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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

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

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

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, Cabinet Office and Treasury
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, 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

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Written Answers

Thursday, 29 October 2020

Buckingham Palace: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by **Lord Adonis**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the latest cost estimate for the refurbishment of Buckingham Palace. [[HL9211](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The reservicing of Buckingham Palace, which includes replacing the ageing core services of the Palace to eliminate the very real risk of fire or flood, is a ten-year programme started in 2017 with an agreed maximum budget of £369 million.

The official business of The Queen, including the current reserving of Buckingham Palace, is primarily funded through the Sovereign Grant. This is paid from the Consolidated Fund, but calculated by reference to The Crown Estate's profits (currently set at 25%). In return, The Crown Estate's revenue profits are paid into the Consolidated Fund.

Combined Heat and Power: Power Stations

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the future of combined heat and power plants in the UK. [[HL9230](#)]

Lord Callanan: The government is currently reviewing the role of combined heat and power plants, as the economy transitions to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy held a call for evidence, *Combined Heat and Power (CHP): the route to 2050*, between 12 June and 4 September. The responses are currently being analysed and a government response will be published in due course.

Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the research by Shields et al, SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence and asymptomatic viral carriage in healthcare workers: a cross-sectional study, published on 11 September, which found that BAME ethnicity confers a significantly increased likelihood of testing positive for COVID-19 antibodies. [[HL8165](#)]

Lord Bethell: Whilst there has not been a specific assessment of this research, we keep all evidence under review and welcome new quality evidence. The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research has prioritised research on the links between COVID-19 and ethnicity, funding six projects with UK Research and Innovation. These projects seek to explain

and mitigate the disproportionate death rate from COVID-19 among people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, including health and care workers.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have put in place a comprehensive programme to address the impact of COVID-19 on BAME National Health Service staff including work to prioritise risk assessments, strengthened engagement with staff networks in decision making, and tailored support as part of their health and wellbeing offer.

Emergency Services Network

Asked by **Lord Wasserman**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 12 March (HL2020), what is their latest estimate of (1) the completion dates for each of three phases of the design and build phase of the Emergency Services Network, and (2) the cost to completion of each phase. [[HL9386](#)]

Asked by **Lord Wasserman**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they have spent to date on independent management and technical consultants contracted to advise and assist with the design and build of the Emergency Services Network. [[HL9387](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The design and build phase of ESN is broken down into three phases:

1) Design and build of the "Prime" product which brings together the push-to-talk application on a range of devices (including handheld, vehicles and aircraft) utilising the prioritised EE network. This is due to complete in October 2021 (later than previously communicated) and is forecast to cost £463m. The majority of functionality required to switch-off Airwave is included in "Prime". The remainder of the supplier implementation programme is made up on one final release to include the remainder functionality needed to commence Transition from ESN to Airwave.

2) The addition of masts to EE's core network to provide the required network coverage for ESN. As per the response provided to HL2020 on 12th March 2020, it is planned that this activity and subsequent network optimisation will be completed during 2021. Costs for this work will be paid via a monthly service charge which will reduce at the start of 2022 from c.£10m per month to c.£6m per month.

3) Delivery of additional coverage e.g. in remote areas of the country and the London Underground. As per the response provided to HL2020 on 12th March 2020, this will complete in parallel with national deployment of the ESN and is forecast to cost £334m.

Independent management and consultancy spend from the inception of the programme in 2015 is £145.5M split between Delivery Support Services and Technical Consultancy.

Employment: Males

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many men have (1) worked for their current employer for less than 26 weeks, (2) become unemployed, or (3) become self-employed, for each month (a) this year and (b) last year; and what estimate they have made of the equivalent figures for each month of 2021. [HL9375]

Lord True: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lady Lister,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how many men have (1) worked for their current employer for less than 26 weeks, (2) become unemployed, or (3) become self-employed, for each month (a) this year and (b) last year; and what estimate they have made of the equivalent figures for each month of 2021 (HL9375).

Labour market estimates are available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is a survey of people resident in households in the UK. The LFS asks respondents which year and month they started working continuously for their current employer. For the purposes of answering this question, we are therefore defining 26 weeks as 6 months.

In the LFS, respondents are interviewed for five consecutive quarters over a 12-month period, which allows us to track respondents' labour market status over their time in the survey. By comparing the labour market status reported by respondents in two consecutive calendar quarters, we can estimate the number of people who become unemployed or self-employed. Unemployed people are those without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks.

The LFS only provides these estimates for three-month periods, rather than single months, and so estimates for the number of men who have worked for their current employer for less than 6 months are presented on a rolling quarter basis. It is not best practice to make direct comparisons between adjacent rolling quarters due to sample overlap. However, these estimates still provide an indication of recent trends in the data. Estimates of the number of men becoming unemployed or self-employed are only available for calendar quarters. All estimates are not seasonally adjusted.

Unfortunately, as we do not produce forecasts, we cannot provide estimates for 2021.

Table 1 contains estimates of the number of male employees, aged 16 years and over, who have been working continuously with their current employer for less than 6 months. These estimates are provided for each rolling quarter from January to March 2019 to June to August 2020, which is the most recent data available. Table 2 contains estimates of the number of men, aged

between 16 and 64 years, who have become unemployed or self-employed since the previous quarter. These are provided for each calendar quarter from January to March 2019 through to April to June 2020, the latest estimates available. Note that, as with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to a level of uncertainty.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Table 1: Estimated number of men who are employees, aged 16 years and over, who have been working continuously with their current employer for less than 6 months prior to their interview, January to March 2019 to June to August 2020[1]

<i>UK, thousands, not seasonally adjusted</i>	
<i>Period</i>	<i>Thousands</i>
Jan-Mar 2019	1,090
Feb-Apr 2019	1,002
Mar-May 2019	933
Apr-Jun 2019	1,016
May-Jul 2019	1,065
Jun-Aug 2019	1,095
Jul-Sep 2019	1,099
Aug-Oct 2019	1,132
Sep-Nov 2019	1,189
Oct-Dec 2019	1,209
Nov-Jan 2020	1,207
Dec-Feb 2020	1,169
Jan-Mar 2020	1,082
Feb-Apr 2020	992
Mar-May 2020	881
Apr-Jun 2020	846
May-Jul 2020	831
Jun-Aug 2020	809

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey

Table 2: Estimated number of men, aged between 16 and 64 years, who have become unemployed or self-employed since the previous quarter, January to March 2019 to April to June 2020

<i>UK, thousands, not seasonally adjusted</i>		
<i>Period</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Self-employed</i>
Jan-Mar 2019	311	198
Apr-Jun 2019	347	210
Jul-Sep 2019	381	179
Oct-Dec 2019	311	248
Jan-Mar 2020	342	168
Apr-Jun 2020	351	167

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey

[1] Quality indicator

Shaded estimates are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

Unshaded estimates are based on a larger sample size. This is likely to result in estimates of higher precision, although they will still be subject to some sampling variability.

Fisheries

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure the UK distant waters fishing fleet has access to fishing opportunities from the year 2021 in (1) the Norwegian exclusive economic zone (EEZ) north of 61 degrees latitude, (2) the Faeroe EEZ, (3) the Greenland EEZ, and (4) the seas around Svalbard. [HL9256]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: On the 31st December 2020, the UK will leave the Common Fisheries Policy. As we become an independent coastal state, we are committed to working closely with our coastal partners including the EU, Norway and Faroe Islands to manage shared stocks in a sustainable way and share fishing opportunities based on the scientific principle of zonal attachment.

As part of these preparations, the UK has concluded fisheries framework agreements with Norway and the Faroes, the first of which was signed on 30 September and has now been laid before Parliament. These framework agreements will provide the basis for annual negotiations on fishing opportunities and access to waters. In the forthcoming annual negotiations, the UK will seek to ensure the best possible outcomes for the whole of the UK fishing industry and our marine environment.

In addition, Defra officials are engaging regularly with their Greenlandic counterparts on opportunities for enhancing bilateral fisheries cooperation between the UK and Greenland. The UK's rights under the 1920 Treaty of Paris with regards to fishing opportunities in Svalbard waters remain unchanged.

Fisheries: Iceland

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking (1) to improve, or (2) to restore, the UK's former access after 31 December to fishing opportunities in Icelandic waters. [HL9257]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra officials are engaging regularly with their Icelandic counterparts across a wide variety of policy issues. Recent discussions have been very positive and have focused on enhancing bilateral fisheries cooperation between the UK and Iceland, building on the fisheries commitments within the UK-Iceland Joint Vision for 2030.

The discussions have also touched on other fisheries management matters within the North-East Atlantic. These have included the UK's recent accession to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations such as the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC).

The UK's relationship with Iceland is likely to evolve further as the UK goes forward as an independent coastal State.

Government Departments: Accountancy

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government which accountancy firms who currently hold contracts awarded by Government departments have been (1) formally criticised, or (2) fined, by any accounting regulatory body. [HL9323]

Lord True: This information is not held centrally.

Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Bethell on 12 October (HL8659) and Lord True on 24 June (HL5754), which UK citizens will be entitled to a UK-issued European Health Insurance Card that remains valid for travel in the EU after 31 December. [HL9216]

Lord Bethell: From 1 January 2021, under the Withdrawal Agreement some groups will be entitled to a United Kingdom-issued European Health Insurance Card for travel in the European Union. These include:

- UK state pensioners living in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland at the end of the Transition Period;
- Individuals who are frontier workers at the end of the Transition Period, for as long as they continue to be covered by the Agreement; and
- EEA or Swiss nationals residing in the UK by the end of the Transition Period.

UK nationals already living in the EU who hold a member state EHIC may use this when accessing healthcare within the EU and UK.

For people not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, the future of reciprocal healthcare arrangements between the UK and EU are subject to negotiations, which are ongoing.

Hong Kong: National Security

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the British Consulate in Hong Kong is monitoring and assessing (1) resignations from, (2) appointments to, and (3) moves of members within, the judiciary in Hong Kong; what assessment they have made, if any, of the desirability of members of the British judiciary being

seconded to serve in the courts of the region to implement the provisions of the Hong Kong national security law; and what criteria they use to make any such assessment. [HL9227]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Hong Kong's independent judiciary is a cornerstone of its economic success and way of life. As the Foreign Secretary said to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 6 October, judicial appointments to the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal are made independently. The Foreign Secretary and the Lord Chancellor will continue their consultations with the Supreme Court, building on assessments from the Consulate-General in Hong Kong and others.

Lighting: Pollution Control

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to address light pollution in the countryside. [HL9231]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government has put in place a range of measures to ensure that light pollution is effectively managed through controls in the planning system, the statutory nuisance regime, and when improvements are made to street lighting.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the possible ecological impacts of artificial light should be considered in the planning system. It makes clear that policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, dark landscapes and nature conservation, including where there may be impacts on wildlife and ecosystems. Defra has contributed to associated guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Defra has published or contributed to a range of assessments of the impact of artificial light on insects and wider biodiversity, which are published on our science website. Defra also keeps under review relevant, externally funded studies, for example on potential impacts of artificial light pollution on insects with our academic partners on the National Pollinator Strategy for England.

We strongly welcome the designation of the South Downs and Exmoor National Parks as International Dark Sky Reserves, two of only 16 in the world. As a result of this designation these National Parks have incorporated local policies to protect dark skies. We welcome the adoption of these local policies for dark sky protection and understand their extension to other National Parks is under consideration.

Nature Conservation: Business

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Salisbury

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Institute of Zoology Living Planet Report, published in

September, what steps they are taking to work with business to address species and habitat destruction caused by UK supply chains. [HL9250]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government regularly engages with businesses in the UK to support the transition to sustainable supply chains. For example, the Government has engaged with the UK Roundtable on Sourcing Sustainable Palm Oil since 2012, and the UK Roundtable on Sustainable Soya since 2018 when it was established. With the support of roundtables the UK achieved 77% certified sustainable palm oil in 2018 – up from 16% in 2010. The Government also engages through the Council for Sustainable Business, who advises Defra on how businesses can help achieve the aims of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Biodiversity is one of the three challenges the Council is focusing on in 2020.

In July 2019 the Government convened the Global Resource Initiative (GRI) taskforce to investigate what the UK can do to reduce our global environmental footprint, fulfilling a 25 Year Environment Plan commitment. The GRI drew on a wide range of expertise from across business, finance and civil society and consulted over 200 businesses and organisations to formulate their final recommendations report, which was published in March this year. We are considering the GRI recommendations carefully and will issue a formal response in due course.

Drawing on the GRI recommendations, the Government recently consulted on whether to introduce a mandatory due diligence requirement to tackle climate change and prevent biodiversity loss in supply chains by making it illegal for larger businesses to use forest risk commodities that have not been produced in accordance with relevant local laws. The due diligence consultation closed on 5 October 2020, generating a wealth of responses including from businesses. We will be publishing a response on gov.uk shortly, including a summary of the feedback received.

Nigeria: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they intend to have with the government of Nigeria about human rights abuses in that country, in particular those in relation to police brutality, illegal detentions, and assaults carried out by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad. [HL9242]

Baroness Sugg: In response to serious allegations against the Federal Special Anti-robbery Squad (FSARS) in Nigeria and subsequent protests, the Foreign Secretary, our High Commissioner and the Minister for Africa have all responded publicly calling for police reform in the country and supporting the right to peaceful protest. We welcome the changes announced by the Nigerian Government in response to the public outcry, including President Buhari's decision to disband FSARS. The High Commissioner has raised the protests with representatives

of the Nigerian Government and we will continue to monitor the protests closely.

We have made clear to the Nigerian authorities at the highest levels the importance of protecting human rights for all. We will continue to push the Nigerian police to uphold human rights and the rule of law in all operations and to investigate allegations of police brutality, illegal detentions and assaults, holding those responsible to account. We are working with the Nigerian Government and international and civil society partners to support broader police reform in Nigeria, and we are developing proposals to support new police regulations to create a more accountable and responsive policing model in Nigeria.

Nigeria: Violence

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Southern Kaduna People's Union letter to the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor published in July calling on the International Criminal Court to act against the "pernicious genocide" in northern Nigeria. [HL9218]

Baroness Sugg: We have seen the letter to the International Criminal Court's Chief Prosecutor from the Southern Kaduna People's Union. We condemn all incidents of intercommunal violence affecting both Christian and Muslim communities in Nigeria, including recent attacks in Kaduna State. We also condemn acts of terrorism in North East Nigeria, including those committed by Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa. It is important that we do not conflate these distinct conflicts as it risks exacerbating tensions. It is UK Government policy not to unilaterally determine whether genocide has occurred, in line with the Genocide Convention. This is a matter for competent courts and tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, after consideration of all the evidence, rather than governments or non-judicial bodies.

The UK continues to play an active role in helping Nigeria to tackle conflict. We call on the Nigerian Government to take urgent action to protect those at risk violence, bring perpetrators to justice and implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of conflict.

Palestinians: Police

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that 12 Palestinian police officers were detained as they returned to Ramallah after entering Area C to apprehend a Palestinian with criminal charges. [HL9332]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made representations on this case. 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 regularly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation.

Peat Bogs: Fires

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Burning as a tool for the restoration of upland blanket bog: Position Statement by Natural England, published in February 2019, which advises that "in exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate to carry out a one-off burn for the purposes of restoration"; and what steps they intend to take in response to that advice before imposing any blanket ban on such burning. [HL9241]

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

Any legislative proposals will be developed with consideration of the expert advice of Natural England. These considerations are complex, but it is important that we take the right steps to restore and protect this valuable habitat.

Police

Asked by Lord Grocott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the total number of police officers in England (1) in 2010, (2) in 2015, and (3) in the latest year for which figures are available. [HL9278]

Asked by Lord Grocott

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many police officers there are per head of population in each policing area in England. [HL9280]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size and composition of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin.

The latest available data in this statistical series, broken down by Police Force Area, cover the situation as at 31 March 2020, and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2020>.

Table H4 of the accompanying data tables provide information on the number of police officers per 100,000 population by Police Force Area. Open Data tables, which contain the number of officers in each Police Force Area since 2007, are also available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-open-data-tables>.

While the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin remains the key measure of the size of the police workforce, as part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme, the Home Office also publishes a quarterly update on the number of officers (headcount) in England and Wales. Data are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics>.

We have attached the information due to the size of the data which would exceed the word limit for responses to written parliamentary questions.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Open Data - Police Workforce - Tables [open-data-table-police-workforce (1).xlsx]

Police Officer Uplift Stats [police-workforce-mar20-hosb2020.pdf]

Police Workforce - England and Wales - March 2020 [police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-june-2020 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-19/HL9280>

Police and Crime Commissioners: Reviews

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to receive the report of part one of the internal review of the Police and Crime Commissioner model. [HL9388]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: On 22 July, the Government announced a two-part Review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners. Part one of the internal Review is focused on strengthening the accountability of PCCs in line with the Government's manifesto commitment. The Review will report to the Home Secretary in October.

Prime Minister: Wales

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times the Prime Minister met with the First Minister of Wales, either physically and virtually, between 1 June and 1 October. [HL9261]

Lord True: There has been extensive engagement between the UK Government and Welsh Government at all levels across many key policy areas. The Prime Minister and First Minister of Wales have had regular recent discussions, focused on the joint Covid-19

response. This includes a bilateral meeting on 21 September in addition to Ministerial COBR meetings.

Frequent engagement with the devolved administrations is led by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster through calls with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, and the First and deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland, alongside the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Procurement: Conflict of Interests

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that any decision to place a contract to procure (1) services, and (2) equipment, during the COVID-19 pandemic is not influenced by any individual involved in the procurement process having a personal connection to the company providing such services or equipment. [HL9262]

Lord True: As we tackle this Covid-19 outbreak, Government contracts must be awarded efficiently and responsibly. Regulation 24 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 requires contracting authorities to take appropriate measures to prevent, identify and remedy conflicts of interest arising in the conduct of procurement procedures.

Railways: Repayments

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are now responsible for making decisions on the conditions applying to refunds requested for cancelled or delayed train journeys. [HL9247]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The conditions that apply to refunds requested for cancelled or delayed train journeys have not changed and continue to be as described in the National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT), which sets out the general terms and conditions for rail tickets sold in Great Britain. The NRCoT is a rail industry owned document but any changes must be approved by the Secretary of State.

As per condition 30.1 of the NRCoT, if a train on which a passenger is scheduled to travel is cancelled, delayed, or the reservation will not be honoured, and they decide not to travel, they may return the unused ticket to the original retailer or train company from whom it was purchased, where they will be given a full refund with no administration fee being charged.

Railways: Standards

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they have made decisions on the frequency of train services since taking over financial responsibility for each rail franchise; and how they intend to make decisions on the

future pattern of services in the event of economic recovery. [HL9246]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government and the rail industry revised the train timetable to ensure passengers received a regular and reliable service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We took early action to stabilise the industry, which enabled the continued operation of critical passenger and freight services. From 7 September, the railway has been operating at 91 per cent of its pre-pandemic capacity, providing frequent and reliable trains for passengers. Rail operators continue to assess local demand regularly and deliver the services passengers need. We will continue to work closely with industry to make sure we strike the right balance between running the maximum levels of service that can be resourced reliably and protecting taxpayers' best interests.

Royal National Institute for the Blind: Publications

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Royal National Institute of Blind People Turned Out 2019, published on 13 October; and what steps they are taking to address the findings of that report. [HL9229]

Lord True: The Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the electoral process for voters with sight loss and other disabilities, and is already in the process of taking forward some of the recommendations made in the report while considering other measures.

The Government is looking at trialling ways to provide blind and partially sighted voters with electoral information in more accessible formats and is working with electoral partners, including the Electoral Commission, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and the Association of Electoral Administrators to ensure the support available to voters with disabilities is effectively publicised.

We will continue working with the Royal National Institute of Blind People to improve processes and will review what additional support might be provided to help voters with sight loss to vote by post.

Schools: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Adonis

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many state schools in England were closed to physical attendance by pupils because of COVID-19 at any point during the week of 12 October. [HL9209]

Baroness Berridge: The table attached gives the number of state-funded schools[1] who responded to the daily education settings status survey, and the total

number that indicated that they were closed for COVID-19 related reasons during each day of the week of 12 October.

[1] State-funded schools include primary, middle, secondary, all-through, special and alternative provision settings.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL9209_table
[HL9209_table_number_of_state_funded_schools_closed_due_to_COVID_19.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-15/HL9209>

Schools: Inspections

Asked by Lord Adonis

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to recommence Ofsted inspections of schools. [HL9210]

Baroness Berridge: Routine inspections will remain suspended for the autumn term. During the autumn term, however, inspectors will visit a sample of schools to discuss how they are managing the return to education of all their pupils. The intention is for Ofsted to resume routine school inspections from January 2021, with this date being kept under review.

Sherwan Amin Sherwani

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Kurdistan Regional Government about the arrest of Sherwan Amin Sherwani on 7 October. [HL9291]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of reports concerning the detention of Sherwan Sherwani and are monitoring his case closely. We condemn acts of intimidation by security forces against journalists and media organisations, and the suppression of information including the internet. We raise this regularly with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Sleeping Rough: Asylum

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by Lord Greenhalgh on 14 October (HLWS505), how the additional support for rough sleepers will be accessed by those evicted from asylum accommodation after a negative decision; and what plans they have to review their policy requiring such evictions to ensure that people are protected "from life threatening cold weather and risks posed by COVID-19". [HL9215]

Lord Greenhalgh: Those evicted from asylum accommodation after a negative decision will not be eligible for the additional support for rough sleepers specifically cited in Lord Greenhalgh's written statement of 14 of October.

For those whose asylum claims have been rejected and have appeal rights exhausted, they will be expected to leave the country, assistance is available to those who opt to leave the country voluntarily.

The Voluntary Returns Scheme will pay for travel and provide a cash amount, and that can and should be utilised whenever possible.

Failed asylum seekers who are unable to leave the UK or take the necessary practical steps to enable them to leave will continue to be eligible to receive support from the Home Office.

Students: Loans

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many loans were made to students who were studying for (1) Higher National Certificate, and (2) Higher National Diploma, qualifications in (1) 2017, (2) 2018, and (3) 2019. [HL9350]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The attached tables show management information from the Student Loans Company on the number of students in receipt of a loan (broken down by tuition fee loan and maintenance loan) and studying for a Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma.

These figures cover students who received funding as English-domiciled students studying in the UK and EU-domiciled students studying in England.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL9350_Table
[HL9350_table_showing_students_receiving_loans_and_studying_for_Higher_National_Certificate_or_Higher_National_Diploma.doc]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-20/HL9350>

Train Operating Companies: Training

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of procedures being followed by train operating companies (1) to train new drivers; and (2) to refresh the training of existing drivers, during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL9245]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: During the initial outbreak of COVID-19, training of new drivers was halted. Subsequently, train driver training agreements have been made with the train drivers' trade union ASLEF and the train operating companies to enable

training to re-start in a COVID secure way. This agreement covers both in-cab practical training of new drivers and the on-going training of existing drivers for route and traction control training purposes. The Department is not directly involved in assessing these procedures at it is a matter for the employers and the recognised trade unions to discuss and agree.

Tree Planting

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Salisbury

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reach their tree planting target as set out in the Tree Planting Strategy; and if they have not reached that target, what assessment they have made of the reasons why they have not done so. [HL9249]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We committed in our manifesto to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025.

As noted in a public paper this summer, we are exploring whether a statutory target for trees in England would be appropriate, under the target setting process proposed by the Environment Bill.

To increase planting in England, we recently consulted on proposals for a new ambitious England Tree Strategy, which will be published in spring 2021. This will set out priority policies and plans for the £640m Nature for Climate Fund.

The planting season begins soon, and we hope to build on the increasing annual planting rates seen in England over the last few years.

West Bank: Breast Cancer

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take to ensure that women living in Gaza have access to medical treatment for breast cancer in the West Bank. [HL9337]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement between Gaza and the West Bank. Israeli restrictions severely restrict the movement of medical professionals, patients and families from Gaza, hampering the provision of quality health services. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the matter of medical permits, and the issue of movement and access, with the Israeli authorities. A lasting resolution to the situation is needed that will ensure that all those who are in need of medical attention and their families have unimpeded access to healthcare provisions.

West Bank: Demolition

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs COVID-19

Emergency Situation Report 17 (29 August–8 September 2020), published on 8 September, and the finding that there has been a 60 per cent increase in the demolition of Palestinian buildings demolished by the government of Israel since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL9333]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the findings of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report 17 regarding demolitions of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. The UK is seriously concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian property, particularly at this time. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, is harmful to the peace process and weakens the capacity of Palestinians to withstand the impact of COVID-19. Under IHL, an occupying power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the occupied territory to the fullest extent of the means available to it and with the cooperation of the local authorities. We call

on both parties to avoid any provocative action which might undermine the cooperation that is so critical.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the demolition of the homes of six Palestinian families in Masafer Yatta on 30 September. [HL9336]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on this particular case, the UK is concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian structures by Israeli authorities. In a joint statement on 16 October, the UK, alongside France, Germany, Spain and Italy, urged Israel to halt its policy of evictions and demolitions of Palestinian structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv also raised this issue with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

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