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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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<b>Baroness Evans of Bowes Park</b>	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
<b>Earl Howe</b>	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Agnew of Oulton</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office and Treasury
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Baroness Barran</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
<b>Baroness Berridge</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Bethell</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
<b>Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Callanan</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
<b>Earl of Courtown</b>	Deputy Chief Whip
<b>Lord Gardiner of Kimble</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park</b>	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Greenhalgh</b>	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
<b>Lord Grimstone of Boscobel</b>	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Penn</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Scott of Bybrook</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Stedman-Scott</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Baroness Sugg</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord True</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

*Thursday, 1 October 2020*

## Covid-19 Update

[HLWS477]

**Lord Bethell:** My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock) has made the following written statement:

As the Covid-19 incidence rate continues to rise across the country, a suite of local and national action is required to break the trains of transmission and enable people to maintain a more normal way of life.

The Government will act swiftly and decisively to limit further spread, reduce disruption and contain local outbreaks. The Local Action Committee Command structure reviewed the latest evidence during two urgently convened meetings yesterday, in which we worked with local leaders and the scientific community to assess the data and consider whether further evidence was required.

Despite local interventions being put into place in the North West of England since 5 August, the latest data in the 7 day period 19-25 September, shows a continuing increase in incidence rates per 100,000 population and also the percentage of positive test results, especially within the Merseyside region. The impact of this has resulted in increased hospital admissions and ICU occupancy in the Merseyside area.

As a result, from 00:01 on Saturday 3 October we are implementing stricter restrictions in Regulations to apply across the Merseyside region, which consists of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral and for these purposes also Halton and Warrington. The new restriction will prohibit inter-household mixing in any indoors venue, unless there is an exemption in place. This restriction includes hospitality, leisure, retail and entertainment venues (including bars, pubs and restaurants).

We reviewed the position in the North East. In addition to the North East measures we announced last week, from 00:01 on Saturday 3 October we are also implementing further regulations in the form of a regional approach to Hartlepool and Middlesbrough to replicate the restrictions in place since 30 September in Durham County, Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. These regulations will prohibit inter-household mixing in any indoors venue, unless there is an exemption in place. This includes hospitality, leisure, retail and entertainment venues (including bars, pubs and restaurants).

We reviewed the level of current interventions in Bolton, and from 00:01 on Saturday 3 October, we will be aligning these with measures in place across the rest of Greater Manchester.

We are also recommending that Sheffield is escalated as an Area of Enhanced Support and that Rotherham, Luton, Wakefield, Barrow-in-Furness, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester are added to the Watchlist as Areas of Concern.

The recommendation is also that Spelthorne and Hertsmere are removed from the Watchlist.

We appreciate that this will be difficult news for the people living in these areas, profoundly affecting their daily lives. These decisions are not taken lightly, and such measures will be kept under review and in place no longer than they are necessary.

There are exemptions to these measures so people can still meet with those in their support bubble. There are other limited exemptions such as for work purposes or to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person. Through the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Protected Areas and Linked Childcare Households) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, people may create an exclusive childcare bubble for the purposes of informal childcare for children under 14, helping ease pressure on those living under local restrictions so they can get to work.

The guidance on GOV.UK covering these areas will also be amended to fully reflect these changes.

# Written Answers

Thursday, 1 October 2020

## Accountancy: Standards

Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 16 September (HL7849), whether (1) the Secretary of State, (2) the UK Endorsement Board, (3) the International Accounting Standards Board, or (4) the auditors and directors for not using the true and fair view override, would be responsible for defects in the UK-adopted international accounting standards. [HL8233]

**Lord Callanan:** The act of bringing into UK law all existing EU-adopted international accounting standards at the end of the transition period has been approved by Parliament.

Thereafter, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be responsible for ensuring that any international accounting standards adopted in the UK after the end of the transition period meet the criteria set out in regulations 7 and 8 of the International Accounting Standards and European Public Limited-Liability Company (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, using the powers granted to the Secretary of State under regulation 6 of those regulations. The UK Accounting Standards Endorsement Board will take on this responsibility once endorsement and adoption functions have been delegated to it under regulation 13 of the International Accounting Standards and European Public Limited-Liability Company (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. However, the Secretary of State will retain the ability to revoke the delegation if it is deemed necessary.

Auditors and directors will remain responsible for ensuring that an individual company's accounts give a true and fair view of the company's assets, liabilities, financial position and profit or loss.

## Advertising: Taxation

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to consider revenue-raising opportunities and consequential behavioural changes through the levying of taxes on online and television advertisements. [HL8274]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government introduced a Digital Services Tax (DST) in April 2020, which is designed to ensure tech firms with UK user generated content pay their fair share of tax in the UK.

The DST applies to businesses that provide a social media platform, search engine or an online marketplace to UK users. The provision of these services includes the carrying on of any associated online advertising business.

The DST is a temporary measure until an appropriate international solution is in place.

## Armed Conflict: Explosives

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made any contribution to the Draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas; and, if so, which department has made this contribution. [HL8450]

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the Draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas will be implemented; and what monitoring mechanisms there will be. [HL8451]

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely impact of the Draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas on (1) targeting of civilians, and (2) related reduction in civilian casualties. [HL8452]

**Baroness Goldie:** The Ministry of Defence and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are at the forefront of international discussions on the political declaration. The declaration remains in draft and we await further developments before we can assess any potential impact or implementation requirements. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is, however, governed by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which the UK complies fully with.

The UK will continue to take an active role in discussions to ensure that the protection of civilians is appropriately balanced with the need for responsible states to retain operational flexibility.

## Armed Forces: Commonwealth

Asked by **Lord Touhig**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord True on 9 September (HL Deb, col 758), on what date Ministers will complete their discussions on visa fees for Commonwealth nationals who have served in the Armed Forces and want to remain in the UK. [HL8251]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government highly values the service of all members of HM Forces, including Commonwealth nationals.

It is for these reasons we explicitly provide for non-UK veterans discharged from HM Forces to obtain settlement in the UK after having served for four years or more or

having been discharged for medical reasons due to their service.

The Ministry of Defence make clear to foreign and Commonwealth recruits into the Forces the process by which they and their families can attain settlement in the UK and the costs involved.

### Armed Forces: Recruitment

*Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the average waiting time for people who pass the recruitment process for the British Armed Forces before they receive a job offer. [HL8586]

**Baroness Goldie:** Each Service collates this information in different ways and so the figures are not comparable.

*Naval Service (Royal Navy and Royal Marines)*

During Recruiting Year (RY) 2019-20, the average (mean) time between a recruiter bidding for a candidate to get an entry date and the allocation of an entry date was 22 days as a total average for Officers and Ratings/Other Ranks.

*Army*

The average (median) time between the successful completion of an assessment centre and being allocated a training start date during the 2019-20 RY, (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020) for Other Ranks was 51 days. This is not collated for Officers.

*Royal Air Force (RAF)*

During Financial Year 2019-20, the average (median) wait time for Officer and Other Ranks candidates who completed the RAF recruiting process to receive a job offer was between two and three working days.

### Borders: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what personnel would be necessary to manage any agreed administrative border between Great Britain and the island of Ireland; and where these personnel would be located. [HL8247]

**Lord True:** The UK's approach to implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol was set out in the Government's Command Paper on The UK's Approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol, published on 20 May. As the document made clear, there will be no new physical customs infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

We have however, always been clear that some process will be required on agri-food goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain, in order to respect the pre-existing status of the island of Ireland as a single epidemiological unit.

### British National (Overseas): Rented Housing

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received about rental problems faced by British National (Overseas) citizens who are currently in the UK on leave outside the Immigration Rules; and when they expect to be able to reply to any such representations. [HL8227]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** We are not aware of any representations made on this issue.

British National (Overseas) citizens currently in the UK with Leave Outside the Rules should not experience any problems when renting property. A person whose passport has been endorsed with a stamp showing they have been granted six months' leave to enter will be able to prove their right to rent to a landlord in England.

The Home Office would like to know of any issues in this regard and encourage anyone with information regarding this to pass it onto the Department.

### China and Hong Kong: Travel Information

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the advisory warning issued by the government of the United States on 14 September against travel to mainland China and Hong Kong which states (1) that the government of China "unilaterally and arbitrarily exercises police and security power," and (2) that US citizens who have publicly criticised China have a "heightened risk of arrest, detention, expulsion, or prosecution"; and what assessment they have made of the risk to UK citizens of such action. [HL8108]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have taken note of the advisory warning to US citizens issued by the US Government on 14 September.

On 11 September, the FCDO amended the travel advice for mainland China to highlight the risk of arbitrary detention, including for British nationals. China's authorities have under certain circumstances detained foreigners citing 'endangering national security'. The advice explains that National Security is interpreted broadly and you may be detained without having intended to break the law. This change did not raise the level of our advice, but was made in order to clearly and factually reflect recent incidents.

FCDO Travel Advice also highlights the possibility of travel bans being imposed in mainland China on those suspected of committing a crime. If an individual is subject to detention or a travel ban, the level of assistance the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office can provide is set out in our publically available guidance 'Support for British nationals abroad'. This includes raising individual cases with the Chinese authorities.

The FCDO travel advice for Hong Kong details the risks under the new National Security Law of mainland authorities detaining individuals under the terms of the law, with the maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

### China: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision by United States Customs and Border Protection to issue five Withhold Release Orders on products from China allegedly produced with state-sponsored forced labour in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; what products have been produced with such forced labour; what assessment they have made of the statement by the government of the United States that "the Chinese government is engaged in systemic human rights abuses against the Uyghur people and other ethnic and religious minorities"; and what plans they have to take similar action. [HL8104]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the United States' Withhold Release Orders on products allegedly produced using forced Uyghur labour. The UK Government remains seriously concerned about the gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, including reports indicating that Uyghurs are being placed into forced labour programmes following "graduation" from the camps. We urge all businesses involved in investing in Xinjiang, or with parts of their supply chains in Xinjiang, to conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to support, any human rights violations or abuses. We keep our policy under review. We are committed to raising human rights with the Chinese authorities and do so regularly.

### China: Minority Groups

*Asked by Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to support religious and minority belief communities in China which have been negatively affected by COVID-19. [HL8239]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We regularly raise our serious concerns about the treatment of religious and minority groups in China, including the gross human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang, both at the UN and directly with China. The Foreign Secretary did so most recently on 28 July with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi, while I expressed our deep concerns at the 45th Session of UN Human Rights Council during the Item 4 General Debate on 25 September.

### Civil Service: Coronavirus

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of the civil service are currently working from home. [HL8259]

**Lord True:** This information is not held centrally.

### Company Accounts: Standards

*Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 16 September (HL7963), whether the model being used by the International Standards Board to set international accounting standards produces numbers which enable the provisions of the kind set out in section 841(2)(b) of the Companies Act 2006 which are designed to ensure compliance with section 830 of that Act; and if not, (1) what model the Board is using, and (2) when the Board decided to adopt that model. [HL8234]

**Lord Callanan:** UK legislation set out in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 (CA06), requires certain companies to use EU-adopted international accounting standards, to produce their accounts. After the end of the transition period, UK companies will be required to use UK-adopted international accounting standards. Part 15 gives an overriding requirement that the accounts must give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, financial position and profit or loss of the company.

International accounting standards require companies to recognise provisions (liabilities) where specific conditions are met. When a company uses international accounting standards accounts to make a distribution, Section 841(2)(b) of CA06 requires those provisions to be treated as realised losses (except revaluation provisions).

### Coronavirus: Mental Health

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to promote public morale during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8221]

**Lord True:** Coronavirus is the biggest challenge the UK has faced in decades – and we are not alone. All over the world we are seeing the devastating impact of this disease.

As the Prime Minister said in his recent address to the nation:

"This is a struggle that humanity will win, and we in this country will win... I know that we can succeed because we have succeeded before. When the sickness took hold in this country in March, we pulled together in a

spirit of national sacrifice and community. We followed the guidance to the letter. We stayed at home, protected the NHS, and saved thousands of lives... There are unquestionably difficult months to come. And the fight against Covid is by no means over. I have no doubt, however, that there are great days ahead. But now is the time for us all to summon the discipline, and the resolve, and the spirit of togetherness that will carry us through.”

Details of UK Government support and guidance available to the public are published on <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

### Doug Gurr

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, when Doug Gurr will take up his role as an advisor to the Government Digital Service; what his role and responsibilities will be; and whether he will remain in post as head of Amazon UK. [HL8182]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what interests were declared by Doug Gurr as part of his appointment as an advisor to the Government Digital Service; and what plans they have to address any conflicts of interest. [HL8183]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Doug Gurr will advise on their cloud computing strategy in his role as advisor to the Government Digital Service. [HL8184]

**Lord True:** As part of the wider Civil Service Modernisation and Reform programme, several members of the Digital Economy Council were invited to contribute to a review of HMG's Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) Function over the summer. The review was limited to the processes, structures and operations of the DDaT function, and did not consider particular strategies for government. The Cabinet Office will continue to consult members of the Digital Economy Council as it considers how to implement the recommendations. As always, robust measures are in place to manage possible conflicts and the perception of conflicts.

### Driving Tests: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the suspension of driving tests during the COVID-19 pandemic, what plans they have to extend the validity period of driving test theory certificates. [HL8583]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The two-year validity period of the theory test certificate is set in legislation and the Government has taken the decision not to lay further legislation to extend it. The primary reason is that the two-year validity is in place to ensure that a candidate's

theoretical knowledge remains current. Extending the validity would provide less reassurance that this is the case, particularly over a period when a candidate was also unlikely to be having driving lessons. It is important that road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date as learners prepare to take their practical test.

### Employment: Veterans

*Asked by Lord Touhig*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps the Office for Veterans' Affairs is taking to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that veterans who have become unemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic find new employment. [HL8255]

**Lord True:** The Department for Work and Pensions is delivering a range of employment support for those affected by COVID-19. These initiatives can benefit those whose employment has been affected by COVID-19, including veterans. More widely, the Government is committed to helping veterans secure fulfilling and sustainable employment. The Ministry of Defence provides a Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to assist Service leavers in finding employment.

### Evictions: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to honour their announcement on 18 March that “no renter who has lost income due to coronavirus will be forced out of their home”. [HL8453]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government has established an unprecedented package of support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included support for businesses to pay staff salaries with the Chancellor's recent announcement of the Government's Winter Economy Plan also setting out further measures to support jobs and businesses.

We have strengthened the welfare safety-net with a nearly £9.3 billion boost to the welfare system which includes an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30% of market rents. For renters who require additional support, there is also an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year – an increase of £40 million from last year which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs. In addition, we have introduced legislation that means, from 29 August 2020, landlords must give tenants six months' notice before they can evict in most circumstances.

Where possession cases do go to court we understand that the judiciary will look to prioritise the most egregious cases such as those involving anti-social behaviour. New court rules have also been introduced requiring landlords to set out any information they are aware of in relation to

how their tenant, or any dependant of their tenant has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Where this information is not provided, judges have the ability to adjourn proceedings. Finally, guidance will be issued to bailiffs highlighting that they should not enforce possession orders in places where local public health restrictions have been introduced by government through legislation or in England and Wales across 11 December 2020 to 11 January 2021.

Taken collectively, these measures ensure those most at risk are protected, providing time for tenants to agree a solution with their landlord to sustain the tenancy if they are unable to pay their rent or to consider moving to avoid building up unsustainable debt.

### **Financial Institutions: Misconduct**

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many financial institutions in the UK have been subject to fines for misconduct in each year since 2000; and what was the total amount of fines paid by them. [HL8279]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Information on the FCA's enforcement powers and its policy on financial penalties is set out in detail in the enforcement section of their website, and in their Handbook.

We have passed Baroness Kennedy's questions on to the FCA, who will reply directly to her by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

### **Furs: Sales**

*Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take to ban the sale of fur products in England. [HL8284]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare. There are restrictions on some skin and fur products which may never be legally imported into the UK. These include fur from cats and dogs and seal skins and products from commercial hunts. Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000 (2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

In addition, we do not allow imports of fur from wild animals caught using methods which are non-compliant with international humane trapping standards. Where fur is from an endangered species protected through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), its import or trade will be subject to CITES controls.

During the transition period it is not possible to introduce restrictions relating to the fur trade. Once our future relationship with the EU has been established there will be an opportunity for the Government to consider further steps it could take in relation to fur sales.

### **Greece: Migrant Camps**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to support victims of the fire at the Moria refugee camp on Lesbos. [HL8245]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is responding to requests by the Greek Government to provide specific humanitarian goods and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is urgently making plans for the delivery of these goods.

### **House of Lords: Membership**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultations they have held with (1) the Northern Ireland Executive, (2) the Scottish Government, and (3) the Welsh Government, about recommendations for appointments to the House of Lords which represent their respective nations. [HL8246]

**Lord True:** As has been the case under successive administrations, appointments to the House of Lords are a matter for the Prime Minister. Members of the House of Lords are appointed from a wide range of backgrounds to ensure the House is able to carry out its scrutiny work effectively.

### **Hydrogen Advisory Council**

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish the Terms of Reference of the Hydrogen Advisory Council. [HL8229]

**Lord Callanan:** Draft Terms of Reference were discussed at the first meeting of the Hydrogen Advisory Council on 20 July. The terms of reference will be published on the GOV.UK website in due course.

### **Immigration: Au Pairs**

*Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what immigration rules will apply to au pairs from EU countries who (1) are currently living with families in the UK, (2) wish to commence residency in the UK after 1 January 2021, or (3) are currently living with families but wish to return to their country of origin for the Christmas period and return to the UK after 1 January 2021. [HL8261]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** EU citizens resident in the UK by 31 December 2020 can apply for UK immigration status under the EU Settlement Scheme, to enable them to continue living and working in the UK after 30 June 2021. Their eligibility for the scheme will not be affected if they are absent from the UK over the Christmas period and return to the UK in early 2021.



From 1 January 2021, EU citizens newly arriving in the UK and non-EU citizens will be treated equally under the new points-based immigration system. There will continue to be no dedicated route for au pairs. However, the UK operates a youth mobility scheme which permits nationals of participating countries to undertake such activity during their stay, along with other routes providing general work rights. We are looking to expand our youth mobility partnerships.

### Interest Rates

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likelihood of negative interest rates being introduced in the current financial year. [HL8277]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Monetary policy, including decisions on Bank Rate, is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England. Therefore, the Government does not comment on the conduct of monetary policy.

As noted in the minutes published on 17 September, the MPC will continue to review the appropriateness of a negative policy rate as a policy tool alongside its broader toolkit.

### Investment Income

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact that dividend recapitalisations have on financial security (1) nationally, and (2) internationally. [HL8266]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** A key part of the government's economic policy objective is to preserve and enhance the stability of the UK's financial system. This is reflected in the remit of the Financial Policy Committee (FPC) at the Bank of England, which is responsible for identifying, monitoring and taking action to remove or reduce systemic risks.

There is little sign of dividend recapitalisations further increasing the leverage of borrowers in 2020 to levels above post-Global Financial Crisis average.

Dividend recapitalisations are a small part of the broader leveraged loan market. They've accounted for slightly under 25% of September 2020 issuances to date. All the dividend recapitalisation issuances from July to September 2020 have been from US corporates.

In addition, the Bank of England has ensured that the major UK banks hold enough capital to withstand losses on their leveraged loan portfolios commensurate with loss rates more severe than those experienced in the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.

Given the US-focussed nature of the market, the Bank is also active in international discussions related to banks

and non-banks. The Bank remains a key contributor to the work of the Financial Stability Board, including their analysis of leveraged loans.

### Local Government: Lancashire

Asked by *Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proposals they have received from Lancashire County Council for the reorganisation of local government in that county; and what plans they have to consider any such proposals. [HL8371]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** A number of councils, including Lancashire County Council, have requested invitations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to submit proposals for unitary local government in their areas. The Government is now carefully considering these requests, and where any invitation is issued it will be for the councils concerned to decide what if any locally led reorganisation proposals they put forward.

### Military Aid: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Balfe*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the event that the military is used to support the enforcement of new COVID-19 restrictions, whether military personnel will be empowered to issue fines for breaches. [HL8439]

**Baroness Goldie:** There are no plans for military personnel to be empowered to issue fines.

### Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Asked by *Lord Browne of Ladyton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Minister for Investment last met representatives of the UK automotive industry to discuss (1) the reduction in investment that motor manufacturing has experienced, and (2) the consequential challenges that industry is facing. [HL8235]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** Since becoming Minister for Investment, I have discussed current challenges and opportunities with a range of automotive companies.

The automotive industry globally has seen the impact of a downturn in demand, exacerbated by the COVID crisis. The UK government has already taken unprecedented steps - welcomed by the sector - to protect businesses and workers. The Department for International Trade has been very active in helping companies access these schemes.

We are also delivering a sustained, strategic programme of support to enable the development, manufacture and adoption of low and zero-emission technologies.

UK automotive is a great success story and we are determined to ensure its recovery from the COVID crisis and its prosperity in a zero-carbon future.

## Myanmar: Human Rights

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the report by Amnesty International Military Limited: The company financing human rights abuses in Myanmar, published on 10 September, and (2) the involvement of international businesses in the financing of the military in Myanmar, including units responsible for crimes under international law and other human rights violations. [HL8225]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Amnesty International report is an important piece of work, adding to a growing body of evidence on the complicated relationship between military owned entities, the Myanmar military, and the wider economy.

We encourage all British companies to undertake their own due diligence on any investment projects, and offer advice on working with responsible local partners ensuring as far as possible they are not linked to military entities. In response to the UN Fact Finding Mission (UN FFM) recommendations, the British Embassy in Yangon further strengthened its approach to avoid acquiring goods or services from military-owned companies, and contacted British Businesses about doing the same. We have also sanctioned all six individuals mentioned by the UN FFM for being involved in serious human rights violations including the top two military leaders. We continue to work with trusted organisations, such as the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, and the Myanmar Institute of Directors to help UK and other businesses, as they increase business transparency and improve corporate governance in Myanmar. The British Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar is our local delivery partner and the Department for International Trade Country Director sits on its Board allowing us to reinforce our messaging. Every quarter, the British Ambassador in Yangon gives a Political and Economic briefing to the British Chamber's membership on these issues.

## Myanmar: Rohingya

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to implement the proposals contained in the joint briefing by Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, Burma Campaign UK and Justice4Rohingya UK. Five steps the UK can take now to start to address the Rohingya crisis, published on 17 September. [HL8226]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK, a lead donor on both sides of the border, is working hard to find solutions to the Rohingya crisis. We have convened the UN Security Council three times this year to discuss the Rohingya crisis and continue to use our UN role and bilateral engagement to push for solutions.

We support sanctions that target those responsible for human rights violations, which is why we listed the top two Myanmar generals in the Global Human Rights sanction regime in July.

The UK has publicly supported the ICJ case and provisional measures which are putting pressure on Myanmar to protect the Rohingya. We will continue to consider whether a UK legal intervention would add value to the merits of the case.

We recognise concerns about the impartiality of the Union Election Commission. We are not providing any direct financial support to the UEC, but are working through partners to promote international best practice and long-term institutional strengthening.

Supporting IDPs and refugees remains a priority and in 2019/20 we provided £30 million to support the displaced and conflict affected in Myanmar. The UK has ensured both a total and percentage increase in bilateral aid provided to IDPs and conflict affected people in Myanmar over the last three years.

We are deeply concerned about the denial of citizenship to the Rohingya, the Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific raised the issue of linking citizenship to voting rights when he spoke to the Myanmar Minister for International Cooperation in June.

The UK supports the RAC recommendation to reform the 1982 Citizenship Law and we calling on the Myanmar government, both publicly and privately, to fully implement the RAC recommendations.

## Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Foreign Secretary last spoke directly to the Foreign Minister of Iran about the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; and whether any such discussions included representations on (1) making her furlough from prison permanent, and (2) permitting her to return to the UK. [HL8188]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** It is positive that Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe remains on furlough, but we continue to urge the Iranian Government to make her release permanent so she can return to her family in the UK. Iran bringing these new charges against Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is unacceptable. We welcome the deferral of this groundless court hearing. We have been consistently clear that she must not be returned to prison. We continue to raise her case at the most senior levels, and discuss it at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. The Foreign Secretary spoke twice with Foreign Minister Zarif in August. We raised her case again with the Iranian Ambassador to London on 22 September. Our Ambassador in Tehran consistently discusses all of our British dual-national detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## NHS: Drugs

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure there will be no shortage of medicinal drugs produced outside the UK in the event they do not reach a trade agreement with the EU. [HL8249]

**Lord True:** Our priority is to ensure that patients continue to have access to medicines and medical products that they need. We are working closely with industry, the NHS and others in the supply chain to ensure that precautions are in place.

The Government continues to hold stockpiles of medicines to cope with a range of scenarios, and robust contingency planning continues to ensure that the country is prepared for the end of the transition period.

## Offences against Children

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 21 July (HL6581), whether their paper on group-based child sexual exploitation will include any consideration of the religious characteristics of offenders. [HL8244]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Secretary announced on 19th May that the Government intends to publish a paper on group-based child sexual exploitation. This work is currently ongoing, and we will publish the paper by the end of this year.

We intend this paper to present the available evidence on this form of offending, bringing together all of the insights gathered in the course of the Home Office's work on this issue. We are not excluding any characteristics from our consideration, and conclusions will be drawn from the demographic data that is available.

The paper will set the direction for future work to tackle this form of offending.

## Planning: Rural Areas

Asked by *Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Greenhalgh on 16 September (HL7638), what assessment they have made of the letter sent by the Rural Services Network to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 18 August which stated that the definition of "designated rural areas" in section 157 of the Housing Act 1985 and subsequently used in their consultation Changes to the current planning system, published on 6 August, does not apply to 70 per cent of smaller rural communities. [HL8367]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government is currently consulting on this matter and will take all responses to the consultation into consideration.

## Ports: Wales

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what changes will be necessary at the ports of Holyhead, Fishguard and Pembroke Dock following the end of the transition period with the EU on 1 January 2021. [HL8248]

**Lord True:** On 13 July, the Government announced a £705 million funding package in 2020/21 for border infrastructure, staffing and IT to ensure GB border systems are fully operational when the UK takes back control of its border after the end of the transition period. The £705 million will be split between £470 million for port and inland infrastructure and £235 million for new staff and IT systems.

As Ministers have previously set out, a breakdown will be provided, port by port and region by region, in due course.

## Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Veterans

Asked by *Lord Touhig*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support the Office for Veterans' Affairs provides to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. [HL8253]

**Lord True:** The Government is taking a number of measures to improve mental health support for veterans including those with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

These measures start with for individuals whilst serving in the Armed Forces where personnel now undergo 'through-life' psychological resilience training. Personnel have access to the Defence Transition service, launched in October 2019. This provides information and support for Service leavers and their families who are most likely to face challenges as they leave the Armed Forces, including those which may impact on their mental health.

The Government continues to invest in the provision of a world-leading mental health pathway in the NHS in England for those who have served in the Armed Forces, which encompasses the Transition Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) and Complex Treatment Services (CTS). We are also accelerating a new High Intensity Service due to be launched later this year, which will provide further support for those with acute mental health needs. As well as investing in these services, the Government continues to work on improving the awareness of, and access to, these services, with over 800 veteran-friendly GP surgeries. In addition to the provision of statutory services through the NHS, the Government has, through funding provided to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the COVID-19 Impact Fund, continued to invest in charity and third-sector

organisations which provide services which support the mental and physical wellbeing of veterans. NHS England and NHS Improvement has also recently provided funding to a number of Armed Forces charities to support serving personnel, veterans and their families during COVID-19.

As well as clinical and charity services, the Government is also funding research and studies to improve the understanding of the issues and instances of mental health, including PTSD amongst the Armed Forces community.

### Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they are introducing to ensure that private renters whose income has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are at risk of eviction do not become homeless. [HL8316]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government has established an unprecedented package of support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We have supported businesses to pay staff salaries and strengthened the welfare safety-net with a nearly £9.3 billion boost to the welfare system. This includes an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30% of market rents. For those renters who require additional support, there is also an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year and which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

In addition, we have introduced legislation that means, from 29 August 2020, landlords must give tenants six months' notice before they can evict in most circumstances. This ensures those most at risk are protected and provides time for tenants to agree a solution with their landlord if they are unable to pay their rent or consider moving to avoid building up unsustainable debt.

These measures enable renters to continue paying their rent and support landlords and tenants in sustaining tenancies. If renters do find themselves at risk of homelessness, the Homelessness Reduction Act places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try and prevent a person's homelessness.

### Property Development

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to prevent developments stalling, and (2) to ensure obligations to build are met in a timely manner, in their changes to planning rules. [HL8296]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** New homes should be built out as soon as possible once planning permission is granted. We are clear that where sites are stalled or experiencing delays to delivery, it is for local authorities and developers to work closely together at a local level to overcome these barriers.

To support build out through planning, we propose to make it clear in the revised National Planning Policy Framework that the masterplans and design codes for sites prepared for substantial development should seek to include a variety of development types by different builders which allow more phases to come forward together.

We will be exploring further options to support faster build out as part of our proposed planning reforms as outlined in the Planning White Paper.

### Public Houses: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to instruct pubs to close an hour earlier in areas under local restrictions to address the COVID-19 pandemic; and if so why. [HL8241]

**Lord Callanan:** My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 22 September that, as from 24 September, all pubs in England must have a 10pm-5am closing time to help curb the spread of COVID-19.

### Rented Housing: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Young of Cookham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide a package of financial support to enable tenants to pay off arrears accrued due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order (1) to prevent the risk of evictions when the ban comes to an end, and (2) to support smaller landlords. [HL8262]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government has established an unprecedented package of support to protect tenants and landlords throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with support for businesses to pay staff salaries and strengthening the welfare safety-net with a nearly £9.3 billion boost to the welfare system. This includes an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30% of market rents. These measures are supporting both landlords and tenants by enabling renters to continue paying their rent.

For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year and which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely throughout the Autumn and Winter.

## Sleeping Rough

Asked by *Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to eradicate rough sleeping. [HL8230]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have ensured that nearly 15,000 vulnerable people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping have been housed in emergency accommodation. We must now ensure that as few individuals as possible return to the streets following this initial period of accommodation.

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme makes available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to prevent these people from returning to the streets. £161 million will deliver 3,300 units of longer-term move-on accommodation in 2020/2021; and £91.5 million has been allocated to pay for immediate support and interim accommodation.

## Small Businesses

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises are appointed to Cabinet Office advisory panels; and what plans they have, if any, to increase this number. [HL8240]

**Lord True:** The Small Business Advisory Panel provides feedback and challenge on increasing government spend with small and medium-sized enterprises. Information about the work of the panel is published at gov.uk/government/publications/sme-panel.

Martin Traynor OBE serves as the Small Business Crown Representative, making sure that small businesses have improved access to government contracts.

## Turkey: Natural Gas

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of (1) Turkey, and (2) Greece, (a) to de-escalate the dispute over maritime rights in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and (b) to enable exploratory talks to resume between the two on the demarcation of Maritime Zones. [HL8463]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is in regular contact with Turkish and Greek partners with regard to the ongoing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean and we welcome the announcement that Greece and Turkey will resume exploratory talks. The Prime Minister discussed this with Turkish President Erdoğan on 28 September. The Defence Secretary discussed this with the Turkish Defence Minister on 28 August. The Foreign Secretary also raised the matter with the Turkish Foreign Minister on 8 July. The Minister for European Neighbourhood and the

Americas has spoken to both her Turkish and Greek counterparts in recent weeks. Officials continue to raise the issue with the parties concerned. We believe it is critical for stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and for the integrity of the rules-based international system that tensions be reduced and disputes resolved through dialogue and in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

## United Kingdom Internal Market Bill 2019-21

Asked by *Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the Welsh Government, (2) the Scottish Government, and (3) the Northern Ireland Executive, about the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill. [HL8232]

**Lord Callanan:** UK Government Ministers and officials have been open to engaging with all devolved administrations following the publication of the UK Internal Market Bill on 9 September, with discussions held both before and after publication. Further discussions are planned at Ministerial and official-level with all three devolved administrations as the legislative Consent Motion process continues.

## Urban Areas

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they plan to have with (1) the Northern Ireland Executive, (2) the Scottish Government, and (3) the Welsh Government, about the scope for (1) new, or (2) expanded, towns to enable a better distribution of population within the UK. [HL8126]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Department is in regular contact with the Devolved Administrations on a range of issues. However, there are no plans to meet in order to discuss changing the distribution of the population of the UK.

Planning is a devolved matter, and the Department has recently consulted on changes to planning practice guidance on the standard method for assessing local housing need. The standard method provides the starting point for planning for housing and the proposals relate to England only.

## Veterans: Suicide

Asked by *Lord Touhig*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their paper *The Strategy for our Veterans*, published in November 2018, what progress has been made in improving data collection to help prevent veterans' suicides. [HL8252]

**Lord True:** Data about suicide rates amongst the general population across England and Wales are reported by the Office for National Statistics using information provided to registrars by coroners in their records of inquest. Historically, governments have relied on specific studies relating to the cause of death, including suicide, amongst veterans' cohorts from specific campaigns, for example the Falklands campaign and the 1990/91 Gulf conflict. In order to ensure that the Government has the most up-to-date understanding of the prevalence of suicide amongst serving and ex-service personnel, two further studies are being conducted. The first is documenting all causes of death, including suicide, amongst those who have served in the Armed Forces

since 2001. This study will continue on an ongoing basis to provide real-time data about causes of death, including suicide, amongst those who have served. A second study is looking at the factors in the year leading up to any confirmed suicide amongst serving and ex-service personnel in the last five years.

Whilst these studies will provide updated and improved data about the prevalence of suicide amongst veterans, the importance of this issue means that the Government is committed to exploring other routes, including a potential role for coroners, by which suicides could be recorded accurately and consistently so as to help inform improved support and interventions aimed at preventing suicide.

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