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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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

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

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# Written Statements

*Monday, 16 November 2020*

## **Covid-19: Students Returning Home**

[HLWS569]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** My honourable friend the Minister of State for Universities (Michelle Donelan) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

As a Government we have made a commitment to ensure students living at university will be able to go home at the end of term, if they choose to do so. Today, I am announcing the measures that we are putting in place to enable students to return home as safely as possible.

The national restrictions are set in law to finish on 2 December and the government is committed to this date. In order to ensure that students can return home at the end of the autumn term but also reduce any transmission risk, the Government is asking that students return home once the national restrictions have been lifted, in a “student travel window” lasting from 3-9 December. This excludes students who have tested positive or been notified by the NHS test and trace system.

Universities should stagger departure dates across faculties and with other institutions in the region to manage pressure on transport infrastructure. In order to ensure that students can travel home during this window, higher education providers should cease in-person teaching no later than 9 December. Moving online learning by 9 December will allow students to start to return home, and any students who have tested positive to complete their period of self-isolation and return home before Christmas.

As the Prime Minister announced this week, we are also working closely with universities to roll out mass testing for students. We have made huge strides in our testing capability in recent weeks, and we will offer this to as many students as possible before they travel home, targeting this in areas of high prevalence. This will help to provide further confidence that students can leave safely if they test negative. If a student tests positive or they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace before their departure, they will need to remain in self-isolation, following the relevant guidance. Moving all learning online by 9 December allows enough time for students to complete this isolation period, where required, before returning home for Christmas.

Under the current national restrictions students will have completed a 4-week period of national restriction by 2 December, limiting the risk of them contracting and transmitting Coronavirus (Covid-19). As this is a key measure to reduce the risk of transmission to their families and friends at home, it is very important that students comply with the measures for the duration of the period of national restrictions and manage social

interactions safely between 3 December and the point of travel. I ask students to work with us to keep themselves and their families safe, while allowing them to return home at the end of term if they choose to do so.

We are working with the devolved administrations to ensure that all students, no matter where they live or study, are treated fairly and can travel home as safely as possible to keep all our communities safe.

English students at universities in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should follow the guidance relevant to where they are living before returning home. When they return to England, they should follow their local guidance for their home area. Students returning to their home in England who have not completed the 4 weeks of national restrictions should undertake at least 14 days of restricted contact either before or after return home to minimise their risk of transmission.

We know that not all students will be able to go home, or may choose not to do so. It is vital that support continues for those who choose to stay at university over Christmas, including our international students, care leavers and those who may be estranged from their families. We have asked universities to ensure they have plans for those students who remain on campus and this includes ensuring that support continues over winter break.

Finally, I want to assure parents, students and staff that their welfare is our priority. The hard work of university staff has meant we are able to keep students and staff as safe as possible during term, and I am very grateful for their efforts to deliver an appropriate balance of online and in-person teaching, as agreed with public health teams. We are pleased we can now announce how students can travel home at the end of term, while keeping themselves, their families, and their communities, as safe as possible.

## **Economic Crime Plan: Action 19**

[HLWS571]

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

As part of the Government’s July 2019 Economic Crime Plan[1], the Treasury undertook to consider the case for a Government power to block listings[2] on UK financial markets on the grounds of national security. This work has concluded and indicates that there are possible scenarios in which a proposed listing may potentially give rise to national security concerns. Therefore, alongside today’s introduction of the National Security and Investment (NS&I) Bill, the Government is announcing its intention to bring forward a precautionary power to block listings on national security grounds.

In designing this power, the Government will take full account of the fact that companies from all over the world come to the UK, as a world-leading financial centre, in order to raise capital. They are attracted by the depth,

breadth and openness of our markets as well as London's reputation for clean and transparent markets. This power will reinforce that reputation and help us maintain London's status as a world-class listings destination. The Treasury will publish a full consultation to inform the design of the power, which we expect to launch in early 2021. Further information will be set out in the consultation document.

[1]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-plan-2019-to-2022/economic-crime-plan-2019-to-2022-accessible-version>.

[2] When a company wants to raise capital, it can do this through 'listing' its securities on a public market, such as the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

### Falkland Islands Demining

[HLWS570]

**Baroness Sugg:** My hon. Friend the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas (Wendy Morton MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

On the 14 November the Falkland Islands were declared mine-free under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (the Ottawa Convention); a major step forward for the Islanders as they look forward to a peaceful future. This project has taken more than 38 years after several thousand land mines were laid during the Falklands Conflict. The Government pays tribute to the members of the British Armed Forces who contributed to mapping, fencing and clearing of the mine fields between 1982 and 2009, as well as the civilian de-miners who between 2009 and 2020 have destroyed over 10,000 mines and other unexploded ordnance in a project funded by the United Kingdom Government. The project has released 23 million square meters of land, allowing public access to large areas of ground which had been out of bounds for almost four decades, including beauty spots close to Stanley. This means that the people of the Falkland Islands will no longer have to teach their children about the dangers of minefields.

In 1997 the United Kingdom, alongside 121 other nations, signed the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and commits signatories to removing such mines from territories over which they have jurisdiction or control. The completion of the demining project in the Falkland Islands marks the United Kingdom's fulfilment of its legal obligation under this Convention. Finishing three years ahead of the deadline of 31 March 2024, this achievement underlines the United Kingdom's commitment to and leadership of global humanitarian mine action.

### Levelling up the Economy: Freeport Bidding Process

[HLWS574]

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

On 16 November, the government launched the bidding process for the allocation of Freeports in England by publishing a bidding prospectus. The bidding period will close on 5 February 2021.

Leaving the EU creates new opportunities for the UK to strengthen the Union and become a hub for international trade and investment. Revitalising our port regions through an ambitious Freeport policy is a key component of realising this vision and unlocking the deep potential of all nations and regions of the UK.

The creation of Freeports will be a cornerstone of the government's plan to level up opportunity across the country. Freeports will increase trade, create employment and attract investment in order to form innovative business clusters that benefit local areas. This in turn will help rejuvenate left-behind communities across the UK, by attracting new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity.

The bidding prospectus sets out how ports, businesses, local government and other local partners can come together to bid for Freeport status.

At the centre of our new Freeports policy is an ambitious new customs model which will improve upon both the UK's existing customs facilitations and the Freeports the UK previously had. Our Freeports model also introduces a package of tax incentives for businesses to invest in Freeports, and seed funding to develop key infrastructure to help level up some of our most deprived communities. We are introducing new measures to speed up planning processes to accelerate development in and around Freeports and new initiatives to encourage innovators to test new ideas to drive additional economic growth and create jobs.

Freeports will be selected according to a fair, transparent and competitive bidding process, and will be expected to collaborate closely with key partners across the public and private sectors.

We want all the nations of the UK to share in the benefits of Freeports. As such, we are working constructively and collaboratively with the devolved administrations to seek to establish at least one Freeport in each nation of the UK as soon as possible.

The "*Freeports bidding prospectus*" CP315 has been laid in Parliament. Copies are available in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office, and also at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freeports-bidding-prospectus>.

## Tax Policy

[HLWS572]

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

In line with the tax policy-making framework, the Government consulted on a number of tax policies announced at Spring Budget 2020. Today, the Government is publishing responses to some of the consultations that were extended due to Covid-19, alongside draft legislation which will need to be introduced.

The Government is also publishing responses to calls for evidence in the market for tax advice, as well as a consultation on Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax.

Finally, the Government is making some tax policy announcements for Tobacco and Vehicle Excise duties, measures to tackle promoters of tax avoidance, a small change to off-payroll legislation, and delays to other measures and reviews.

### *Previously announced publications*

The Government is publishing summary of responses and draft legislation for each of the following measures, as announced at the Spring Budget:

- Plastic Packaging Tax
- Tackling Construction Industry Scheme abuse
- R&D SME tax credit PAYE cap
- Tax implications of the withdrawal of the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR)
- Hybrid and other mismatches

The Government had extended the policy consultation response deadlines for these measures in April, in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Draft legislation is accompanied by a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN), an Explanatory Note (EN) and, where applicable, a summary of responses to consultation document. All publications can be found on the GOV.UK website. The Government's tax consultation tracker has also been updated.

### *Raising standards for tax advice*

The Government is publishing a Summary of Responses and Next Steps from the call for evidence on raising standards in the market for tax advice. As a first step towards raising standards, the Government will consult on requiring tax advisers to hold professional indemnity insurance and how to define tax advice. The majority of respondents supported government action to raise standards.

### *Tackling promoters of tax avoidance*

In line with the Government's strategy to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes, published in March, the Government is today announcing that it will consult in the new year on further measures to tackle promoters. These proposals will build on the proposals announced earlier this year and will:

- disrupt the business model of offshore promoters by making it harder for such promoters to access the UK by making their onshore partners equally responsible for the anti-avoidance regime penalties that the offshore promoter generates.
- directly tackle the secrecy on which promoters rely; the proposals here would ensure that taxpayers are fully informed of the reality of what is being sold to them.
- disrupt the economics of tax avoidance by ensuring that, without delay, promoters face financial consequences for continuing to promote tax avoidance so that promoters cannot continue to profit from avoidance while HMRC investigates them.
- give HMRC additional powers to act against companies that continue to promote schemes and who sidestep the rules designed to restrict their activities. The proposals would see such promoters shut down and restricted from setting up similar businesses.

The Government continues to recognise that the many tax advisers who adhere to high professional standards are an important source of support for taxpayers. The proposals are aimed at targeting those promoters who exploit every opportunity to personally profit by side-stepping the rules and whose unscrupulous actions often leave taxpayers with significant tax bills.

The Government continues to recognise that strengthening HMRC powers in the way described must be done in a carefully constrained way. HMRC will again work with stakeholders, and in particular those tax advisers who adhere to high professional standards, to ensure that these proposals are both effective and proportionate.

### *Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax*

The Government is publishing a consultation on the design of Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax, as announced on 21 July. This will allow stakeholders to inform the early stage design of Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax and to provide businesses with time to prepare.

### *Further policy announcements:*

The Government has made a number of further policy decisions which are being announced today, relating to:

### *Extending the Annual Investment Allowance provisional £1 million cap*

The Government is today announcing a yearlong extension to the temporary increase of the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA). The AIA provides firms 100% same year tax relief on qualifying capital expenditure, up to a fixed limit. Instead of allowing the AIA to revert to £200,000 from 1 January 2021, the Government is extending the temporary £1 million cap set at Budget 2018 until 31 December 2021. This announcement:

- Responds to the needs of business, giving enhanced tax relief on plant and machinery expenditure;
- Provides businesses with upfront support during continuing Covid-related uncertainty;



- Simplifies taxes for the 99% of businesses investing up to £1 million on plant and machinery assets each year.

#### *Tobacco Duty uprating*

The Government is announcing the uprating of tobacco duties to protect the public finances, continue the drive to reduce smoking prevalence, and support the Government's target for a smoke-free England by 2030. In line with the existing escalator, duty rates on all tobacco products will increase by RPI + 2%. In order to narrow the gap between hand-rolling tobacco (HRT) and cigarette duty rates and ensure the Minimum Excise Tax (MET) continues to be effective in the current market, HRT will increase by RPI + 6% and the MET by RPI + 4%. The Treasury is laying an Order before the House to enact these changes, which will take effect on 16 November.

#### *Van Vehicle Excise Duty*

The Government will not now introduce a new graduated system of Vehicle Excise Duty for light goods vehicles or motorhomes from April 2021, to avoid distracting the automotive sector and businesses more widely from the challenges they currently face in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Motorhomes will continue to be placed in the Private/Light Goods class.

#### *Off-payroll working - technical change to ensure legislation operates as intended*

A technical change to the off-payroll working rules will be made in the next Finance Bill. This will ensure the legislation operates as intended from 6 April 2021 for engagements where an intermediary is a company. The change will correct an unintended widening of the definition of an intermediary, which went beyond the intended scope of the policy.

#### *Notification of uncertain tax treatment by large businesses*

The Government is announcing the implementation of the new requirement for large businesses to notify HMRC of uncertain tax treatments will be delayed until April 2022. This will allow more time to get the policy and legislation right following the recent consultation, including through further engagement with stakeholders, and will give affected businesses more time to prepare for the change.

#### *Timely Tax Payments and Review of Tax Administration Framework*

On 21 July, the Government committed to publishing calls for evidence on Timely Tax Payments and a Review of the Tax Administration Framework. Given the continued pressures of the Covid-19 outbreak, and with other consultations in progress, the Government will now publish these documents in Spring 2021.

#### *Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) milk review*

In 2017, the Government made a commitment to review the exemption for sugary milk and milk-substitute drinks from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) by 2020. The Government has been clear that if industry does not make

enough progress on voluntarily reformulating these drinks, the Government may extend the SDIL to include them. In light of Public Health England's latest reformulation report (published earlier this month) that shows good progress has been made in sugar reduction of milk-based drinks, the Government will next consider the exemption for sugary milk and milk-substitute drinks in 2022 after the full reformulation programme completes.

## University Admissions System

[HLWS573]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today I want to update both Houses on policy developments for reform within the university admissions system.

On Friday 13 November, I announced the Department's intention to explore a Post Qualification Admissions (PQA) system for higher education, where students would receive and accept offers after they have received their Level 3 (A-Level or equivalent) grades.

The government's manifesto committed us to "improve the application and offer system" and in a way that is "underpinned by a commitment to fairness, quality of learning and teaching, and access". Evidence shows that the current admissions system falls short of this commitment, which is why we are now exploring how a new system could work. We want to ensure the system works for disadvantaged students and facilitates the levelling up that we all want to see, so that everyone with the qualifications and ability to benefit from higher education can do so, no matter what their background.

If we were starting from scratch today, no one would design the higher education admissions system we have now – a system which, with its reliance on predicted grades, systematically favours the most advantaged. Whilst the higher education provider base has expanded significantly in recent decades, with the emergence of new providers and courses, the admissions system has remained largely unchanged since the 1960s. The current system lacks transparency, and it works against the interests of some students, notably high achieving disadvantaged students. In recent years we have also seen the emergence of undesirable admissions practices, such as the mass use of unconditional offers.

We know, due to the pandemic, that students have experienced considerable disruption to their education this year. We believe that the unique set of circumstances students faced could have been better dealt with by a fairer higher education admissions system.

A broad range of interested parties across the education system, and from across the political spectrum – including the Sutton Trust, Policy Exchange, and the University and College Union – have been calling for a Post Qualification Admissions system to support social mobility and to remove the complexity and undesirable

practices of the current system. According to a recent poll by the Sutton Trust, two-thirds of this year's university entrants (66%) are in favour of removing predicted grades from university admissions and making decisions based on actual results. Universities UK has also confirmed its desire to work with government to explore moving to such a system.

The government will therefore consult universities, colleges, schools, students, and other interested parties to

develop a potential model of reform over the coming months. We will work across the sectors to design a more efficient and transparent system that helps all students, especially those who are disadvantaged, access the course and institution that best suits their aspirations and capabilities. This is a set of reforms we would look to deliver during the course of this parliament, but it will not affect students over the current academic year.

## Written Answers

Monday, 16 November 2020

### Afghanistan: Terrorism

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Afghanistan about the IS attack at Kabul University on 2 November; and what assistance they have offered to help to end IS attacks on education centres in Afghanistan. [HL9938]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I spoke to Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister on 3 November. I expressed the UK's profound condolences for the loss of life caused by the attack in Kabul and noted the particular tragedy of targeting young Afghans in a place of education.

Acting Foreign Minister Atmar and I agreed on the need for a reduction in violence levels and for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces to receive continued international support. The UK has committed up to £70 million to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces for 2021. This funding will help ensure those forces are better able protect the Afghan people. Tuesday 3 November was a day of National Mourning in Afghanistan and the British Embassy flew the flag at half-mast in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan.

### Africa: Quarantine

Asked by *Baroness Hayman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they undertake country-specific risk assessments for countries in Africa before deciding whether visitors to the UK from those countries have to self-isolate due to Covid-19. [HL9838]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Decisions on International Travel Corridors, and therefore whether visitors to the UK from specific countries have to self-isolate, are currently informed by risk assessments provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), working closely with Public Health England (PHE), using methodology endorsed by the four Chief Medical Officers (CMO) of the UK.

JBC and PHE monitor over 250 countries, territories and islands to inform these risk assessments. This includes African nations. Factors taken into consideration include:

- An estimate of the proportion of the population that is currently infected (this is known as 'point prevalence');
- Weekly case incidence rate taking into account population size of the country, territory or island;
- Trends in incidence, deaths, hospitalisations and intensive care admissions;
- Information on laboratory capacity, testing and contact tracing strategies, and test positivity rates;

- Covid-19 cases detected in the UK following travel to the country, territory or island ('imported infections');
- Qualitative information related to the reliability of reported data and the maturity of public health systems;
- Public health measures in place and the enforcement of, and adherence to, those measures.

### Age: Proof of Identity

Asked by *Lord Stevenson of Balmacara*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to bring forward proposals for a pilot study allowing the use of digital forms of identification for age verification purposes in retail and hospitality settings. [HL10191]

**Baroness Barran:** A Document Checking Service pilot is currently under way to test the use of digital means of identification-proofing across the economy. Age verification is a key requirement in a range of sectors where there are age restricted goods and services, including hospitality and retail. It is important we get our approach right. Therefore, we are working with industry and civil society to develop standards that will provide confidence to retailers and consumers that digital identity products are secure and fit for purpose. We continue to work in close collaboration with other Government departments on this matter.

### Agriculture: Water

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to improve knowledge of, (2) to implement, and (3) to enforce, their farming rules for water. [HL9818]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Defra and the Environment Agency (EA) jointly undertook communications on the announcement of the new 'farming rules for water' and the approach to their implementation. This included promotion of the rules on gov.uk, posters, banners, summary cards and questions and answer sheets distributed to a wide range of key farming and environmental stakeholders who also raised awareness via talks, press articles and their own websites. The EA continues to promote the rules via the Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter.

The EA is responsible for regulation of the rules. In the first year it took an advice led approach raising awareness of the rules with farmers and their advisers. It is now actively enforcing the rules, through advice, guidance and the possibility of both civil and criminal sanctions. The EA takes a risk-based approach to farm visits with the resources it has available for agriculture, targeting visits at the activities with high potential for pollution or where actual pollution has been reported. The EA also works with those producing materials off-farm that are spread on farmers' fields, such as anaerobic digestates and biosolids



from the water industry to raise awareness of the rules and the limits on what can be spread.

### **Amer Abdel-Rahim Sanouber**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the death of Amer Abdel-Rahim Sanouber. [HL9888]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As the British Consulate Jerusalem made clear in a tweet on 26 October, we are concerned by the reports surrounding the death of Amer Abdel-Rahim Snobar. The British Embassy Tel Aviv raised this case with the Israeli Authorities on 26 October. The UK urged the Israeli authorities to investigate the allegations surrounding his death. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations and if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account.

### **Armed Conflict: Civilians**

*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 Protection of Civilians Report (6-19 October 2020), published on 23 October, and in particular, the destruction of Palestinian-owned olive trees. [HL9892]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the findings of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Protection of Civilians Report (6-19 October 2020). The UK condemns any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We recognise that there can be an increase in assaults on Palestinian farmers, the destruction of olive trees and the stealing of produce coinciding with the Palestinian olive harvest, which began earlier this month. We have expressed our concerns to the Israeli Government on a number of occasions. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence, and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance and bring those responsible to justice.

### **Arts: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of workers who have left the (1) music, (2) performing arts, and (3) creative sectors, since March. [HL10172]

**Baroness Barran:** We recognise that businesses and workers in the creative industries have been severely impacted by Covid-19.

The Government has not made an assessment of the number of workers who have left the music, performing arts and creative sector since March. We have worked closely with music and cultural sector representative bodies to maximise the survival of businesses and employee retention in the sector, through the extensive range of support the Government has provided to businesses and the self-employed.

We are committed to continuing to work with the music and cultural sectors to understand the difficulties they face and help them access support through these challenging times and through recovery.

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Barran on 9 November (HL Deb, col 808), what funding streams constitute the £119 million which Arts Council England has made available for individuals; what is the relative value of any such funding streams; and whether such funding derived from (1) Arts Council England's regular funding, (2) the Culture Recovery Fund, or (3) any other sources. [HL10177]

**Baroness Barran:** The £119 million which Arts Council England made available for individuals is derived from ACE's own funding (National Lottery reserves, Grant-in-Aid reserves and from repurposing some of their current funding programmes) and is made up of the following:

- £17.1 million distributed through the Emergency Response Fund for individuals.
- £6 million distributed by a series of Benevolent Funds focused on the self-employed.
- £18 million available through their Developing Your Creative Practice fund. This came from an underspend from the £160m made available for the Arts Council's Emergency Response Fund.
- £77.9 million available through National Lottery Project Grants (available to both individuals and organisations). This is from ACE's existing National Lottery money and an underspend in the Emergency Response Funds.

### **Arts: Termination of Employment**

*Asked by Lord Aberdare*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of workers who have left (1) the music, (2) the performing arts, and (3) the creative, sector since March. [HL10030]

**Baroness Barran:** We recognise that businesses and workers in the creative industries have been severely impacted by Covid-19.

The Government has not made an assessment of the number of workers who have left the music, performing arts and creative sector since March. We have worked closely with music and cultural sector representative

bodies to maximise the survival of businesses and employee retention in the sector, through the extensive range of support the Government has provided to businesses and the self-employed.

We are committed to continuing to work with the music and cultural sectors to understand the difficulties they face and help them access support through these challenging times and through recovery.

### Bounce Back Loan Scheme

*Asked by Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether Greensill Capital has extended Bounce Back Loans to companies that are part of, or associated with, the GFG Alliance; and whether these loans complied with the eligibility criteria set by the Bounce Back Loans scheme. [HL9858]

**Lord Callanan:** Greensill Capital is not a Bounce Back Loan Scheme accredited lender. A full list of accredited lenders can be found on the British Business Bank website.

### Broadband: Finance

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 3 November (HL9493), whether the commitment to provide gigabit-capable broadband nationwide will be rolled out equitably between rural and urban communities. [HL10103]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government is committed to delivering nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, in both urban and rural areas. The Government is supporting commercial gigabit capable broadband deployment to the majority of the country (c. 80% of premises) by encouraging greater network competition and removing barriers to deployment. To ensure that areas in the harder to reach 20% of the country - which are predominantly rural and more remote - get gigabit capable broadband in parallel to commercial build, the Budget committed the Government to invest £5 billion into these areas.

### Census: Ethnic Groups and Religion

*Asked by Lord Lea of Crondall*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to make changes in the 2021 Census to the questions on (1) religion, and (2) ethnicity, used in the 2011 Census of England and Wales; and if so, what any such changes are. [HL9854]

**Lord True:** The Census (England) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/560) set out the questions for Census 2021 in England and include facsimiles of the paper

questionnaires. The religion question is the same as that asked in the 2011 Census. For the ethnic group question, two substantive changes to the question used in 2011 have been made:

- a new tick-box response option for 'Roma'.
- a write-in option for those selecting 'African background' within the 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African' high-level category.

People can still declare another religion or ethnicity, even if it is not a tick-box response option.

The parallel Census (Wales) Regulations 2020 were made by Welsh Ministers and laid before the Welsh Parliament.

### Centenary Forum

*Asked by Lord Kilclooney*

To ask Her Majesty's Government who are the members of the Northern Ireland Centenary Forum; and which organisations these members represent. [HL10075]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The establishment of the Centenary Forum was announced by the Prime Minister in August. It is composed of a wide range of perspectives and interests, ensuring diverse voices are heard as we mark this important national anniversary. The composition of the Centenary Forum and the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel was confirmed in a press notice published on 9 October:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/centenary-bodies-meet-to-discuss-plans-for-northern-irelands-anniversary>.

Its composition is as follows:

- Doug Beattie MC MLA
- Eileen Chan-Hu, CRAIC NI
- Stephen Farry MP
- Rev. Mervyn Gibson, Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland
- Ivy Goddard, Inter-Ethnic Forum
- Peter Harbinson, Invest NI
- Howard Hastings
- Jacqueline Irwin, Community Relations Council
- David Jackson, SOLACE NI
- Ian Marshall
- John McGrillen, Tourism NI
- Paul Mullan, National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Luke Patterson, NI Youth Parliament
- Canon David Porter
- Gavin Robinson MP
- Cormac Savage, NI Youth Parliament
- Jonathan Stewart, British Council
- Liza Wilkinson, TIDES Training
- Richard Williams, Northern Ireland Screen.

## Centenary Historical Advisory Panel

*Asked by Lord Kilclooney*

To ask Her Majesty's Government who are the members of the Northern Ireland Centenary Historical Advisory Panel; and which organisations these members represent. [HL10074]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The establishment of the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel was announced by the Prime Minister in August. This Panel will provide advice to the Centenary Forum, and to the Government, on the historical facts of the centenary, and its work will be guided by the Principles for Remembering. The composition of the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel was confirmed in a press notice published on 9 October:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/centenary-bodies-meet-to-discuss-plans-for-northern-irelands-anniversary>.

The composition of the Panel is shown below:

- Professor Lord Bew MRIA, Emeritus Professor, Queen's University Belfast
- Dr Brian Barton, FRHistS, Independent Historian
- Dr Marie Coleman, FRHistS, SFHEA, Reader in Modern Irish History, Queen's University Belfast
- Dr Niamh Gallagher, Lecturer in Modern British and Irish History, University of Cambridge and Fellow of St. Catharine's College
- Dr Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, Senior Lecturer in Modern History, University of Sheffield
- Dr Margaret O'Callaghan, Reader in History and Politics, Queen's University Belfast
- Professor Henry Patterson, Emeritus Professor of Politics, University of Ulster
- Professor Graham Walker, Professor of Political History, Queen's University Belfast.

## Constituencies

*Asked by Lord Hayward*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the steps taken by the Office for National Statistics to ensure that parliamentary constituency boundary data for March is made available promptly to the Boundary Commissions ahead of the next review of constituency boundaries. [HL9840]

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

Dear Lord Hayward,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking about the steps taken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to ensure that parliamentary constituency boundary data for 1 March is made available promptly to the Boundary Commissions

ahead of the next review of constituency boundaries (HL9840).

The publication of Electoral Statistics for the 2 March 2020 is scheduled for the beginning of January 2021 and we are confident of publishing at this time. The publication was originally scheduled for October 2020 but problems with Electoral Registration Officers in England and Scotland supplying the required data to ONS and National Records for Scotland meant that the release was delayed. We have been in regular contact with the Cabinet Office and the Boundary Commissions for England and Wales to ensure that any issues are appropriately addressed. We remain on track to release the Electoral Statistics on the revised publication date.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

## Contact Tracing: Computer Software

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government who owns (1) the intellectual property rights, and (2) the commercial rights, of the algorithm that was developed for the NHS Covid-19 app to determine the distance between users and the length of time users have spent in proximity to each other. [HL8689]

**Lord Bethell:** The intellectual property associated with the National Health Service Covid-19 app, including the risk algorithm, is retained by the Department. In order to promote transparency, the source code for the app is published under Massachusetts Institute of Technology licence. This licence allows the Department to make the code Open Source whilst retaining its intellectual property rights related to the development of the NHS Covid-19 app.

## Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

*Asked by Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the total value of Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans that (1) have interest rates set at the maximum permitted rate of 14.99 per cent per annum, (2) have interest rates set at 10.00 per cent per annum or more, and (3) have arrangement fees of more than 3.00 per cent per annum; and whether they meet or guarantee to the lending institutions all or part of these rates for the time the loan is outstanding. [HL9859]

**Lord Callanan:** The interest rate charged on a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans (CBILS) facility varies in line with the lender's own policies, as would be the case with any commercial facility.

(1) The total value of drawn down CBILS facilities where interest is set at 14.99 per cent or higher [1] per annum is £15,391,560.

(2) The total value of drawn down CBILS facilities where interest is set at 10.00 per cent or higher is £183,522,119.

(3) The total value of drawn down CBILS facilities with arrangement fees greater than or equal to 3.00 per cent per annum is £323,923,395.

All figures correct as of 30 September 2020.

The Government cover the first 12 months of interest payments and lender-levied charges on behalf of CBILS borrowers. The Guarantee covers lenders for the principal only.

[1] Some delivery partners accredited before the 14.99% maximum was in place can issue CBILS facilities with interest rates above 14.99%.

### Coronavirus: Disease Control

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask Her Majesty's Government who they have awarded contracts to as part of their response to Covid-19; and for each such entity, (1) how many contracts have been awarded, and (2) what is the value of those contracts. [HL9322]

**Lord True:** Cabinet Office does not hold the information requested, as individual departments are responsible for their own procurements.

Central Government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder at <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

*Asked by Baroness McGregor-Smith*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020, what evidence was used to inform the decision to close certain categories of businesses; and what plans they have to publish any such evidence. [HL9995]

*Asked by Baroness McGregor-Smith*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan to lift the restrictions put in place by the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020; and what restrictions they plan to put in place in England once those Regulations are no longer in force. [HL9997]

**Lord Bethell:** We believe the new regulations strike the right balance to take urgent action to stem the spread of the virus while also allowing essential retail to stay open and allowing the hospitality sector to remain open for delivery and takeaway.

Throughout this crisis, the Government and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, have provided robust scientific evidence and advice to guide decisions regarding the measures taken to address the Covid-19 pandemic. Indoor settings carry higher environmental risks, due to the close proximity of people

and a longer duration of exposure. This evidence continues to be published online.

On 2 December, restrictions will expire, and we intend to return to a tiered system on a local and regional basis according to the latest data and trends.

### Coronavirus: Screening

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what provision they have made available for people who do not have their own transport who have been told they must travel for a Covid-19 test. [HL8084]

**Lord Bethell:** One of the biggest innovations is the pioneering of mass home-testing. Home testing is an innovative solution to provide the best possible access to testing to anyone, anywhere in the country.

Home testing enables anyone who cannot get to a testing site, such as those who are shielding, self-isolating, have mobility issues, live in very rural areas or are waiting for elective surgery, to take a test in their own home. We are continuously improving the testing service so that testing is accessible to all.

### Côte d'Ivoire: Elections

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the political situation in the Ivory Coast following the election of President Alassane Ouattara. [HL9934]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK Government has noted the provisional election results published by the Independent Electoral Commission in Côte d'Ivoire. In his statement of 30 October ahead of the election, the Minister for Africa was concerned by the violence in the run up to elections and urged the Ivoirian authorities to ensure that all deaths and election-related violent incidents were properly investigated. In his statement on 5 November, the Minister for Africa condemned the violence and incendiary rhetoric during the electoral period in Côte d'Ivoire, and expressed his condolences to the families of those who died. The UK Government notes the varied voter participation around the country, whether through choice or disenfranchisement. The lack of consensus on the electoral process has divided communities, but creating parallel structures is not a resolution. We urge all parties to exercise restraint and abstain from declarations which may inflame the situation further. We encourage all parties to respect the constitutional order and democratic process and to re-establish a genuine political dialogue to resolve their differences.

The UK stands with the people of Côte d'Ivoire at this important moment, and reiterates its commitment to working with all stakeholders in a peaceful way. We continue to follow developments closely.



## Cycling: Pedestrian Areas

Asked by **Lord Palmer**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the imposition of fines on people who ride bicycles on pavements. [[HL9862](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government has no plans to review the imposition of fines on people who ride bicycles on the footway.

Except in designated areas (such as shared used paths), cycling on the pavement (“footway”) is an offence under Section 72 of the Highways Act 1835. Officers can issue verbal warnings, fixed penalty notices or report the road user for formal prosecution.

The enforcement of cycling on the footway and other cycling offences is an operational matter for the police.

## Department for Transport: Motor Vehicles

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many vehicles are (1) in the Department for Transport (DfT) fleet, and (2) in the fleets of those agencies that report to the DfT and otherwise operate under its authority; and how many of those vehicles, in each such organisation, are (a) fully electric, and (b) hybrid. [[HL9864](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Department for Transport (DfT) consists of a Central Department and 4 Executive Agencies.

The DfT as a whole has 1,860 vehicles in total consisting of:

- 156 ultra low emission vehicles (ULEV) of which:
  - 22 are Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV); and
  - 134 are plug in hybrid vehicles (PHEV) or mild hybrid;
- 43 petrol vehicles;
- 1,326 diesel vehicles; and
- 335 motorbikes/ specialist LCV.

Please see the table below for the full breakdown of vehicles by Agency and type (please note the Government Car Service operates under the central department).

DfT organisation	Total no. vehicles	BEV	Hybrid	Petrol	Diesel	Other
Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA)	32	2	9	0	21	0
Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)	1220	1	97	8	779	335 motorbikes/ specialist LCVs
Government Car Service	92	18	26	28	20	0

DfT organisation	Total no. vehicles	BEV	Hybrid	Petrol	Diesel	Other
Maritime & Coast Guard Agency (MCA)	510	0	0	7	503	0
Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA)	6	1	2	0	3	0
Totals	1,860	22	134	43	1326	335

## Developing Countries: Nutrition

Asked by **Baroness Mone**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to support global nutrition beyond the Nutrition for Growth Commitments. [[HL10088](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** Prevention and treatment of malnutrition remains a priority for the UK as part of our commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children. The FCDO remains committed to working closely with the Government of Japan to make sure the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit generates meaningful action by governments, donors, businesses, the UN and civil society. We are looking carefully at options for a new UK commitment post-2020 and will provide an update on our plans in due course.

## Diplomatic Service: Driving Licences

Asked by **Lord Kilclooney**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much is being spent by the British Embassy in Dublin on the provision of advice to UK driving licence holders about applying for Irish driving licences before 31 December; which media sources they are paying to advertise this advice; and which other British embassies are expending funds to provide similar advice in other EU nations. [[HL10072](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** The Cabinet Office regularly publishes expenditure, broken down by supplier, on a monthly rolling basis on GOV.UK, including expenditure on the cross-government Transition public information campaign.

As part of this major campaign, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is running a strand of activity focused on UK nationals who live and work in EU and EFTA countries. The campaign focuses on four key actions UK nationals may need to take around residency applications or registrations, healthcare provision, passport validity and driving licences. The messages are tailored for each country so that UK nationals are aware of the actions that may apply to them. Communications centre on digital channels, radio, print media and a range of outreach events run by embassies



locally. All activity signposts UK nationals to GOV.UK with specific information for each country.

### Eating Disorders

*Asked by Baroness Parminter*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many independent sector beds are used by the NHS for the treatment of patients with eating disorders in (1) England, (2) the North of England, (3) the Midlands and East of England, (4) London, and (5) the South of England; how many such beds in each region are for (a) children and young people, and (b) adults; and what was the cost of procuring those beds in each region. [HL9376]

**Lord Bethell:** The data is not held in the format requested.

### Environment Protection: Capital Investment

*Asked by Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of their decision to conduct a one-year Spending Review on the levels of funding available for green investment projects, including hydrogen projects. [HL9849]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government continues to take its environmental responsibilities very seriously and is committed to ensure a green recovery with concern for our environment at its heart.

At Spring Budget 2020, the Chancellor announced at least £800m to establish Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in at least two sites. This will play an important role in the production of low carbon hydrogen.

In 2019 the Government announced a £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund to encourage private sector investment in hydrogen. We are also investing in innovation, providing up to £121m to support a range of projects to explore and develop the potential of low carbon hydrogen. This includes production, storage and end use in heat, industry and transport.

### EU Countries: Foreign Relations

*Asked by Baroness Stuart of Edgbaston*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have a strategy to enhance bilateral relationships with governments of European countries; and if so, whether that strategy includes the development of shared cultural events. [HL10020]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Leaving the EU is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvigorate the UK's position on the world stage. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is working to ensure that our European bilateral relationships have the proportionate levels of investment to deliver our international priorities,

harnessing appropriate opportunities to enhance bilateral cooperation. The UK already engages in a number of bilateral civil society events with other European governments. For example, the annual UK-Italy Ministerial Pontignano Conference took place in October 2020, providing an opportunity for dialogue, debate and relationship building with participants from a variety of sectors including cultural leaders. We will continue to ensure that such events continue to deliver for the UK and seek further opportunities for cultural exchange.

### Exports: VAT

*Asked by Lord Rose of Monewden*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the withdrawal of the VAT retail export scheme from 1 January 2021 on levels of employment in (1) the retail sector, (2) the hospitality and leisure sector, (3) the creative sector, and (4) across all sectors. [HL9869]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.

- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.

- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.

- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation 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 are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

HMRC estimate that VAT RES refunds cost around £0.5 billion in VAT in 2019 for around 1.2 million non-EU visitors. 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 around £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.

### Fossil Fuels

*Asked by Baroness Goudie*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to stop working with (1) Boston Consulting Group, and (2) other management consultancy firms which regularly advise the fossil fuel industry. [HL9533]

**Lord True:** Any organisations working with the UK Government are contracted in line with Public Sector Procurement Guidelines. Further details of the Government's Management Consultancy Framework are available on gov.uk.

### Gambling

*Asked by Lord Filkin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to enforce (1) effective affordability checks for gamblers, and (2) a duty of care on gambling companies. [HL10063]

**Baroness Barran:** Gambling Commission licence conditions require operators to monitor play and intervene where there are signs that a customer may be at risk of experiencing harm, including by spending more than they can afford. Guidance issued by the Commission in May makes clear that operators must set realistic spend/deposit thresholds for triggering affordability assessments.

On 3 November, the Commission launched a consultation and call for evidence on more prescriptive requirements for operators to identify and intervene with customers who may be at risk of harm. This included a specific process for assessing affordability and particular consideration will be given to the spending/ loss thresholds at which it might be proportionate to require operators to complete affordability checks. The call for evidence runs until January and next steps will be announced once the evidence has been considered.

In July, the House of Lords Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry published its report which recommended that the law should be amended to place a statutory duty of care on operators. The government is considering that recommendation and others made by the Committee carefully and will publish its response in due course.

### Gambling: Children

*Asked by Lord Filkin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of children who are exposed to gambling advertisements in football. [HL10062]

**Baroness Barran:** Gambling advertising is subject to strict controls on content and placement which mean that it must never be targeted at children or seek to appeal directly to them. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is currently consulting on proposals to strengthen rules on content further to minimise the possibility of gambling ads appealing to children. In 2019 the Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising was amended to include a whistle-to-whistle ban on betting adverts being shown during live sport, including football, before the 9pm watershed.

The government does not hold figures on the number of children who see gambling advertising while watching football. However, the Gambling Commission's 2019 Young People and Gambling Survey found that 50% of 11-16 year olds had seen or heard gambling adverts linked to a sports event. In addition, the ASA has published data on children's exposure to gambling advertising on TV. During 2019, the last full year for which there is available data, children saw an average of 0.3 sports betting ads per week, down from 0.7 in 2018. Figures published by the gambling industry indicate that children's exposure to gambling advertising during live sport has fallen by 70% since the introduction of the whistle-to-whistle ban.

### Gaza: Unemployment

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that unemployment in Gaza has increased. [HL9891]

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the rate of unemployment in Gaza has reached 70 per cent. [HL9963]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. We are working to address the underlying causes of humanitarian need and economic decline in Gaza. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv and our Consulate-General in Jerusalem frequently urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to take steps to improve conditions in Gaza. Our economic development programme aims to lift the overall standard of living in by increasing trade and job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water. The UK will continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take

the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

### Government Departments: Digital Technology

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 1 October (HL8184), which members of the Digital Economy Council were invited to contribute to the review of their Digital Data and Technology function over the summer. [HL9286]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 1 October (HL8184), what were the terms of reference of the recent review into their Digital Data and Technology function. [HL9287]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 1 October (HL8184), which (1) processes, (2) structures, and (3) operations, of the Digital Data and Technology function were considered as part of the review they carried out over the summer. [HL9288]

**Lord True:** The review was commissioned and overseen by the Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary, Alex Chisholm. Announcements will be made in the usual way.

### Government Departments: Overseas Aid

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 20 May (HL4189), which Government departments applied to the Integrated Activity Fund for funding during the 2018/19 financial year; and which of those applications were granted. [HL9876]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** During the 2018/19 financial year the Integrated Activity Fund received applications for funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport, the Ministry of Defence, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for International Trade, the Home Office, HM Revenue and Customs and the Foreign and Commonwealth and Development Office.

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 20 May (HL4189), which Government departments have applied to the Integrated Activity Fund for funding during the 2020/21 financial year; and which of those applications have been granted. [HL9877]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Integrated Activity Fund was replaced by the Gulf Strategy Fund for 2020/21. Applications for funding were received from the Department for International Trade, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, HM Revenue & Customs, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). Funding for DCMS was not approved.

### High Speed 2 Railway Line: Finance

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest funding envelope for HS2, broken down by (1) Phase 1 (Euston to Old Oak Common), (2) Phase 1 (Old Oak Common to the West Midlands), (3) Phase 2a, (4) Phase 2b Western Leg, and (5) Phase 2b Eastern Leg. [HL9822]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** In April, the Government approved the Full Business Case for Phase One and set the funding envelope at £44.6 billion (2019 prices), including Euston. The overall Phase 2a estimated cost is ranged between £5-7 billion (2019 prices). Updated cost estimates will be provided for the Phase 2b links to Manchester and Leeds once the Integrated Rail Plan is concluded. The Government has committed to keeping Parliament regularly updated on the latest cost estimates of the scheme via twice yearly reporting. The first of these was published in October.

### History: Curriculum

*Asked by Baroness Eaton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how those universities which receive public funding are accountable to the taxpayer for decisions about their curricula, including decisions on whether or not to decolonise the history curriculum. [HL9829]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** As autonomous institutions, it is for universities to determine the content of their curricula, but they are also required by law to uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom.

These are fundamental principles in the English higher education sector, as recognised in the Higher Education and Research Act (2017), which allow academic staff and students freely to question and test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and opinions, even if they are controversial or unpopular. These principles are also enshrined in other legislation including the Education (No. 2) Act (1986), which applies in both England and Wales and in similar provisions specific to Scotland and Wales.

Higher education providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) must comply with the ongoing registration condition to meet Public Interest Governance Principles. Principles I and VII relate to academic freedom and freedom of speech. Ongoing Registration Condition B1 also requires that all registered higher

education providers must provide a high quality academic experience for all students. The OfS has the power to investigate, sanction, and ultimately deregister providers.

The government committed to strengthening academic freedom and free speech in universities in its 2019 manifesto, and we are considering a range of legislative and non-legislative options to achieve this.

## Honours

*Asked by Lord Blunkett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 27 October (HL9112), what is the breakdown of honours received by region or nation in the UK as a percentage of the population of each such region or nation. [HL9823]

**Lord True:** Statistical information held in relation to the regional breakdown of recipients at all levels on the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020 can be found below. Please note that data reflects the correspondence address provided by recipients rather than region of origin. Percentages are rounded to 1 decimal point. Data is collected using county and aggregated into regional figures. Honours are bestowed on merit. A key aim of the honours system is to make it more equitable and better representative of the whole of the UK.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total number of recipients from region</i>	<i>% of BD20 List living in region</i>	<i>% of UK population living in region</i>
East	116	7.9%	9.3%
East Midlands	40	2.7%	7.2%
London	264	17.6%	13.4%
North East	39	2.5%	4.0%
North West	136	7.9%	11.0%
South East	211	9.1%	13.7%
South West	109	10.1%	8.4%
West Midlands	102	14.1%	8.9%
Yorkshire and Humberside	100	7.2%	8.2%
Northern Ireland	115	6.7%	2.8%
Scotland	151	6.7%	8.2%
Wales	103	6.6%	4.7%
Living Abroad	11	0.2%	-

## Horticulture: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Naseby*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the fairness of allowing garden centres, classed as 'essential' retailers, to sell Christmas gift items during the new national Covid-19 restrictions

in England from 5 November, while competing independent 'non-essential' retailers will have to close. [HL9860]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government recognises this will be a challenging time for any business which have been asked to close.

All shops can continue to offer home delivery to customers and click and collect services. Click and collect services allow for doorstep pick-up, which is safer than shopping indoors, in potentially poorly-ventilated spaces.

## House of Lords: Membership

*Asked by Lord Lea of Crodall*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proportion of people who responded to the questions on ethnicity in the 2011 Census of England and Wales by identifying as Arab when considering recommending appointments to the House of Lords. [HL9855]

**Lord True:** The information requested is not centrally held. The House of Lords Appointments Commission is an independent and advisory non-departmental public body.

## Housing: Construction

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Greenhalgh on 1 October (HL8296), 6 October (HL8828), and 28 October (HL9442), what assessment they have made of the impact of (1) fears of negative equity on existing house purchases, and (2) house prices rising faster than wage increases, on the effectiveness of diversification. [HL9871]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** In response to Part 1: The Government has taken unprecedented measures to support consumers, businesses and the wider economy. Many homeowners will benefit from these measures.

The Government has strengthened the welfare safety-net with over £9 billion boost to the welfare system. The furlough scheme has been extended to the end of March, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked. The Government has also supported business during this time through the coronavirus business interruption schemes, the bounce back loans and the future fund.

This package of support also includes mortgage holidays for up to 6 months, and a moratorium on lender repossession enforcement until 31 January 2021. These measures continue to protect homeowners who have been affected by coronavirus from unaffordable costs if they cannot work due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Government has also taken substantial measures to support the housing market. We have introduced a stamp duty holiday, with effect until 31 March 2021, raising the



threshold for paying stamp duty land tax from £125,000 to £500,000. We have kept the housing market open, with clear guidance on how to conduct home buying and selling amid Covid-19 restrictions. We have taken measures to ensure that the housing market and all associated activities can continue during the current lockdown, and the housebuilding sector, in line with the wider construction sector, will continue to operate and follow Covid-19 secure guidelines. In combination, these measures have ensured a functioning and effective housing market. There are currently high levels of transactions in the market. The provisional seasonally adjusted estimate of UK residential transactions in September 2020 is 98,010, which is very similar to September 2019 at only 0.7% lower and 21.3% higher than August 2020. In response to Part 2: the Government wants to see the housing market diversify over the long term, regardless of short term movements in house prices. We support community and self-builders, small and medium enterprises, and those who are building homes in innovative ways. We have put in place initiatives to diversify the market including the £2.5 billion Home Building Fund, which received a £450 million boost in June, and the £1 billion ENABLE Build guarantee scheme. In addition, we are supporting the Build to Rent sector with a £3.5 billion Guarantee Scheme, driving up standards and quality across the private rented sector. Leveraging in more private investment will help create skilled jobs and drive economic growth while our ongoing planning reforms will reduce burdens on the construction sector.

### Hydrogen: Finance

*Asked by Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what discussions they have had and with whom, and (2) what evaluations they have undertaken, in relation to (a) investing in hydrogen projects, and (b) supporting a UK hydrogen strategy, through the upcoming Spending Review. [HL9850]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government has been working closely with industry and expert groups on hydrogen, including through the Hydrogen Advisory Council.

At Spring Budget 2020, the Chancellor announced at least £800m to establish Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in at least two sites. This will play an important role in the production of low carbon hydrogen.

In 2019 the Government announced a £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund to encourage private sector investment in hydrogen. We are also investing in innovation, providing up to £121m to support a range of projects to explore and develop the potential of low carbon hydrogen. This includes production, storage and end use in heat, industry and transport.

### Immigration: European Economic Area

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Permitted Paid Engagement visa will be extended to citizens in the European Economic Area after the end of the transition period. [HL9824]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** EEA and Swiss citizens will be able to come to the UK under the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route in order to undertake certain paid engagements for up to a month.

We expect to treat EEA and Swiss citizens as non-visa nationals, meaning they will be able to enter the UK without the need for a visa in advance of travel if they are intending to visit. This includes the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route.

### Influenza: Vaccination

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the British Medical Association about the capacity to deliver seasonal flu jabs to all people aged over 50 in the autumn. [T] [HL7537]

**Lord Bethell:** NHS England and NHS Improvement have had discussions with the British Medical Association, and other representative bodies to discuss delivery of the expanded flu programme.

In addition to developing the existing system of providing vaccinations through general practice, community pharmacies, schools, community and other National Health Service settings to reach new cohorts and increase uptake in existing cohorts; new models of delivery have been shared with regional commissioning teams to encourage innovative thinking to deliver the programme this winter.

### Iraq: Turkey

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they are making to the governments of Turkey and Iraq about the agreement between the government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government for (1) the governance of Shengal, and (2) the appointment of a mayor of Shengal, without (a) consultation with, or (b) the agreement of, Yazidi communities or their representatives. [HL9844]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues to closely monitor the recent agreement between the Government of Iraq (GoI) and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over governance sharing in Sinjar. We are committed to supporting the rights of the Yazidi



community and other minority groups in Iraq. HMA Baghdad has recently discussed this matter with GoI and KRG leadership, as well as senior representatives of the Yazidi community, urging for representation of minority groups. The UK will continue to engage closely with all relevant parties in order to support the rights of the Yazidi community and other minority groups through this agreement.

### **Landlords: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial impact of Covid-19 on private landlords; and what steps are they taking to provide financial support to private landlords. [HL10021]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government is supporting landlords by helping tenants to pay their rent, and has brought forward a significant economic response, including support for business to pay staff salaries through the furlough scheme, which has been extended to March.

As made clear in our COVID renting guidance to tenants and landlords, tenants who are able to pay rent must continue to do so. Where landlords find themselves in coronavirus-related hardship, mortgage lenders have agreed to offer payment holidays of up to six months, with applications now open until 31 January 2021.

Housing possession claims are able to be actioned through the courts and we have worked with the judiciary to introduce new court arrangements to ensure appropriate protection for all parties. Listing is a matter for the judiciary but they will prioritise the cases that represent the most strain on landlords such as anti-social behaviour and extreme rent arrears. The Government believes this strikes the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, whilst ensuring landlords can access and exercise their right to justice for the most serious cases.

### **Legal Profession**

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by Ban Ki-Moon at the IBA 2020 Virtually Together Conference on 2 November about attacks on, and harassment of, lawyers globally; and what steps they are taking, with international partners, to ensure that the rule of law is not undermined at nation state level. [HL9937]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We share Ban Ki-Moon's concern about the attacks on, and harassment of, lawyers globally. This Government is absolutely clear that any form of violence or abuse against lawyers is utterly unacceptable. The implementation of rule of law by national governments is central to securing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental

freedoms. The independence of the judiciary, legislature, and executive helps ensure that each institution is able to hold the others to account, thereby protecting individual citizens. The UK is part of the Rule of Law Core Group at the UN Human Rights Council; ensuring that the rule of law remains prominent on the Council's agenda. The UK also supports a range of resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council that seek to promote the importance of the rule of law and democracy. In March 2019, the Permanent Representative of the UK Mission to the United Nations, Julian Braithwaite, delivered a statement to the Human Rights Council on behalf of the Rule of Law Core Group, highlighting why the implementation of the rule of law is particularly important for the protection and empowerment of citizens throughout the world.

### **Legal Profession: Brexit**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what provisions they have put in place for short-term business visits to the EU for legal professionals and barristers once the Brexit transition period ends. [HL9884]

**Lord Callanan:** As part of the ongoing Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with the EU, it is our intention to agree reciprocal measures on short-term business visitors. The purpose would be to 'lock in' a list of permitted activities for short-term business visitors that both Parties must allow, without requiring a work permit. As is normal in EU trade agreements, some Member States may choose to table exceptions to this list, known as 'reservations'. Note that both Parties may in practice allow more activities than those committed to in the FTA. Whether these activities are permitted visa-free is a matter for Member States.

The EU has never previously agreed with any of its trade partners a route for short-term business visits specific to legal professionals and barristers. The UK's overarching approach to temporary entry and stay issues with the EU is to explore building on the EU's precedents with Canada and Japan. This includes for short-term visitors, where it is mutually beneficial to do so.

After the Transition Period ends, for short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period, the EU has legislated so that UK nationals will not need a visa when travelling to and within the Schengen Area to undertake a limited range of activities, such as attending business meetings. The types of activities allowed will differ by Member State, and UK nationals should check with their host state before travelling whether the activity they are travelling for requires a visa and/or work permit.

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that (1) EU nationals can still access legal services in the UK once the Brexit transition period ends, and (2) British nationals can access legal services in the EU. [HL9885]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** The government recognises that citizens and businesses in both the UK and EU Member States rely on the expertise, experience and scale of supply that lawyers currently provide.

The government is seeking to negotiate reciprocal sector-specific provisions in the UK-EU Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement which would allow UK lawyers to provide legal advice on UK and International law in EU member states under their UK legal title on a temporary or permanent basis. These provisions remain subject to ongoing negotiations with the EU. UK lawyers will be subject to each EU Member State's domestic framework which regulates provision of legal services. The government has posted guidance online at gov.uk and will be updating this once negotiations have concluded.

EU lawyers practising in the UK will no longer be able to provide regulated services under their home state professional title, although they can still become solicitors and barristers through existing transfer tests that are open to all foreign lawyers. The government has signposted on gov.uk that EU lawyers should speak to UK regulators for further information.

### Legal Profession: EU Countries

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that independent legal professionals based in the EU can access the UK (1) visa free, and (2) without needing a UK sponsor. [HL9886]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** From 1 January 2021, EU and non-EU citizens will be treated equally. Legal professionals visiting the UK will be able to come and undertake the wide range of activities permitted under the UK's generous visitor rules.

Furthermore, a qualified lawyer may provide advocacy for a court or tribunal hearing, arbitration or other form of dispute resolution for legal proceedings within the UK, if they have been invited by a client as a permitted paid engagement visit.

### Lex Greensill

*Asked by Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court*

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what occasions since 1 January 2012 Cabinet Office officials have met Lex Greensill. [HL8878]

**Lord True:** In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

Details of Cabinet Office senior official (Permanent Secretary) meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis, and are available on GOV.UK.

### Loujain al-Hathloul

*Asked by Baroness Clark of Kilwinning*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia about Loujain al-Hathloul, in particular about her access to family visits. [HL9910]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Ministers, our Ambassador and Embassy in Riyadh have raised concern over the continued detention of Women's Rights Defenders, including Loujain al-Hathloul, at senior levels with the Saudi authorities. This was also raised by the Foreign Secretary during his recent trip to Saudi Arabia. We have consistently pressed for due process, raised concerns about the use of solitary confinement, lack of family contact and allegations of torture. The UK, along with other embassies in Saudi Arabia, consistently attempt to attend all trials of Women's Rights Defenders, but have been denied access since October 2018. The UK signed a statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September, calling for the release of Women's Rights Defenders. I raised Women's Rights Defenders during my call with Dr Awwad al-Awwad, the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, in June.

### Musicians: Free Movement of People

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord True on 21 October (HL Deb, col 1538), whether their offer on mode 4 includes expanding the list of permitted activities to enable musicians' performing and touring activities. [HL9825]

**Lord True:** The Government is currently negotiating commitments with EU member states on 'Mode 4'. A reciprocal agreement based on best precedence would mean that UK citizens will be able to undertake some business activities in EU member states without a work permit, on a short-term basis. The precise details, including range of activities, documentation needed, and the time limit, are under negotiation.

The Government recognises the importance of touring for UK musicians and appreciates the significant contribution of the UK music industry.

### Nagorno-Karabakh: White Phosphorus

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Baroness Sugg on 2 November (HL Deb, col 497), what assessment they have made reports of the use of white phosphorus against the population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region by the government of Azerbaijan; and if substantiated, what steps they intend to take in response. [HL9902]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK Government is aware of reports that white phosphorus has been used, by both parties, although we have not made an assessment of

these allegations. Her Majesty's Government strongly supports the appropriate national and international accountability mechanisms to investigate and report on allegations of violations/breaches of international law.

### **Najah Ahmed Yousif**

*Asked by Baroness Clark of Kilwinning*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Najah Yusuf has been detained and tortured by the government of Bahrain. [HL9982]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are not aware of any recent reports regarding Najah Yusuf. Najah Yusuf was pardoned and released from prison in August 2019.

### **Natural England: Environmental Land Management Scheme**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of demands arising from Environmental Land Management schemes on Natural England; and what plans they have to increase that organisations funding. [HL9817]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Like all other Defra sponsored bodies, Natural England (NE) receives an appropriate budget to carry out its duties and responsibilities in line with what is affordable and the priorities set out by the Secretary of State.

NE is an important advisory and delivery partner in the Environmental Land Management (ELM) programme. For the current financial year, NE has been allocated approximately £3.6 million to support the development of ELM. This includes drafting ELM technical guidance, development of scheme design for the Pilot and associated policy advice.

We are currently assessing the budgets for our arm's length bodies as part of the Spending Review process.

### **Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Rose of Monewden*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend the business rates holiday beyond April 2021 for (1) retail, and (2) hospitality and leisure, businesses. [HL9868]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government will consider all reliefs in due course through the Business Rates Review.

### **North Korea: Religious Freedom**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made (1) of reports of persecution based on religion or belief in North Korea, and (2) the

report by Korea Future Initiative Persecuting Faith: Documenting religious freedom violations in North Korea, published in October; and what plans they have to impose sanctions on those responsible for any such persecution in line with the recommendations made in the Bishop of Truro's independent review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO support for persecuted Christians, published in July 2019. [HL9806]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues to have strong concerns about the lack of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in North Korea. Religious and human rights groups outside the country report that those conducting religious activities outside state-sanctioned religious groups face severe punishment including arrest, beatings and imprisonment in political prison camps. North Korea sits at the top of Open Doors' World Watch List of countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution and has done so for the past 17 years. We continue to urge North Korea to uphold its human rights obligations and engage substantively with the international community on this issue, including on freedom of religion or belief.

Defending the right to FoRB for all is a priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We welcome the Korea Future Initiative's new report as another step towards ensuring that human rights violations in North Korea are documented for accountability and deterrence purposes. The UK Government remains committed to implementing the recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's independent Review on persecuted Christians in full. Of the recommendations, 18 have already been, or are in the process of being, implemented. One of those recommendations related to the establishment of the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime. This regime came into effect on 6 July and allows us to designate those who commit serious human rights abuses or violations, including those who target individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief. We take decisions about whether particular individuals or entities could be subject to measures under the regime on a case-by-case basis.

### **Northern Ireland**

*Asked by Lord Kilclooney*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the Belfast Agreement, (2) the involvement of the Republic of Ireland in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, (3) Northern Ireland's status as part of the UK, and (4) human rights in (a) Northern Ireland, and (b) the Republic of Ireland. [HL10073]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** This Government remains steadfastly committed to the Belfast Agreement, including the political institutions it seeks to establish and the rights that it guarantees. The Agreement, along with its successors, has been the bedrock of the significant progress that has been made in Northern Ireland over the last 22 years. Any involvement of the Irish Government in

the internal affairs of Northern Ireland remains consistent with the well-established three-stranded approach to Northern Ireland affairs in the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

The Agreement confirmed that whether Northern Ireland remains part of the UK depends on the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. Section 1 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, reaffirms that Northern Ireland is part of the UK and shall not cease to be so without the consent of its people.

While this Government's clear preference is for Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom it has always made clear that, in accordance with the 1998 Agreement, it is for the people of Northern Ireland to decide. It remains the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's view that a majority of the people of Northern Ireland continue to support Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom and that this is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future.

### Overseas Aid

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa on 23 October (HC106362), what are the titles of the 47 projects delivered by the Integrated Activity Fund during the 2019/20 financial year. [HL9872]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We do not disclose information related to IAF projects to maintain the confidence and confidentiality of implementers and our Gulf partners.

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa on 23 October (HC106361), which minister, or ministers, were consulted in relation to this project. [HL9874]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The then Home and Foreign Secretaries were consulted about the project's Overseas Security and Justice Assessment.

### Pakistan: Politics and Government

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the government of Pakistan, and (2) the government of India, about the announcement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 1 November of his decision to grant provisional provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan. [HL9936]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has regular contact with the Governments of Pakistan and of India, including about regional issues and regional stability. We encourage both sides to engage in dialogue. The UK's

long-standing position is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting resolution to the situation in Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

### Palestinians: Politics and Government

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support the proposal by the President of the Palestinian Authority to hold a peace conference about the independence of Palestine as a state. [HL9890]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is committed to making progress towards a two-state solution. We remain a strong supporter of all efforts to promote peace. We are in close consultation with international partners about how to encourage the parties to reverse negative trends on the ground, including through a regional approach to peace, and encouraging meaningful bilateral negotiations. We believe that negotiations will only succeed when they are conducted between Israelis and Palestinians, supported by the international community. We call on both parties to make constructive and open steps towards a return to dialogue and a return to cooperation.

### Performing Arts: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Aberdare*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to assess the effect of the introduction of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Covid-19 measures on (1) live music venues, (2) theatres, and (3) other live performance venues. [HL10031]

**Baroness Barran:** Since Thursday 5 November, new national restrictions have been in force in England to control the spread of coronavirus and to limit contacts between households.

During this period, performing arts venues such as theatres, concert halls (including grassroots music venues) and entertainment venues can continue to operate under Stages 1 and 2 of the performing arts roadmap. This means performing arts professionals may continue to rehearse and train, and perform for broadcast or recording purposes. Other than for this purpose, these venues must close.

We have always said that further reopening of the performing arts sector would be dependent on the public health context at the time. DCMS has convened a Venues Steering Group which includes representatives from leading sector organisations as well as Public Health England and other experts to develop an action plan for maximizing activity under Stages 3 and 4, when it is permitted again, and for how we safely proceed to Stage 5 of the roadmap. DCMS will continue to work with these sectors to establish an appropriate pilot process for testing the return to stage 5 activity when appropriate and are working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care on the Government Mass Testing Programme.



## Pesticides

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many incidents of adverse health impacts from exposure to pesticides have been reported to the National Poisons Information Service by (1) trained operatives, and (2) members of the public, in each of the last three years. [HL9420]

**Lord Bethell:** The National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) provides advice to health professionals across the United Kingdom on the management of poisoned patients. Since 2004, the NPIS has conducted a pesticide surveillance study, collecting data on all pesticide exposures for which they are notified in the UK. NPIS annual reports describe the incidence and character of pesticide exposures in the UK that result in contact with health professionals. Enquiries are not reported directly by members of the public or trained operatives.

During the financial year 2019/2020 the NPIS were notified of 282 exposures where adverse health effects were reported, 272 reported minor symptoms and 10 reported moderate or severe symptoms.

In 2018/2019, 311 exposures reported adverse health effects, 303 of these reported minor symptoms, seven moderate or severe symptoms and the NPIS was notified of one fatality.

During 2017/2018, 320 exposures reported adverse health effects, 301 reported minor symptoms, 16 reported moderate or severe and there were three fatalities.

## Philippines: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of the Philippines about (1) the murder of journalist Jobert Bercasio, (2) the alleged killing of 85 other journalists in the Philippines since 1991, and (3) the deaths of 116 political activists, environmentalists, and human rights defenders on the island of Negros between July 2016 and August 2019. [HL9928]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government regularly raises concerns about a range of human rights issues with the Government of the Philippines, including the treatment of human rights defenders, land rights defenders and the deteriorating media freedom space. We consistently call on the Government of the Philippines to ensure a safe environment for human rights defenders and the prioritisation of the passage of a Human Rights Defenders Bill.

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific raised our concerns with the Philippine Ambassador to the UK on 21 September. The UK supported the Iceland-led Resolution at the UN Human Rights Council in July 2019 which led to the June 2020 report on the human rights situation by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We agree with the recommendations of the report and will continue to

work with like-minded countries to highlight the report's concerns. The UK supports the provision of UN technical assistance to the Philippines, as set out in the UN Human Rights Council resolution adopted in October 2020.

## Philippines: Offences against Children

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of the Philippines about progress in implementing the Republic Act No. 9775 (the Anti-Child Pornography Act 2009); what were the outcomes of these discussions; and what plans they have to make further representations on this matter to the government of the Philippines. [HL9845]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is at the forefront of work with international partners to improve the capability of the Philippine authorities to fight online sexual exploitation of children. The National Crime Agency (NCA) works closely with Philippine law enforcement to tackle this issue, and has supported the creation and ongoing operations of the Philippines Internet Crimes against Children Centre (PICACC).

The UK also works closely with the Philippines Department of Justice via a Technical Working Group on online sexual exploitation of children. This group brings the international community and the Philippine Government together to share best practice. The UK has not had specific consultations with the Philippines with regards to the Anti-Child Pornography Act, but supports the introduction of legislation by countries around the world to combat online sexual exploitation of children.

## Police

*Asked by Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 October (HL9278), what was the total number of police officers in England in 2010. [HL9832]

*Asked by Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 October (HL9278), what was the total number of police officers in England in 2015. [HL9833]

*Asked by Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 October (HL9278), what was the total number of police officers in the latest year for which figures are available. [HL9834]

**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.



From this data collection, the table below shows the total number of police officers in England in 2010, 2015 and the latest year for which figures are available (the year ending 31 March 2020) on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis and on a headcount basis.

<i>Total Police Officers (England)</i>		
<i>Year ending 31 March...</i>	<i>FTE</i>	<i>Headcount</i>
2010	136,365	138,551
2015	120,437	123,017
2020	122,112	124,492

The Home Office has also recently started collecting and publishing police officer numbers (on a headcount basis only) on a quarterly basis to report the progress of the Police Uplift Programme. The Programme is delivering on the current Government's manifesto pledge to recruit 20,000 additional police officers in England and Wales by March 2023. Taken from this new data series, the number of police officers in England from October 2019 to September 2020 on a headcount basis is shown in the table below.

<i>Police Officers (England)</i>	
<i>Month</i>	<i>Headcount</i>
Oct-19	120570
Nov-19	121331
Dec-19	121607
Jan-20	122291
Feb-20	122924
Mar-20	124492
Apr-20	124768
May-20	125109
Jun-20	125933
Jul-20	127000
Aug-20	127257
Sep-20	127611

These data are collected and published on a headcount basis and are therefore not comparable to the FTE figures published in the long-running 'Police workforce, England and Wales' bulletin. The latest Police Uplift quarterly publication covering the period to September 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-september-2020>.

### **Police: South East, South West and East of England**

*Asked by Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 October (HL9280), how many police officers there

are per head of the population in each Police Force Area in South West England. [HL9835]

*Asked by Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 October (HL9280), how many police officers there are per head of the population in each Police Force Area in South East England. [HL9836]

*Asked by Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 October (HL9280), how many police officers there are per head of the population in each Police Force Area in the East of England. [HL9837]

**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. From Table H4 in the data tables published alongside this bulletin, the table below shows the total number of police officers and the number of police officers per 100,000 population in each force of the relevant regions requested as at 31 March 2020.

<i>South West region as at 31 March 2020<sup>1</sup></i>		
	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Avon & Somerset	2,803	163
Devon & Cornwall	3,100	175
Dorset	1,238	160
Gloucestershire	1,176	185
Wiltshire	1,007	139
South West Total	9,324	166

<sup>1</sup>. The figures provided are on a full-time equivalent basis

<i>South East region as at 31 March 2020<sup>1</sup></i>		
	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Hampshire	2,692	135
Kent	3,780	203
Surrey	1,928	161
Sussex	2,717	159
Thames Valley	4,310	178
South East Total	15,428	168

<sup>1</sup>. The figures provided are on a full-time equivalent basis

<i>Eastern region as at 31 March 2020<sup>1</sup></i>		
	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Bedfordshire	1,262	187

	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Cambridgeshire	1,545	181
Essex	3,298	179
Hertfordshire	2,086	175
Norfolk	1,665	183
Suffolk	1,219	160
Eastern Total	11,076	178

<sup>1</sup>. The figures provided are on a full-time equivalent basis.

More recent figures are available, but on a headcount basis that is not comparable with previous publications reporting on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis. The tables below provide the total number of officers and total officers per 100,000 population on a headcount basis as at 30 September 2020.

*South West region as at 30 September 2020<sup>2</sup>*

	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Avon and Somerset	2965	172
Devon and Cornwall	3273	185
Dorset	1306	169
Gloucestershire	1231	193
Wiltshire	1042	144
South West	9817	175

<sup>2</sup>. The figures provided are on a headcount basis

*South East region as at 30 September 2020<sup>2</sup>*

	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Hampshire	2893	145
Kent	3898	210
Surrey	2041	171
Sussex	2904	170
Thames Valley	4510	186
South East	16246	177

<sup>2</sup>. The figures provided are on a headcount basis

*Eastern region as at 30 September 2020<sup>2</sup>*

	<i>Total Officers</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 population</i>
Bedfordshire	1317	195
Cambridgeshire	1625	190
Essex	3398	184
Hertfordshire	2187	184
Norfolk	1737	191
Suffolk	1269	167
Eastern	11533	185

<sup>2</sup>. The figures provided are on a headcount basis

These figures calculated using data from the Home Office's new quarterly Police Uplift publication, reporting the progress of the Police Uplift Programme that is delivering on the current Government's manifesto pledge to recruit 20,000 additional police officers in England and Wales by March 2023. The latest Uplift publication can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-september-2020>.

## Pollinators: Nature Conservation

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to support an international treaty for global pollinator stewardship and pollinator ecosystem restoration. [HL9820]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The UK Government is committed to taking action for pollinators, globally and at home.

We have supported international action under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), including the "Plan of Action 2018-2030 for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable use of Pollinators" adopted at the CBD's most recent Conference of the Parties in 2018. The UK is also a member of 'Promote Pollinators', an international coalition of the willing under which we have committed to take action to protect pollinators and their habitats, and with whom we share information on research, policy and practical activities.

We have supported and contributed to research which has underpinned such initiatives, including a major global review of the status and threats to insect pollinators, published in 2015 by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

The UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 global framework for biodiversity under the CBD, expected to be adopted at COP-15 next year. In particular, we will promote ambitious and practical targets, including targets to enhance ecosystem resilience and species recovery, supported by strengthened implementation mechanisms that are commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

Domestically, biodiversity is a devolved issue and each country has its own pollinator strategy which includes objectives for ecosystem restoration and other action in line with these international commitments and initiatives. The four countries also collaborate on monitoring the status of pollinators across the UK.

## Quad Bikes: Smuggling

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the feasibility of HMRC investigating all quad bikes exported from the UK in

ISO shipping containers using search technology like backscatter X-ray scanners. [HL9813]

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many shipping containers have been found by HMRC to contain stolen construction equipment for export in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [HL9814]

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many shipping containers have been found by HMRC to contain stolen quad bikes for export in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [HL9815]

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many shipping containers have been found by HMRC to contain stolen cars for export in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [HL9816]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Responsibility for customs detection activity at the border was transferred from HMRC to UK Border Agency (UKBA), now Border Force in 2009. From that time Border Force has been responsible for frontline operations at the border, including enforcing customs regulations and conducting anti-smuggling activity. This includes anti-smuggling activity directed against illicit exports.

### **Quad Bikes: Theft**

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of quad bike theft in the UK; and what research they have undertaken, if any, on whether stolen quad bikes are being sold on (1) within the UK, or (2) overseas. [HL9812]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** No statistics are held on the levels of quad bike thefts, nor has research been undertaken on where stolen quad bikes are sold.

### **Ramy Kamel**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last raised the case of Ramy Kamel with the government of Egypt; and what assessment they made of (1) his treatment in prison, (2) his visitation rights, and (3) his access to legal assistance. [HL9900]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are following the case of Ramy Kamel closely. Our Embassy in Cairo is in regular contact with his lawyer, and has expressed to the Egyptian authorities our concern at his ongoing detention. Guaranteeing visitation rights and access to medical care in prisons was one of the specific recommendations we made in our intervention at Egypt's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva last

year. Encouragingly, the Egyptian Government accepted our recommendation. We continue to follow this issue closely.

Egypt is a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Human Rights Priority Country. The UK continues to urge the Egyptian Government to ensure the full implementation of the rights and freedoms set out in Egypt's constitution. We regularly raise our concerns with the Egyptian Government, both in public and in private, including at Ministerial level.

### **Refugees: Syria**

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to reopen the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Community Sponsorship programme, (2) to provide safe and legal routes for refugees to reach the UK, and (3) to support UK sponsor groups to receive refugees. [HL9847]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Due to coronavirus (Covid-19) related restrictions and pressures, both overseas and in the UK, it is not currently possible to undertake any refugee resettlement activity. We continue to evaluate how to respond given these restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity, including Community Sponsorship, when safe to do so.

Safe and legal routes are a core part of our proposed reforms to the asylum system to ensure it is both firm and fair. As made clear in the answer on 21 October (HL Deb, col 1598), as an integral part of that work, the Government will conduct a review of safe and legal routes to the UK for asylum seekers, refugees and their families.

We are continuing to support Community Sponsor groups via Reset, our grant funded support organisation. This support includes virtual drop in sessions, online resources, newsletters and more tailored advice and support as required.

### **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they consulted the Places of Worship Taskforce before announcing the closure of places of worship as part of the national Covid-19 restrictions in England planned from 5 November; what assessment they have made of any issues resulting from churches' Covid-19 safety measures; and what assessment they have made of whether places of worship are more likely to facilitate the spread of Covid-19 than schools and universities. [HL9811]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Places of Taskforce met on 2 November. In addition, roundtables have been held with the country's major faith groups to discuss the guidance.

Discussions with our faith groups at these meetings, as they have been throughout the pandemic, have been extremely helpful. They have provided us with an opportunity to share information with our faith groups, as well as hearing of their concerns. We will continue to draw on the expertise of the Taskforce in the coming days.

I am very grateful to our faith communities for their efforts to ensure their places of worship are as Covid-secure as possible. However, the evidence from the scientific community, and from SAGE, points to an increasing rate of infection overall. We therefore need to reduce the level of interaction and the number of gatherings that take place, and with regret, places of worship are closed for communal prayer.

The regulations now in force will expire on 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to ease restrictions.

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to amend the regulations underpinning the new national Covid-19 restrictions in England from 5 November to allow churches and other places of worship to remain open for both private prayer and limited services; and if not, why not. [HL9846]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** Regulations came into force on 5 November that places of worship in England must close for communal prayer. They are however permitted to open for individual prayer, and to record or stream to broadcast. In addition, funerals are also permitted and can be attended by a maximum of thirty people.

The regulations are in place until 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to ease restrictions.

### **Rented Housing: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the scale of rental income losses in England during the Covid-19 pandemic. [HL10022]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government has established an unprecedented package of support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic which is supporting renters to sustain tenancies and continue paying rent. As with all policy making, this is informed by a range of data sources.

This comprehensive package includes a range of support for businesses to pay staff salaries, including through the furlough scheme which has now been extended to March. We have also strengthened the welfare safety-net with over £9 billion boost to the welfare system, including an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30% of market rents. For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40

million from last year and which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

The Department does not currently hold information on the scale of rental losses.

### **Sanctions**

*Asked by Baroness Eaton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what framework they have put in place to assess the success of UK sanctions. [HL9828]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As required by sections 30 and 32 of the Sanctions Act, Her Majesty's Government will review annually whether the UK's sanctions regimes remain appropriate to achieve their stated purposes, and will report to Parliament. If the Government determines that it is no longer appropriate to maintain an autonomous sanctions regime, that regime will be removed or amended accordingly. Periodic reviews of autonomous sanctions designations will take place every three years under the Act.

### **Saudi Arabia: Human Rights**

*Asked by Baroness Clark of Kilwinning*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia about women's rights in that country. [HL9911]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Our close relationship with Saudi Arabia allows us to raise our concerns about human rights, including women's rights, in private and in public, including during the most recent visit of the Foreign Secretary to Saudi Arabia. The UK has consistently called for women in Saudi Arabia to be able to participate fully in society. We welcome recent positive developments, including the reforms meaning that women no longer require a male guardian's permission to attend university, leave the country, get a job, or register divorce. The World Bank's "Women, Business, and the Law 2020" report recognises Saudi Arabia's efforts to advance women's economic participation within the Kingdom. However, women's rights still fall short of international standards. We will continue to raise the issue with Saudi Arabia, and work to promote and support further progress.

### **Saudi Arabia: Human Rights**

*Asked by Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to secure the release of senior political detainees, including Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and Prince Turki bin Abdullah, in advance of the forthcoming G20 meeting in Saudi Arabia. [HL9929]



*Asked by Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to their participation at the forthcoming G20 meeting in Saudi Arabia in view of the human rights record of Saudi Arabia and the detention of senior political prisoners including Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and Prince Turki bin Abdullah. [HL9930]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK will participate in the G20 Summit, which is likely to focus on health, the global economic recovery and wider global challenges (including climate change, trade and development). It is a key part of international planning for a sustainable recovery from coronavirus. As current G20 President, Saudi Arabia will play a vital role in coordinating the global health and economic response. We hope that the international platform provided by the G20 Presidency encourages continued progress on domestic reforms.

Our close relationship with Saudi Arabia allows us to raise our concerns about human rights, including on political detainees, in private and in public. We have expressed significant concerns about reports of continuing arrests and arbitrary detentions in Saudi Arabia. We raise concerns about individual cases regularly, using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels, including our Embassy in Riyadh. The UK signed a statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September noting our human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia and calling for the release of all political detainees. We continue to raise concerns at all levels and are monitoring the situation closely.

### **Self-employed: British Nationals Abroad**

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there will be a replacement for the social security certificate A1/E101 for self-employed UK citizens working in EEA countries; and, if so, what it will be. [HL9768]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The UK continues to participate in EU social security coordination rules during the transition period, and the self-employed should continue to apply to HMRC for A1/E101 certificates as normal.

Self-employed individuals going to work in the EU, EEA or Switzerland on or after 1 January 2021 who remain subject to UK social security legislation will be entitled to an A1/E101 certificate if they are covered by the Withdrawal Agreement with the EU, the Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement or the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement. For those individuals not covered by these agreements, the Government published a mandate on 27 February which sets out its intention to negotiate a future EU-wide agreement on social security coordination, including on which countries' legislation is applicable.

On 26 October, HMRC published an Agent Update which sets out some of the changes for the self-employed going to work in or coming from the EU, the EEA or Switzerland from 1 January 2021.

### **Syria: British Nationals Abroad**

*Asked by Lord Dubs*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they have, if any, that British nationals may be put on trial in north-east Syria. [HL9984]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government is clear that those individuals who have fought for, or supported Daesh, whatever their nationality, should face justice and accountability through prosecution in the most appropriate jurisdiction: often in the region where the crimes took place. Her Majesty's Government is not aware of any current trials in north-east Syria involving British nationals.

### **Syria: Migrant Camps**

*Asked by Lord Dubs*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what presence they have, if any, in the (1) Al Hol, and (2) Roj, camps in north-east Syria. [HL9983]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Her Majesty's Government does not have any presence in Al Hol or Al Roj internally displaced persons camps in north-east Syria. The UK suspended all services of the British Embassy in Damascus and withdrew all diplomatic personnel from Syria in 2012.

*Asked by Lord Dubs*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the return of women and children to the UK from the Al Hol and Roj camps in north-east Syria. [HL9985]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware that some British nationals are living in internally displaced persons camps in Syria. This Government's highest priority is to ensure the safety and security of the UK. It is essential that we do not make judgements about the national security risk someone poses based on their sex or age. Women who travelled to join Daesh can, and in many cases do, pose as significant a risk to our national security as returning male fighters. Her Majesty's Government's assessment remains that risks posed by those adults who travelled to Syria are best managed outside the UK, however each case is considered on its own merits. Where we become aware of British unaccompanied or orphaned children, or if British children are able to seek consular assistance, we will work with relevant UK and international partners to facilitate their return where feasible, subject to national security concerns. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Transport: Apprentices**

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have achieved their target, set in 2015, to create 30,000 apprenticeships in the transport sector; if not, why not;



and what fresh initiatives they are planning to create more apprenticeships. [[HL9863](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** In 2016 the Government set ambitions through the Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy to increase apprenticeships in road and rail client bodies to help address skills shortages in the transport sector and ensure that the transport sector has the capacity and capability to deliver planned investment. The target to create 30000 apprenticeships was deliberately set at an ambitious level to encourage bold action from industry. Whilst the target was not met, significant progress has been made during this time to embed apprenticeships as the recognised way of getting skilled individuals into the transport industry. It is a mark of the growing recognition for apprenticeships that the number of apprenticeships has grown steadily since this target was set.

The Department is committed to ensuring that the transport industry continues to support the creation of high quality apprenticeships, and in the recent Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce (STAT) annual report, we committed to updating the Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy in early 2021 to reflect current challenges and priorities. We recognise that this is more important than ever in this challenging economic climate.

We will continue to work with the Department for Education to ensure that its Adult Education policy and FE reform proposals reflect the needs of the transport industry, and that employers are able to continue to take on apprentices to deliver our ambitious plans to build the transport infrastructure of the future.

We will also support transport employers to take advantage of broader training and employment offers, particularly those that support young people into employment opportunities that may lead to apprenticeships, such as DWP's Kickstart scheme.

We will continue to work with industry partners on schemes such as Engineering UK's Code of Practice, to ensure that transport apprenticeships and careers are available and accessible to people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

We are exploring what more can be done through contractual and procurement levers to encourage the supply chain to continue to invest in apprentices and other skills and training initiatives.

### **Trees: Fruit**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the number of traditional orchards in England that are in a favourable condition. [[HL9819](#)]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Traditional orchards are listed as a habitat of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Government agri-environment grant schemes, including

Countryside Stewardship (which replaced the Environmental Stewardship Scheme) provide financial support to improve the condition of traditional orchards and to establish more of them.

In England there are 1,952 hectares of traditional orchards being managed or established under agri-environment schemes.

### **Visas: Musicians**

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the music sector to discuss the requirement, particularly for self-employed musicians, of a flexible and affordable mechanism allowing short-term visa-free work travel. [[HL9826](#)]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The UK's Points-Based Immigration System has been designed with businesses and employers given huge consideration, including the music sector.

The Visitor route includes provision for professional artists entertainers and musicians to undertake paid engagements for up to a month. We expect to treat EEA and Swiss nationals as non-visa nationals, meaning they can undertake these engagements without needing to apply for a visa in advance of travel.

As non-visa nationals, EEA citizens will be in scope for the concession for temporary creative workers looking to remain in the UK for up to three months, without the need to apply for a visa in advance, provided they first secure a certificate of sponsorship. This is a popular and generous concession available only to non-visa nationals working in the creative industries.

We will continue to engage with the creative industries as we review the routes for creatives going forward.

### **West Bank: Demolition**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 October ([HL9333](#)) that they "call on both parties to avoid any provocative action which might undermine the cooperation that is so critical", what provocative action has been taken by the occupiers of buildings which have been demolished by the government of Israel since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. [[HL9965](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is deeply complex. Actions by both sides have damaged trust. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

### **West Bank: Housing**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports of a building permit being issued by the Israeli Civil Administration for 31 housing units for Israeli settlers in the Old City of Hebron. [HL9889]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including settlement expansion within the West Bank. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We urge Israel to halt settlement expansion immediately.

### **West Bank: Water Supply**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports of the destruction of water pipes which has led to the water supply being removed for Maghayir al-'Abid and Khirbet al-Majaz, near the South Hebron Hills. [HL9893]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is concerned by the continued destruction of Palestinian structures by Israeli authorities. The Minister of State for the Middle East raised our concern about demolitions of structures in

the South Hebron Hills with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October. Also on 29 October, the UK Ambassador to Israel raised demolitions in this area, and throughout the West Bank, with the Israeli Authorities. On 19 October, officials from the British Consulate Jerusalem visited communities in the South Hebron Hills to reiterate UK support for those facing demolitions and evictions. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances such destruction by an occupying power is contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The UK has also raised concerns over access to water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities, including stressing the urgent need for Israel to take immediate and practical measures to improve the current situation and ensure fair distribution of water in the West Bank and Gaza.

### **Westminster Foundation for Democracy: Gulf States**

*Asked by **Lord Scriven***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Westminster Foundation for Democracy has ever received funding through the Integrated Activity Fund to implement projects benefitting Gulf Cooperation Council member states; and if so, how much funding these projects received, broken down by (1) beneficiary state, and (2) financial year. [HL9873]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We do not disclose information related to IAF projects to maintain the confidence and confidentiality of implementers and our Gulf partners.

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