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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>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
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<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
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<b>Baroness Scott of Bybrook</b>	Whip
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<b>Lord Stewart of Direleton</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Lord True</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

Thursday, 10 December 2020

## College of Policing Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20

[HLWS630]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My hon Friend the Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today publishing the 2019-20 annual report and accounts for the College of Policing Limited [HC 987]. This will be laid before the House and published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). The report will also be available in the Vote Office.

## Correction to Private Notice Question

[HLWS632]

**Lord Bethell:** During the Private Notice Question on the COVID-19: Transparency and accuracy of statistics tabled by Lord Lilley on 9 November 2020, I was asked by Lord Lamont about a graph from the No10 presentation, specifically the one with four long term scenarios for daily deaths from COVID-19. I told the House that this graph had a presentational error in it, and I would like to correct the record. There were no presentational errors with this graph. The graphs from the press conference of 31 October with presentational errors in them were the projections of deaths and hospitalisations over the next six weeks, different graphs to the ones he referred to. This error only affected the visualisation of the confidence intervals (blue shaded area) and the upper bound was too high. The central projection was unaffected. As I said, these were corrected as soon as possible. I reassured him that the data upon which decisions were made and the data that went into the central projections of that amended charts were correct, and the fact that we have changed it demonstrates that we are committed to transparency in all these matters. This remains correct.

## European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks Report

[HLWS628]

**Lord True:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith MP) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today laying before Parliament a report, 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 June 2020 to 25 September 2020'. I am laying this report because it is a legal requirement under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for quarterly reports to be made to Parliament on the progress of the work to

develop common frameworks. The report is available on [Gov.uk](http://Gov.uk) and details the progress made between the UK Government and devolved administrations regarding the development of common frameworks. This report details progress made during the ninth 3-month reporting period and sets out that no 'freezing' regulations have been brought forward under section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act. A copy of the 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 June 2020 to 25 September 2020' report has been placed in the library of both Houses. The publication of the report reflects the Government's continued commitment to transparency.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

EU (Withdrawal) Act & Common Frameworks Report  
[(Unnumbered Act Paper) - EU (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2020-12-10/HLWS628/>

## Offensive Weapons Act 2019 Surrender and Compensation Scheme

[HLWS629]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My hon Friend the Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Offensive Weapon Act 2019 Surrender and Compensation Scheme commences today. This is an important part of the Government's response to tackling serious violence and keeping dangerous weapons off our streets.

The scheme is being run in advance of the Government commencing the prohibitions relating to rapid firing rifles and certain knives and other offensive weapons provided for by the Offensive Weapons Act 2019.

The scheme allows for the surrender to the police of certain knives such as zombie knives and cyclone knives, other offensive weapons, rapid firing rifles and their ancillary equipment and bump stocks. The arrangements apply in England and Wales and extend to Scotland and Northern Ireland with respect to firearms and ancillary equipment only. The lawful owners of these items will be able to claim financial compensation in most cases.

The scheme will run for 3 months between 10 December 2020 and 9 March 2021 inclusive.

I will place in the Libraries of both Houses a copy of the guidance to the public on the scheme, the claims form, a standard values list of compensation that will be paid for surrendered weapons and a list of designated police stations in every force where weapons can be surrendered. These documents are being made available to the public on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk).

## Prison Service Pay Review Body Recommendations 2020-21

[HLWS631]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** My honourable friend the Minister of State for Justice (Lucy Frazer QC) has made the following Written Statement.

"I am today making a further and final announcement on the government's response to this year's recommendations from the Prison Service Pay Review Body.

The Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) reported to Government with its 2020-21 pay award recommendations earlier this summer, and on 21 July, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice was pleased to announce the Government's acceptance of six out of the seven recommendations. This has already delivered an above inflation pay rise of at least 2.5% for all prison staff, with cumulative awards of up to 7.5% where progression pay is taken into account.

The PSPRB report also included a recommendation ("recommendation 3") to make a further overall increase of £3,000 for 'Band 3' prison staff on modernised terms and conditions, intended to have effect from September 2020. For staff at this grade, this would represent a rise of between 14 and 21%. This group represents around one third of the prison service workforce. This recommendation presents clear affordability challenges due to its exceptional cost and is also out of step with other public sector workforces. The Government therefore committed to considering the recommendation in more detail.

Since the initial announcement, the Ministry of Justice, together with HM Treasury, has considered further the exceptional costs associated with implementing this recommendation, the impact on the overall pay structure, and the changing labour market conditions due to the exceptional economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Changes in the labour market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unpredictable changing state of the economy means that the assumptions made by the PSPRB

upon which they based their recommendations have now changed.

The Department has also considered if any associated workforce reforms could be delivered alongside the recommendation which would create efficiencies and savings, and therefore deliver value for money by offsetting some of the cost of the recommendation. This was undertaken with a view to possible discussions with recognised trade unions, should an option for affordable delivery of the recommendation, which could offer value for money for taxpayers, be identified. The conclusion is that sufficient savings required to offer value for money could not be achieved, meaning the recommendation remains unaffordable.

It has therefore been decided not to accept "recommendation 3".

Nonetheless, this is the third year in a row that prison staff have benefitted from an award of at least 2% - which delivers an above inflation increase.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the PSPRB for their independent expertise, insight and rigour through which they have developed this year's report. While the Government has not accepted the entirety of the PSPRB recommendations for 20/21, the Department remains committed to working with the review body and we will also continue to work closely with recognised trade unions.

The Chancellor has outlined that in the interest of fairness, pay rises in the public sector will be restrained and targeted for the coming year (2021/22), whilst also ensuring an uplift for lower earning staff who need it most. I will be shortly writing to the Chair of the PSPRB to seek their independent advice on the prison pay for 2021/22, in line with the Chancellor's statement.

I am also, above all, immensely grateful for the hardworking public servants who are critical to the delivery of safe and secure running of our prisons. While the wider circumstances are unpredictable, I remain committed to supporting staff in our prison service, who work hard to help those who are the most vulnerable in our society while keeping the public safe."

## Written Answers

Thursday, 10 December 2020

### Accident and Emergency Departments: Overcrowding

Asked by **Baroness Masham of Ilton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to classify crowding in NHS hospital Emergency Departments as Serious Incidents. [HL10774]

**Lord Bethell:** The National Health Service Serious Incident framework of 2015 describes the criteria and definitions that providers and commissioners should apply when considering whether an event in healthcare should be investigated as a serious incident.

The decision to declare a Serious Incident should be informed by the potential for an investigation into the event to generate new insight into preventing future risks, as well as the impact of the event on those involved.

The framework discourages the use of prescriptive lists of types of event to identify serious incidents as this leads to automatic investigations into events that offer little new learning.

### Alcoholic Drinks: Prices

Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the findings of the report by the Alcohol Health Alliance UK Small change: alcohol at pocket money prices, published in November, what steps they are taking to limit the sale of cheap, strong alcohol. [HL10967]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government has taken measures to tackle alcohol consumption through pricing interventions including banning sales of alcohol below the level of duty plus VAT which set an important regulatory precedent.

HM Treasury introduced a higher duty band on cider at 6.9% and 7.5% alcohol by volume in February 2019. This targeted measure is to tackle cheap high strength 'white' ciders to encourage reformulation to lower alcohol levels and discourage consumption so as to help to reduce the harm associated with these drinks.

The Department wants to increase the general drinking population towards lower strength alternatives to moderate drinking habits. We will work with industry to create more consumer choice and availability in the low and no alcohol sector.

### Armenia and Azerbaijan: Prisoners

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of prisoners still held by the governments of (1) Azerbaijan, and (2) Armenia; and what steps they intend to take to support the release of

all prisoners and detainees in those countries who were held as a result of recent fighting. [HL11030]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK Government has not made an estimate on the number of prisoners held by the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan as a result of recent fighting. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas recently spoke to both the Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers where she highlighted the importance of return of prisoners of war and reinforced support for the International Committee of the Red Cross as the primary mediator through which prisoner exchanges should take place. We continue to monitor the situation carefully.

### Asylum: Albania

Asked by **Baroness Doocey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many unaccompanied Albanian children have claimed asylum in the UK in each of the last three years. [HL10800]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Table 1 – The number of asylum applications the UK has received from Albanian Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the last three years and 2020 to date.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Jan to Sep)
Albanian UASC Applications	265	293	238	67

Note:

Data for UASC provide a count of asylum applications received from main applicants who are treated as an unaccompanied child for at least one day from the date of application, up until the initial decision (where applicable), even if they are later persons found to be an adult following an age dispute. As a result, some UASC cases relate to over 18.

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>). Data on the number of asylum applications from unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), and the initial decision on such applications are published in tables Asy\_D01 and Asy\_D02 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>), which include nationality breakdowns. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate up to September 2020. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables' (see attached). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar' (<https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and->

statistics?keywords=immigration&content\_store\_document\_type=upcoming\_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asylum summary tables [Copy of asylum-summary-sep-2020-tables.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-11-27/HL10800>

Asked by **Baroness Doocey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many unaccompanied Albanian children have been granted discretionary leave to remain in each of the last three years. [HL10801]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications and grants of extensions in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release':

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

Data on the number of asylum applications from unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), and the initial decision on such applications are published in tables Asy\_D01 and Asy\_D02 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>), which include nationality breakdowns. Asy\_D02 can be broken down to show grants of discretionary leave (DL) following an asylum application but does not show any grants of DL from non-asylum routes. Data on the number of non-asylum related grants of discretionary leave granted in-country are published in tables Exe\_D01 of the extensions detailed datasets (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/managed-migration-datasets>), which include nationality breakdowns. Exe\_D01 can be broken down to show grants of DL but does not show the reason for the grant, or whether the grant was to an unaccompanied child

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate up to September 2020. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in both the asylum and resettlement and extensions 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement and extensions.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar' ([https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content\\_store\\_document\\_type=upcoming\\_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance](https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance)).

The data from the tables mentioned above are outlined below.

*Table 1 – The number of asylum applications the UK has received from Albanian Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the last three years and 2020 to date.*

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Jan to Sep)
Albanian UASC Applications	265	293	238	67

Source: Home Office, Immigration Statistics year ending September 2020 Asylum and Resettlement Table Asy\_D01

*Table 2 – The number of Albanian UASC granted discretionary leave (DL) at initial decision following an application for asylum in the last three years and 2020 to date.*

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Jan to Sep)
Albanian UASC granted DL	0	0	2	0

Source: Home Office, Immigration Statistics year ending September 2020 Asylum and Resettlement Table Asy\_D02

*Table 3 – The number of Albanians granted non-asylum related discretionary leave (DL) in the last three years and 2020 to date.*

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Jan to Sep)
Albanians granted DL	55	56	18	12

Source: Home Office, Immigration Statistics year ending September 2020 Extensions Table Exe\_D01

Notes:

- i) Data for UASC provide a count of asylum applications received from main applicants who are treated as an unaccompanied child for at least one day from the date of application, up until the initial decision (where applicable), even if they are later persons found to be an adult following an age dispute. As a result, some UASC cases relate to over 18.
- ii) Data on discretionary leave does not include those granted discretionary leave through non-asylum routes.
- iii) Statistics on extensions of stay (also known as "after-entry applications to vary leave to remain") relate to people wishing to extend or change the status of their stay in the UK.

The data on Discretionary Leave (DL) in the extensions dataset include all grants of discretionary leave to remain to non-EEA nationals except those granted DL following an asylum claim.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asylum summary table [Copy of asylum-summary-sep-2020-tables.xlsx]

Extensions summary table [Copy of extensions-summary-sep-2020-tables.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-11-27/HL10801>

## Asylum: Standards

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why volunteers at refugee camps in (1) Penally, and (3) Folkestone, are required to sign confidentiality agreements stating that they will not disclose the living conditions of the refugees. [HL10836]

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many asylum seekers are accommodated at the camps in (1) Penally, and (2) Folkestone. [HL10837]

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what legal assistance is available at the asylum seeker camps in (1) Penally, and (2) Folkestone, to help those who wish to seek refugee status. [HL10838]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** All asylum seekers have access at all times to Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE), a single, integrated service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help.

The AIRE service provides advice and guidance to asylum seekers on the asylum process, their rights and signposts different services.

This includes information on the availability of legal advice and representation, including legal aid, upon induction into temporary accommodation.

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, which includes those in hotel and wider government facilities. These statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>.

There is no secrecy about our use of Napier and Penally as accommodation, but privacy of individuals must be maintained. The accommodation itself is entirely adequate for its purpose, with the same standards applied as for other asylum accommodation. We are taking great care to ensure that we provide safe, secure accommodation and that everyone has access to the support they need. This includes providing asylum seekers with privacy and confidentiality as would be expected for those seeking sanctuary in the UK where it would be damaging for their identities to be revealed.

## Blood Transfusions: Coronavirus

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19

pandemic on the supply and use of blood in transfusions in England; whether the current reduction in donor numbers continues to match a reduction in the demand for transfusions; whether they anticipate any critical imbalances in the blood supply chain over the next year; and if so, whether they plan to review mitigation options. [HL8871]

**Lord Bethell:** NHS Blood and Transplant is accountable to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and is responsible for the provision of a safe, reliable, efficient supply of blood to hospitals in England.

NHS Blood and Transplant aims to retain around six days' supply of blood at any one time. This is in addition to the stock held within hospitals, which is typically five to six days' stock. As at 2 December, NHS Blood and Transplant had eight days' supply of blood, including donations being processed.

## Blood: Donors

*Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to lift the ban on the pharmaceutical use of pooled plasma from UK donors; and what assessment they have made of the impact of allowing the use of such plasma on national self-sufficiency in immunoglobulin and other plasma-derived medicinal products. [HL10526]

*Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they estimate that the first plasma derived medicinal products sourced from UK plasma donors will become available for the treatment of NHS patients. [HL10527]

**Lord Bethell:** The safety of United Kingdom plasma is reviewed periodically. A comprehensive review of the safety of immunoglobulins produced from fractionated UK plasma was conducted by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) during 2020 and is now under consideration by the Department and the devolved administrations.

The Department will work with the devolved administrations, NHS England and NHS Improvement, the MHRA and NHS Blood and Transplant to consider the implications of any decision on the UK supply of plasma for immunoglobulin.

## Bounce Back Loan Scheme

*Asked by Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they accredited Greensill to make loans under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme; how much has been lent by Greensill through that Scheme so far; and which Government department or entity is responsible for maintaining loans by Greensill under that Scheme to related entities and groups. [HL10777]

**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.

### Breast Cancer

*Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what research they have commissioned into the UK's success rate at treating breast cancer compared with other countries, namely in Europe. [HL9642]

**Lord Bethell:** It is difficult to compare data in England to other countries, including countries in Europe, in a meaningful way due to time lag on data being published, and issues with data completeness.

Despite this, a 2019 CONCORD study shows that breast cancer deaths are falling faster in Britain than in the rest of Europe as diagnosis and treatment improves. Death rates this year will be below the European Union average after a 18% drop in little more than half a decade, according to comparisons that suggest the National Health Service's focus on better organisation, screening and care has paid dividends.

### Bus Services

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish a bus strategy. [HL11092]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Following the announcement at the end of October of further national restrictions, the Department for Transport took the decision to delay the publication of the National Bus Strategy until early 2021.

### Bus Services: Concessions

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they anticipate that Travel Concession Authorities will be able to resume reimbursement of bus operators on the 'no better and no worse off' principle. [HL11091]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Travel Concession Authorities have been given the funding to pay bus operators at pre-COVID levels for this financial year. We are working closely with Travel Concession Authorities and operators on plans for the next financial year.

### Bus Services: Finance

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to provide sufficient funding for bus services for the next three years to enable (1) the recovery of service patronage, and (2) the maintenance of service levels; whether they plan to devolve any such

funding to local transport authorities; and if not, why not. [HL11090]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Following the one-year Spending Review settlement, £300 million has been allocated in 2021-22 to provide any ongoing COVID-19 support that may be required, while progressing bus reforms to deliver better services for customers. More information on how this will be spent will be released in due course.

This funding is in addition to funding paid directly to Local Authorities through the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) and BSOG provided directly to commercial bus operators (this totalled over £200 million in the current financial year).

### Business: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect on high street businesses of COVID-19 restrictions in the pre-Christmas period. [HL10739]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of COVID-19.

This is why we have delivered one of the most generous and comprehensive packages of support globally, with a total fiscal response of over £200bn. The measures introduced, including loan schemes, grant funding, tax deferrals and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

Businesses forced to close due will receive up to £3,000 per month, depending on their rateable value. Businesses in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors experienced reduced demand due to restrictions introduced between 1 August and 5 November, will receive up to £2,100 per month to cover the period during which they were subject to these restrictions.

### Care Homes: Visits

*Asked by Baroness Hayman of Ullock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support they intend to provide to care homes to enable such homes to offer twice weekly tests to two visitors for each care home resident. [HL10963]

**Lord Bethell:** The Department is providing a tailored training and guidance package for care homes in order to support them to establish effective testing regimes. We have made £4.6 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care.

In addition, the Infection Control Fund, set up in May, has been extended until March 2021, with an extra £546 million for the care sector to take key steps to improve



infection prevention and control. As per the grant conditions, this funding may be used for supporting safe visiting in care homes.

*Asked by **Baroness Hayman of Ullock***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they estimate that family members and friends of care home residents will be provided with twice weekly testing to enable them to visit; and whether they still plan to implement that policy before 25 December. [HL10966]

**Lord Bethell:** We want to bring an end to the pain of separation and help care homes bring families and loved ones together. The launch of visitor testing is a crucial step to making that happen.

Testing is only one way of minimising the risk of visiting a care home. If a visitor has a negative test, is wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and following other infection control measures, then it will be possible for family and friends to visit care homes.

Following a successful trial in 20 care homes, we have started the phased rollout of new rapid tests to all care homes across England to support visiting. The first 385 care homes are now able to begin testing visitors and we aim to roll this out to all care homes by Christmas.

### **China: Bilateral Aid**

*Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much bilateral aid China has received from the UK in the form of development assistance since 2015; when this was last reviewed; and when it will next be reviewed. [HL10770]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK ended traditional bilateral aid programmes to China in 2011. China's size, rising economic power and influence make it an important partner in tackling global challenges. We now offer expertise and skills to help tackle global issues like climate change, which is firmly in the national interest. Bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend for 2009-2019 as categorised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) can be found here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/920048/Table-A4b.od](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920048/Table-A4b.od). This includes ODA spend on activity such as British scientists and researchers working with Chinese counterparts, Chinese Chevening scholars, the British Council's ODA eligible activity in China and, for 2015 and 2019, the ODA eligible portion of costs related to UK diplomatic staff in China (in 2016-2018 these costs were presented regionally).

ODA programmes, including those relevant to China, were reviewed in July 2020 as part of the ODA reprioritisation exercise due to the reduction in Gross National Income (GNI) during the early stages of the Covid-19 crisis. Following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement in the Spending Review that

ODA will be reduced to 0.5% of GNI until the fiscal situation allows a return to 0.7%, the Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise ODA allocations across all departments.

### **Commonwealth: Overseas Aid**

*Asked by **Lord Field of Birkenhead***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of the overseas aid budget is allocated to Commonwealth countries; and how much each of those countries receives. [HL10859]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** In 2019, UK bilateral aid to Commonwealth countries totalled over £1.887 billion, representing around 18% of total UK bilateral ODA. Information on UK bilateral aid to each Commonwealth country is contained in table A4g of the 2019 UK Statistics on International Development, published on Gov.uk.

### **Computer Software: Fees and Charges**

*Asked by **Lord Clement-Jones***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to address regulatory concerns in relation to the fees levied on application developers by major technology platforms. [HL11071]

**Baroness Barran:** We are committed to taking action to protect businesses and users from the potential harms associated with substantial and enduring market power in digital platform markets.

Earlier this year, we accepted all the strategic recommendations of the Furman Review and established the cross-regulator Digital Markets Taskforce to advise on the design and implementation of a new pro-competition regime for digital markets.

On 27 November we confirmed the establishment of a new pro-competition regime for tech giants. A Digital Markets Unit (DMU), housed in the Competition and Markets Authority, will be set up to begin to operationalise the new regime. It will work closely with key regulators, including the ICO and Ofcom, to ensure that the new regime is effective and coherent. The Taskforce has advised us that the DMU should prioritise firms active in particular activities, including app stores. We will consider the expert advice and respond in due course. Government will legislate to put the DMU on a statutory footing as soon as parliamentary time allows, following consultation in early 2021.

### **Conflict, Stability and Security Fund**

*Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of the £821 million provided to the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in Spending Review 2020, published on 25 November, will be allocated (1) to the women,

peace, and conflict agenda, and (2) to preventing sexual violence in conflict. [HL10811]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** To ensure coherence and maximum value for money from the UK's ODA spending, the Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review all discretionary allocations for the next financial year. This is planned to conclude before Christmas.

### Coronavirus: Disease Control

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding of the research by Australia's National Science Agency, published on 7 October, that the COVID-19 virus can survive on bank notes, phone screens and stainless steel for up to 28 days. [HL9019]

**Lord Bethell:** No specific assessment has been undertaken.

### Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 2 November (HL9267), which supplier contracted by the Department of Health and Social Care supplied the central distribution warehouse for personal protective equipment (PPE) in Daventry with PPE masks produced by Medwell Medical Products. [HL10317]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 2 November (HL9267), how many personal protective equipment (PPE) masks held at the central distribution warehouse for PPE in Daventry were produced by Medwell Medical Products. [HL10318]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 2 November (HL9267), how much they paid the supplier of the personal protective equipment (PPE) masks produced by Medwell Medical Products which were held at the central distribution warehouse for PPE in Daventry. [HL10319]

**Lord Bethell:** Investigation of stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE) received from suppliers at the central distribution warehouse in Daventry show a record of receiving PPE masks produced by Medwell Medical Products.

The masks produced by Medwell Medical Products are marked as part of a donation from 'Mail Force Charity', a charity supported by the Daily Mail newspaper to solicit donations from the public to be used to purchase PPE from a variety of sources. These masks were procured

through an intermediary who Mail Force had no direct dealings with. Of the 22 million masks supplied by the Mail Force Charity, only a small fraction of these were associated with Medwell.

### Coronavirus: Screening

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the operational false positive rate for polymerase chain reaction COVID-19 tests is regularly determined by inserting samples into the system that cannot be positive; and what is the false positive rate for such samples. [HL10847]

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

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the operational false positive rate for polymerase chain reaction COVID-19 tests in each of the last four weeks; and how this rate was determined. [HL10848]

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

### Coronavirus: Travel

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether UK students can travel abroad to undertake essential voluntary work under current COVID-19 restrictions provided that they self-isolate upon return; whether they intend to publish advice on that issue; and, if so, when. [HL10606]

**Lord Bethell:** Students can travel abroad to undertake paid or unpaid work which includes volunteering. If students do travel overseas, they should consider the restrictions on entry to the country in question, such as whether they would need to undertake a period of self-isolation in that country, and whether they would need to self-isolate when they return. Returning students travelling from countries not on the exemption list will need to self-isolate in their accommodation for 14 days.

Different rules apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Based on where a person lives, these rules must be followed.

### Coronavirus: Vaccination

*Asked by Lord Walney*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to prevent COVID-19 infection in immunocompromised people who will not be able to benefit from a COVID-19 vaccine. [HL10553]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government is exploring all avenues available to us, to ensure that a treatment for COVID-19 is found., Treatments containing COVID-19 neutralising

antibodies have been secured from AstraZeneca in order to prevent COVID-19 infection in immunocompromised people who will not be able to benefit from a COVID-19 vaccine. The antibody treatment currently being developed by AstraZeneca is a combination of two monoclonal antibodies and has the potential to be given as a preventative option for people exposed to the virus, and to treat and prevent disease progression in patients already infected by the virus if successful.

### Costa Rica: Tourism

Asked by *Baroness Hooper*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current conditions for tourists in Costa Rica, in particular for eco tourists; and what plans they have to review their travel advice for that country. [[HL10761](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) currently advises against all but essential travel to Costa Rica. This decision is informed by the latest COVID-19 risk assessments from Public Health England (PHE) and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC). This assessment is based on a number of key indicators, including virus incidence rates, trends in incidence and deaths, testing capacity, test positivity rates and other international epidemic intelligence. FCDO travel advice remains under constant review to ensure it reflects our latest assessment of risks to British nationals and has the key information and advice they need to plan travel. Our top priority is to protect the safety and well-being of the British public; we want to continue opening up to international travel but only when we can be sure that the risks to public health are manageable.

### Crohn's Disease, Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Ulcerative Colitis: Health Education

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential merits of running an awareness campaign on the symptoms and wider impact of Inflammatory Bowel Disease. [[HL10873](#)]

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to mark, and (2) to support, Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week between 1 and 7 December. [[HL10874](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** No specific assessment or plans have been made.

### Customs: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Lord Hay of Ballyore*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of what checks will be required at Northern Ireland ports to comply with the Northern Ireland Protocol from 1 January 2021. [[HL10756](#)]

**Lord True:** Following the statement made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 9 December, updates will be made to the House shortly setting out further detail on all Northern Ireland Protocol issues. Extensive guidance has also been published on gov.uk.

### Delivery Services: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the length of time the COVID-19 virus can remain on (1) plastic packaging, (2) cardboard packaging, (3) stainless steel surfaces, (4) mobile phone screens, and (5) door handles; whether any such estimate has been revised since April 2020; and what steps they are taking to include such estimates in their guidance (a) to businesses, and (b) to the general public. [[HL10155](#)]

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 1 September (HL6347), what plans they have to publish guidance on how to deal most safely with the possible COVID-19 contamination of parcels delivered to the home, or of packaged goods bought in retail outlets; and whether any precautionary measures should take into account the differences between paper, cardboard, plastic and metal. [[HL7609](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** In May 2020, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) published a review of *Evidence of environmental dispersion for different mechanisms, and the risks and potential mitigations/measures of control within different environments from what we know about COVID-19: A brief evidence summary for SAGE*. A copy is attached. The SAGE Environmental and Modelling Group published a paper on *Environmental Influence on Transmission of COVID-19*, which considered the evidence relating to duration of time spent in an environment and transmission on surfaces. A copy is attached.

Preliminary analysis suggests surface contacts are likely to be a significant transmission route for COVID-19. Evidence to date suggests that the virus can persist on surfaces at a level that may pose a risk for up to 48 hours, while it is unlikely to persist in air for more than 30 minutes. As new evidence or data emerges, SAGE will continue to update its advice accordingly.

## Dental Health: Children

Asked by *Lord Colwyn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to bring forward proposals (1) to improve children's oral health, and (2) to reduce the number of children admitted to hospital for dental extractions in England. [[HL9465](#)]

Asked by *Lord Colwyn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend the provision of supervised tooth brushing programmes for children; and what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of those programmes on reducing oral health inequalities in children in England. [[HL9466](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** As set out in the green paper *Advancing our health; Prevention in the 2020s*, the Government intends to seek views on the merits of expanding the current provision to reach more children in pre-school and primary school settings in England. Water fluoridation is also clinically proven to improve oral health particularly for children. The green paper set out a commitment to reduce the barriers to expanding water fluoridation and this is being carefully considered.

There has been no recent national evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing local authority led individual schemes that promote toothbrushing. Public Health England regularly review available evidence on the effectiveness of measures to promote oral health including supervised toothbrushing. This includes evidence from schemes in England and those in other parts of the United Kingdom including the well-established scheme in Scotland.

## Dental Services: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Lipsey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the scientific evidence used to inform the guidance requiring dentists to leave a gap of one hour between patients. [[HL7670](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government's initial infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance was developed by health protection and IPC experts in collaboration with clinicians. Expert reviews and advice from the Department's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group informed this guidance.

The original IPC guidance for dental teams, which was published in the NHS England and NHS Improvement standard operating procedure (SOP) was a summary of the COVID-19 IPC guidance.

The guidance for dental teams contained within the SOP has been replaced by an appendix to current main IPC guidance and provides updated post aerosol generating procedure downtime based on recommendations from the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme.

## Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they are prioritising global access to vaccines for poorer countries; what estimate they have made of the number of agreements for early vaccine access which the government of China has signed with developing nations, including the loan provision to buy Chinese vaccines; and how that compares to the progress made by the WHO-led COVAX programme. [[HL10771](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK will deliver on its commitment to global equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines through our commitment to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC). The UK is the largest funder to the COVAX AMC with a commitment of up to £548 million. This will contribute to 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines for 92 developing countries in 2021, and immunisation for up to 500 million people (subject to vaccines successfully securing stringent regulatory approvals). The COVAX AMC has achieved its 2020 funding target for \$2 billion to secure vaccine supply for 92 developing countries. It has announced agreements with several companies. Negotiations with additional companies are ongoing.

At least 4 vaccines developed by Chinese companies are in phase 3 efficacy trials. Results are not yet available. Other vaccines are in earlier stages of development. Several countries have announced bilateral agreements to support clinical trials, manufacturing and for future procurement. China has joined the COVAX Facility for self-financing countries to access vaccines for its domestic use. We continue to promote the COVAX AMC as the best mechanism to support equitable and rapid global access to safe and effective vaccines for low- and middle-income countries.

## Driving Tests

Asked by *Lord Rosser*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many practical driving tests (1) took place, and (2) were postponed or cancelled, (a) in each month in 2020 for which figures are available, and (b) in each month of 2019. [[HL11172](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Please see attached table for the Number of practical car tests conducted and the Number of practical car tests postponed or cancelled in 2020.

Please see attached Table 2 for the No. of practical car tests conducted and the No. of practical car tests postponed or cancelled in 2019.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

No of driving tests and cancellations - 2019 [Table 2 - No of car tests and cancellations.docx]

No of driving tests and cancellations - 2020 [Table - No of driving tests and cancellations.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-07/HL11172>

*Asked by Lord Rosser*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average period of time in days between the booking of each practical driving test and the date of the test in each (1) month in 2020 for which figures are available, and (2) month of 2019. [HL11173]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Average time in days between practical car test booking and the test date January 2020 63.9

February 2020 122.7

March 2020 179.4

April 2020 40

May 2020 34

June 2020 31.9

July 2020\*

August 2020 \*

September 2020 \*

October 2020 \*

November 2020 \*

December 2020 \*

\*TO NOTE: We cannot provide figures beyond 30 June 2020 as they have not yet been published officially and to release them externally would breach the Statistics and Registrations Service Act 2007.

Average time in days between practical car test booking and the test date January 2019 40.1

February 2019 40.9

March 2019 44.7

April 2019 49.4

May 2019 48.9

June 2019 50.3

July 2019 54.5

August 2019 55.2

September 2019 51.2

October 2019 49.2

November 2019 53.2

December 2019 55.9.

## Drugs: Developing Countries

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to prevent the sale of counterfeit drugs to developing countries, and (2) to ensure that only patented drugs are sold to those countries. [I] [HL10978]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK has long supported strategies to increase access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines to people living in low-

and middle-income countries. This includes patented products, and their generic equivalents, which are affordable versions of brand name products. We also work to prevent the spread of substandard, falsified, and counterfeit medicines; for example, through support to the WHO's Global Surveillance and Monitoring System for substandard and falsified medical products.

## Egypt: Capital Punishment

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Egypt about the use of capital punishment. [HL10879]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** It remains a long-standing policy of the United Kingdom to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We continue to raise human rights concerns, including the death penalty, with the Egyptian authorities, both privately and in forums such as the UN Human Rights Council. Most recently, on 18 November, our Ambassador in Cairo raised our concerns over the death penalty with the President of Egypt's National Council for Human Rights.

## Electric Vehicles

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the report by Transport and Environment Plug-in hybrids: Is Europe heading for a new dieselgate?, published on 22 November, that emissions from plug-in hybrid vehicles are higher in road tests than those reported by manufacturers in laboratory tests. [HL10780]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government is confident in the robustness of the regulatory emissions test procedures for plug-in hybrids. However, we acknowledge that real-world emissions of plug-in hybrids can vary according to usage profiles and the findings of the report by Transport and Environment are being carefully considered.

The Department for Transport's Market Surveillance Unit conducts its own impartial testing of vehicle emissions, including of plug-in hybrid vehicles in real-world conditions, and analysis of these results will inform our view of whether any future improvements to regulatory emissions tests are required.

## Environmental Land Management Scheme

*Asked by Lord Teverson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) advice they intend to provide to, and (2) advisory service they intend to set up for, those (a) people, (b) enterprises, and (c) organisations, eligible for funding under the Environmental Land Management Scheme;

and how any such advice and services will be funded. [HL10784]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Evidence from Defra's Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials and other sources shows that effective advice and guidance leads to better, more sustained environmental outcomes. For advice to be effective it needs to be trusted and based on expertise, credibility and local knowledge. This evidence has informed the approach to advice and guidance for the Environmental Land Management National Pilot, which will start in 2021 and run for three years.

The National Pilot will combine several elements of advice and guidance, working on the assumption that the scheme should, for the most part, be simple enough for a land manager to apply unassisted. Nevertheless, we assume many may still seek advice. We will use the National Pilot to learn from advisers and land managers what they require across all phases of the pilot, prior to full roll out of Environmental Land Management in 2024.

Firstly, there will be comprehensive guidance, developed by experts across Defra group, published on GOV.UK that covers how and why to apply and how best to deliver the environmental outcomes the scheme can pay for. Defra will improve guidance content and navigation using Tests and Trials and user feedback throughout the pilot.

Secondly, there will be a National Pilot Field Team to gather learning from land managers and advisers. This will be operated by Defra and advisers from its arm's length bodies.

Thirdly, Defra's arm's length bodies will provide advice on statutory responsibilities and assisting regulatory permissions. They will also play a role in formally assessing outcomes and compliance, which will take a fairer more supportive and effective approach.

We also recognise the need to improve land managers' skills and knowledge directly, to meet the challenges of agricultural transition and reduce reliance on advice. We will introduce learning and information sessions for participating land managers and will engage with agricultural training providers to explore how their courses can better support the industry for the future.

As announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan, the Government will contribute towards the establishment of a new professional body, the Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture, which will establish a professional framework, providing farmers with a recognised pathway for training.

We think land managers should pay for any additional on-farm advice when applying for the pilot and implementing their agreement, using either their existing trusted adviser or employing one from the advice market, and payment rates will need to allow for this cost.

The need to employ an adviser should be reduced if the scheme is demonstrably simpler and less risky than previous schemes and if published guidance is accessible

and effective. This means when an adviser is employed they can be focused where they add most value.

As with land manager training, we will help advisers to upskill so that they can provide a high-quality service to land managers during transition. We are identifying the key skills and knowledge required for advisers to support applicants effectively. We will work with existing certification providers rather than launching a scheme-specific certification.

## **Environmental Land Management Scheme: Advisory Services**

*Asked by Lord Teverson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to trial a protocol-type Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) advisory service as a part of the piloting of ELMS. [HL10785]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** We are developing our Environmental Land Management offer in partnership with farmers and other stakeholders, including representatives from some leading farm and land management advice providers. We are doing this through a series of tests and trials, 71 to date with more in preparation, which are already underway, and through a National Pilot which will start in 2021. Forty-three tests and trials have been providing findings on the role of and need for trusted, technically competent advisers with local knowledge, which have been and continue to be fed into the development of our approach. The National Pilot will be available for up to 5,500 farmers who want to be involved in helping us to learn and co-design the full ambition of our new schemes.

In line with our policy for on-farm advice to come largely from the marketplace, we will use the National Pilot to build skills and capacity in that market through training and learning from advisers as they support their clients. To support them in this we will provide introductory information sessions for advisers from early 2021 (online at first), ahead of applications for Phase 1 of the National Pilot being invited. As well as offering a reminder of the context of agricultural transition, they will go into more detail on the mechanics of the Sustainable Farming Incentive component, related regulations and consents and permissions. We intend these to be made available to participating land managers too.

Training content and delivery will be continuously improved throughout the National Pilot, applying established training evaluation methodology to learn from previous phases. Training 'top-ups' will be put in place to update those who participated in earlier sessions as the later components of the Pilot (and wider future farming and countryside programme schemes) are rolled out.

Defra's arms-length bodies will also help, drawing on their expertise to develop scheme guidance and training products as well as the supporting assessment for essential consents, permits that may be required by participants in the National Pilot. They are also likely to provide

compliance checks, which will themselves be more focused towards advice and support where possible rather than just penalties.

We will develop through the pilot a fuller adviser and land manager training package with a stronger element of quality assurance in a way that can be scaled up to meet demand as we approach full roll-out in 2024. This may include potential for commercial delivery or other market provider solutions.

We will use the National Pilot to learn from advisers and land managers what they require across all Phases of the National Pilot.

In sum, the National Pilot will enable us to build on the findings of a range of Tests and Trials to co-design, learn and refine how advice is best delivered when Environmental Land Management is fully rolled out in 2024. The approach at that point will reflect the learning obtained and may differ from what I have set out.

### Environmental Protection

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Salisbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures are in place (1) to prevent, and (2) to minimise the impact of, any environmental governance gap after 31 December. [HL10783]

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

As regards scrutiny of the implementation of environmental measures, the Government intends to bring the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) into operation in 2021. The delay to the Environment Bill due to Covid-19 means it will not be formally established by the beginning of the year as originally planned. The Government is therefore establishing an interim secretariat which will support the OEP Chair-designate and will receive complaints about alleged failures of public authorities to comply with environmental law from the start of next year. This will be in place until the OEP can begin its statutory functions.

As a result, the OEP will be able to use its legal powers to investigate and take enforcement action, where appropriate, against any serious failures alleged to have occurred from 1 January 2021. For example, if the interim Secretariat receives a complaint in February 2021 about an alleged failure to comply with environmental law which happens in January 2021, it will pass this to the OEP once it becomes operational. At that point the OEP will be able to consider whether the matter is serious and action should be taken in connection with that complaint. As a result, there will be no gap in time where public authorities cannot be held to account.

### Eritrea: Politics and Government

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the domestic situation in Eritrea. [HL10826]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are concerned about reports of Eritrea's involvement in the current conflict in Tigray in Ethiopia, which has seen rocket attacks on Asmara and elsewhere in Eritrea by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) since mid-November. We are urging Eritrea and all parties to de-escalate, urging unfettered humanitarian access to those in need and protection of civilians and human rights.

The Eritrean Government has introduced COVID-19 restrictions across the country, including a ban on travel between the main towns and closure of the hospitality sector, although Eritrea is largely case free other than in the quarantine camps in the border areas.

Desert locusts have badly affected the Southern Zone, including Asmara, as spraying is halted due to the conflict in Ethiopia. Eritrea is also experiencing food shortages, which are reported to be particularly severe in more remote locations including Northern and Southern Red Sea regions, that has led to a 25 percent increase in food prices since March.

Eritrea is also experiencing significant power outages across the country, with some areas without power for up to 12 hours per day.

UK Aid has funded life-saving humanitarian assistance in Eritrea since 2011; £2 million is planned to be disbursed through UNICEF in 2020/21 to provide access to safe hygiene and sanitation services and to help treat malnutrition in under-fives. During 2020 the UK has provided £25 million to support the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Regional Emergency Appeal for the locust outbreak in the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

### Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ask the government of Ethiopia (1) to establish a humanitarian corridor into the Tigray region, and (2) to ensure that any such corridor is supervised in conformity with the neutrality principles laid down by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and what plans they have to seek access for UK diplomats to all areas affected by the conflict in that region to collect any evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity. [HL11060]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK has been at the forefront, liaising closely with the United Nations (UN) and partners, in calling for immediate, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, in line with the guiding principles laid down by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The UK

worked with the UN to develop these guidelines and they have been shared with the Government of Ethiopia. We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), do not have access to refugee camps in Tigray. This means we lack an understanding of the humanitarian and protection context in camps and refugee hosting areas.

We are encouraged that a UN assessment mission was able to access Tigray on 7 December. The mission must be able to work without hindrance and in turn it must facilitate the timely supply of humanitarian support to those who need it including to civilians in contested areas. We will work with the UN to monitor access and humanitarian delivery and the degree to which the UN's guiding principles are adhered to. The UK has, alongside international partners, called on all sides to ensure the protection of civilians and for respect for human rights. We welcome the appeal made by the Ethiopian Commission for Human Rights for an independent investigation into human rights violations.

### **Ethiopia: Politics and Government**

*Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the domestic situation (1) in Ethiopia, and (2) in Tigray. [HL10823]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is concerned by the violence between federal and regional forces in the Tigray region and the risk it poses to civilians, and by reports of ethnically-motivated attacks both within Tigray and elsewhere in Ethiopia. We are gravely concerned at Amnesty International's report of killings of civilians on 9 November; we call for transparency and accountability to be delivered for such incidents. We are also concerned about the risk these events pose to Ethiopia's overall political stability and its democratic transition of which the UK has been supportive. The Foreign Secretary called Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November to raise our concerns and stress the urgent need to prioritise the protection of civilian lives, restore services (including banks and telecommunications) and enable humanitarian access. He also urged de-escalation swift moves to political dialogue. He reiterated these messages when he met Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 25 November. We will continue to track the situation and to raise with the Government of Ethiopia and regional leaders these concerns, our concerns about civilian deaths and casualties, and the importance of respect for human rights.

### **Fleet Solid Support Ships**

*Asked by **Lord West of Spithead***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement on the Integrated Review of Foreign, Defence, Security and Development policy by the Prime Minister on 19 November (HC Deb, col 495),

when they plan to order the three fleet solid support ships. [HL11007]

**Baroness Goldie:** I refer the noble Lord to the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin), in the House of Commons on 30 November 2020 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) in response to Question 120779.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Fleet Solid Support Ships [Hansard Extract 120779.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-01/HL11007>

### **HIV Infection: Screening**

*Asked by **Baroness Barker***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic, whether they plan to make funding available for online HIV self-sampling services in all areas of England; and if not, why not. [HL10663]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government has mandated local authorities in England to commission comprehensive open access sexual health services, including the provision of HIV testing through self-sampling and online services. It is important that individuals and communities have information and support to access testing in a range of settings to facilitate earlier diagnosis and prevention of HIV transmission.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has issued guidance on increasing the uptake of HIV testing among people who may have undiagnosed HIV. We will explore what more can be done on testing as part of our work to develop the Sexual and Reproductive Health strategy and the HIV Action Plan.

### **Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**

*Asked by **Lord Browne of Belmont***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect on the hospitality sector of COVID-19 restrictions in the pre-Christmas period. [HL10740]

**Lord Callanan:** We know that hospitality venues are subject to significant restrictions under the new regional tiered system and that is why on 1 December, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs' in tiers 2 and 3 who will miss out on much needed business during the busy Christmas period.

This additional support comes on top of other measures, which include:

- The extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until March 2021, where small and large



employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month;

- Businesses can continue to access our loan schemes, now extended, defer VAT payments previously due in March, and benefit from business rates holidays, a moratorium on eviction for commercial tenants and the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme;
- The availability of grants of up to £3,000 for businesses required to close in Tier 2 or Tier 3. Grants are also available from the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) scheme, which is a discretionary fund to support businesses which are not legally closed but severely impacted Tier 2 and Tier 3 restrictions, with funding of up to £2,100 per 28 days.

### **Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Medical Treatments**

*Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the per capita uptake of NICE approved medicines for treating Inflammatory Bowel Disease in their first year of launch, for medicines first marketed between 2014 and 2018. [HL10776]

**Lord Bethell:** No direct assessment has been made.

### **Institute of Commonwealth Studies**

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the proposed closure of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies by the University of London on (1) the UK's reputation as a global centre of academic excellence, (2) diplomatic relationships with other Commonwealth countries, and (3) the training of British diplomats. [HL10733]

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received from (1) Commonwealth governments, (2) the Commonwealth Secretariat, or (3) other interested parties, about the proposed closure by the University of London of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. [HL10735]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Several Commonwealth stakeholders have made representations to us about the proposed closure of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies by the University of London. This is a matter for the University; but, as I have made clear to the Vice Chancellor, we are aware of the important role the Institute has played in fostering a greater understanding, particularly a contemporary understanding, of the Commonwealth, both within the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and in the wider world. While recognising the financial difficulties facing the University of London and the School of Advanced Studies, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic,

we hope a solution can be found which recognises the value of an academic institute located in London with mandate and means to be a focus for study of the Commonwealth.

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to refer the University of London's proposed closure of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies to the Office of Students to ascertain the potential implications of such a closure for students engaged in, or seeking opportunities to engage in, further post-doctoral studies in black British history, decolonisation and the documentation of the transition from Empire to Commonwealth. [HL10734]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The Office for Students (OfS), as the regulator of higher education in England, works within its regulatory framework with individual higher education providers to consider the implication for students of any decision to cease the provision of higher education. It does so independently, without reliance on referrals from the Department for Education. We understand, however, that the OfS is aware of these reported proposals and will engage with the University of London to understand them in greater depth as part of its normal engagement process.

### **International Law: Enforcement**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they take to enforce international law when they determine that other countries have broken such law. [HL10923]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** How to respond to breaches of international law is considered by Her Majesty's Government taking into account all relevant circumstances and is dependent on the circumstances of each case.

### **Jerusalem**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office considers Jerusalem to be part of Israel; and if so, why. [HL10927]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The position of the UK Government has remained constant since April 1950, when the UK extended de jure recognition to the State of Israel, but withheld recognition of sovereignty over Jerusalem pending a final determination of its status. We recognise Israel's 'de facto authority' over West Jerusalem. But in line with Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and subsequent Council resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as under Israeli military occupation.

A final determination of the status of Jerusalem should be sought as part of a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. It must ensure Jerusalem is a

shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, with access and religious rights of both peoples respected.

### Kenya: Politics and Government

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the domestic situation in Kenya. [HL10828]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Kenya remains a beacon of stability in Africa, even though it has had a challenging year, contending with the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts, drought, severe flooding and two waves of locusts. The economic toll of COVID-19 has been significant, particularly for Kenya's tourism industry, and agricultural and horticultural export sectors. Above normal rainfall - the result of climate change - has helped create the conditions for Kenya's worst locust infestation in 70 years, potentially plunging millions into food insecurity. Through this, the UK has provided much needed support: launching programmes providing cash transfers to help some of Kenya's most vulnerable citizens; by keeping supply chains operating; advising business on how to operate in a COVID-19 compliant manner; and working closely with the IMF and the World Bank to provide concessional loans to support the Government of Kenya's budget. This work has noticeably contributed to the recovery of key export sectors and bolstered Kenya's response to the locust infestation, preventing further damage to crops and livelihoods.

With the Prime Minister and President Kenyatta's launch of the UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership in January, an already strong bilateral relationship has been enhanced by an agreed focus on five shared priorities: mutual prosperity; security and stability; sustainable development; climate change; and people to people links. This has helped deliver swift progress towards a Trade Agreement, which will help bring certainty to Kenyan businesses reliant on access to UK markets. It has also deepened our security cooperation - particularly in the field of counter-terrorism - to better protect Kenyan citizens and British nationals in Kenya alike. This Partnership commits the UK and Kenya to joint leadership on some of the key international policy challenges of today - such as climate change, whose harmful impacts are already evident in Kenya - but also provides a forum to discuss other priorities, including anti-corruption and police reform. We look forward to building on these achievements in UK/Kenya relations.

### Libya: Politics and Government

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) political, and (2) security, situation in Libya. [HL10768]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We remain deeply concerned by ongoing instability in Libya. However, we

welcome recent positive developments and the commitment shown by Libyans to engage constructively in the UN-led political process. The comprehensive ceasefire, and roadmap to elections in December 2021, both brokered by the UN, are important steps towards achieving a sustainable and inclusive political settlement for all Libyans. The UK is actively engaged in international diplomatic efforts, in support of the UN, to help Libyans to find solutions to the issues they face.

### Loujain al-Hathloul

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 25 November (HL10225), what was the response of the government of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Ambassador to the UK to the concerns raised about the continued detention of women's rights defenders, including Loujain al-Hathloul. [HL10871]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Saudi Ambassador took note of the UK's concerns. The Saudi Government outlined its position on the continued detention of women's rights defenders, including Loujain al-Hathloul, in interviews ahead of the G20 Summit. We continue to monitor the situation closely. On 29 November, the UK Ambassador for Human Rights and six European counterparts released a joint statement reiterating our call for the release of the women's rights defenders.

### Mental Health Services

*Asked by Lord Patel of Bradford*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many patients were in inpatient psychiatric wards in England in 2019; and for the breakdown of the total by (1) gender, (2) age, and (3) ethnicity. [HL10834]

**Lord Bethell:** The information is not available in the format requested.

### Ministry of Defence: Sites of Special Scientific Interest

*Asked by Baroness Parminter*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many sites of special scientific interest are on the defence estate; how much land those sites cover; and how many such sites are in a favourable condition. [HL10979]

**Baroness Goldie:** The UK defence estate includes 171 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covering 81,266 hectares (ha). SSSIs are designated and assessed differently between all four countries.

Country	Number of SSSIs	Total Hectares (ha) covered
England	129	68,500
Wales	18	4,766

Country	Number of SSSIs	Total Hectares (ha) covered
Scotland	22	6,911
Northern Ireland	2	1,089

In England 34,366 ha is deemed by Natural England to be in Favourable condition.

In Wales, 3,632 ha is deemed by Natural Resources Wales to be in Appropriate Conservation Management.

Scotland includes 22 SSSIs covering 6,911 ha. This includes 148 separate SSSI features. 121 are deemed by NatureScot to be in Favourable condition and six are in Unfavourable recovering condition.

Northern Ireland includes two Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) covering 1089 ha. This includes 12 separate ASSI features, 10 of which are deemed by Northern Ireland Environment Agency to be in a Favourable condition with two in an Unfavourable recovering condition.

### Mohammed Al Fara

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia about reports that Mohammed Al Fara is at risk of execution. [HL10925]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK strongly opposes the death penalty in all countries and in all circumstances, as a matter of principle. This is especially the case for juveniles and for crimes other than the most serious. This is in line with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. We reiterated our opposition to the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September.

In August, our Chargé d'affaires in Riyadh raised the issue of the death penalty with Minister of State Al Jubeir, including Mohammad al-Faraj's case. We will continue to monitor and raise concerns about the case of al-Faraj.

We regularly raise our concerns about the use of the death penalty with the Saudi Arabian authorities. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa raised the death penalty with Dr Awwad al Awwad, President of Saudi Arabia's Human Rights Commission during his virtual visit in July. I raised the death penalty in a call with Dr Awwad in June and raised a range of human rights concerns during my visit last September. The Foreign Secretary raised human rights during his visit in March this year.

### Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evidence they have of the mistreatment of (1) civilian, and (2)

military, prisoners, (a) during, and (b) following the conflict between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces; and what plans they have to assist with the exchange of all remaining prisoners. [HL10814]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government welcomes the ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The UK Government is aware of reports that both sides have mistreated civilians and military prisoners of war during the conflict and afterwards. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas has been in regular contact with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers since the outbreak of hostilities in September. She has urged investigation of these reports, condemned the targeting of civilian settlements and pressed both sides to prioritise the return of prisoners of war. The UK Government continues to support the work of the ICRC in this regard.

### Obesity

*Asked by Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps the Department for Health and Social Care has taken to address the level of obesity in socio-economically deprived communities; and whether any such steps will be taken as part of their strategy set out in their policy paper Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives, published on 27 July. [HL10326]

**Lord Bethell:** *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan including our ambition to halve the number of children living with obesity and significantly reducing the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030. We are also working with councils to reduce obesity locally through a range of schemes.

### Overseas Aid

*Asked by Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what fiscal conditions need to be met to allow the UK's official development assistance to return to 0.7 per cent of gross national income. [HL10767]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. We cannot at this moment predict with certainty when the current fiscal circumstances will have sufficiently improved.

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 25 November that they will be "spending the equivalent of 0.5 per cent of our national income on overseas aid in 2021" (HC Deb, col 830), which 20 countries have been the biggest recipients of UK bilateral aid since 2015;

and what criteria will be used to determine reductions in (1) multilateral, and (2) bilateral, aid. [HL10769]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The top twenty recipients of UK bilateral aid between 2015 and 2019 are:

Pakistan	Democratic Republic of Congo
Ethiopia	Kenya
Nigeria	Sierra Leone
Syria	Uganda
Afghanistan	Lebanon
Bangladesh	India
Somalia	Jordan
South Sudan	Burma
Tanzania	Zimbabwe
Yemen	Nepal

The Government is introducing a new strategic approach which will allow us to drive greater impact from our ODA spending around a set of strategic objectives. First, tackling climate change, protecting biodiversity and financing low-carbon and climate-resilient technologies in poor and emerging economies. Second, tackling COVID-19, and promoting wider international health security. Third, prioritising girls' education. Fourth, resolving conflict, alleviating humanitarian crises, defending open societies, and promoting trade and investment, including by increasing UK partnerships in science research and technology. Finally, improving delivery of aid in order to increase the impact that we have on the ground, in the countries and the communities that they are designed to benefit and help. We will do this by strengthening accountability, value for money and in-house capability.

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to prioritise (1) digitisation and (2) climate resilience capability building programmes, in their spending on international development. [HL10929]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government is investing in multiple programmes that aim to increase digital inclusion and digital transformation in developing countries and emerging markets with a focus on underserved and marginalised communities. The programmes aim to address the fundamental constraints to digital inclusion, build cybersecurity capacity, support local digital economies and advise partner countries about digital transformation of the government and the economy through tools such as digital identification.

Countries need to take action to anticipate the impact of climate change to avoid more people falling into poverty and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a major focus of the UK's international climate finance, which helps both to avoid carbon emissions and build climate resilience. These include the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Least Developed Countries'

Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience. We will use the UK's Presidency of the COP26 climate conference, in Glasgow in November 2021, to secure greater international support for adaptation and resilience measures.

## Overseas Aid: Reviews

*Asked by Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the cross-governmental review of official development assistance will take place; how long it will last; which departments will be involved; when it will report; and whether the report will be made public. [HL10766]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** To maximise the Government's strategic focus in the use of ODA next year, the Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise all of the UK's ODA allocations. This will involve all current ODA spending departments. It is the Government's intention to conclude this process as soon as possible and communicate the outcome to the departments concerned.

## Peers: Writs of Summons

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many writs of summons were sent to Peers in (1) 2016, (2) 2017, (3) 2018, (4) 2019, and (5) 2020; and how many of those writs were sent to Peers in (a) each region of England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales, and (d) Northern Ireland. [HL10731]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** The information on the number of writs of summons issued to Peers is set out below:

- (1) 2016 – 17.
- (2) 2017 – 823.
- (3) 2018 – 20.
- (4) 2019 – 814.
- (5) 2020 – 43.

Following the dissolution of Parliament for General Elections in 2017 and 2019, writs of summons were sent to all eligible Peers in the UK and Northern Ireland. In 2016, 2018 and 2020, writs of summons were only issued to newly created, or newly elected, Peers.

Information on writs issued by region is no longer held by the Crown Office, which is responsible for issuing the writs. Writs are issued to contact addresses provided by Peers to the House of Lords.

## Post Office Card Account

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they sought to renew their current contract with the Post Office to provide accounts for the payment of state pensions and benefits at a lower price. [HL10759]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The contract with Post Office Limited is due to expire in November 2021 with an option to extend for a maximum of up to 3 years. The Department for Work and Pensions is working with Post Office Limited to agree exit timescales and arrangements. There is no option to replace Post Office Card Account once the current contract ends. The replacement service will be procured in line with public procurement regulations to ensure open and fair commercial competition.

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what options are available to individuals in receipt of a state pension or benefits who do not wish to open a bank account after the Post Office Card Account service is discontinued. [HL10760]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Department for Work and Pensions preferred method of payment for all benefits is into a bank, building society or credit union account. For customers who are unable to open or manage a mainstream account or choose not to open an account the Department will offer an alternative Payment Exception Service to allow continued access to cash payments across all locations (including suburban and rural locations).

### Post Office Card Account: Pensioners

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultation they conducted with pensioner organisations regarding the decision not to renew their contract with the Post Office to provide accounts for the payment of state pensions and benefits. [HL10758]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Department for Work and Pensions' has communicated with external organisations including Pension Organisations to update on contract end arrangements and we will continue to use external communication routes to provide updates on the timings and customer communication arrangements surrounding closure of the Post Office card account.

The Departments preferred method of payment for all benefits and pensions is mainstream account, such as a bank, building society or credit union account. This provides individuals access to useful products and services that better meets their needs, for example, the ability to send and receive payments. We will continue to encourage customers to convert to mainstream accounts ahead of contract end.

### Protective Clothing: Contracts

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether Uighur forced labour was used in the production of personal protective equipment purchased by the UK from Medwell Medical Products;

and what plans they have to implement due diligence checks to ensure that items purchased by the UK have not been produced using such forced labour. [HL10106]

**Lord Bethell:** The masks produced by Medwell Medical Products are marked as part of a donation from Mail Force Charity, a charity supported by the Daily Mail newspaper to solicit donations from the public to be used to purchase PPE from a variety of sources. These masks were procured through an intermediary who Mail Force had no direct dealings with. Of the 22 million masks supplied by the Mail Force Charity, only a small fraction of these were associated with Medwell.

Government guidance advises public sector contracting authorities on how to assess suppliers in terms of mitigating the risk of modern slavery. Contracts are normally placed in line with Departmental terms and conditions which include clauses requiring Good Industry Practice to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in supply chains. In the event that allegations of modern slavery are substantiated in relation to a Departmental supplier, we will consider all available options.

### Protective Clothing: Procurement

*Asked by Lord Strasburger*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 24 November (HL10126), whether the use of the "extreme urgency" provision in Regulation 32(2)(c) instead of competitive tendering has become the default method for the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies; whether the demand for PPE has returned to more predictable levels such that contracts for PPE supplies can return to being competitively tendered; and what assessment they have made of the continued use of the "extreme urgency" provision in the current circumstances. [HL10718]

**Lord Bethell:** We have made use of existing procurement rules which allow the Government to procure at speed in times of emergency, as confirmed in Cabinet Office Guidance circulated to procuring authorities in March. Regulation 32(2)(c) for the direct award of a contract is not a new procedure but its use was necessary due to a highly volatile global market and the extreme urgency at which we had to proceed.

The guidance issued by the Cabinet Office set out a range of options under the Procurement Regulations which can be used depending on urgency and other factors. In addition to direct awards, authorities can reduce the minimum timescales for the open procedure, the restricted procedure and the competitive procedure with negotiation if a state of urgency renders the standard timescales impracticable. All future procurement routes will be considered against the specific requirement and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to determine how best to proceed.

## Roads: Nature Conservation

*Asked by Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the proposals by Highways England to create wildflower verges on all new large-scale highways projects will take account of differing (1) climatic, (2) geological, and (3) ecological, conditions in different areas of England; and what plans they have to include provision for future management of such verges in ways that conserve their wildflower nature and avoid their being over-run by invasive coarse weeds, including guarantees for the necessary funds. [HL11080]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Highways England's new approach to low nutrient grasslands will support the creation of new areas of grassland that support greater biodiversity. Any seed mixes used to establish grasslands will be appropriate to the local area of the project and specifications will be determined on a scheme by scheme basis taking account of local climate, geology and ecology.

Low fertility grasslands are expected to reduce maintenance requirements because of reduced vegetation growth, but maintenance will still be required. This will be determined on a plot by plot basis and managed appropriately to maintain low nutrient levels and improved biodiversity. This can be achieved by cutting once a year in late summer and removing the arisings from the grassland plot. This will minimise the risk of coarse weeds becoming established and maintain low soil fertility.

## Rodents: Gough Island

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to continue to fund the eradication of invasive mice on Gough Island. [HL10936]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Over 90% of UK's biodiversity is in the Overseas Territories. Gough Island is a UNESCO natural World Heritage site and the UK Government continues to support the RSPB's efforts to eradicate invasive non-native mice from the Island to save critically endangered seabirds from extinction. The RSPB has announced that the final eradication stage can now proceed in 2021. The UK Government has provided over £2 million in funding to support this project and will give further consideration to providing additional funding for the next financial year

## Skin Cancer

*Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they collect on the proportion of non-melanoma skin cancer patients who are diagnosed at early stages compared to the number of such patients who have been

diagnosed at a late stage during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL10625]

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

## Skin Cancer: Medical Treatments

*Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of (1) known or (2) suspected non-melanoma skin cancer patients in England who are waiting to be seen by a dermatologist; and how this compares to historical trends. [HL10624]

**Lord Bethell:** Data is not available in the format requested.

## Slavery: Victim Support Schemes

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the head of the Single Competent Authority established under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 took up their post. [HL10797]

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Home Office (1) staff, and (2) agency staff, are employed (a) full time, and (b) part time, to make decisions on trafficking and modern slavery within the Single Competent Authority established under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. [HL10798]

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there is a specific team within the Single Competent Authority established under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 responsible for making trafficking decisions in relation to children. [HL10799]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The creation of the Single Competent Authority (SCA) was announced in Autumn 2017 as part of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Reform Programme. The SCA was launched in April 2019, replacing the previous competent authorities for the NRM.

Decision makers within the SCA are fully trained to make both Reasonable Grounds decisions and Conclusive Grounds decisions on children who may be potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.

The figures below include all staff involved in the Single Competent Authority's decision-making work (including all decision points such as Reasonable Grounds, Conclusive Grounds, Reconsiderations, Modern Slavery Discretionary Leave, and Recovery Needs Assessments) and includes all functions across the unit necessary for that activity (including management, case preparation, technical specialists, business support etc). The numbers provided are taken as of 30 November from

a live operational database and may change as information on the system is updated.

Home Office Staff: 225 (181 full time and 44 part time)  
Agency Staff: 3 (all full time).

Between now and March 2021, over 350 new staff will join the Home Office to work in the SCA. The vast majority of these staff will be decision-makers, with the remainder of the posts going to case preparation, workflow management, technical specialist and management roles essential for the operation of the Unit.

Recruiting in these numbers will give us the capacity to make significantly more Conclusive Grounds decisions than we are currently able to do with existing resource, and therefore will bring down decision-making timescales for victims.

The current Head of the SCA took up post on 4 April 2019.

### Somalia: Politics and Government

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the domestic situation in Somalia. [HL10827]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK supports efforts towards a more stable, secure, prosperous and resilient Somalia, with progress towards agreeing a political settlement and a reduction in threats from Al Shabaab and to regional stability. Multiple shocks, including threats from Covid-19, desert locusts and floods, have deepened Somalia's protracted climate and conflict-induced humanitarian crisis and disrupted progress towards stability and economic recovery. The UK observes with regret that the model for the upcoming electoral process falls short of longstanding Somali commitments on direct voting. We encourage Somali leaders to engage in dialogue to make the process timely, transparent and inclusive.

### Submarines

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UK's ability to communicate with deep sea (1) military, and (2) civilian, vessels in the event of a total satellite blackout. [HL10934]

**Baroness Goldie:** For Defence related communications to Military deep-sea vessels the Ministry of Defence would revert to Line of Sight (where feasible) or atmospheric bounce Radio services of a specific wavelength and frequency.

These capabilities are tested at periodical intervals in line with the Defence Exercise Programme.

For communications with civilian vessels, the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) provides an internationally operated maritime communications

service. Regulated UK vessels have radio installations capable of GMDSS communications to shore for their areas of operation. In ocean regions they may choose to have either High Frequency (HF) radio or satellite communications, but in polar regions HF is mandatory.

### Sudan: Politics and Government

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the domestic situation in Sudan. [HL10824]

**Baroness Sugg:** Eighteen months after the removal of Omar al-Bashir as President, Sudan has begun the process of transitioning to democracy after decades of misrule. In order to deliver the stability required for this transition to succeed, the civilian-led Government of Sudan has committed to important reforms to address Sudan's economic crisis and to a process that aims to bring an end to conflict. There has been progress on economic reforms, including the removal of fuel subsidies in November, but severe challenges remain. Inflation exceeds 230%, the humanitarian situation is worsening, 7.1m face food insecurity and there has been an influx of over 45,000 refugees as a result of the situation in Ethiopia. On securing comprehensive peace, we welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on 3 October between the Government of Sudan and a number of opposition groups, and continue to urge those outside the agreement to engage in negotiations. In addition the civilian-led government has delivered a number of welcome legal and human rights reforms, including the criminalisation of Female Genital Mutilation and on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

As a leading donor to Sudan, the UK is providing extensive support to Prime Minister Hamdok and his government to help deliver stability and improvements for the lives of ordinary Sudanese. Most significantly, the UK will provide up to £160m in economic assistance this financial year, including £80m to help ensure economic reforms are delivered. We have also helped ensure international support for Sudan through the establishment by the UN Security Council, of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission Sudan (UNITAMS), which is mandated to help with the transition and peace process. The Foreign Secretary spoke with Prime Minister Hamdok on 12 November to discuss regional issues, progress on economic reforms, and UK support for Sudan's economic transition. The Minister for Africa also spoke with Foreign Minister Omer Garameldin Ismail on 02 December.

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the domestic situation in South Sudan. [HL10825]

**Baroness Sugg:** Despite significant progress, including the formation of the transitional government in February 2020, the situation in South Sudan is of deep concern. Implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement has stalled, contributing to increases in violence in a number of areas. The South Sudanese economy remains in crisis and many South Sudanese are facing the effects of flooding. Over 50% of the population are experiencing severe acute food insecurity and there is threat of famine in several areas. South Sudan also remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for aid workers with at least nine killed in 2020.

South Sudan's best chance of a more stable and prosperous future remains in the full implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement. The UK continues to push for progress, alongside our international partners, including the Troika. We remain the second largest bilateral donor and in 2019 UK aid reached over 200,000 with food assistance and one million people with vaccinations for preventable illnesses. During a visit to South Sudan in October, the Minister for Africa pressed President Kiir and other key figures on the need for real political progress and announced a further £8 million of UK aid to help mitigate the risk of famine and assist the victims of flooding.

## Surgery

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh RCSEd responds to cancellation of elective surgery, lack of testing and concerns over NHS staff wellbeing, issued on 10 November. [[HL10431](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** National Health Service providers have worked hard to recover as much elective activity as possible whilst preparing for winter, making full use of available capacity. The Prime Minister has announced £3 billion of extra funding to support the NHS this winter and this includes ensuring the retention of the Nightingale hospital surge capacity and continued access to independent hospitals capacity to help meet patient demand. Essential care should only be postponed if a clinician and patient agree it is in the patient's best interest.

Supporting the NHS workforce is crucially important and testing of staff remains a top priority. All NHS staff are eligible for priority testing for COVID-19, access is provided through pillar 1 testing and there is capacity within trusts to ensure staff can get tested.

To support the wider wellbeing of NHS staff the NHS People Plan published in July sets out our vision and immediate actions to make the NHS the best place to work, where our NHS people are valued and supported.

## Syria: White Phosphorus

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 24 November (HL10150) whether they will answer the entirety of the question put, namely what assessment they have made of reports that more than 70 export licences have been issued by the UK for military products sold to Turkey containing white phosphorous over the last two decades. [[HL10687](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Licensing records dating back to 2000 show that the UK has granted a small number of export licences for Turkey for products which it has not be possible to discount they may contain white phosphorus. Each licence application is carefully assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, based on the most up-to-date information and analysis available, including reports from NGOs and in the media. These Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework and require the Government to think hard about the impact of providing equipment and its capabilities.

White phosphorus is commonly used in smoke grenades as well as in decoy and countermeasure equipment, for example to protect aircraft against attack, and in signalling flares. These products are in use across NATO armed forces, including British forces, but they must be used in accordance with international humanitarian law. White phosphorus is not a prohibited substance.

## Telecommunications

*Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to consult on the operation of the Electronic Communications Code. [[HL11102](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** We are committed to consulting on whether further reforms to the Electronic Communications Code are necessary to support the delivery of digital connectivity. Timings for this consultation are still to be finalised, and we will confirm this as soon as possible.

## Transport: Infrastructure

*Asked by Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for (1) ensuring certainty in the programme for transport infrastructure investment; (2) changing the regional balances in transport infrastructure investment as between London and the South East, and other regions in England; and (3) cancelling Crossrail 2 and investing a similar amount in the north of England and other English regions. [[HL11024](#)]



**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government recognises the importance of securing long-term transport infrastructure investment, as outlined in the recently published National Infrastructure Strategy. Though the scope of the Spending Review this year was refocused on supporting the government's response to Covid-19, the Department secured over £60 billion in multi-year investment – providing certainty for major transport infrastructure programmes.

Investing in transport infrastructure is critical to increasing connectivity and driving regional growth, which are central to this government's ambition to level up the UK. The Spending Review delivered investment for regions across the entire UK - including announcing a new £4 billion levelling-up fund, £4.2 billion for city regions across England as part of Intra-City Transport Funding and a commitment of over £22 billion to fund HS2 Phases One, 2a and 2b Western Leg to deliver essential North-South connectivity, greater capacity and shorter journey times.

The Department is also working to implement the findings of the Green Book Review. The refreshed Green Book will support levelling up by ensuring that projects are being assessed first and foremost on how well they deliver policy objectives rather than focusing on a purely economic assessment. For the first time, business cases for all proposals will have to set out how they will impact different places aligning with relevant local strategies and major interventions in the area.

Transport projects are kept under continual review. Given current affordability constraints, Transport for London has confirmed that they are not in a position to prioritise investment in Crossrail 2, and the Government has agreed that they will stop development on the project. This frees up investment to raise the performance of public transport networks in our regional cities.

## UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the passage of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland which are not then transported to Ireland will not be subject to disruption from 1 January 2021. [HL10738]

**Lord True:** Following the statement made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 9 December, updates will be made to the House shortly setting out further detail on all Northern Ireland Protocol issues.

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to extend the 24 month timescale for support provided to companies sending goods to Northern Ireland, in the event it proves insufficient. [HL10793]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Trader Support Service (TSS) will provide guidance to traders to help them understand changes to the way goods move under the Northern Ireland Protocol from 1 January. Traders will be supported to understand the information they will need to collect about their goods in order for the TSS to complete declarations on their behalf.

The service will be in place for at least two years and during this period will provide guidance and training to help grow the existing intermediary market. The Government is committed to providing appropriate support and has developed the TSS to meet this commitment. The service and its future will be reviewed after two years.

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