postmasters.

The Judge when handing down the Horizon Issues Judgment raised concerns in relation to the evidence provided by Fujitsu employees. He has referred these cases to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

Public Transport: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will begin to promote public transport and a reduction in private vehicle use as part of the post-COVID-19 recovery; and what steps they will take to achieve this. [HL6304]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government has provided advice on using public transport guided by the scientific evidence. This will enable people to practice social distancing and help avoid crowding. Our Safer Transport guidance makes clear that people should consider all other forms of transport, such as cycling and walking, before using public transport. We expect that mandatory face coverings will give people confidence to travel safely where they have no other option but to use public transport, this is alongside other measures such as regular hand washing and maintaining distance wherever possible. Government will continually monitor and review the evidence regarding public transport and provide updates when it is safe to do so.

As part of our post-COVID-19 recovery plans, the Government is also providing £5 billion of new funding to overhaul bus and cycling links across England. This funding includes measures to encourage modal shift onto the bus, such as higher frequency services, more 'turn up and go' routes, new priority schemes, and more affordable fares. The new 5-year funding package builds on the Government's determination to make buses work better for passengers. The details of the programmes, including how funding will be distributed, will be announced in due course.

There will also be a National Bus Strategy which we are finalising our approach to.

Railway Network: Costs

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what methodology they use to estimate the costs of high-speed rail projects in the UK. [HL6289]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport looks to its Arm's Length Body, HS2 Ltd and its consultants to estimate the cost of High-Speed Rail Projects in the UK, including the Rail Method of

Measurement (RMM) and Civil Engineering Standard Method of Measurement (CESMM). The estimates are tested through benchmarking both nationally and internationally and are ultimately validated through the contracted prices HS2 Ltd secures with suppliers.

Refugees: Greek Islands

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the next Strategic Migration Dialogue between the UK and Greece will take place; whether they will publish the agenda of that meeting in advance; and whether the agenda will include (1) the "best interests" of unaccompanied migrant children, and (2) speeding up the transfer of children and adults from the Aegean Islands to the mainland. [HL6309]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK-Greece Action Plan sets the strategic direction for future cooperation between our two governments on irregular migration. We will be working closely with the Greek Government to progress all actions under the Plan over the coming months.

Satellites

Asked by Lord Tunnickliffe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice the Ministry of Defence has provided to other Government departments on the military capability of the OneWeb satellite system. [HL6644]

Asked by Lord Tunnickliffe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment the Ministry of Defence has made of the military capability of the OneWeb satellite system. [HL6645]

Baroness Goldie: The investment in OneWeb is not a Defence matter. The SKYNET satellite programme will provide for global military communications and no formal assessment has been made of the military use of OneWeb.

Scots Gaelic Language

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the preservation of the Scottish Gaelic language is a wholly devolved matter; and if not, what is their involvement in this endeavour. [HL6465]

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the Scottish Government, and (2) other bodies, about the preservation of the Scottish Gaelic language. [HL6466]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, preservation of the Scottish Gaelic language is a devolved matter.

The Scottish Government published their second Gaelic language plan in 2016 (for 2016-2021) which outlines their commitment to support the use of the language in its operations and also how to support other public services to fulfil their own commitments to Gaelic.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) works to support minority languages through its work on the creative industries strand of the British Irish Council. This includes working with the devolved administrations to support minority languages, share best practice, and nurture more diverse UK audiences, including through minority language publications.

DCMS officials also work with MG Alba (Gaelic Media Scotland who jointly own BBC Alba with the BBC) on a number of different issues to support the Gaelic language.

Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for testing rough sleepers for COVID-19 when they come in off the streets; and what funds they will provide for such work. [HL6308]

Lord Greenhalgh: We are continuing to work with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to explore the case for testing rough sleepers for COVID-19 when they come in off the streets. However, following the expansion of testing, anyone with symptoms of coronavirus can now access a COVID-19 swab test, including those being moved into and currently in emergency accommodation. This will enable us to control the risk of outbreaks amongst this vulnerable group.

We continue to recognise the challenges that people experiencing rough sleeping face and we are working with local authorities to consider how we can improve access to testing for vulnerable groups.

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government which local authorities have not responded to their request for information about rough sleepers and those in need of emergency accommodation to inform their decisions about additional funding during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL6316]

Lord Greenhalgh: Nearly 15,000 vulnerable people have been housed in emergency accommodation, including hotels, since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown period. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) surveyed all local authorities about accommodation support provided to rough sleepers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the security situation in Northern Ireland. [HL6474]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The threat from dissident republican terrorism continues to be SEVERE in Northern Ireland. This Government's first priority is to keep people safe and secure right across the United Kingdom. Terrorism, paramilitary violence and criminality have no place in Northern Ireland - they must not hold us back from progress towards a peaceful and prosperous future. The Police Service of Northern Ireland, MI5 and others who work to keep people safe have our full support for the public service they give.

Trade and Agriculture Commission

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government what will be the (1) remit, and (2) composition, of the proposed Trade and Agriculture Commission; and whether the Commission's recommendations to the Government will be binding. [HL6314]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Department for International Trade has announced on Friday 10 July further details of the new Trade and Agriculture Commission which has been set up to act as an advisory board to my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade.

The Commission will be chaired by Tim Smith, former director of FSA, and will have a fixed term of six months to consider trade policies that Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, producers and exporters. The Commission will ensure the sector remains competitive and that animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined. At the end of its work, the Trade and Agriculture Commission will produce an advisory report which will be presented to Parliament by the Department for International Trade. The recommendations will not be binding as the Commission has an advisory role.

Translink: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Ministers and officials in the Northern Ireland Executive about providing emergency support funding for Translink. [HL6577]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Public transport within Northern Ireland is devolved and the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure. The Government has been working closely with the NI Executive to ensure continued transport connectivity during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Government has not been approached by the Executive with regard to specific support funding for Translink, which would be for the Executive to resolve in the first instance. In June, the NI Executive's Finance Minister provided Translink with an additional £20m to cover loss of income as a result in the sharp drop in passenger numbers.

Travellers: Equality

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on the development of a cross-Government strategy to tackle inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. [HL6291]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government's top priority over recent months has been to respond to the unprecedented challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

My department has been supporting the co-ordination of cross Government work in response to the impact of Covid-19 on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, to ensure their needs are reflected in response and recovery planning.

We expect to shortly resume our scoping work on the Government's June 2019 commitment to develop a GRT Strategy to tackle inequalities in these communities.

War Widows: Pensions

Asked by Baroness Crawley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the letter from the Secretary of State for Defence to the

Chair of the War Widows' Association on 29 June, what plans they have to revisit their policy on war widows' pensions. [HL6443]

Baroness Goldie: Officials have now developed a number of options to be considered. The full financial and legal implications of these options are being explored so that the Defence Secretary can decide how to proceed. Work on this is continuing at pace both in the Ministry of Defence and across Government.

Asked by Baroness Fookes

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to set a date to reinstate the pensions of war widows that were withdrawn on remarriage or cohabitation before April 2015. [HL6450]

Baroness Goldie: Officials have now developed a number of options to be considered. The full financial and legal implications of these options are being explored so that the Defence Secretary can decide how to proceed. Work on this is continuing at pace both in the Ministry of Defence and across Government.

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