

**Session 2019-21
No. 126**



**Monday
19 October 2020**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Statements1

Written Answers.....5

[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/>

Members who want a printed copy of Written Answers and Written Statements should notify the Printed Paper Office.

This printed edition is a reproduction of the original text of Answers and Statements, which can be found on the internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>.

Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

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

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2020

This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence, which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/

Written Statements

Monday, 19 October 2020

CrossCountry Rail Franchise

[HLWS512]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

I am updating the House that the Department for Transport has negotiated a further Direct Award for the CrossCountry rail franchise.

I am pleased to inform the house that the Government has signed a new contract with Arriva to ensure vital train services continue across the UK's most extensive rail network. Stretching from Aberdeen to Penzance and from Stansted Airport to Cardiff, CrossCountry's network is the most geographically extensive passenger rail franchise in Great Britain. It calls at over 100 stations and connects seven of Britain's ten largest cities.

The new agreement means Arriva CrossCountry, which has run the service since 2007, will continue to operate the franchise for three more years until October 2023. This brings stability to CrossCountry services and provides certainty for passengers and staff as the future direction of rail reform takes shape.

Vital, long-distance rail services, which people across the length of Great Britain rely on, will continue to run and support the UK's recovery from Covid-19, thanks to this new contract. As people return to the railway, passengers will benefit from more capacity and operational staff, along with new measures to help passengers with disabilities, aligned with current best practice across the rail industry.

The contract also has a renewed focus on tackling environmental impacts. To reduce diesel emissions, Arriva CrossCountry will trial the use of electrical shore supplies when Turbostars are in depots for cleaning, and on-train batteries when Voyagers enter and leave stations. We will continue to work with the owners of the Voyagers to ensure engines are turned off when at platforms.

This new contract complements the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) announced in September, in place for up to 18 months, where the Government pays train companies a small management fee to keep services running through the pandemic.

The contract will see the Government take on the revenue and cost risk associated with the franchise and pay Arriva a performance-linked fee to operate the service, incentivising the company to deliver improvements to operational performance, passenger experience and service quality.

Future Regulatory Framework and Solvency II Reviews

[HLWS517]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

In the written statement *Financial Services Update* on 23 June [HCWS309], the Chancellor announced that the Government would commence the next stage of the Future Regulatory Framework (FRF) Review and bring forward a review of certain features of Solvency II, the prudential regulatory regime for insurance firms. The Government has today laid the first FRF consultation on the wider regulatory framework for financial services and published a call for evidence as the first stage of the Solvency II Review. These reviews reflect the Government's aim to make financial services regulation better tailored to the needs of the UK economy and its citizens, and to support the UK's world-class financial services sector.

Following the completion of Phase I of the FRF Review, which focused on improving coordination between the UK's financial services regulatory bodies, the Government is progressing with Phase II of the Review, which will examine how the wider regulatory framework for financial services should adapt now that the UK has left the EU. The important and wide-ranging issues raised by this Review, combined with the broad range of stakeholders that will be affected, make an in-depth review process appropriate. The Government will therefore consult in two stages, starting with the first consultation published today.

Leaving the EU provides an opportunity to shape our regulatory framework for financial services so that it is more coherent, agile and democratically accountable to support a stable, innovative and world leading financial services sector. The consultation proposes an overall approach that builds on the strengths of the UK's existing domestic framework by:

- Providing a clear and coherent allocation of regulatory responsibilities between Parliament, the Government and the financial services regulators.
- Setting out a legislative approach under which Government and Parliament can establish an enhanced policy framework within which the regulators must operate.
- Making the UK's expert, operationally independent regulators responsible for setting direct regulatory requirements on financial services firms and markets, according to the policy framework set by Government and Parliament.
- Reviewing accountability, scrutiny and public engagement arrangements, particularly in relation to the financial services regulators, so that these arrangements can be strengthened to reflect the regulators' expanded responsibilities.

This first consultation is intended to generate a wide-ranging debate about the UK's overall regulatory approach for financial services. The views gathered through the first consultation will then be used to develop a final package of proposals which will be set out in a second consultation during 2021.

The Government is reviewing Solvency II to ensure that the UK's prudential regulatory regime for the insurance sector is better tailored to support the unique features of the UK sector and the UK regulatory approach. The review will focus on several specific areas of Solvency II, including the risk margin, matching adjustment, and reporting requirements, but the review will not necessarily be limited to these areas.

The Solvency II Review will be guided by three objectives:

- To spur a vibrant, innovative, and internationally competitive insurance sector.
- To protect policyholders and ensure the safety and soundness of firms.
- To support insurance firms to provide long-term capital to support growth, including investment in infrastructure, venture capital and growth equity, and other long-term productive assets, as well as investment consistent with the Government's climate change objectives.

Both publications are available on www.gov.uk and will be open for responses until 19 January 2021.

The Future Regulatory Framework Review consultation <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-regulatory-framework-frf-review-consultation>

Solvency II Review call for evidence <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/solvency-ii-review-call-for-evidence>.

Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

[HLWS516]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill) has made the following written statement:

The primary objective of our policy is to support the expansion of the annual seasonal flu vaccination campaign and to support the successful roll-out of a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine. Throughout the Coronavirus outbreak, the government has brought in the right measures at the right time, based on the most relevant and up-to-date scientific advancements and advice. As the UK enters the 'flu season' where domestic transmission is rising, it is important that the Government can respond swiftly and effectively to the current situation.

The independent Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) will advise the UK government on the safety, quality and efficacy of any vaccine; no vaccine will be

deployed unless stringent standards have been met through a comprehensive clinical trial programme. The preferred route to enable deployment of any vaccine, including new vaccines for Covid-19, remains through the usual marketing authorisation (product licensing) processes.

In the interests of patient safety and bringing the pandemic to an end which will allow life to restore to normality, the Human Medicine (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 will come into force, for the most part, on 3 November 2020, although some provisions need to be brought into force on the day after they are laid before Parliament. Our plan is to bolster the safeguards to product authorisation and to improve access to necessary vaccines in order to protect the public ahead of the winter and beyond; and ultimately reduce mortality.

The Regulations introduce measures to support the safe future mass rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine, and the expansion of the annual seasonal flu vaccination programme, and include bringing the 5 main changes into effect:

- i) Reinforcing temporary authorisation measures to provide for the attaching of conditions, a technical change in order to make sure that any unlicensed products that the government recommends for deployment in response to certain public health threats must meet required safety and quality standards;
- ii) Expanding the workforce able to administer Covid-19 and flu vaccines to improve access and protect the public, including by new immunisation protocols for Covid-19 and flu vaccines;
- iii) Rationalising the scope of the pre-existing partial immunity from civil liability for the pharmaceutical companies whose unlicensed products are recommended for use by the government in response to certain public health threats, and also extending that partial immunity to all members of the additional workforce that could be allowed to administer temporarily authorised vaccinations under the new immunisation protocols;
- iv) Ensuring that treatments used in response to certain specific types of public health threat can be promoted by advertisements to the public as part of national campaigns;
- v) The provision of an exemption from the need for a wholesale dealer's licence to allow the swift and safe transfer of Covid-19 and flu vaccines, and other medicines for treatment of pandemic disease, in response to patient need, by NHS and armed services providers at the end of the supply chain.

If a Covid-19 vaccine is ready for deployment prior to 1 January 2021, these measures will bolster existing temporary authorisation powers that allow the MHRA to consider approving its use, before a full product licence is granted - provided it is proven to be safe and effective during the extensive clinical trials. The measures are especially necessary in the context of the transition period

because until its end any full product licence for a potential Covid-19 vaccine must be granted by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The UK government has sought views on proposals to make changes, in conjunction with the Minister of Health in Northern Ireland, to the Human Medicines Regulations 2012. The Department has further welcomed views from any interested individual or organisation through a public consultation which ran from 28 August and closed on 18 September, also holding discussions about the proposals with specialists and key stakeholders in tandem. We welcome the participation of all individuals and organisations who contributed to the consultation and received over 188,000 responses. We analysed these responses and based on feedback made three key changes to the content of the legislation, which are explained in the Explanatory Memorandum published alongside the instrument.

The Explanatory Memorandum published with the instrument also explains why some of the provisions of this instrument breach the rule that provisions of statutory instruments subject to the negative procedure should normally be laid 21 days before the instrument comes into force. The measures that are being brought into force in breach of the 21-day rule are essentially permissive and enabling. The priority action is to support the annual flu vaccination rollout, delaying their implementation could increase the incidence of the influenza in the UK. Currently a safe effective vaccine for Covid-19 to deploy is subject to the outcome of clinical trials. However, any delay to the annual vaccination rollout would hamper an important aspect of the Covid-19 fightback.

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will advise the UK government on which Covid-19 vaccine/s the UK should use, and on the priority groups to receive the vaccine based on the best available clinical, modelling and epidemiological data. This will depend on the properties of the vaccine, those most at need (including health and care ‘frontline’ workers) and the medical circumstances of individuals. Updated JCVI advice can be found [here](#).

In-Work Progression Commission: Call for Evidence

[HLWS513]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My Right Honourable Friend, The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey MP) has made the following Written Statement.

I established the In-Work Progression Commission - led by Baroness McGregor-Smith - in March this year as part of this government’s commitment to levelling up opportunities for those who want to progress from lower paid jobs into higher paid work.

In response to Covid-19, our focus is getting people back into work and our £30bn Plan for Jobs will support hundreds of thousands of people of all ages do this. Now

however is also the time to lay the groundwork for the future when people will be able and striving to progress.

The Commission wants to hear from all sectors, including businesses, charities, think-tanks, advocacy groups and other community focused organisations as well as from individuals who have or have not progressed out of low pay. We have launched a call for evidence, details of which can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression): <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression>.

We want written contributions that highlight the challenges to progression in low-paid sectors and how best to support talented people to rise through the ranks. A copy of the call for evidence document will be placed in the House Library and responses can be sent to progression.commission@dwp.gov.uk.

Modern Slavery: Annual Report

[HLWS514]

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:

Today, I am publishing the 2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery. The Report covers the whole of the UK and has been drafted in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government. This report sets out an assessment of the scale of modern slavery in the UK and outlines the actions that have been taken to combat it over the last year.

A copy of the report will be available on Gov.uk and placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Private Pensions: Annual Benefit Statements

[HLWS515]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions & Financial Inclusion (Guy Opperman MP) has made the following Written Statement.

The Government has published its response to the consultation on the approach to delivering simpler annual pension benefit statements.

Participation in pension saving has been transformed through the success of Automatic Enrolment. However, there is a growing likelihood that people will have a number of different jobs in their lifetime, and therefore multiple pension pots and annual pension statements.

This is why the Government’s ambition is for pension benefit statements to be simpler, more consistent and jargon free. Consistency across pension benefit statements will help savers better understand their pensions and effectively plan for retirement. A standardised template will be more accessible, drive member engagement and signpost members to detailed information on costs and charges and investment strategy. It will also complement

the work Government is doing with the pensions dashboard to bring pensions online to your phone or laptop.

We will focus first on Defined Contribution schemes used for Automatic Enrolment, but it remains the long term ambition to improve consistency across all schemes. We will consult later this year on draft regulations for a mandated approach to simpler statements, working with industry on the detailed design of the Regulations and associated statutory guidance.

In addition, Government will work with the pensions industry to introduce a statement season, building on the success of pensions awareness month. It will support the normalisation of workplace pension saving, provoke debate amongst the public and enable easier comparison between statements and providers.

These measures will help individuals engage with their workplace pension savings, and enable savers to achieve greater financial security in retirement.

Written Answers

Monday, 19 October 2020

Abd al-Rahman Jabarah

Asked by *Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the shooting of Abd al-Rahman Jabarah by police in that country. [[HL8784](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on this specific incident, we remain deeply concerned by the ongoing cycle of violence. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

Affordable Housing

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact changes to planning regulations will have on the number of affordable homes. [[HL8895](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: To aid small and medium-sized (SME) builders through economic recovery, we have consulted on a proposal to increase the current threshold at which affordable housing contributions can be collected on new developments. Details of the impact of this proposal are set out in the *Changes to the current planning system* consultation, which closed on 1 October. It is important that we analyse the consultation feedback thoroughly. We will respond to the consultation in due course.

We are proposing this as a short-term measure before introducing radical reform through the *Planning for the future* white paper, in which we are proposing a new nationally-set 'Infrastructure Levy' that delivers at least as much on-site affordable housing as at present. The *Planning for the future* consultation closes on 29 October.

Agriculture and Land Use: Environment Protection

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the devolved administrations about future policies on agriculture and land-use that are designed to meet biodiversity and climate targets. [[HL8764](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Domestic agricultural policy is a devolved matter in the UK. The

UK Government is working closely with the devolved administrations to develop the Agricultural Support Common UK Framework, and we expect to be able to agree this soon. The aim of this is to ensure effective co-ordination and dialogue between the administrations on how any changes to legislation or policy in one part of the UK may affect other parts. This includes discussion on the concept of agreements with land managers for delivering public goods, such as may support the UK's biodiversity and climate targets.

In England, the Agriculture Bill will introduce an ambitious new Environmental Land Management scheme, based on the principle of "public money for public goods", which will allow us to reward farmers and land managers who protect our environment. The scheme will provide a powerful vehicle for supporting our biodiversity goals and meeting our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.

Domestic biodiversity policy is also devolved. The UK Government and devolved administrations also meet regularly as part of the UK Biodiversity Framework, which was established in 2012 to identify joint actions to complement country implementation of biodiversity strategies, evidence collation, sharing of best practice and reporting, for example on UK progress with biodiversity targets.

As part of our preparations for the COP26 Climate Conference next year, the UK Government is working with the devolved administrations on a number of regional events across the UK to demonstrate the benefits of nature-based solutions that can support our climate change targets.

Andy Li

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they have on the wellbeing of imprisoned Hong Kong activist Andy Li; and whether they have asked the government of China (1) to allow access to Andy Li by family members and lawyers, and (2) to return him to Hong Kong. [[HL8697](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have raised our concerns about the 12 detainees in Shenzhen, which we understand includes Andy Li, with the Chinese authorities in Hong Kong. It is essential that due process is followed. The rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong, including their rights to freedom of speech and assembly, are expressly guaranteed in the Joint Declaration. Rights committed to under the Joint Declaration must be upheld.

Armed Forces: Compensation

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to assist injured members of the British Armed Forces including the Ulster Defence Regiment

and their relatives to claim from the Victims' Payment Scheme. [HL8801]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government understands the need to support potential applicants, which is why the Victims Payments regulations make it clear that the Board is required to have regard to the need to prioritise, and be responsive to, the victims of Troubles-related incidents.

The regulations are also clear that for any person making an application, or considering whether to make an application, the Victim's Payments Board must make arrangements for facilitating access to advice and support, and help victims obtain evidence necessary to support the claim.

These support provisions will be available to all individuals applying for the scheme, including members of the Armed Forces - in addition to existing pension and compensation schemes which provide support for the Armed Forces, veterans and their families, such as the War Pension scheme.

The Northern Ireland Executive are responsible for delivery of the scheme, and will want to be as open as possible with the public about preparations and progress. We will continue to prioritise supporting the Executive's delivery of this scheme.

Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether non-use against civilians is a condition of UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia. [HL8721]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: British arms sales are subject to an export licence. All export licence applications are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria').

The Consolidated Criteria take into account our obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and other relevant rules of international law. They provide a thorough risk assessment framework and require us to think hard about the possible impact of providing equipment and its capabilities.

HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current status of UK arms supply arrangements with Saudi Arabia; and whether changes have been made to these arrangements in the light of the ongoing conflict in Yemen. [HL8722]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: British arms exports are subject to an export licence. All export licence applications are assessed against the Consolidated EU and

National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria').

As set out in my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade's Written Statement of 7th July 2020, we have developed a revised methodology in respect of all allegations that it is assessed are likely to have occurred and to have been caused by fixed wing aircraft, reflecting the factual circumstances which court proceedings concerned and this revised methodology is in place for international humanitarian law (IHL) assessments when assessing such exports against Criterion 2c of the Consolidated Criteria.

Criterion 2c provides that HM Government will not grant a licence if there is a clear risk that the items might be used in the commission of a serious violation of IHL. Indeed, HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with any part of the Consolidated Criteria.

Aviation: Compensation

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether UK citizens will be able to enforce their rights under EU Regulation 261/2004 after 31 December without new domestic legislation. [HL8711]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: EU261 rules apply until the end of the EU Exit transition period. After that point, those rules will be retained in domestic law and will therefore continue to apply.

Aviation: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Dobbs

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of passengers arriving at UK airports are required to present a Passenger Locator Form; and how many of those required to present such a Form have subsequently been found to be suffering from COVID-19. [HL8719]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: All passengers arriving in the United Kingdom are required to complete a Passenger Locator Form unless they are in one of the exempt categories, which are set out on the Government website.

Public Health England does not collect data on the number of international arrivals who have completed the Passenger Locator Form and have subsequently tested positive for COVID-19.

Aviation: EU Law

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 16 September (HL7613), what challenges have been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and what plans, if any, they have to introduce legislation before 31 December to ensure that passengers are protected

from losses resulting from flight cancellations after the transition period has ended. [HL8710]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The pandemic has caused major disruption in the travel sector and the ability of consumers to travel. After the end of the EU Exit transition period, the Air Passenger Rights Regulations will be retained in domestic law and will therefore continue to apply.

Buildings: Insulation

Asked by Baroness Grender

To ask Her Majesty's Government how long they estimate it will take to carry out External Wall Surveys (EWS) on all buildings that are currently required by mortgage providers to have an EWS1 certificate before owners can re-mortgage or sell their properties. [HL9127]

Asked by Baroness Grender

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many buildings, including those (1) with shared ownership properties, and (2) over 18 metres tall, are currently required by mortgage providers to have an External Wall Survey 1 form before an owner can re-mortgage or sell properties within that building. [HL9128]

Lord Greenhalgh: The External Wall System form (EWS1) and process is designed and implemented by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) in conjunction with mortgage lenders to assist with valuation of high-rise residential buildings. Some lenders do not require an EWS1 form, and others seek them for a greater range of buildings than the process was designed for. It is not a Government policy or regulatory requirement and the department does not hold data on its use.

Business: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the campaign launched on 1 October by the Confederation of British Industry and others to increase the diversity of racial and ethnic participation in British businesses. [HL8835]

Lord Callanan: The Government is committed to promoting business leadership diversity and inclusion. Companies should embrace diversity throughout their workforce, including at board level and throughout senior leadership and the talent pipeline.

We work with businesses and business representative bodies to promote diverse boardrooms for FTSE 350 companies, and we support the independent business-led Parker Review which recommends that FTSE 100 companies should have at least one director of colour by the end of 2021 and that FTSE 250 companies also meet this target by the end of 2024.

We welcome the CBI campaign's reinforcement of the Parker Review's recommendations.

Cameroon: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last produced a conflict analysis report on Cameroon; what were the conclusions of that report; what steps they intend to take in response to those conclusions; and what plans they have to publish that report. [HL8903]

Baroness Sugg: The Government monitors developments in Cameroon closely. Representatives of the UK Government in Yaoundé and around the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office global network routinely engage with the Government of Cameroon and a range of experts to understand more about the crisis in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions and the ways we can support the restoration of peace. Quality, impartial analysis is critical to supporting our policy development.

The Government is encouraging the Government of Cameroon to engage in further, inclusive dialogue to address the root causes of the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. The British High Commissioner in Yaoundé raised this directly with the Prime Minister of Cameroon in September. We also discuss the crisis with international partners and in multilateral fora, calling for support to peacebuilding efforts and engagement by regional partners including the African Union and the Commonwealth. We routinely call for all sides to remain engaged in the Swiss-led efforts to facilitate talks between separatist groups and the Government of Cameroon.

Cattle: Accidents

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to prevent walkers on public footpaths being killed by cattle. [HL8706]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Promoting safety in the countryside and ensuring the public feel safe and confident while using the rights of way network is very important.

The Health and Safety Executive provides advice on keeping cattle in areas where there are public rights of way and in open access areas, which can be accessed here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais17ew.pdf>. It provides a list of actions which farmers can take to avoid or mitigate risk; for example, keeping stock elsewhere, avoiding fields with public access, putting up temporary fencing and clear signposting.

Cattle, particularly if with calves, can occasionally become aggressive towards dogs. The current Countryside Code pages on GOV.UK give advice for the public on dogs and farm animals, as well as advice for land managers regarding identifying threats to visitor safety. These pages can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/countryside-code-full-online-version>.

Natural England is refreshing the code for a planned relaunch next year which will provide an opportunity to reinforce messaging around cattle and public access.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

GOV.UK Countryside Code web page [Countryside code - full online version - GOV.UK.pdf]

HSE information sheet [HSE information sheet - Cattle and public access.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-05/HL8706>

Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland: Finance

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have reached an agreement on the future funding of the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland; and if so, what funds they are making available to fund this office (1) in the current financial year, and (2) in subsequent years. [HL9028]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Northern Ireland Office is committed to ensuring that all of its sponsored bodies have the necessary resources to deliver their statutory functions. Budget allocations for the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland are kept under review throughout the year and discussions around funding take place at regular governance meetings.

Funding for subsequent years will be considered as part of the current Comprehensive Spending Review.

Children: Exploitation

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that child victims of criminal exploitation are not excluded from school. [HL8731]

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Just for Kids Law, Excluded, exploited, forgotten: Childhood criminal exploitation and school exclusions, published on 26 August; and what plans they have to include new provisions to protect children vulnerable to exploitation in their forthcoming guidance on exclusions. [HL8732]

Baroness Berridge: It is critical for schools to be calm and disciplined environments, for pupils and teaching staff, and it is important that they remain as such.

There is no right number of exclusions, but we are clear that permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort. Exclusion from school should not mean exclusion

from good quality education or from support needed to reduce risk and vulnerability.

We are taking forward an ambitious programme of work on school behaviour and are working to rapidly improve the availability of good alternative provision, so that permanently excluded children and children at risk of exclusion receive high-quality education and support suited to their individual needs. We are also working with Ofsted to clamp down on off-rolling, which is never acceptable.

We will also revise guidance on exclusions to make it clearer and more consistent, so that head teachers have the information they need to use exclusion properly and proportionately. We will continue to engage with key stakeholders including Just for Kids Law when revising guidance.

Schools must have due regard to the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) statutory guidance, when carrying out their duties, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This guidance already provides information for all staff as to what abuse, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and peer-on-peer abuse look like, indicators to be aware of, what to do and who to report to, if they have a concern about a child.

On 1 September 2020, a revised version of KCSIE was published. This includes more detail regarding child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation in part one, which all staff should read. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>.

It is right that, where it comes to individual cases, local professionals are best placed to decide on the measures to support victims and child perpetrators.

In addition, the department provided £7 million to the See, Hear, Respond service led by Barnardo's which will deliver, among other things, street-based youth work to identify and support children at risk of harm outside of the home, including criminal exploitation. Additionally, the £13 million Trusted Relationships Fund (2018-22) funds 11 different local authorities across England delivering innovative approaches to supporting children and young people, aged 10-17 years, at risk of child sexual exploitation or abuse, criminal exploitation and peer-on-peer abuse.

The department is also funding a £2 million Tackling Child Exploitation support programme to help safeguarding partners in local areas develop an effective response to extra-familial harms such as child sexual and child criminal exploitation.

The Home Office has invested £70 million into Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) to help tackle serious violence in the 18 worst affected areas. VRUs are non-statutory partnerships which offer leadership and strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence by bringing together police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and other key

partners to identify the drivers of serious violence and agree a multi-agency response to them.

This government is also investing £20 million this year to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and having a devastating impact on our communities. This includes investment to significantly uplift the law enforcement response to county lines, develop several wider national capabilities, and increase specialist support for young people and their families who are affected by county lines exploitation.

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made in negotiations over joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. [HL8809]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: Pursuing accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a priority for the Government and is a key part of our trade negotiations programme. We have engaged with all eleven member countries, at both ministerial and official level. All CPTPP members have welcomed our interest in accession. Most recently, on 9th September 2020, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade addressed a United Kingdom-CPTPP Senior Officials' meeting to discuss the UK's potential accession. We will continue to engage all members as we consider our application.

Confucius Institutes

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of Confucius Institutes by the government of China. [HL8708]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Confucius Institutes are affiliated to the Chinese Ministry of Education, and the programme is overseen by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (referred to as Hanban), which is a Chinese Government entity. Their stated aim is to promote Chinese language and culture and promote cultural exchanges internationally. Concerns have been raised in a number of countries about the impact of Confucius Institutes on academic freedom at host institutions.

UK higher education providers that host Confucius Institutes are responsible for ensuring their partnerships are managed appropriately with the right due diligence in place. The Government will continue to support the sector to promote mutually beneficial international partnerships in line with UK values. As the Minister for Asia, Nigel Adams MP, made clear in a Westminster Hall Debate on 7 October, we will not tolerate any attempts to interfere with academic freedom or freedom of speech and

encourage any institutions concerned about their international collaborations to contact the Government.

Councillors and Mayors: Sexual Offences

Asked by Baroness Pinnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to honour the commitment made by the Local Government Minister on 18 October 2018 to amend section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 to disbar persons required to sign the Sex Offenders Register from acquiring or holding public office as councillors or mayors. [HL8757]

Lord Greenhalgh: It is essential that all our councillors, mayors and London Assembly members are held to the highest standards of conduct.

That is why the Government has committed to legislate on this issue as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

These challenging times have put the Government's legislative programme under pressure. However, the Government will seek an early opportunity to legislate on this matter as soon as is practicable.

Courts and Legal Aid Scheme

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to increase the rate of legal aid fees paid to barristers, and (2) to reduce the backlog of cases in the magistrates' and Crown courts. [HL8703]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Criminal defence lawyers play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and the Government greatly values the work they do.

In August we announced that we would be taking forward the policy proposals that practitioners told us mattered most for the Criminal Legal Aid Review (CLAR) accelerated areas. These areas were: unused material, cracked trials, paper-heavy cases, sending cases to the Crown Court, and pre-charge engagement. These policies allowed us to inject up to £51 million into criminal legal aid to further strengthen the market.

We also announced that the next phase of the review would include an independently led review of the market, to ensure it can meet demand now and into the future, provide an effective and efficient service that ensures value for money for the taxpayer.

With respect to the courts, as one of the first among other comparable jurisdictions globally to resume jury trials, our Crown Courts currently list thousands of cases each week. Since late July 2020, magistrates' courts have been completing more cases than have been received. We expect the trend of reducing the outstanding work to continue.

We are also installing plexiglass screens into over 300 courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms enabling us to open safely 250 Crown Court rooms for jury trials by the end of October. We're also investing record amounts - the

biggest single investment in court estate maintenance for more than 20 years – and unlocking vital capacity by opening Nightingale Courts to provide extra court rooms.

Credit Unions: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role credit unions have played in supporting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8817]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government recognises the contribution credit unions have made to support vulnerable people during the Covid-19 pandemic. Credit unions play a vital role in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.

The Centre for Community Finance Europe (CFCFE) published research in May 2020, setting out the range of activities credit unions have undertaken to support their local communities during the Covid-19 pandemic, including adapting existing services and introducing new products. The research is available on the CFCFE website.

In April 2020, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury wrote to credit union trade bodies to thank frontline credit union staff for their efforts to continue to provide essential services to their members. Furthermore, the Economic Secretary has engaged with representatives from the credit union sector through the Consumer Finance Forum and Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, which has brought financial services and consumer group representatives together, to discuss how people can be best supported.

HMT officials also hosted a meeting with credit union trade bodies in June 2020 to understand their experiences of supporting members through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Crimes of Violence: Young People

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address serious youth violence. [HL8767]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government is committed to delivering on the people's priorities by tackling violent crime. This means giving the police the resources and powers they need to make a difference. In January this year we announced the biggest funding increase in a decade for the police system and we are recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers over next three years including 6,000 additional officers by the end of financial year 2020/21.

In the 18 Police Force areas worst affected by serious violence, we have invested a total of £176.5 million over 2 years (2019-21) to deliver a whole-systems response. Of this funding, £106.5 million is to enhance the Police's operational response and £70 million has funded the establishment of local, multi-agency Violence Reduction Units to address the drivers of serious violence. Tackling serious violence will be backed with £119 million in 2020-21, which includes £20 million to tackle county lines drug dealing; £35m funding for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs); and £41.5m on extra police resources in the areas most affected by serious violence.

The Government has also invested £200 million in a 10-year Youth Endowment (YEF) Fund to tackle the drivers behind serious youth violence. An extra £5million has been awarded to the YEF in 2020 to develop a National Centre of Excellence, which will share knowledge and expertise with those working with vulnerable children and young people at risk of involvement in serious youth violence.

In July 2020, the YEF offered a total of £6.5m to 130 organisations across England and Wales as part of its COVID-19 grant round. The funding will help charities, social enterprises, local authorities and youth organisations to re-connect with young people at-risk of being drawn into violent crime and tackle any problems to emerge because of COVID-19.

It was announced on 19 December in the Queen's Speech that we will be bringing forward legislation that will place new duties on a range of specified agencies across different sectors to work collaboratively, share data and put in place plans to prevent and reduce serious violence.

In addition, on 14 September we launched an 8-week public consultation on the design of the new court order - Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs). SVROs would give the police personalised powers to target those already convicted of certain knife and weapon offences, giving them the automatic right to search those who pose the greatest risk.

Criminal Proceedings: Royal Commissions

Asked by Lord Ramsbotham

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to announce (1) the chair, (2) the timeframe, and (3) the terms of reference, for the Royal Commission on the Criminal Justice Process announced in the Queen's Speech 2019. [HL8761]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Royal Commission presents an opportunity to undertake a significant independent review to investigate some key issues in the criminal justice system alongside building greater resilience following the impact of this pandemic.

We are therefore carefully considering the precise remit and timing of this Commission and will update the House in due course.

Department for Work and Pensions: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by Baroness Kramer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many BAME civil servants there are at the Department for Work and Pensions at (1) SCS1, (2) SCS2, (3) SCS3, and (4) SCS4, grade. [HL9047]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: All of our employees are positively encouraged to record their diversity status, although any such declaration is on a voluntary basis. Therefore, we do not hold an exhaustive record of all Departmental employee ethnic origin.

Developing Countries: Literacy

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking (1) unilaterally, and (2) multilaterally, to protect lower and middle income countries from adverse impacts of COVID-19 on literacy rates. [HL8733]

Baroness Sugg: Education is a top priority for this Government and FCDO is taking decisive steps internationally to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on learning. We have adapted our bilateral education programmes in 18 countries to provide child protection, continuity of learning (e.g. through radio and home learning kits) and are helping schools prepare to re-open safely. Improving foundational skills, especially getting more children reading by the age of ten, is central to our plan to ensure more girls benefit from 12 years of quality education.

Multilaterally, we are also leading efforts to build back better in education and protect learning. The UK is partnering with Kenya to co-host the 2021 Global Partnership for Education (GPE) financing summit, and as the largest donor, supported establishment of a dedicated \$500 million COVID-19 accelerated funding window to maintain basic education. We topped up our contribution to the global fund Education Cannot Wait, to which we are the also the largest donor, and provided funding to support an additional 5,500 teachers in refugee camps via the UN refugee agency.

Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Bill provides for community-based domestic abuse services. [HL8769]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Domestic Abuse Bill, as introduced in the House of Lords on 7 July, includes a new statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation. These provisions have been designed in the light of extensive consultation and analysis about how to address the gaps in current provision.

We fully recognise the vital role played by community-based support services in helping victims of domestic abuse and their children to rebuild their lives. However, until we have undertaken a similar analytical exercise in relation to community-based support services, we believe it would be premature to legislate in this Bill.

To enable us to better understand the complex landscape for community-based support for all victims, including children, the designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner has agreed to undertake an in-depth exploration of the current community-based support landscape over 2020/21. The Government will then work with the Commissioner to understand the needs identified and develop options on how best to address them.

Drugs: Organised Crime

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address county lines drug trafficking and safeguard children from being exploited by such crimes. [HL8768]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities.

That is why we are investing £25m to boost law enforcement efforts in England and Wales to tackle these ruthless gangs. Our overall package launched in October last year and includes: expanding the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC), increased disruption on the rail networks by the British Transport Police's County Lines Taskforce, operational activity against high harm lines in the three major exporting force areas (the Metropolitan Police, Merseyside, West Midlands), investment in new technology, and increased support for victims.

Our investment is already delivering results; between November 2019 and March 2020, the Metropolitan Police, Merseyside, West Midlands and the British Transport Police made over 650 arrests, closed nearly 140 deal lines, seized cash and drugs with a total value of over £3 million, made over 100 weapons seizures, and safeguarded a number of individuals, including 140 children. The most recent county lines 'Week of Intensification' conducted 14-20 September also resulted in over 1,000 arrests, drugs worth more than £1m seized and over 1,500 vulnerable individuals safeguarded.

We are significantly increasing investment in specialist support for children and young people involved in county

lines to help them exit and rebuild their lives. We are funding St Giles Trust £860,000 this financial year to provide specialist one-to-one support in London, Merseyside and the West Midlands and are also continuing to fund Missing People's SafeCall service, a specialist 24/7 helpline which provides advice and support to children, young people and parents/carers concerned about county lines exploitation.

Environment Bill

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the regulatory gap that would occur as a result of the Environment Bill not being enacted by 1 January 2021; and what steps they plan to take to ensure there is continuity in the transfer of EU protections into UK law during any such gap. [HL8726]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 will make sure all existing EU environmental law continues to operate in UK law at the end of the transition period, providing businesses and stakeholders with certainty. We have a long history of environmental protection supported by a strong legal framework which predates membership of the EU, and we will safeguard and improve on this record.

As regards scrutiny of the implementation of environmental measures, the Government intends to bring the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) into operation in 2021. The delay to the Environment Bill due to Covid-19 means it will not be formally established by the beginning of the year. However, an interim secretariat will support the OEP Chair and will receive complaints about alleged failures of public authorities to comply with environmental law from the start of next year. This will be in place until the OEP can begin its statutory functions. Once established, the OEP will then be able to use its legal powers to investigate complaints reported to the interim team from 1 January 2021, and could take enforcement action against serious failures if necessary. As a result, there will be no gap in time where public authorities cannot be held to account.

Exports: VAT

Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what forecast they have made of the potential fall in VAT revenue following the end of the VAT Retail Export Scheme on 31 December. [HL8821]

Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what contact they have had from organisations in support of the decision to end the VAT Retail Export Scheme. [HL8822]

Asked by Baroness Wheatcroft

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

the VAT Retail Export Scheme, on (1) the retail, (2) the tourism, and (3) the attractions, sectors. [HL8900]

Asked by Baroness Wheatcroft

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultation they have had, if any, with (1) Visit Britain, (2) the British Retail Consortium, (3) the Walpole Group, (4) the Airport Operators Association, and, (5) the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, about the decision to end the VAT Retail Export Scheme. [HL8901]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government published a consultation on the potential approach to duty-free and tax-free goods following the transition period which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with stakeholders to hear their views, and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government is also continuing to meet and discuss with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes and a list of respondents to the consultation can be found in the summary of responses to the consultation.

HMRC estimate that VAT Retail Export Scheme refunds cost about £0.5 billion in VAT in 2019 for about 1.2 million non-EU visitors. HMRC also estimate that fewer than one in ten non-EU visitors use the VAT Retail Export Scheme.

In 2019 the ONS estimate there were substantially more EU visitors (24.8 million) than non-EU passengers (16.0 million) to the UK. This implies an extension to EU residents would significantly increase the cost by up to an estimated £0.9 billion. This would result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU visitors which already happens without a refund mechanism in place, potentially taking the total cost up to about £1.4 billion per annum.

The final costings will be subject to scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and will be set out at the next forecast.

Fisheries: Protection

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in reaching agreement between the devolved nations that Remote Electronic Monitoring will be enforced on all fishing fleets in UK waters. [HL8730]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We have launched a call for evidence on expanding the use of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on English registered vessels and other vessels operating in English waters. The call for evidence is available on GOV.UK and closes on 30 November.

The Government has been clear that we see benefits of expanding the use of REM, but we must develop the right policy for our industry and the marine environment.

Many of the objectives a REM programme could help to deliver are devolved matters, including control and enforcement and fisheries science. Defra will continue to work with the other administrations to make sure we have a coherent UK approach on REM but one that recognises the different needs of each administration.

Fishery Agreements: Norway

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the UK–Norway Fisheries Framework Agreement includes a guarantee that neither country will fish above the minimum sustainable yield, as set by UK scientists, from year one of the agreement. [HL8729]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The agreement enters in to force on 1st January 2021. It will require the Parties to cooperate to achieve the sustainable use of marine living resources. This will be underpinned by using the best scientific evidence available to both parties and the further requirement that due account is taken of the need to preserve marine biological diversity.

Football: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ability of football clubs in the National League and the leagues below to remain in business during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8937]

Baroness Barran: Football clubs can be the bedrock of our local communities and it is vital they are protected.

That is why we have provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many football clubs have benefited from. Sport England's Community Emergency Fund has also provided £210 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic.

Importantly, under government guidance clubs below the National League North / South are able to admit spectators, whilst adhering to COVID-19 guidance, generating crucial revenue that is vital for their survival.

Government recognises the implications for elite sports clubs of not being able to admit spectators to stadia from 1 October, and are working urgently on what we can do now to support them.

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to bring the COVID-19 restrictive measures at football clubs in line with those currently in place at concert venues. [HL8942]

Baroness Barran: We are committed to getting spectators back into stadiums as soon as it is safe to do so. The evidence we received from the Chief Medical Officer was very clear that at a time of rapidly rising infections,

and when we were considering restrictions elsewhere, it was not the right time to undertake any further easements.

We will continue to work closely with a whole range of sports, including football, to understand the latest thinking that might allow spectators to return. This includes the creation of a new Sports Technology Innovation Working Group of sporting bodies and health experts to analyse new technologies which might support this.

We will take the earliest opportunity to look again at getting spectators safely back into stadiums but this must clearly be very carefully judged against the prevailing health conditions.

Gaza: Ammunition

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of heavy metal residues from munitions in the environment on (1) foetal, and (2) subsequent child, development in Gaza; and what studies, if any, they have commissioned on this issue. [HL8781]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made an assessment of this issue, we are deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. In addition to our emergency support to aid the COVID-19 crisis, we are providing a further £2.5m to UN agencies to provide food assistance, medical supplies and personal protection for the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees and non-refugees. The UK urges all parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take the necessary steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

Georgia: Investment

Asked by Lord Harries of Pentregarth

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 28 September (HL8057), what plans they have to accelerate their assessment of the government of Georgia's amendment to their communications law following the expropriation of telecoms provider Caucasus Online; and whether they plan to raise concerns with the government of Georgia about the reasons for that government's takeover of a privately-owned internet provider shortly before parliamentary elections. [HL8810]

Baroness Sugg: Our Embassy in Tbilisi have reviewed the amendments to the Law on Electronic Communications, and discussed with other Embassies and NGOs in Georgia. The UK's view, and that of the stakeholders we have consulted, is that these amendments seek to address national security concerns, and have been put in place to protect Georgia's critical digital national infrastructure.

The case involving Caucasus Online is currently under arbitration, and therefore it is inappropriate for the UK

Government to comment at this time. We will continue to monitor developments in this case closely.

Green Homes Grant Scheme

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the capacity of the building sector, particularly small independent builders, to meet the Green Home Fund deadline for training and registering of companies and sole-traders, commissioning, completing and documenting works before the deadline of 31 March 2021; and whether they have considered extending (1) the time frame, and (2) the funding made available. [HL8705]

Lord Callanan: We are working closely with TrustMark and wider actors in the supply chain to market the scheme and encourage suppliers who could become TrustMark registered and PAS or MCS certified to do so. We have recently launched the Green Homes Grant skills training competition to fund programmes which can deliver training and support towards becoming certified, among other things. This is scheduled to deliver 5,000 training opportunities in support of the scheme.

Housing: Insulation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the insurance industry, and (2) housing association providers, about agreeing an insurance indemnity to enable those in shared ownership properties to obtain a mortgage and move when they do not have a cladding test certificate. [HL8965]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) designed and implemented the External Wall System form (EWS1) in conjunction with mortgage lenders to assist in the valuation of high-rise residential buildings for mortgage purposes, and high-rise residential buildings include those provided by housing associations. Not all lenders request an EWS1 form, and the Government does not support a blanket approach in EWS1 use for lower risk properties. We are working with mortgage lenders to support a more pragmatic approach in their valuation of homes within multi storey residential buildings. We are encouraging lenders to accept a broader range of evidence to assure themselves of a build's value. The Department also discussed these challenges with Housing Associations, and has frequent meetings with the insurance industry, including on the availability of insurance for professionals undertaking this work.

Housing: North of England

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what basis they decided to reduce housebuilding in northern cities such

as Newcastle and Liverpool; and what assessment they have made of how such a reduction will impact (1) house prices, and (2) rents, in affected areas. [HL8704]

Lord Greenhalgh: There has been no such decision. The consultation on changes to the current planning system set out the elements we want to balance when determining local housing need, including meeting our target of building 300,000 homes, tackling affordability challenges in the places people most want to live, regenerating brownfield sites and renewing and levelling up our towns and cities.

The proposals were out for consultation until 1 October 2020. Following consideration of the consultation responses received, the Government will reflect carefully on feedback and publish a response in due course.

Huawei: 5G

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to bring forward their deadline for removing Huawei from UK 5G networks by 2027. [HL8923]

Baroness Barran: The 2027 Huawei removal date has been set taking into account our specific national circumstances and how the risks from US sanctions to telecoms networks are manifested in the UK.

To go further and faster beyond a 2027 target would add considerable - and unnecessary - costs and delays to 5G rollout. And the shorter we make the timetable for removal, the greater the risk of actual disruption to mobile telecoms networks.

Human Rights

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many formal representations they have made to other governments about human rights abuses in each of the last five years; to which governments they have made such representations; and of those, which they have raised with (1) the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, or (2) at the UN Security Council. [HL8848]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Respect for human rights and democratic freedoms underpins the UK's foreign policy. UK Ministers and officials have regular and frank discussions about the full range of human rights concerns, wherever they occur, and we use our bilateral relationships, our development programmes and our presence in multilateral institutions to drive progress. Our Annual Human Rights Report sets out in detail the UK's approach to human rights priority countries, and the work we have undertaken to promote and protect human rights around world.

In discussions with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ministers and officials raise the most pressing human rights issues of the day. We also set out

concerns on a wide range of countries at every session of the Human Rights Council. For example, at the 45th session in October, we raised our concerns about human rights violations in China and Belarus, the case of Alexei Navalny in Russia, and led a resolution on the human rights situation in Syria. We also stand up for human rights at the UN Security Council; for example, in 2020 we spoke about the human rights situation in Libya and the Democratic Republic of Congo, including on issues related to conflict-related sexual violence, and the need for human rights to be at the core of peacekeeping.

Hydrogen: Renewable Energy

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their target for the amount of green hydrogen to be produced from electrolysis by 2025. [HL8750]

Lord Callanan: We are committed to developing hydrogen as a strategic decarbonised energy carrier for the UK. We have committed to publish a UK hydrogen strategy in early 2021. Development is well underway, including consideration of the important role that targets, alongside long-term policy frameworks, have often played in the development of low carbon technology in the UK, and how this might apply to hydrogen.

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the governments of Australia and Japan about the production of hydrogen from lignite and the consequent CO2 emissions. [HL8751]

Lord Callanan: We are closely monitoring international hydrogen developments and participate in a range of international fora, including the International Partnership for Hydrogen for Fuel Cells in the Economy, Mission Innovation and Clean Energy Ministerial. These offer opportunity to discuss other countries' domestic hydrogen strategies in detail.

Countries have many different drivers for their interest in hydrogen, and the scale and application of hydrogen in national energy systems is likely to differ across the globe based on national circumstances.

Officials from BEIS have engaged directly with counterparts in relevant Japanese and Australian ministries to understand their hydrogen ambitions, including hydrogen production pathways; and to share the UK approach.

Hydrogen: Technology

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications of firms owned by the government of China taking significant stakes in UK hydrogen technology companies. [HL8752]

Lord Callanan: As an open economy, we welcome foreign trade and investment where it supports UK growth and jobs. All investment must meet stringent legal and regulatory requirements to protect the UK's national interest and security.

The UK has an outstanding innovation base with a number of world leading companies developing the next generation of hydrogen related technologies. As we develop the UK's low carbon hydrogen economy to help meet our legally binding net zero commitments, we will seek to build on existing expertise to develop a prominent position in a growing global hydrogen market.

Impala Car Rental

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports (1) that state agents and Impala car rental in Zimbabwe colluded to abduct and torture political opponents, and (2) that Impala car rental has not complied with an order of the High Court in Bulawayo to hand over information about (a) the identity of those who hired the vehicle used to abduct Tawanda Muchehiwa on 30 July, and (b) the route that vehicle travelled on that day; and what discussions they have had with the government of Zimbabwe about imposing economic measures on Impala car rental and its directors. [HL8747]

Baroness Sugg: We are aware of reports that a car hired from Impala Car Hire was used in the abduction of Tawanda Muchehiwa, and that the matter is subject to a high court order. HMG has been clear, including in an international statement on 28 August, that the Government of Zimbabwe has a responsibility to investigate and prosecute those responsible for violating human rights. The Minister for Africa regularly engages with the Government of Zimbabwe to raise serious concerns about the political, economic and human rights situation in Zimbabwe and reinforce the need for accountability. He clearly conveyed our views when he spoke to Foreign Minister Moyo on 8 June, and in a letter to the Foreign Minister on 12 August.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November. [HL9037]

Baroness Sugg: The UK is proud to be a world leader on efforts to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as part of our broader ambitions on gender equality. We strongly support the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and plan to mark it with events across our networks, including engaging with international partners and women's rights

organisations in our role as co-leader of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender-based Violence. Details of the events will be publicised in due course.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Asked by Baroness Mone

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. [HL9146]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed annually on 3 December around the world. It aims to increase awareness of disability issues and to promote the rights and well-being of disabled people.

The Government supports these aims and will mark the day through various activities. We will provide more details in due course.

Iraq: Kurds

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they intend to have with (1) the government of Iraq, and (2) the Kurdistan Regional Government, about the installation of another pontoon bridge over the river Tigris at Faysh Kharbur. [HL8814]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: British officials regularly discuss the issue of refugee crossings into the Kurdistan region of Iraq with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. We understand that at present, aid and people are still able to cross at Fishkabour (although this is of course restricted due to COVID-19 measures), but we continue to monitor the situation and keep in regular contact with the UN, NGOs and international partners on the issue.

Israel: Democracy

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the rejection by the Knesset of a bill aimed at introducing equality for all Israeli citizens, what assessment they have made of the functioning of democracy in Israel. [HL8783]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Israel is a thriving democracy which maintains a fine balance between its Jewish identity and its democratic values. As a friend to Israel, we have regularly expressed our concern in cases where Israeli laws could undermine the equality of members of minority groups. We encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that 23 Palestinians were abducted by the Israel Defence Force on 23 September in the West Bank. [HL8785]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made an assessment of these reports, we remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

Israeli Settlements

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take to prevent (1) the demolition of property, and (2) the levelling of land, owned by Palestinians by the Israel Defence Force for the expansion of any illegal settlements in the West Bank. [HL8782]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian structures by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We have made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. Our longstanding position on settlements is that they are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. The UK funds a number of projects that support Palestinians communities in the West Bank, from the effects of settlement expansion in particular. Our legal aid programme also supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Korea: Nuclear Disarmament

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the Foreign Secretary's visit to South Korea and the demilitarised zone, what assessment they have made of the prospects for (1) the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, and (2) an improvement in the protection of fundamental human rights in North Korea. [HL8698]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is concerned at the continued development of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. UN sanctions must be enforced until North Korea takes concrete steps

to denuclearise and dismantle its weapons programme. The UK is working with partners to enforce UN sanctions on North Korea and to reduce the risk of North Korean cybercrime, a valuable source of revenue for the regime. We continue to show our support to US efforts to negotiate with North Korea, and to partners in the region, as evidenced by the Foreign Secretary's discussions with South Korean Foreign Minister Kang in Seoul in early October. We have raised our concerns directly with North Korea and at the UN Security Council. We encourage North Korea to return to meaningful negotiations with the United States.

The UK repeatedly calls on North Korea to acknowledge and address the many reports of serious and wide-ranging human rights violations in the country. The UK made a robust statement at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2020. The UK has directly challenged North Korea on its human rights abuses. In July 2020, we designated two North Korean Government organisations under the UK Global Human Rights sanctions regime. At the UN Human Rights Council in October, we made clear our continued concerns.

Literature: Education

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Teach First Missing Pages: Increasing racial diversity in the literature we teach, published on 30 September. [HL8779]

Baroness Berridge: The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage. It encourages pupils to read a range of books, poems and plays to encourage the development of a life-long love of literature. Pupils should be taught to maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions. Teachers have flexibility in their choice of books to teach within the context of the curriculum. Following consultation on the minimum requirements for the new English Literature GCSE criteria in 2013, the final categories are: at least one play by Shakespeare; a selection of poetry since 1789; at least one 19th century novel; and fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards. The GCSE specification encourages students to read widely within these categories, to broaden their knowledge of literature and enhance critical and comparative understanding. Selection of set texts for examination in the GCSE is down to the exam boards, who follow the categories set out above. The set requirements for both GCSE and A-level provide scope for pupils to read a breadth of diverse texts (including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic authors) so that they can encounter diverse representations within literature. Schools make their own decisions on choosing texts, within the set requirements. There is guidance for

teachers on how to make their choices of texts, with literacy organisations and reading charities offering suggestions, book lists, guidance, research, and support.

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of black people. The department is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity and supports all pupils and students to tackle racism and have the knowledge and tools to do so.

Marriage: Ceremonies

Asked by Baroness Burt of Solihull

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the safeguards which would be required for commercial independent celebrants to perform legally recognised marriages. [HL8715]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of that review, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations including considering how independent celebrants could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent.

Marriage: Humanism

Asked by Lord Desai

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect the Law Commission to complete its current review of marriage law; and what plans they have to introduce legal recognition of humanist marriages after that review. [HL8717]

Asked by Lord Desai

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the High Court judgement in R (Harrison and others) v Secretary of State for Justice [2020] EWHC 2096 (Admin), what plans they have to extend legal recognition to humanist marriages, after the current Law Commission review of marriages concludes. [HL8718]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of that review, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent.

The Commission initially delayed its publication of the consultation paper due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but

the consultation launched on 3 September 2020 and will last until 3 December 2020. The law on wedding ceremonies is a complex and important area of the law. The Commission considered it essential to conduct a proper consultation with the wide range of interested groups and individuals who would be affected by reform. It did not feel that publishing during the initial period of public emergency would achieve this, particularly when weddings were being postponed.

The Commission expects to report to Government with its recommendations in the second half of next year. The Government will decide on provision on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations.

Mongolia: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of news reports of protests in Inner Mongolia about (1) the suppression of the Mongolian language, and (2) the destruction of the Mongolian ethnic identity. [HL8656]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the recent protests in Inner Mongolia and will continue to monitor developments closely.

Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their target for the number of operational hydrogen filling stations in the UK by 2025. [HL8748]

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their target for the number of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles owned and in operation in the UK by 2025. [HL8749]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government does not have targets for the number of operational hydrogen filling stations and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles owned and in operation in the UK by 2025. We are confident that the UK is well placed to be a leader in hydrogen fuel cell powered transportation and we are supporting hydrogen where the market favours its use. The UK already has one of the largest hydrogen refuelling station networks in Europe, and our £23m Hydrogen for Transport Programme is delivering new refuelling stations, upgrading some existing stations as well as deploying hundreds of new hydrogen vehicles.

Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Shushi Cathedral in Nagorno-Karabakh has been damaged by shelling; what representations they have made to the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey about the

conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh; and what discussions they have had with the government of Turkey about the compatibility of its membership with NATO and its role in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. [HL8917]

Baroness Sugg: We are deeply concerned by the reports of shelling of civilian areas, including places of worship, including the cities of Stepanakert and Ganja and their surrounding areas. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas spoke to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September. She raised UK concerns over civilian casualties and fatalities, urged immediate de-escalation and reinforced the importance of returning to negotiations within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

The UK continues to engage actively with international partners in support of these objectives. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in Nagorno Karabakh with President Erdogan on 28 September, the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas raised with Deputy Foreign Minister Onal on 2 October and the Secretary of State for Defence raised with his counterpart during a visit to Ankara on 6 October.

Turkey is a key NATO ally, and sits on the frontline of some of the most difficult and serious challenges we face. We will continue to work closely with Turkey within NATO on challenges to peace and security.

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the shelling of Shushi Cathedral by the Azerbaijan military; what representations they have made to the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey about this attack; and what assessment they have made of the compatibility of the involvement of the government of Turkey in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with its continued membership of NATO. [HL9025]

Baroness Sugg: We are deeply concerned by the reports of shelling of civilian areas, including places of worship, in the cities of Stepanakert and Ganja and their surrounding areas. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas spoke to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September. She raised UK concerns over civilian casualties and fatalities, urged immediate de-escalation and reinforced the importance of returning to negotiations within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The UK continues to engage actively with international partners in support of these objectives. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh with President Erdogan on 28 September, the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas raised with Deputy Foreign Minister Onal on 2 October and the Secretary of State for Defence raised with his counterpart during a visit to Ankara on 6 October. Turkey is a key NATO ally, and sits on the frontline of some of the most difficult and serious challenges we face. We will continue to work

closely with Turkey within NATO on challenges to peace and security.

National Parks Review

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in implementing the findings of the report by Julian Glover Landscapes Review, published on 21 September 2019; and what assessment they have made of the response to those findings by civil society organisations. [HL8735]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Government is committed to ensuring our Protected Landscapes flourish as havens for nature and are places that everyone can visit and enjoy.

The Glover Landscapes Review set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, more biodiverse and more accessible National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We welcome this ambition and recognise the importance of actively engaging with civil society organisations and the Landscape organisations to inform and develop our response.

We have therefore established the 'National Landscapes Stakeholder Reference Group' and have been working closely with them to help shape our response to the Review, with a focus on those recommendations requiring collective action and new ways of working nationally.

The Government will come forward with firm proposals for implementing the Glover Landscapes Review in due course.

National Parks: Planning

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what policies relating to National Parks are set out within their proposals for reform of the planning system in England. [HL8736]

Lord Greenhalgh: The *Planning for the future* consultation states that, to achieve effective stewardship and enhancement of our natural and historic environment, the reformed planning system will continue to protect places of environmental and cultural value which matter to us. Development plans will still play a vital role in identifying areas of national importance such as National Parks.

The consultation remains open until 29 October 2020. After considering all responses received, we will publish the Government's conclusions in due course, setting out any decisions and how we intend to implement them.

Offences against Children

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address child sexual abuse, including online abuse. [HL8765]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Nothing is more important than the safety of our children. The UK Government is committed to stamping out all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse and continuing to be a global leader in tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Last year we announced an additional £30 million to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation and abuse, both at home and online. This includes £9.86 million to the National Crime Agency (NCA) to improve its ability to tackle perpetrators seeking to offend against children via the Dark Web and £3.36 million to further improve our understanding and tackle all aspects of the threat.

Recognising the unprecedented challenge posed by the impact of COVID-19 and restrictions to prevent its spread, the Prime Minister hosted a cross-Government Hidden Harms Virtual Summit, to bring together key decisions makers and agree actions to combat hidden crimes, including child sexual abuse. We have also worked across government, with law enforcement and the third sector to provide information and advice about child sexual exploitation and abuse to schools, parents, carers and children and to ensure that victims and survivors continue to have access to the greatest possible support.

For example through the NCA's #OnlineSafetyAtHome campaign and their ThinkUKnow resources, as well as published guidance on GOV.UK. We have also galvanised industry and international partners to raise awareness of online safety in response to COVID-19 and formally launched the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

In the Queen's Speech in December 2019, the Government committed to develop legislation to improve internet safety for all. This will build on the proposals in the Online Harms White Paper, published in April 2019 which set out our plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

We intend to establish in law a new duty of care on companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. The duty of care will require companies to put in place appropriate systems to deal with harmful content on their services and keep users safe. Companies will be required to take particularly robust action on tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

On 12 February the Government published an initial response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation. We are working on a full Government response, which will be published shortly. This will be released alongside an interim code of practice to tackle online child sexual exploitation and abuse. This code will set out steps that companies can take to tackle online child sexual exploitation and abuse on a voluntary basis, ahead of any regulatory system introduced following the proposals in the Online Harms White Paper.

Offences against Children: Internet

Asked by **Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to enact new laws designed to protect children who are at risk of sex abuse online. [HL8740]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Nothing is more important than the safety of our children. The UK Government is committed to stamping out all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse and continuing to be a global leader in tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Last year we announced an additional £30 million to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation and abuse, both at home and online. This includes £9.86 million to the National Crime Agency (NCA) to improve its ability to tackle perpetrators seeking to offend against children via the Dark Web and £3.36 million to further improve our understanding and tackle all aspects of the threat.

Recognising the unprecedented challenge posed by the impact of COVID-19 and restrictions to prevent its spread, the Prime Minister hosted a cross-Government Hidden Harms Virtual Summit, to bring together key decisions makers and agree actions to combat hidden crimes, including child sexual abuse. We have also worked across government, with law enforcement and the third sector to provide information and advice about child sexual exploitation and abuse to schools, parents, carers and children and to ensure that victims and survivors continue to have access to the greatest possible support.

For example through the NCA's #OnlineSafetyAtHome campaign and their ThinkUKnow resources, as well as published guidance on GOV.UK. We have also galvanised industry and international partners to raise awareness of online safety in response to COVID-19 and formally launched the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

In the Queen's Speech in December 2019, the Government committed to develop legislation to improve internet safety for all. This will build on the proposals in the Online Harms White Paper, published in April 2019 which set out our plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

We intend to establish in law a new duty of care on companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. The duty of care will require companies to put in place appropriate systems to deal with harmful content on their services and keep users safe. Companies will be required to take particularly robust action on tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

On 12 February the Government published an initial response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation. We are working on a full Government response, which will be published shortly. This will be released alongside an interim code of practice to tackle online child sexual exploitation and abuse. This code will set out steps that

companies can take to tackle online child sexual exploitation and abuse on a voluntary basis, ahead of any regulatory system introduced following the proposals in the Online Harms White Paper.

Office for Environmental Protection

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Whitchurch**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect that the Office for Environmental Protection will be fully operational; and what its budget allocation will be from 1 January 2021. [HL8727]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government still intends to bring the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) into operation in 2021, but due to the pause in the Environment Bill's passage and the wider context of Covid-19, we cannot yet confirm exactly when the OEP will start. We will implement transitional arrangements, with a secretariat to support the OEP chair currently being sought in a public appointment campaign. This will be in place from the start of next year until the OEP can begin its statutory functions.

Defra will agree with HM Treasury a budget that will be ring-fenced for each spending review period, giving the OEP greater certainty over its finances. The budget will be announced as soon as possible after the Environment Bill achieves Royal Assent.

Overseas Loans

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of default on national debt in Zambia and other states which are receiving temporary relief; and what steps they are taking to limit the damage caused by any such defaults. [HL8815]

Baroness Sugg: The UK is strongly supportive of work to safeguard debt transparency and sustainability in lower-income countries. The UK conducts regular assessments of macro-stability in lower-income countries, informed particularly by the debt sustainability analyses carried out by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In line with the classification arrived at by the IMF and World Bank in 2019, the UK currently assesses Zambia's debt to be on an unsustainable path. The Minister for Africa discussed the issue of debt with the President of Zambia and the Minister of Finance during his visit to Zambia on 8 and 9 October.

In April 2020, the G20 and Paris Club of official creditors announced a historic joint Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) for the least developed countries. The DSSI has supported 43 countries, including Zambia, which have requested suspensions, freeing up a total of US\$5 billion in fiscal space to fund the countries' COVID-19 responses. Given the depth of liquidity needs in these countries, the UK supports an extension of the DSSI into 2021. We expect further debt relief to be required. This should be on a case-by-case basis in the

context of an IMF programme to ensure it is tailored to need, with equitable burden sharing among all official and private creditors. To ensure this process is efficient and effective, on 25 September the Chancellor met with his G7 counterparts to discuss a future Common Framework for debt relief between the G20 and Paris Club, as well as possible extension to the DSSI. A joint statement detailing this discussion is available on the US Treasury website.

Overseas Trade: Africa

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for future trade relations with the African Union. [HL8843]

Baroness Sugg: The UK is a key trading partner for African nations and the Government has made arrangements to provide duty-free quota-free access to our market for 39 Sub-Saharan African countries, and tariff reductions to a further five countries.

The UK is supporting the African Union's ongoing negotiations on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with targeted technical assistance and training for African trade negotiators. We continue to consider options to increase this support from the next financial year. The Minister for Africa discussed UK support for the AfCFTA with the Secretary General of the AfCFTA in June and with African Union Commissioners in Addis Ababa in July. We are also implementing programmes to help countries in the region break down barriers to trade, including the UK Trade Partnerships Programme and SheTrades Commonwealth.

Overseas Trade: Commonwealth

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for future trade relations with the Commonwealth. [HL8842]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Commonwealth includes some of our closest friends and greatest allies. We share strong bonds and I hope the Noble Lord will welcome our commitment to work closely with Commonwealth countries to remove barriers and liberalise the global trading environment.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2018, chaired by the United Kingdom, we committed to boosting intra-Commonwealth trade beyond \$2 trillion (approximately £1.5 trillion) by 2030. Commonwealth leaders also adopted the 'Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment' to enhance co-operation amongst ourselves.

In October 2019, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade chaired the sixth Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting, which

reaffirmed the Commonwealth's support for free trade and the rules based multilateral trading system.

HM Government is also funding several projects including the Commonwealth Trade Facilitation Programme, the Commonwealth Standards Network and the SheTrades Commonwealth Programme, and continues to support increasing trade and investment between Commonwealth partner countries, taking advantage of the average cost of trade between us being 19% lower than the cost of trade outside the Commonwealth.

Overseas Trade: Latin America

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for future trade relations with Latin America. [HL8844]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Department for International Trade works extensively in Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen the United Kingdom's trade and investment relationships, with staff based in 19 countries across the region.

The United Kingdom has concluded trade continuity agreements with Chile, CARIFORUM, six Central American countries and the Andean Community (Colombia, Peru and Ecuador), which will allow United Kingdom business to continue trading on preferential terms. Additionally, HM Government is working with Peru, Mexico and Chile as part of the United Kingdom's potential accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Ministers also regularly discuss trade with their counterparts, including through dialogues such as the UK-Brazil Joint Economic and Trade Committee.

Overseas Trade: South Asia

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for future trade relations with the Indian subcontinent. [HL8841]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: My Department has an ambitious agenda to strengthen bilateral trade relations between the United Kingdom and the Indian subcontinent. With India herself, we are developing an Enhanced Trade Partnership with the objective of deeper trade policy cooperation and the removal of barriers to doing business. We are also facilitating trade with other countries across the subcontinent, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, through a generous trade preferences scheme and the potential for closer working in the future.

Peat

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce legislation banning all harvesting of peat; and if not, why not. [HL8754]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We have taken action to tackle domestic extraction of peat; the National Planning Policy Framework, first published in 2012, ends the granting of new licences for peat extraction. Peat extraction in England will therefore end when the remaining licenses expire.

The Government continues to be committed to phasing out the use of peat in horticulture in England. The biggest user of peat is the amateur sector and this is an important part of our policy focus. We signalled to the industry that if we have not seen sufficient movement to peat alternatives by 2020, then we would look at further measures that could be taken, and we are currently considering what these potential further measures could look like.

Pedestrian Areas: Greater Manchester

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Greenhalgh on 30 September (HL8535), what assessment they have made of the consistency of that answer with the letter sent by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to Manchester City Council in August on planned 'smoke-free' pavement licences; and what plans they have to publish the evidence underpinning the claim set out in that letter that businesses will close if these licences are implemented. [HL8746]

Lord Greenhalgh: As set out in the Housing Minister's letter of 6 October, the motivation behind the letter to Manchester City Council was to protect hospitality businesses otherwise severely affected by the pandemic and save jobs. The Act, and associated guidance, is consistent with this aim. The smoke-free seating condition was introduced to strike the balance with the economic needs of businesses and helping towards the financial recovery from the impacts of COVID.

Asked by Lord Young of Cookham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the letter sent by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to Manchester City Council in August on planned 'smoke-free' pavement licences was agreed in advance with the Department of Health and Social Care. [HL8789]

Lord Greenhalgh: The national smoke-free seating condition in the Business and Planning Act was agreed with the Department of Health and Social Care, as was the associated guidance. Ministerial correspondence is not generally cleared across Government.

Prisons: Education

Asked by Lord Ramsbotham

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how many adults in prison have been actively engaged in self-study, and (2) how many adults in prison have

completed accredited qualifications and assessments, in the last six months; and what plans they have to provide self-study education to adults in prison in the immediate future. [HL8762]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Following the introduction of restrictions suspending the delivery of all face-to-face education in prisons due to Covid-19, we have worked with all Prison Education Framework (PEF) and Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) providers to support prisons via the remote production of various materials to provide in cell activity, distraction material and learning packs for as many prisoners as possible.

We have provisional data from the beginning of April 2020 which shows that the education providers have worked with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to distribute approximately 871,000 learning packs. Of these, 361,000 were course specific packs and 510,000 were generic learning packs.

During the time that restrictions have applied we have had to adapt existing recording procedures for education delivery to meet these new restrictions and we need to carry out further work with providers to assess levels of engagement and achievement.

HMPPS managers continue to maintain routine dialogue with PEF provider staff locally around the development and delivery of additional support materials to meet new and emerging needs during these restrictions.

Private Rented Housing: Social Security Benefits

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to prevent landlords and vetting agents from discriminating against, and refusing to accept, tenants who are in receipt of benefit payments. [HL9031]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government wants everyone to have access to secure and safe housing. Blanket bans against tenants in receipt of benefits have no place in a fair and modern housing market. The Government has worked with the lettings industry to agree an approach to end this practice. Major lettings portals Zoopla and Rightmove agreed last year to stop the use of 'No DSS' adverts on their websites, and several major lenders agreed to remove restrictions on mortgages which prevented landlords from letting to tenants on benefits.

The Government will continue to strongly encourage landlords to look at all potential and existing tenants on an individual basis. Legislation exists to prohibit acts of discrimination against individuals in terms of race, age, disability, gender, religion and sexual orientation amongst others. Where a prospective tenant believes that they have been discriminated against, they should seek independent legal advice or contact Citizens' Advice for free, impartial advice.

The Government has made a significant investment in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) of nearly £1 billion,

lifting rates to the 30th percentile from April this year. The increase in LHA will help alleviate affordability challenges facing benefit claimants in the private rented sector by reducing shortfalls, benefiting over 1 million households who will see an average increase of £600 a year.

Property Development

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Greenhalgh on 1 October (HL8296) and the White Paper Planning for the Future, published on 6 August, what assessment they have made of the reasons for low market absorption rates as the responsible factor for stalled developments. [HL8828]

Lord Greenhalgh: Sir Oliver Letwin's 2018 independent Review of Build Out provided a comprehensive assessment of build out rates for large residential sites which identified low market absorption rates as a key constraint. A copy of the report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-build-out-draft-analysis>.

Public Expenditure

Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to announce the Comprehensive Spending Review; and what plans they have to put in place a programme of support to mitigate financial pressures on local authorities while that Review is undertaken. [HL8758]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Chancellor launched the Comprehensive Spending Review in July and it will be published this autumn. To date, the Government has provided a comprehensive package of support for Councils to help them respond to financial pressures resulting from Covid-19. This includes over £3.7bn in additional grant funding to be used across all services. The Government continues to engage with Councils to understand the pressures that they are facing and assess the need for further support.

Pupils: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many students at (1) secondary schools, (2) sixth forms, and (3) University Technical Colleges, did not attend in the week ending 2 October because they were isolating or quarantined; and how many of those students had access to a computer and an internet connection to facilitate remote learning. [HL8701]

Baroness Berridge: Keeping close track of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools is a priority for the government. Public Health England (PHE) leads in holding data on infection, incidence and COVID-19 cases overall. PHE have published data on COVID-19 incidents by institution, including educational settings. This data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports>.

The department is currently collecting data from schools on a daily basis, as well as gathering information from local areas and following up with individual settings to confirm that procedures requiring pupils to isolate are well understood and that necessary decisions are made on the basis of public health advice.

The department collects data on the number of schools that have indicated that they have either sent children home due to COVID-19 containment measures or have staff shortages due to COVID-19 related absences, and have attendance data for schools that have done so. We are currently looking at the quality of that data with a view to publishing it as part of the official statistics series. The series includes published data on school openings and attendance, which shows that at a national level approximately 93% of state-funded schools were fully open on 1 October. Of all schools that responded to the survey, 7% said they were not fully open due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 on 1 October. Equivalent estimates have not been made at phase level. Approximately 90% of all children on roll in all state-funded schools were in attendance on 1 October. More information is available at:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

During the summer term, the department delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets, and over 50,000 4G wireless routers, for disadvantaged children in year 10, as well as children with a social worker and care leavers who would not otherwise have had online access, as part of over £160 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care.

The department is now supplementing this support by making 250,000 additional laptops and tablets available in the event that face-to-face schooling is disrupted as a result of local COVID-19 restrictions and children become reliant on remote education. This scheme is intended to enable schools to support disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 who cannot afford their own laptops and tablets. Schools will also be able to order laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children across all year groups who are shielding as a result of official or medical advice, all year groups who attend hospital schools and those completing their key stage 4 at a further education college.

Questions for Short Debate and Select Committee Reports: Parliamentary Scrutiny

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask the Leader of the House what plans there are to set aside time on currently non-sitting Fridays to debate (1) Select Committee reports, or (2) Questions for Short Debate, in the Chamber or in Grand Committee. [HL8699]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Noble Friend the Government Chief Whip has no such plans. In line with the Guidance on Hybrid House and Hybrid Grand Committee set down by the Procedure and Privileges Committee, legislation is currently taking precedence on sitting Fridays.

Despite the constraints on the way in which the House is working we have managed to debate 11 Select Committee reports in the session to date. I expect it to be possible to debate further reports as the session progresses.

Last week the Government Chief Whip wrote to the Procedure and Privileges Committee with a suggestion as to how we can adapt our current working practices to allow a limited number of Questions for Short Debate to be asked in Grand Committee.

Background/points we could make:

- The short answer to the question is 'no'.
- We normally sit on only one Friday per calendar month. We have had to sit on more than that since returning from the summer recess to accommodate the various Coronavirus regulations.
- The Procedure and Privileges Committee guidance clearly states, at paragraph 39, that:
 - "Until further notice, Thursday and Friday sittings of the hybrid House may be used for legislation which shall have precedence over other business."
 - Despite the broadcasting and administrative restrictions we have been working under we have still managed to debate 11 select committee reports in the session to date. And will take more where we can.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

B Evans signed [Scan_Isabelle Tombs_20201019-123716_2720_001.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-05/HL8699>

Railways: Concessions

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reconsider their decision not to give refunds or compensation to people unable to use railcards as a result of (1) the COVID-19 pandemic, and (2) their advice to avoid public transport. [HL8763]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department recognises that Railcard holders have been unable to use their cards while travel restrictions were in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We took immediate action at the outbreak of the pandemic to support passengers and the rail industry by keeping the services people depend on running, protecting jobs, delivering refunds and removing charges for cancellations. To date, over £480m has been refunded for people whose travel plans unexpectedly changed due to the pandemic. Fares revenues fell to less than 5% of pre-Covid levels in the Spring and are still at just 30% of previous levels. Looking to the post-COVID-19 recovery, we need to build a rail network which is fit for the future. In this context we must ensure the demands placed on taxpayers are fair and balanced and that Government focuses its investment on maintaining services, to enable social distancing and support our economic recovery. I recognise that the emergency situation has meant that railcard holders have not been able to benefit to the fullest extent over recent months. However, many passengers are able to recover the cost of their railcard in a single trip. Having carefully considered the situation, we can confirm that railcards will remain non-refundable and will not be extended.

River Aller: Flood Control

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of flood mitigation measures installed on the course of the river Aller and its headwaters in Somerset. [HL8753]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The River Aller is a rapid response, rural catchment that has required a number of innovative flood mitigation measures to protect properties from rainfall running off the steep sided slopes of Exmoor.

Approximately 70 properties are at risk of flooding in or near the villages of Allerford and Bossington. The most recent flooding in 2000 impacted properties and the A39 road. The measures set out below have been effective in reducing the impact of flooding in a number of ways and no significant flood events or property flooding has occurred since they have been in place.

Natural flood management (NFM) storage bunds, woody debris dams and woodland planting has reduced the risk of high flows since it was completed in 2015.

Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures such as removable boards in doorways and air brick covers have been installed in 38 properties at risk of flooding in Allerford and Bossington that provide an effective defence to flooding up to 600mm.

The Environment Agency's Flood Warning Service provides targeted and timely alerts and warnings to people about the likelihood and severity of any potential flooding. This then allows people to activate flood plans and install their PFR measures. A siren is also sounded to

provide immediate warning that life threatening flooding is imminent.

Rule of Law

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 30 September (HL8064), whether they plan to provide guidance to the courts on how to handle cases where a defendant cites the United Kingdom Internal Market Act as a precedent for breaking the law in a specific and limited way which should be acquitted without penalty. [HL8725]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government has no plans to issue guidance to the courts on this matter.

Schools: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide additional funding to schools to assist with costs resultant of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8778]

Baroness Berridge: Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. School budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the financial year 2020-21, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to the 2019-20 financial year. As stated in our guidance, schools should use their existing resources when making arrangements to welcome all children back for the autumn. There are no plans at present to reimburse additional costs incurred as part of that process.

We are providing additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred between March and July due to the outbreak of COVID-19 that could not be met from their budgets. Schools have been eligible to claim for: increased premises related costs associated with keeping schools open over the Easter and summer half term holidays; support for free school meals for eligible children who were not in school, where schools were not using the national voucher scheme; and additional cleaning costs required due to confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19, over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements.

The first claims window for the COVID-19 schools fund closed on 21 July. All claims for funding only within the specified cost categories and maximum limits have already been paid. We are assessing all other claims, which will be paid later in the autumn if approved. There will be a further opportunity in the autumn for schools to claim for exceptional costs that fell between March and July, in the same approved categories as for the first window.

The department has invested over £160 million to support remote education. We have already delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children

who would not otherwise have had online access, supporting disadvantaged children to stay online and connected with their teachers during the summer term. These laptops and tablets remain the property of the schools and local authorities so they can continue to be used to support education. We are now supplementing this support by making available 250,000 additional laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 in the event face-to-face schooling is disrupted as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks or local restrictions, meaning that children become reliant on remote education.

The government has also announced a catch up package worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. This will provide each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil, and special schools, alternative provision and hospital schools with £240 for each place, across the 2020-21 academic year. We have applied additional weighting to specialist settings, recognising the significantly higher per pupil costs they face. Alongside this, as part of the catch up package, we have also announced a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils.

Science: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional resources they will make available to UK Science and Discovery Centres in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8714]

Lord Callanan: Science and Discovery Centres in England have access to the unprecedented support the Government has announced for business and workers, to protect them against the current economic emergency. Many are also part of museum groups or are heritage sites. Museums and heritage organisations can access over £200 million of coronavirus support schemes from Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Some centres may also be eligible for support from the £1.57 billion investment to protect cultural and heritage organisations announced by Government on 5 July.

Seabed: Bomb Disposal

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of low order deflagration to clear unexploded bombs from the seabed as a means of clearing bombs without damage to marine life. [HL8707]

Lord Callanan: The Government recognise the potential for significant impact of underwater noise from unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance on vulnerable marine species and is taking active steps to manage and reduce the risk. Two phases of a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) funded project to

characterize and contrast the acoustic fields generated by UXO clearance using high order detonation and using low-order deflagration have been completed and reported on.

A third phase has now been initiated to further improve the information base, allowing further assessment of the clearance options. A potential 4th phase of the work involving offshore field work is also being actively explored in which comparative noise measurements would be made during actual UXO clearance campaigns using both deflagration and high order detonations. This would require cooperation and active support from industry (windfarm developers) and the regulatory authorities.

The outcomes from the 3rd and 4th phases would allow an informed discussion and consideration of the adequacy of evidence by regulatory authorities and the statutory nature conservation bodies (SNCBs). It will be for the regulatory authorities and the SNCBs to consider the best available scientific evidence when providing advice on these matters.

Social Security Benefits

Asked by Baroness Sherlock

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a machine learning algorithm is used to calculate entitlement (1) to Universal Credit, and (2) to any other benefit; and if so, how that algorithm is used. [HL8772]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department does not use Machine Learning to calculate entitlement to Universal Credit or other benefits. All entitlement and calculation rules are an implementation of welfare policies, which are delivered in accordance with relevant legislation.

Special Educational Needs: Appeals

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the statistics for appeals of Education, Health and Care plans are not kept centrally. [HL8832]

Baroness Berridge: Statistics for appeals relating to education, health and care plans are collected and published by the Ministry of Justice, and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics>.

Students: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that students who have been impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns are offered partial tuition fee refunds. [HL8777]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Universities have worked hard to put in place a wide range of measures to deliver a COVID-secure environment. These include enhanced cleaning and improved ventilation, smaller groups for in-person teaching, adjusted timetables to limit contact between groups, and changes to physical layouts to comply with social distancing guidelines.

The government expects universities to continue delivering a high-quality academic experience. It is a registration condition of the Office for Students (OfS) that institutions must deliver well-designed courses which provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees, up to a maximum of £9,250 for approved (fee cap) institutions. In deciding to keep charging full fees, universities will of course want to ensure that they can continue to deliver courses that are fit for purpose and that help students progress their qualifications. Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the institution and the student.

If a student is concerned about their education, in the first instance they should speak to their higher education institution. The government expects student complaints and appeals processes to be operated flexibly and sympathetically. Students who are not satisfied with their institution's response can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to consider their complaint if their institution is based in England or Wales.

Additionally, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds in light of COVID-19. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>.

The OfS has also published guidance on student consumer protection during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-and-consumer-protection-during-coronavirus/>.

Sudan: Floods

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the floods in Sudan, what aid they have provided to support those affected. [HL8780]

Baroness Sugg: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is supporting the Government of Sudan-led flood response through the UN and NGOs.

This includes the UN Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) where the UK has provided £27 million in 2020 for a range of urgent needs including COVID-19, locusts and now flooding. £ 3.0 (\$3.9) million, via the SHF, has been provided to aid agencies for clean water, sanitation and hygiene activities, emergency shelter as well as basic relief items including blankets and sleeping mats. The START Fund, to which the UK is the largest donor, allocated funding to provide clean water and sanitation.

UK aid has also provided over £750,000 to the UN's Refugee Agency, UNHCR, the Danish Refugee Council and other aid agencies to provide affected people with emergency shelter kits to repair damaged homes, cash, food, clean water and sandbags.

Syria: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Syrian opposition fighters have been killed in Azerbaijan; and what information they have received about (1) how any such fighters arrived in that country, and (2) who was paying them. [HL8723]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is aware of media reporting that Syrian opposition fighters have been killed in Azerbaijan. We have received no specific information regarding these claims. The UK continues to urge all actors to use their influence to ensure an end to the hostilities and a return to the negotiating table.

Telecommunication

Asked by Lord Risby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to diversify the UK's national telecommunications supply chain, particularly with regard to 5G infrastructure. [HL8983]

Baroness Barran: The security and resilience of the UK's telecoms networks is of paramount importance. The government will publish its targeted diversification strategy focused on rebalancing the telecommunications supply chain in the coming weeks alongside the Telecoms Security Bill. As part of this, we are exploring ways to incentivise research and development in the UK telecoms sector, such as alternative 5G deployment models, and accelerating the development of 'interoperable' equipment - kit which can be used by multiple vendors - and making it standard across the sector.

The government has established a Diversification Taskforce - chaired by Lord Livingston of Parkhead - which will provide independent and expert advice to the Government, supporting the development of the strategy and ensuring that our measures are ambitious and effective.

Trade Agreements

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what channels exist for organisations and stakeholders, who are not involved in the Trade Advisory Groups, to feed into trade negotiations and decision-making processes. [HL8786]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Trade Advisory Groups (TAGs) have been created to access strategic and technical expertise from within specific sectors that are vital to the British economy.

The TAGs are just one part of HM Government's external engagement on international trade. The Department for International Trade continues to engage regularly with a wide range of interested parties, including one-to-one meetings and roundtables.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish country by country guides that will explain the key trading and administration changes for the countries that the UK (1) has concluded continuity trade agreements with, and (2) intends to conclude continuity trade agreements with. [HL8787]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: We have published reports alongside all signed agreements, outlining our approach to delivering continuity with all partners, and we will continue to do so for all continuity agreements yet to be signed.

We will publish further business guidance on trade agreements on GOV.UK this autumn.

Businesses and consumers are already able to find more information about continuity agreements, including product-specific and country-specific information on tariffs and regulations, using tools including Check How to Export Goods (CHEG). Additionally, the 'Trade with the UK' (TWUK) tool will provide businesses exporting goods into the British market with detailed and up-to-date information on topics such as tariffs, taxes and rules.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish how trade agreements reached with other countries will benefit (1) Scotland, (2) Wales, (3) Northern Ireland, (4) the north east of England, (5) the north west of England, (6) the Midlands and East Anglia, (7) the south east of England, (8) the south west of England, and (9) London. [HL8788]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: HM Government is committed to an inclusive and transparent trade policy. We have published Scoping Assessments for agreements with the United States, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

These Scoping Assessments set out the potential economic impacts, and we will publish impact assessments following the outcome of negotiations that

will include an assessment of the impacts on every part of the United Kingdom.

Trade Agreements: Colombia

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the government of Colombia's compliance with the UK–Andean countries trade agreement, specifically with regard to labour rights commitments. [HL8839]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The United Kingdom and the Andean countries, including Colombia, signed the UK-Andean Countries Trade Agreement on 15 May 2019. The agreement includes specific clauses on labour in the Trade and Sustainable Development chapter, which maintain high labour standards and protections for both the United Kingdom and our partners. The United Kingdom will use the Trade and Sustainable Development Free Trade Agreement committee to monitor these issues with the Andean partners.

Trade Agreements: Food

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to enforce protections for food and product safety and standards in trade deals. [HL8840]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: We remain committed to our high food safety, environmental, product and labour standards, and will use the full range of measures available to us to uphold Britain's high regulatory standards.

HM Government passed the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, to convert EU law – as it was applied as of exit – into the law of the land. Furthermore, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade established the Trade and Agriculture Commission to independently advise HM Government on how to ensure that British food safety and production standards are protected throughout trade negotiations.

Trade Agreements: Japan

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish the terms of the free trade agreement with Japan. [HL8808]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will be finalised and signed in the coming weeks, before the full text is laid in parliament and made publicly available.

Furthermore, a parliamentary report, setting out in detail any areas where there are material differences between the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement and the CEPA, will be published, alongside a full Impact

Assessment. Both the International Trade Committee and the International Agreements Sub-Committee will have the opportunity to scrutinise the deal and produce an independent report on the agreement.

Transport: Isles of Scilly

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the resilience of the inter-island transport system in the Scilly Isles. [HL8755]

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to upgrade transport between islands in the Scillies to enable better access for children to get to school. [HL8756]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government fully recognises the importance of the Isles of Scilly's inter-island transport network which allows for the provision of vital services to islanders, including ensuring that children can attend school. As such we have been engaging with local stakeholders from the outset of the current crisis and have provided bespoke financial support to Isles of Scilly transport operators to ensure that services to, from and between the islands continue.

Our immediate priority is to support the islands' transport network through the pandemic. However, we are aware that the Isles of Scilly Transport Board are working on proposals to improve transport services over the longer term and look forward to discussing their proposals with them in due course. Going forward, DfT officials will continue to engage with local stakeholders to ensure that we fully understand the challenges facing the islands well into the future.

Uighurs: China

Asked by Lord Suri

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Grimstone of Boscobel on 23 September (HL7967), what plans they have to introduce legislation to ban imports of all goods (1) mined, (2) produced, and (3) manufactured, in Xinjiang, unless proven by clear and convincing evidence that goods were not produced using forced labour. [HL8775]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: HM Government has serious concerns about the situation in Xinjiang, with reports of the use of forced labour. It has always been the case that, where we have concerns, we raise them – as we did on this issue at the UN Human Rights Council, most recently in September.

We advise businesses with supply chain links in Xinjiang to conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to be supporting, any violations or abuses of rights and responsibilities. However, we do not currently have plans to ban imports from Xinjiang.

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 the devolved administrations about the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill. [HL8709]

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.

Universal Credit

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Department for Work and Pensions grosses up the net amount of relief at source pension contributions, taken from HMRC Real Time Information data, before deducting those contributions from Universal Credit claimants' earnings. [HL8845]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The earnings figure used in the calculation of Universal Credit entitlement is gross earnings: gross taxable pay minus income tax, National Insurance contributions, and ignoring 100 per cent of contributions made to an occupational or personal pension. Adjustments are made to ensure fairness of treatment between those pension contributions made under net pay arrangements and relief at source pension contributions.

USA: Elections

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement made by the International Crisis Group on 2 October that it intends to cover developments in the United States ahead of the presidential election on 3 November, following their identification of risk factors for potential election-related violence; what plans, if any, they have made in response to that statement; and what assessment they have made of the possibility of such violence in that country. [HL8874]

Baroness Sugg: We are aware of the 2 October statement by the International Crisis Group. However, we will not speculate on the outcome of the US election, which is a matter for the US people.

Wildlife: Nature Conservation

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include legally binding targets to restore populations of wild species to a 1970's baseline, including binding interim targets, in the forthcoming Environment Bill. [HL8728]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Domestic biodiversity is a devolved matter in the UK. In England, our 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) marked a step change in ambition for wildlife and the natural environment. We are already taking steps to meet this ambition, including bringing forward the Environment Bill, investing in woodland expansion and peatland restoration, and developing a new Environmental Land Management scheme that will reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental public goods.

We are exploring the use of powers in the Environment Bill to strengthen our commitments. The Bill requires us to set at least one biodiversity target in law, as set out in our recently published policy paper on environmental targets. The Government will also be required to set interim targets that set out the trajectory for progress and help to ensure the Government stays on track to achieve long-term targets.

For biodiversity, the objectives under consideration for targets include the populations of species in the wider countryside, alongside the condition of our protected sites, and habitats outside of protected sites. All targets will be based on scientifically credible evidence, as well as economic analysis, seeking advice from independent experts and stakeholders. The public will also have an opportunity to provide input. When developing targets, we will consider any relevant best practice and commitments, including new international biodiversity targets expected to be finalised under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) next year. We are not yet able to commit to the specific targets we will set or the metrics we will use. It would be premature to do so without further evidence gathering, public consultation and international processes.

Index to Statements and Answers

Written Statements.....1	
CrossCountry Rail Franchise.....1	Department for Work and Pensions: Senior Civil Servants 11
Future Regulatory Framework and Solvency II Reviews1	Developing Countries: Literacy..... 11
Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.....2	Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes..... 11
In-Work Progression Commission: Call for Evidence3	Drugs: Organised Crime 11
Modern Slavery: Annual Report3	Environment Bill 12
Private Pensions: Annual Benefit Statements3	Exports: VAT 12
Written Answers.....5	Fisheries: Protection 12
Abd al-Rahman Jabarah5	Fishery Agreements: Norway 13
Affordable Housing5	Football: Coronavirus 13
Agriculture and Land Use: Environment Protection.....5	Gaza: Ammunition 13
Andy Li.....5	Georgia: Investment 13
Armed Forces: Compensation5	Green Homes Grant Scheme 14
Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia.....6	Housing: Insulation..... 14
Aviation: Compensation.....6	Housing: North of England..... 14
Aviation: Coronavirus6	Huawei: 5G..... 14
Aviation: EU Law.....6	Human Rights 14
Buildings: Insulation7	Hydrogen: Renewable Energy 15
Business: Ethnic Groups.....7	Hydrogen: Technology 15
Cameroon: Armed Conflict7	Impala Car Rental 15
Cattle: Accidents7	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 15
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland: Finance8	International Day of Persons with Disabilities .. 16
Children: Exploitation8	Iraq: Kurds 16
Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership9	Israel: Democracy 16
Confucius Institutes9	Israel: Palestinians 16
Councillors and Mayors: Sexual Offences9	Israeli Settlements..... 16
Courts and Legal Aid Scheme9	Korea: Nuclear Disarmament 16
Credit Unions: Coronavirus.....10	Literature: Education 17
Crimes of Violence: Young People10	Marriage: Ceremonies 17
Criminal Proceedings: Royal Commissions10	Marriage: Humanism..... 17
	Mongolia: Human Rights 18
	Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen 18
	Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict 18
	National Parks Review 19
	National Parks: Planning 19

Index to Statements and Answers

Offences against Children	19	United Kingdom Internal Market Bill 2019-21 .	29
Offences against Children: Internet.....	20	Universal Credit.....	29
Office for Environmental Protection	20	USA: Elections	29
Overseas Loans.....	20	Wildlife: Nature Conservation.....	29
Overseas Trade: Africa.....	21		
Overseas Trade: Commonwealth.....	21		
Overseas Trade: Latin America.....	21		
Overseas Trade: South Asia	21		
Peat	21		
Pedestrian Areas: Greater Manchester	22		
Prisons: Education	22		
Private Rented Housing: Social Security Benefits	22		
Property Development.....	23		
Public Expenditure	23		
Pupils: Coronavirus	23		
Questions for Short Debate and Select Committee Reports: Parliamentary Scrutiny.....	24		
Railways: Concessions	24		
River Aller: Flood Control	24		
Rule of Law	25		
Schools: Coronavirus.....	25		
Science: Coronavirus.....	25		
Seabed: Bomb Disposal.....	25		
Social Security Benefits	26		
Special Educational Needs: Appeals	26		
Students: Coronavirus	26		
Sudan: Floods	26		
Syria: Armed Conflict	27		
Telecommunication	27		
Trade Agreements	27		
Trade Agreements: Colombia.....	28		
Trade Agreements: Food	28		
Trade Agreements: Japan	28		
Transport: Isles of Scilly	28		
Uighurs: China	28		