

**Session 2019-21
No. 163**



**Wednesday
30 December 2020**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Statements 1

Written Answers..... 2

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

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

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

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

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

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2020

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

Written Statements

Wednesday, 30 December 2020

European Union (Future Relationship) Bill

[\[HLWS683\]](#)

Lord True: I have made a statement under Section 19(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1998 that, in my view, the provisions of the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill are compatible with the convention rights. A copy of the statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 30 December 2020

5G

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of when the UK will have a fully functional 5G infrastructure in place. [[HL11332](#)]

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any possible future negative impacts of the revision of procurement plans in July on the UK's 5G roll-out targets. [[HL11333](#)]

Baroness Barran: The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport was clear in his statement to the House of Commons on 14 July that the position on Huawei will have implications for rollout, that that was a necessary cost to ensure the security of our 5G networks and protect our national security. We expect the sector to do as much as possible to minimise the effects of this decision, and the Government remains focused on the UK becoming a world leader in 5G mobile technology, and for consumers and businesses to see the benefits of 5G as fast as possible.

Our ambition, therefore, remains for the majority of the UK population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. To support this ambition, the Government is investing £200 million in a 5G Testbeds and Trials programme. The Mobile Network Operators are similarly focussed on rolling out commercial 5G coverage across the UK and, as a result, it is currently available in over 100 UK towns and cities.

Abortion

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported rise in the number of abortions among women with two or more children. [[HL11398](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Department has made no such assessment. However, the Department has commissioned the King's Fund to undertake a piece of work to provide insights into factors contributing to changing patterns of abortion uptake in England.

Africa: Diplomatic Relations

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to extend the UK's diplomatic presence across Africa, in particular into smaller countries. [[HL11467](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Since 2018, the UK has increased its diplomatic reach by over 350 staff across

Africa, including in Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Eswatini and Lesotho. In addition, the UK contributes to international diplomatic efforts, including through its Sahel Envoys and Sahel Alliance networks. We continue to keep under close review the size and location of our network to ensure that it remains appropriate for delivering HMG priorities across Africa within the overall resources available.

Africa: Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend "everything but arms" access (1) to Ghana, (2) to Cameroon, and (3) to other non-least developed countries in Africa, where regional integration is otherwise threatened. [[HL11465](#)]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: At the end of the Transition Period, the United Kingdom will create its Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which will replicate the three levels of market access provided by the EU's Scheme. This is the most appropriate way to ensure continuity of trade for the existing 70 countries trading under the EU GSP.

We continue to engage with Ghana and Cameroon; they have each been offered a deal that provides the same trading arrangements as they have today.

Africa: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 24 November ([HL10267](#)), what plans they have to establish an inquiry to address the legacies of African enslavement, in particular (1) Afriphobia, (2) colonisation, (3) neocolonialism, and (4) environmental and ecological destruction; and what steps they will take to ensure that the victims of those legacies and their descendants are consulted as part of any such inquiry. [[HL11464](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has no plans to establish such an enquiry.

Algeria: Ahmadiyya

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Algeria about the treatment of Ahmadiis in that country; and if they have not made any such representations, what plans they have to do so. [[HL11461](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights policy priorities. Her Majesty's Government is concerned about

the treatment of religious minorities in Algeria, including the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. Our Embassy in Algiers is in regular contact with minority religious groups, and has contacted local Ahmadi representatives to understand their concerns and how best to support them. We continue to raise the difficulties encountered by minority religious groups in freely practicing their faith at senior official and ministerial level. Most recently Her Majesty's Ambassador raised Freedom of Religion or Belief with the Minister of Interior in November 2020.

Apprentices

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the Confederation of British Industry, and (2) Trades Union Congress, about apprenticeships. [[HL11397](#)]

Baroness Berridge: We meet regularly with employers, providers, and other stakeholders to explore how we can best support businesses to use apprenticeships to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, meets with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and other business representative organisations each quarter to discuss various aspects of apprenticeships and skills policy.

Trades Union Congress (TUC) is a member of the department's Apprenticeships Stakeholder Board, a diverse group of apprenticeship employers, providers, business representative organisations, and other stakeholders. Through this forum, the TUC provides constructive feedback on the impact of apprenticeship policy and discusses the future strategy of the programme.

We continue to listen to and work with the CBI, the TUC and other stakeholders on all aspects of apprenticeship policy and delivery to ensure the programme continues to deliver for employers of all sizes.

Apprentices: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect apprentices whose employment has ceased as a consequence of COVID-19. [[HL11393](#)]

Baroness Berridge: We are committed to supporting apprentices who have been made redundant as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, including enabling them wherever possible to continue and complete their apprenticeships.

We launched the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices which provides clear, accessible advice and guidance to individuals, as well as a vacancy sharing scheme to help apprentices find new opportunities with employers. Over 1,000 employers have submitted

opportunities to the vacancy sharing service for redundant apprentices.

We have also amended legislation to enable more apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the event of redundancy. In addition to funding an apprentice's training to completion if they have less than six months of their apprenticeship remaining at the point of redundancy, we have extended this provision to include any apprentice who has completed 75% or more of their apprenticeship at the point of redundancy.

Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow. In the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years, we are making available £2.5 billion for apprenticeships in England, double that spent in the 2010-11 financial year. To help employers offer new apprenticeships, including to those that have been made redundant, employers are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for those 25 and over, until 31 March 2021. We are extending the incentive payments available to employers taking on new apprentices until the end of this financial year, boosting job creation and supporting employers to invest in skills as the economy recovers.

Apprentices: Standards

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with independent apprenticeship providers about improving the quality of apprenticeship training. [[HL11250](#)]

Baroness Berridge: We have made apprenticeships longer and better, with more off-the-job training and proper assessment at the end. All new learners starting an apprenticeship from 1 August 2020 must now start on a high-quality, employer-designed standard. Each apprentice will undertake rigorous and independent end-point assessment to ensure they can perform in the occupation they have been trained in and can demonstrate the duties, and requirements set out in the occupational standard.

We continue to work closely with providers, employers, and sector bodies to improve the quality of apprenticeship training. Ofsted inspections and visits give providers public judgements about the quality of their teaching and learning. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is in contact with independent training providers as part of its normal contract management process, which includes discussing the quality of providers' training (apprenticeships and other provision) and, where necessary, taking action where risks to quality are identified.

ESFA officials also have regular contact with senior figures in the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) to discuss emerging priorities around high-quality training, and test future policy ideas with

some of their members to shape the impact and benefits of new initiatives before they are launched.

We will continue to work with employers, training providers, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and its Quality Alliance of key stakeholders, including AELP, to help boost apprenticeship quality and make sure more people get the skills they need to get ahead.

Asylum: Employment

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 3 November (HL9361), what plans they have to provide an update on when the review into the right to work of asylum seekers will be laid before the House. [HL11207]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The findings of the review will be announced once the work has been completed.

Asylum: Languages

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration An inspection of the Home Office's use of language services in the asylum process, published on 11 November. [HL11200]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office have assessed the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's (ICIBI) report that was conducted between May to November 2019.

The Department has accepted all three of the ICIBI's recommendations and our formal response of 11 November 2020 has been published and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-an-inspection-of-the-home-offices-use-of-language-services-in-the-asylum-process>.

Asylum: Reform

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reform the UK's asylum system. [HL11291]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office is working to transform the broken asylum system and processes: the work will simplify, streamline and digitise processes, ensuring that asylum claimants are treated quickly, fairly and are supported, and that claims which do not qualify are rapidly identified and prepared for return.

Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the avian influenza outbreak; and what assessment they have made of the risk of transfer to the human population. [HL11303]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra's approach to disease control is set out in the Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain (www.gov.uk/government/publications/notifiable-avian-disease-control-strategy) and the Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals in England (www.gov.uk/government/publications/contingency-plan-for-exotic-notifiable-diseases-of-animals-in-england).

Once disease has been confirmed, susceptible birds are humanely culled and disease control zones are put in place around the infected premises. These are to reduce the risk of disease spread further. Movements of live birds, eggs, poultry carcasses, poultry litter and manure are subject to restrictions. Veterinary investigations and epidemiological assessments are carried out at each infected premises, including the tracing of all movements of birds on and off, and surveillance is carried out within the disease control zones.

The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus associated with the current outbreak in the UK has been analysed in the international reference laboratory at Weybridge, Surrey, part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). It has been shown to be genetically the same as that found in the current outbreaks on the continent of Europe. The European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) assessment (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6379>) is that the viruses identified in those outbreaks are not related to the Asian H5N1 ones which have caused some human infections elsewhere in the world.

In the light of the current outbreak we have established a statutory Avian Influenza Protection Zone (AIPZ). All bird keepers are required by law to take a range of further precautions including keeping their birds indoors except in very specific circumstances. Similar measures were also introduced in Scotland and Wales. I refer the Noble Lady to my statement of 8 December 2020: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-12-08/hlws621>.

Public Health England advises that the risk to the public's health from the virus in the current outbreaks is very low. The Food Standards Agency advises that on the basis of the current scientific evidence, avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Avian Influenza: Poultry

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of avian influenza occurring at intensive poultry rearing units compared to the

farming of poultry on open field sites; and whether they have identified any need to improve biosecurity measures for intensive poultry rearing units. [HL11340]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra, and the relevant departments of all administrations in the UK, have robust biosecurity measures in place to reduce the risk of spread of avian influenza and a strong track record of controlling and eliminating outbreaks.

The risk of incursion of avian influenza has been increased to very high for wild birds, medium for poultry with high biosecurity and high for poultry with poor biosecurity. In response to the risk we established an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) across the whole of England from 11 November 2020 and brought additional housing measures into force from the 14 December 2020.

The AIPZ means all bird keepers (whether they have pet birds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) are required by law to take a range of biosecurity precautions including, from the 14 December 2020, keeping their birds indoors except in very specific circumstances. Similar measures were also introduced in Scotland and Wales. I refer the Noble Lady to my statement of 8 December 2020:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-12-08/hlws621>.

The decisions to implement the AIPZ and the additional housing measures followed scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice. In particular a rapid risk assessment on the relative risks of incursion of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N8 into housed or not-housed flocks was undertaken and is available via the following web link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/941150/rapid-risk-assessment-H5N8-HPAI-housing-poultry-flocks-captive-birds.pdf.

Defra is clear that all operational livestock farms should implement strong biosecurity measures and report suspected disease immediately.

Aviation: Air Pollution

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the climate from indirect warming caused by condensation trails from cruising aircraft. [HL11423]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The recent publication "The Contribution of global aviation to anthropogenic climate forcing for 2000 to 2018" by Lee *et al.*, 2020 presents the most up to date scientific analysis of aviation's climate impacts, including contrails. The publication shows that contrail cirrus formation accounts for a large proportion of aviation's climate impact, however large uncertainties remain in determining the climate effects of contrail formation.

As stated in the 2018 Aviation 2050 consultation, the Government will continue to keep non-CO₂ emissions from aviation under review and adjust its policy as more evidence becomes available.

I will place a copy of "The Contribution of global aviation to anthropogenic climate forcing for 2000 to 2018" by Lee *et al.*, 2020 in the libraries of both Houses.

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the possible (1) technological, and (2) regulatory, solutions available to help prevent the formation of aircraft contrails. [HL11424]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) recently produced a report titled "Updated analysis of the non-CO₂ climate impacts of aviation and potential policy measures pursuant to EU Emissions Trading System Directive Article 30(4)" for the European Commission, which identified three policies that could be implemented to prevent the formation of aircraft contrails: a reduction in aromatics in jet fuel; mandatory use of sustainable fuel; and avoidance of ice-supersaturated airspace.

The UK is pushing internationally for investigation of how to reduce aromatics in jet fuel and plans to consult domestically on a sustainable aviation fuel mandate. However, significant uncertainties remain meaning that policies which risk increasing aviation CO₂ emissions, such as rerouting aircraft, cannot be taken forward with confidence that aviation's total climate impact would be reduced.

The Government will continue to keep this issue under review and adjust its policy where necessary.

I will place a copy of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency report in the libraries of both Houses.

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which regulatory arrangements to limit the impact on the climate of aviation once the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU has ended will be sufficiently collaborative across adjoining airspaces. [HL11425]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government remains committed to leading ambitious and concerted international action to combat the contribution of aviation to climate change.

At the end of the Transition Period, EU airspace regulations covering requirements on flight efficiency will be retained as UK law.

The UK will also establish a UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) that supports our world leading climate ambition. The UK ETS will include aviation and impose surrendering obligations on the following routes from day one: UK domestic flights, flights departing the UK to aerodromes in the European Economic Area (EEA), and flights between the UK and Gibraltar.

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the regulatory framework for climate impact offsetting to account for both the direct and indirect climate impact of aviation. [HL11427]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: As a contracting state of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) the UK will participate in the globally agreed Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) from January 2021. Under the scheme, aeroplane operators on routes between participating states will be required to offset the CO₂ emissions above 2019 levels by purchasing and cancelling approved offset credits.

Currently, CORSIA only applies to CO₂ emissions. Due to the uncertainties surrounding aviation's non-CO₂ climate impacts, ICAO does not include these in its climate policies.

The UK played an instrumental role in agreeing CORSIA through ICAO and continues to negotiate for greater environmental integrity within the scheme.

Aviation: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to publish their strategy for the recovery of the aviation sector. [HL11201]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The impact of a second wave of COVID and the need for the Government to respond has impacted on the aviation sector.

The Government has therefore announced through the Global Travel Taskforce, a number of measures to assist the sector to restart over the winter period. This includes the 'Test to release for international travel' (TTR) scheme to be launched on 15 December, which will boost consumer confidence in air travel.

Following the successful implementation of these measures, the government will then put forward of its strategic framework for the medium and long-term recovery of the aviation sector.

Bank Services: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those who are unbanked. [HL11219]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government is committed to supporting all groups in society, including the most vulnerable, with the challenges caused by Covid-19. The Government has boosted the generosity of the welfare system by £7.4bn in 2020-21 including through a temporary £20 a week increase in Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic

element, an increase in Local Housing Allowance rates and relaxation of UC minimum income floor for self-employed claimants. The Department for Work and Pensions offers HMG Payment Exception Service that allows customers access to funds via PayPoint outlets, for individuals who cannot access a bank account.

However, the Government recognises the importance of having a bank account, as it provides a way of receiving income, whether that be salary, pension, benefits or tax credit and opens up opportunities to access other financial products such as savings accounts, credit, insurance and mortgages. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, HM Treasury and the financial regulators have worked closely with banks, building societies and credit unions to maintain branch access for essential services, including for the purposes of opening a bank account.

The Treasury does not make assessments of the number of people who do not have a bank account. However, in 2017, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published the results of the Financial Lives Survey which found that 1.3 million UK adults do not hold an account they can use for day-to-day payments and transactions.

The 9 largest personal current account providers in the UK are legally required to offer fee-free basic bank accounts to customers who do not have a bank account in the UK or who are ineligible for a bank's standard current account. The Treasury publishes data on basic bank accounts annually. The December 2019 publication shows that in total there are nearly 7.5 million basic bank accounts open in the UK. More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/basic-bank-accounts>.

Batteries: Recycling

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce legislation comparable with the proposal by the European Commission to establish a circular economy for all batteries on the European market; and whether any such plans will include requirements for (1) environmentally and socially responsible extraction of raw materials, (2) recyclability, (3) the provision of recycling systems, (4) the use of recycled materials, and (5) efficiency criteria. [HL11341]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: As set out in the Government's December 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy, we are presently reviewing the arrangements applying to batteries and their treatment at end of life. That review is considering all aspects, including requirements relating to when batteries are first placed on the market. We will consider carefully the proposals recently put forward by the European Commission in this area.

Bicycles: Pedestrian Areas

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to consult on raising the penalties for cyclists and delivery drivers using heavyweight electric bicycles who (1) ride on the pavement, and (2) leave their bikes blocking the pavement, to (a) a fine of up to £5,000, and (b) six months imprisonment. [HL11275]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Her Majesty's Government have no current plans to consult on raising the penalties for cyclists and delivery drivers using heavyweight electric bicycles who ride on the pavement, or leave their bikes blocking the pavement.

In 2018 we consulted on creating new cycling offences for people whose cycling behaviour caused serious harm. The responses have been analysed and the government response will be issued in due course.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they prioritise measures to address issues relating to (1) climate change, and (2) biodiversity; whether more priority is given to one over the other; and if so, how they decide the differing level of priority. [HL11121]

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they prioritise measures (1) to reduce carbon emissions, and (2) to conserve habitats; whether more priority is given to one over the other; and if so, how they decide the differing level of priority. [HL11122]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The climate and biodiversity crises are linked, and this Government believes they have to be tackled together. Globally, climate change is the third biggest driver of biodiversity loss, while biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation further exacerbate climate change - releasing stored carbon into the atmosphere and reducing our ability to adapt to a changing climate.

As we develop our plans to deliver our world-leading net zero target at home, we will need to progress climate change and biodiversity objectives together. For example, we will need to balance land use change for mitigation purposes such as planting trees, with enhancing the natural environment and improving food security. Defra and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are working closely together to ensure that this balance is met.

The Government has introduced significant new funding for nature restoration to address climate change, but this does not detract from our biodiversity goals - the funding is additional and complementary. We prioritise funding for ecosystems that provide the greatest contribution to our emissions targets, following the

underlying science. Our assessment is that, on land, restoring degraded peatlands and appropriately creating and managing multi-purpose woodlands will offer the greatest benefits for tackling climate change, while also contributing to biodiversity goals, addressing these challenges together. Our Nature for Climate Fund is therefore providing £640 million over the course of this Parliament for the creation, restoration and management of woodland and peatland habitats.

We have a range of funding streams that support conservation of other habitats and wider biodiversity goals. This includes agri-environment schemes and green recovery funds, where the contribution to biodiversity, as well as wider environmental outcomes, is used to prioritise funding.

Research suggests that, globally, nature based solutions could provide up to a third of the most cost-effective carbon mitigation, but despite that, only around 3% of international climate finance is invested in nature. We believe there is a need for a significant increase in support for nature based solutions, which is why we have put nature at the heart of our climate ambitions - domestically and internationally.

Biodiversity: Conferences

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to include farming representatives in the UK delegation to the Conference on the Convention on Biodiversity in 2021. [HL11146]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Farmers have a crucial role to play in implementing the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity at home.

This role was evident from the evaluation of Biodiversity 2020, the Government's previous strategy for implementing the Convention's commitments in England. This report, published in 2019, found strong partnerships that included farmers and landowners had supported progress in driving forward our biodiversity goals on land, by managing habitat condition, extent and connectivity. Agri-environment schemes were considered in the report to be the main mechanisms by which biodiversity improvements have been delivered. It highlighted how farmers and landowners, through agri-environment options and partnership working with Government and the conservation community, had supported the recovery of declining species, including circl bunting and turtle dove.

Domestic biodiversity and land management policy is devolved in the UK. We are developing a new strategy for nature to replace Biodiversity 2020 in England. We expect the new strategy will continue to stress the importance of farmers, farming and wider land management as we take forward our plans under a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biodiversity, as well as those set out under our 25 Year Environment Plan.

Our new Environmental Land Management Scheme will be a powerful tool for delivering the goals of our 25 Year Environment Plan, including for biodiversity, on farmed land in England. Environmental Land Management will also play a role in supporting the “30by30” target, to protect 30% of England’s land for biodiversity by 2030, through habitat creation and restoration, or securing long-term management and protection for wildlife-rich habitats.

The 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held in Kunming, China in 2021. The make-up of the UK delegation will be confirmed closer to the time and will be dependent on the conference agenda.

*Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role farmers can play in improving biodiversity in their preparations for participation in the Conference on the Convention on Biodiversity in 2021. [[HL11147](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Farmers have a crucial role to play in implementing the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity at home.

This role was evident from the evaluation of Biodiversity 2020, the Government’s previous strategy for implementing the Convention commitments in England. This report, published in 2019, found strong partnerships that included farmers and landowners had supported progress in driving forward our biodiversity goals on land, by managing habitat condition, extent and connectivity. Agri-environment schemes were considered in the report to be the main mechanisms by which biodiversity improvements have been delivered. It highlighted how farmers and landowners, through agri-environment options and partnership working with Government and the conservation community, had supported the recovery of declining species, including ciril bunting and turtle dove.

Domestic biodiversity and land management policy is devolved in the UK. We are developing a new strategy for nature to replace Biodiversity 2020 in England. We expect the new strategy will continue to stress the importance of farmers, farming and wider land management as we take forward our plans under a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biodiversity, as well as those set out under our 25 Year Environment Plan.

Our new Environmental Land Management Scheme will be a powerful tool for delivering the goals of our 25 Year Environment Plan, including for biodiversity, on farmed land in England. Environmental Land Management will also play a role in supporting the “30by30” target, to protect 30% of England’s land for biodiversity by 2030, through habitat creation and restoration, or securing long-term management and protection for wildlife-rich habitats.

The 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held in Kunming, China in 2021. The make-up of the UK delegation will be confirmed closer to the time and will be dependent on the conference agenda.

Borders: Digital Technology

*Asked by **Lord Beecham***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increased costs of the digital border system to monitor the movement of people and goods into and out of the UK arising from missing the initial deadline of March 2019. [[HL11391](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Significant external factors over the last few years have inevitably required changes to the original delivery plans for the Digital Services at the Border programme as set out in 2014, for example, the decision to leave the EU, improvements in the Home Office’s approach to using information, and changes to the way that government handles data.

The programme was reset in 2019 to help ensure the best chance of success, this included actions to strengthen the leadership team and put in place a clear plan of delivery.

As part of the reset in 2019, the Digital Services at the Border Programme was extended for three years to complete in April 2022. The Home Office estimate the net additional costs that will be incurred by the programme resulting from the extension will be £173 million.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

*Asked by **Lord Hylton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to call for a review of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reached on 21 November 1995, in order to find new constitutional arrangements for Bosnia–Herzegovina; and what plans they have to stipulate, as part of any such review, that the population of Bosnia–Herzegovina be consulted in any such review. [[HL11412](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The importance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, which brought an end to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in the 1990s, cannot be overstated. However, it was not intended to be set in stone and was worded to enable local actors to make changes in the future. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting BiH's security, democracy and prosperity, underpinned as necessary by constitutional reform. The international community will offer support, but it is essential that the authorities in BiH themselves make reforms based on broad consensus and for the greater good of all citizens. This path forward requires compromise and cooperation from all sides. All BiH citizens must have the right to participate equally in their country's future. The Foreign

Secretary called on BiH's leaders to focus on a peaceful future and democratic rights for all in his statement to mark the anniversary of the Dayton Agreement on 21 November.

Brexit

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the UK's preparedness for the end of the transition period following the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11367]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UK's preparedness for the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11431]

Lord True: We have been making significant preparations for the end of the transition period, and have been urging businesses and citizens to do the same, with the Government supporting them to do so.

The key actions that businesses and citizens need to take before the end of the Transition Period are set out on [GOV.UK/transition](https://gov.uk/transition) which contains advice on a wide range of subjects.

Brexit: Festivals and Special Occasions

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likelihood of securing Parliamentary approval for government expenditure on a ceremony to mark the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11440]

Lord True: The Government was elected on a manifesto which made clear our plans to exit the EU, that the transition period will end on 31 December 2020, and that we will have recovered our economic and political independence.

Many millions of people welcome this outcome and will mark it in their own private ways. A ceremony is not appropriate at a time of COVID restrictions.

British Nationals Abroad

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of British citizens who are resident overseas. [HL11153]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO does not hold data on the number of British citizens who are resident overseas. This is because there is no requirement for British travellers or residents to register with us when they go overseas.

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government which departments hold information on British citizens who are resident overseas; and what categories of information each of those departments hold. [HL11154]

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what arrangement each department has for dealing with inquiries from British citizens who are resident overseas; and whether all departments (1) have a dedicated phone line for, and (2) provide training to staff about how to deal with, such inquiries. [HL11158]

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many requests for assistance have been received by (1) the Department of Work and Pensions, (2) HM Revenue and Customs, and (3) other Government departments, from British citizens who are resident overseas in each of the past five years. [HL11235]

Lord True: This information is not held centrally.

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of British citizens who are resident outside of the UK, broken down by country of residence. [HL11155]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO does not hold data on the number of British citizens who are resident overseas. This is because there is no requirement for British travellers or residents to register with us when they go overseas.

Broadband

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their announcement on 25 November that their target for the rollout of gigabit broadband to householders in the UK by 2025 has been revised to 85 per cent, when they estimate 100 per cent of households will have such broadband; and what costs will be saved before 2025 as a result of the new target. [HL11527]

Baroness Barran: The Government remains committed to delivering nationwide gigabit connectivity as soon as possible. Our programme for gigabit-capable broadband has made dramatic progress. More than a third of UK premises now have access to gigabit-capable connections, up from nine per cent when the government took office in July 2019. By next year, more than half of all premises will have access. We are working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025 but will seek to accelerate rollout further to get as close to 100% as possible.

We remain committed to investing £5bn in bringing gigabit coverage to the hardest to reach areas and will

continue to work with suppliers to accelerate this investment.

Buildings: Insulation

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase insulation in properties to contribute to the net-zero carbon emissions target. [\[HL11394\]](#)

Lord Callanan: The £1.5 billion Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme aims to deliver energy efficiency and clean heat upgrades to 600,000 homes across England. Insulation forms one of the groups of primary measures funded through the scheme. The scheme has been extended to March 2022, as announced in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

Support is also available for installation of energy efficiency measures, including insulation, through a number of government-funded schemes. In addition to the £640 million per year Energy Company Obligation (ECO), in financial year 2020-21, these include the £500 million Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Green Homes Grant Scheme and the £50 million Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator (SHDFD), with a further £60 million for this scheme for 2021-22 announced in the Spending Review.

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in the new year, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

Burundi: Economic Situation

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Legatum Institute The Legatum Prosperity Index 2020, published on 16 November; and in particular that report's findings that Burundi is (1) 157th out of 167 countries ranked in terms of overall prosperity, and (2) among the top 10 worst countries in the world in the categories of (a) economic quality, (b) living conditions, and (c) health. [\[HL11204\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains concerned by the development indicators for Burundi and the findings of this report. The UK has been providing support to Burundi to tackle health crises including helping to tackle acute malnutrition, responding to a malaria outbreak and supporting on Ebola and COVID-19 response.

Business and Employment

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) protect jobs, and (2) support

businesses, at the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [\[HL11432\]](#)

Lord Callanan: We have provided support and tools to help businesses prepare and understand the actions they need to take ahead of the end of the transition period. The Government, through HMRC, has provided £84 million to support small businesses adapt to new customs rules, and the Department for International Trade has established a £38m Internationalisation Fund for small businesses.

The Government has published comprehensive guidance and launched an online checker tool for businesses to tailor guidance to their needs via GOV.UK. BEIS has also undertaken a comprehensive programme of engagement with businesses, including my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State writing out to 4.7 million businesses across the country to inform them of how to prepare for the end of the transition period.

Business and Employment: Government Assistance

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) maintain jobs, and (2) support businesses, after the end of the transition period following the UK's departure from the EU. [\[HL11368\]](#)

Lord Callanan: We have provided support and tools to help businesses prepare and understand the actions they need to take ahead of the end of the transition period. The Government, through HMRC has provided £84 million to support small businesses adapt to new customs rules and DIT has established a £38m Internationalisation Fund for small businesses.

The Government has published comprehensive guidance and launched an online checker tool for businesses to tailor guidance to their needs via GOV.UK. BEIS has also undertaken a comprehensive programme of engagement with businesses including the Secretary of State writing out to 4.7 million businesses across the country to inform them of how to prepare for the end of the transition period.

Canary Islands: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Snape

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their decision to remove the Canary Islands from their travel corridor list for the COVID-19 pandemic, what plans they have to renew their advice on holiday travel to that destination. [\[HL11494\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: FCDO travel advice related to COVID-19 is based on the country assessments of Public Health England and the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC), the organisation mandated to provide health advice to British nationals travelling overseas. They judge the risks of exposure to COVID-19 in each country/territory. All FCDO travel

advice pages remain under constant review to ensure they reflect the latest threat assessment to British nationals and include up-to-date information and advice.

Canary Islands: Immigrants and Refugees

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Spain about the number of migrants and refugees arriving in the Canary Islands; whether that government has requested any assistance with this matter; and what plans they have to offer support (1) to aid that government's assessment and resettlement of those migrants, and (2) to prevent the establishment of permanent camps. [HL11029]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government, through our Embassy in Madrid, discusses a range of issues related to migration with the Spanish authorities. Our Embassy monitors closely the recent rise in migrant crossings from West Africa to the Canary Islands which, according to Spain's Ministry of the Interior, increased by 1,019% between 1 January and 15 November compared with the same period in 2019. The Government of Spain has not requested assistance in managing this increase in arrivals and the UK Government, whilst committed to working with Spain to achieve safe and properly managed migration, has no plans to intervene.

Cars: Loans

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Our work on motor finance—final findings, published on 1 March 2019, and the decision by the FCA announced on 28 July to ban discretionary commission models of car finance, what assessment they have made of whether personal contract purchase finance has been mis-sold; and what plans they have to introduce a compensation scheme for any consumers affected. [HL11374]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: This question has been passed on to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The FCA will reply directly to the Lord Bishop by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Children: Computers

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of (1) the total number, and (2) the percentage of schoolchildren in (a) England and (b) Leeds who are currently without home internet access. [HL11168]

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of (1) the total number, and (2) the

percentage, of schoolchildren in (a) England, and (b) Leeds, currently without access to a laptop at home. [HL11169]

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many laptops they committed to provide to schools in (1) England, and (2) Leeds, during the COVID-19 pandemic; and how many have been delivered. [HL11170]

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to procure, and (2) to deliver, (a) laptops, and (b) home internet access, to disadvantaged students in Leeds during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11171]

Baroness Berridge: The department has provided laptops, tablets and connectivity support to schools and social care services during the COVID-19 outbreak to enable them to support disadvantaged and vulnerable children. Over the summer, over 220,000 laptops and tablets were provided to allow schools and social care services to support disadvantaged pupils in year 10, children with a social worker, and care leavers.

This term, the department has bolstered this support by providing laptops and tablets to schools where face to face education has been disrupted in order to enable them to support pupils in years 3 to 11. We will have made over 500,000 devices available by the end of the year and invested nearly £200 million to support remote education. The devices and connectivity support are provided to local authorities, trusts and schools. They are best placed to know which pupils need access and are responsible for onward distribution.

The department publishes delivery data periodically. We therefore have two snapshots, summer term as of 27 August and current term as of 23 October.

As of 27 August 2020, 3,016 laptops and tablets had been delivered to Leeds Council and schools. Delivery data reflecting support provided over the summer is published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Device_s_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf.

Given that devices for non-maintained schools were provided to academy trusts, and that these can span multiple local authorities, we cannot provide a precise figure for the number of devices received by schools in Leeds during summer term.

Information on the laptops and tablets provided this term to schools, local authorities and academy trusts as of 23 October 2020 is published below. We have delivered 105,508 nationally:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc_stats_note_shipped_data_231020_FINAL.pdf.

We will be publishing further delivery data after the end of term.

For deliveries during both the summer and autumn term, the department has allocated a number of laptops and tablets to each school. This term, schools are invited to order from this allocation when face to face education is disrupted.

To arrive at this allocation of devices, the department used data on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals in each school. The department expects that pupils' device needs will be met to some extent by existing school laptops and tablets that the school already owns.

To identify the number of children who require support to access the internet, the department used data on pupils eligible for free school meals in each school, taking into consideration estimations by Ofcom and reflecting that some pupils would already have access to a private internet connection.

Schools, local authorities and academy trusts can request additional devices if their allocation from the department does not meet their needs. These requests can be submitted to covid.technology@education.gov.uk.

Children: Day Care

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the Department for Education report Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19, published on 26 October, that 45 per cent of nurseries and pre-schools and 55 per cent of childminders expect to remain financially sustainable for the next year; and what action they intend to take to support those childcare providers who do not expect to remain financially sustainable. [HL11511]

Baroness Berridge: The government recognises the importance of supporting the early years sector financially during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We are continuing to fund childcare at the same level as before the COVID-19 outbreak, until the end of the calendar year, giving nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of how many children are attending. Early years settings will continue to benefit from a planned £3.6 billion in funding for the 2020/21 financial year, to create free early education and childcare places.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced on 25 November 2020 a further £44 million investment for the 2021/22 financial year. We can now also confirm that in the 2021/22 financial year, we will increase the hourly funding rates for all local authorities by 8p an hour for the 2 year old entitlement and, for the vast majority of areas, by 6p an hour for the 3 and 4 year old entitlement. This will pay for a rate increase that is higher than the costs nurseries may face from the uplift to the national living wage in April 2020.

Additionally, the government has provided a package of support for individuals and businesses which are directly benefitting providers of childcare. This includes business

rates relief and grants, the extended Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which will remain open until April 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

Our 'Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19 (Coronavirus)', published on 26 October 2020, contains information on early years providers' use of the CJRS and how many childminders applied for and received government support. This can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-covid-19-coronavirus>.

At the time of the survey (July 2020), 76% per cent of open group-based providers and 14% of open school-based providers reported having made use of the CJRS at any point.

At the time of the survey, all childminders were asked whether they had applied for any financial support from the government due to loss of income (for example, via the SEISS or the Small Business Grant Scheme). The majority of all childminders (86%) reported having applied for financial support from the government. Of these, 80% have received support and 6% had applied for but not yet received support. 14% of childminders had not applied for financial support.

The government continues to work closely with both local authorities and early years sector organisations to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the sector. We continue to both look at the costs associated with the outbreak and to secure the best and most appropriate support for the sector.

China and Tibet: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that UK businesses undertake supply chain due diligence regarding the reported human rights violations of workers in (1) Xinjiang, and (2) Tibet. [HL11161]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government remains seriously concerned about the gross human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang and Tibet. We continue to urge all UK businesses to conduct appropriate due diligence in their supply chains to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to support, any human rights violations or abuses. More broadly, we are funding think-tank research and engaging business and other stakeholders to share information and promote knowledge of China's human rights violations.

China: HSBC

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relationship between HSBC Bank and the Chinese Communist Party. [HL11375]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are in close contact with a wide range of businesses in Hong Kong, but it is for businesses themselves to make their own judgement calls. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

China: Sanctions

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to identify and apply sanctions against any senior officials of the government of China who are found to be responsible for committing human rights violations against (1) Uyghurs, and (2) Hong Kong citizens. [HL11160]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has taken a leading international role in holding China to account for its gross human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong. On 6 October, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York expressing deep concern at the situation in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, including the mass detention of Uyghurs in political re-education camps. This growing caucus reflects UK diplomatic leadership. The Government's position remains that it is not appropriate to speculate about who may be designated under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations.

China: Uighurs

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of China about the mistreatment of Uighurs. [HL11519]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain committed to promoting human rights in Xinjiang, and our continued multilateral and bilateral activity demonstrates this. The Foreign Secretary has personally raised our serious concerns with his Chinese counterpart on a number of occasions this year. The UK has also taken a leading international role in holding China to account for its gross human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong. On 6 October, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York expressing deep concern at the situation in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, including the mass detention of Uyghurs in political re-

education camps. This growing international pressure on China reflects UK diplomatic leadership, including the personal involvement of the Foreign Secretary in raising the issue with a wide range of partners.

Asked by Lord Garnier

Her Majesty's Government when they plan to conclude the review of the evidence of the government of China's use of Uighur forced labour in Xinjiang; whether they plan to designate identifiable officials of that government as pursuant to the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020; and if so, when. [HL11585]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On 6 July, the UK Government established the Global Human Rights sanctions regime. The Government's position remains that it is not appropriate to speculate about who may be designated under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations. We will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review. We remain deeply concerned that Uyghurs are being placed into forced labour programmes following "graduation" from internment camps, and others are detained for not participating in such programmes. We continue to raise these concerns, including most recently in a joint statement on Xinjiang with 38 other countries at the UN Third Committee in October.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask Her Majesty's Government why Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is not listed on the topics covered by the NHS Clinical Knowledge summary; who authorised the decision to combine CFS with "Tiredness/fatigue in adults"; and when that change was made. [HL11441]

Lord Bethell: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Clinical Knowledge Summary *Tiredness/fatigue in adults* was published in October 2009 and there has been no change in the way it is titled over the subsequent period. NICE advises that the inclusion of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) within the tiredness/fatigue topic is to ensure that clinicians will consider CFS as a potential diagnosis as early as possible in the course of care of a person presenting with symptoms of tiredness and fatigue.

In 2007 NICE published the guideline, *Chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis (or encephalopathy): diagnosis and management*. This is currently being updated and a draft guideline is out for consultation with the final guidance expected in April 2021. The CFS diagnosis and management sections in the Clinical Knowledge Summary on Tiredness/Fatigue are kept in line with NICE guidance on CFS and will be updated following publication of the new guidance if necessary.

Climate Change Convention: Females

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) UK Leadership Team includes at least 50 per cent women. [HL11142]

Lord Callanan: The UK is committed to championing diversity and inclusion throughout our COP26 Presidency and all civil servants in the Cabinet Office COP26 Unit have been appointed in line with Civil Service guidance and rules.

Forty five percent of the Senior Management Team in the COP26 unit are women. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently appointed the Hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP) as the COP26 Adaptation and Resilience Champion.

In line with the Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25, the UK also recognises that the full, meaningful and equal participation and leadership of women in national and local level climate policy and action is vital for achieving long-term climate goals.

Climate Change Convention: Travel

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 6 August (HL7322), what progress they have made on the travel plan for COP26; and what plans they have (1) to block book trains or carriages, (2) arrange special trains or carriages, and (3) to appoint official agents to arrange travel, for those attending COP26. [HL11338]

Lord Callanan: We continue to encourage all delegates to consider low-carbon travel options, such as rail, particularly those arriving from Europe. We have had early engagement with the International Union of Railways to understand what may be done to enhance the take up of rail travel to Glasgow from Europe.

Rail travel within the UK will certainly be encouraged and we are in the process of developing a multifaceted transport plan that is ISO2012 compliant, supports the delegate experience and has sustainability at its core.

Commonwealth: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are providing to smaller Commonwealth nations to access COVID-19 (1) tests, and (2) vaccines. [HL11472]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, treatments and tests globally as demonstrated by our strong support for the Access for COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, to which the UK has contributed up to £813 million of new funds. This includes up to £23 million

committed to the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), to drive innovation in the development and delivery of tests to combat major diseases affecting the poorest populations. Our contribution also includes the UK's commitment of up to £500 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. On top of our existing contribution of £48 million re-programmed from existing Gavi programming, this makes the UK the COVAX AMC's largest bilateral donor. Our commitment will support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, including in the Commonwealth, by contributing to the supply of 1 billion doses in 2021, and vaccinations for up to 500 million people (subject to vaccines successfully securing stringent regulatory approvals).

Communication Service Providers

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of which communications service providers do not (1) recognise, and (2) accept, the extraterritorial application of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000; and whether these include (1) Facebook, (2) Twitter, (3) Google, (4) TikTok, and (5) Parler. [HL11148]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Much of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 has been replaced by the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. The IPA regime enables the extraterritorial application of our laws so that requests can be made both domestically and overseas. Whilst HMG cannot comment on the opinion of private companies, the IPA is enforceable through civil proceedings.

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government which communications service providers charge for information requests, such as IP addresses, from the UK police and law enforcement agencies for use in criminal investigations, and whether these include (1) Facebook, (2) Twitter, (3) Google, (4) TikTok, and (5) Parler. [HL11149]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It would be operationally and commercially sensitive to discuss the details of any specific company and their support in investigations. The IPA, in Section 249, provides a statutory cost recovery mechanism stating that the Telecommunications Operator should "receive an appropriate contribution in respect of such of their relevant costs" (s249(1)) and that any payment may be "subject to terms and conditions determined by the Secretary of State" (s249(3)).

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many requests for information from the UK police and law

enforcement agencies for information from communications service providers are currently outstanding for longer than (1) one month, (2) three months, and (3) one year. [HL11150]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office do not hold this information centrally. Each Public Authority authorised to acquire data under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 will likely maintain their own records.

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current annual budget required to cover the cost of obtaining information, including IP addresses, from communication service providers in relation to criminal investigations. [HL11151]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Information relating to the cost of obtaining information from communication service providers in relation to criminal investigations is not held centrally by the Home Office.

Section 249 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 recognises that Telecommunications Operators and Postal Operators incur expenses in complying with requirements in the Act. The Act, therefore, allows for appropriate, minimal reimbursement to be made to them to cover these costs insofar as they do not suffer commercial disadvantage for complying with their notice. All other costs are expected to be met by the Telecommunications Operator. Section 22 of the Communications Data Code of Practice sets out further relevant detail in relation to Communications Data funding.

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the average timescale between information being requested by UK law enforcement agencies from communication service providers in relation to criminal investigations and that information being provided. [HL11152]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Home Office officials work with law enforcement regularly to consider what data is operationally valuable to them and how they may lawfully access it. It is vital that law enforcement agencies have the information they need to detect and prevent crime and keep the public safe.

The legal routes available to law enforcement agencies will depend on the specific circumstances and the types of data sought.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 allows the Government to place obligations on Telecommunications Operators to co-operate with Law Enforcement Agencies in providing specific data required for investigations.

The Act governs these powers and provides extensive privacy safeguards and a robust oversight regime, including approval of the most intrusive powers by an independent Judicial Commissioner and the Secretary of State.

During the parliamentary passage of the IPA, the UK Government set out, in detail, how IPA powers can be used, and continues to do so where appropriate.

The information concerning average timescales for data being requested by UK law enforcement agencies from communication service providers is not held centrally by the Home Office. Each Public Authority authorised to acquire data under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 will likely maintain records of their own average timescales. These timescales may depend on the Telecommunications Operator and the urgency of the investigation.

Confucius Institutes

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many branches of the Confucius Institute are active in universities in England; and what plans they have to determine how many universities in England give financial support to branches of the Confucius Institute. [HL11109]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: A number of UK higher education providers host Confucius Institutes. As autonomous, independent organisations, they bear the responsibility of ensuring that their partnerships are managed appropriately, with the right due diligence. The Department for Education does not collate information on the funding arrangements for Confucius Institutes, but continues to support the higher education sector to promote mutually beneficial international partnerships and UK values. We encourage providers to contact the department if they have any concerns regarding their international collaborations.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 16 November (HL9859), which Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan lenders have charged interest rates of more than 14.99 per cent per annum; and what is the total value of such loans. [HL11478]

Lord Callanan: Interest rates are set by lenders under the scheme. The British Business Bank and BEIS do not approve individual commercial terms. Some delivery partners accredited before the 14.99 per cent maximum rate of interest was in place can issue Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) facilities with interest rates above 14.99 per cent. We are unable to provide a breakdown by lender as this data is commercially sensitive.

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 16 November (HL9859), whether any lenders charging 14.99 per cent

per annum or more for Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans also charged arrangement fees of more than 3 per cent per annum. [HL11479]

Lord Callanan: Interest rates are set by lenders under the scheme. The British Business Bank and BEIS do not approve individual commercial terms. Some delivery partners accredited before the 14.99 per cent maximum rate of interest was in place can issue Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) facilities with interest rates above 14.99 per cent. We are unable to provide a breakdown by lender as this data is commercially sensitive.

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government what value of loans extended by Greensill under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme had annual rates of interest of more than 10 per cent per annum; and what proportion of Greensill loans within the Scheme involved an arrangement fee of 3 per cent per annum. [HL11480]

Lord Callanan: We are unable to provide of a breakdown of Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme data by lender as this is commercially sensitive.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by Baroness Noakes

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of nosocomial infection rates for SARS-COV2 throughout 2020 in (1) England, and (2) the UK. [HL10357]

Asked by Baroness Noakes

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their current estimate of the rate of nosocomial infection for SARS-COV2 in (1) England, (2) Scotland, (3) Wales, and (4) Northern Ireland. [HL10358]

Lord Bethell: Information on the estimated nosocomial infection rate for COVID-19 throughout 2020 in England is not available. Data is collected on the time between admission to hospital and the first positive swab for COVID-19, as part of a daily COVID-19 sitrep. The sitrep data collection began on 20 May 2020 and does not therefore cover the full pandemic.

Due to health systems being devolved in the United Kingdom, the Government does not have data on nosocomial infection rates for the other UK nations.

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to address any shortfall in funding for the World Health Organization-led Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, and (2) to ensure global equitable access (a) to tests, (b) to treatments, and (c) to vaccines, to prevent economic damage to low and lower middle income countries; and what representations they have

made to international partners to address any such shortfall in funding. [HL11319]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, treatments, and tests. This is demonstrated by our strong support for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. The UK is its largest bilateral donor, contributing up to £813 million to the ACT-Accelerator partners. This includes up to £548 million for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which is the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines as well as other important medical technologies.

The UK recognises that there are critical ACT-Accelerator funding gaps. We continue to encourage international partners to actively work together to mobilise the resources needed, both bilaterally and in international fora.

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting government policies on (1) incomes, (2) unemployment levels, (3) furlough levels, (4) benefit payments, (5) the number of companies ceasing to trade, and (6) regional levels of GDP, in each region of England including London. [HL11352]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: We recognise the challenges that COVID-19 is having on all groups in society, including the most vulnerable. That is why the government announced an unprecedented package of support – including boosts to Universal Credit, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme – helping to protect incomes, jobs, and support those most at need. HMT distributional analysis as of the end of May 2020 showed that these interventions, along with the existing tax and welfare system, helped reduce income losses faced by working households by up to two-thirds, with the poorest working households protected the most (as a proportion of income).

On the level of unemployment, the unemployment rate in the three months to October rose 0.7ppts on the quarter and 1.2ppts on the year to 4.9%. The unemployment level rose by 241,000 on the quarter and rose by 411,000 on the year, to 1.7 million. The single-month unemployment rate for October rose by 0.3ppt on September to 5.2%. The unemployment level rose by 114,000 on the month and 582,000 on the year to 1.8 million.

Regarding those furloughed under the CJRS, this scheme was designed and created to respond to the crisis. As of 13 December 2020, the CJRS has helped 1.2 million employers across the UK furlough 9.9 million jobs, protecting people's livelihoods. £46.4 billion has been paid out in grants.

On benefit payments, the pandemic has seen a substantial increase in Universal Credit claims – as of August, 4.6 million households were in receipt of

Universal Credit, compared to 2.6 million in February. The Office for Budget Responsibility's November 2020 Economic and Fiscal Outlook fully assessed the impact of Covid-19 and associated government policy measures of welfare spending, and found that the government is spending an additional £7.4 billion on its overall package of increased welfare support.

On the number of companies ceasing to trade, insolvency case registrations remain above 2019 levels. For the year to date, registrations in 2020 remain low, at around 73% of 2019 levels.

Finally, on the impact on regional GDP, in November 2020, the Office for National Statistics published experimental measures of quarterly regional GDP for the first quarter of 2020 for Wales and the English regions. They show a reduction in GDP in all regions compared to the last quarter of 2019. These statistics are still in development and should be interpreted with caution. The latest official regional GDP statistics relate to 2018 and were published in December 2019.

Asked by Lord Robathan

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Bethell on 1 December (HL Deb, cols 717–21), what assessment they have made of the efficacy of lockdowns in preventing the transmission of COVID-19. [HL11369]

Lord Bethell: Evidence suggests that more stringent interventions tend to reduce the reproduction number of the virus.

The lockdown imposed in late March and the changes in behaviour that preceded this had a high level of uptake and resulted in a rapid reduction in the reproduction number 'R' from about 2.5–3.0 to about 0.5–0.7. That is a reduction in 'R' of about 2, or a reduction in transmission of 75%. We continue to review the efficacy of measures.

Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the disproportionate rate of fines issued to BAME communities under regulations introduced to address the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11378]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) have published an analysis of the disproportionality of fines issued via a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN), for breaching the new public health regulations to control the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) which can be found here: <https://cdn.prgloo.com/media/download/608327f7e62a4432a59ce05c5c1554bc>

The analysis presented in this report covers such fines issued between 27th March and 25th May 2020. The data shows that the disparity rate for individuals of a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background was 1.6 times higher than White individuals.

We will continue to work extremely closely with the police as we have throughout the pandemic. We are clear that no one should be subject to police enforcement on the basis of race alone and we work with forces and the NPCC to address disproportionality in policing.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the priority that should be given to making a COVID-19 vaccine available to people with diabetes. [HL11047]

Lord Bethell: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to the priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all individuals aged 16–64 years old with underlying health conditions such as diabetes.

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential benefits of including blood donors in the priority groups of those to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. [HL11330]

Lord Bethell: In line with the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the vaccine is being rolled out to priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and health and care workers. The vaccine is then being prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all individuals aged 16–64 years old with underlying health conditions.

Blood donors range between those aged 17 years old to over 70 years old. While blood donors are not in the priority group to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, some donors are likely to receive a vaccine as part of the national roll-out.

Asked by Baroness Manzoor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they had about the impact of the COVID-19 vaccines on people with pre-existing health conditions prior to authorising the use of those vaccines. [HL11362]

Lord Bethell: Prior to the recent authorisation, the efficacy of COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 was

evaluated in two clinical studies. The first study excluded co-morbidities or pre-existing health conditions. The second study allowed enrolment of subjects with pre-existing stable disease, defined as disease not requiring significant change in therapy or hospitalisation for worsening disease during the six weeks before enrolment. Also enrolled were subjects with known stable infection with HIV, hepatitis C or hepatitis B. There were no meaningful clinical differences in overall vaccine efficacy in participants who were at risk of severe COVID-19 disease including those with one or more comorbidities that increase the risk of severe COVID-19 disease.

Evaluation of data for other vaccines is ongoing but will include a robust review of all quality, safety and efficacy data, including in those with pre-existing health conditions if they were included in clinical trials.

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on supplies of COVID-19 vaccines to the UK in the event of the UK's departure from the EU without a deal. [HL11389]

Lord Callanan: The UK has put in place a number of measures to facilitate trade with the EU beyond the end of the transition period and to avoid any adverse impact to vaccine supply beyond 1 January 2021.

The Government has worked with COVID-19 vaccine suppliers to support them with robust contingency plans.

If necessary, we will use alternative supply routes and Government procured freight capacity, in line with current Government advice.

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of plans to test whether the Oxford/AstraZeneca and Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccines can be combined successfully. [HL11455]

Lord Callanan: This is a commercial matter for AstraZeneca on which the Government cannot comment. The agreement between the UK Government and AstraZeneca to supply 100 million doses of vaccine is unaffected by any further agreements by AstraZeneca with other partners.

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many doses of the Sputnik V vaccine they (1) have purchased, or (2) are planning to purchase, in the event that tests show that the Oxford/AstraZeneca and Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccines can be combined successfully. [HL11457]

Lord Callanan: The UK Government has not and is not planning to purchase any Sputnik V vaccines.

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of (1) syringes, (2) vials, and (3) other medical equipment required for a national COVID-19 vaccination

programme they have (a) purchased, and (b) ordered. [HL9903]

Lord Bethell: Purchase orders have been raised for all required medical equipment to support a vaccination programme and further orders have been made to support the ongoing deployment. NHS England have published the Supply Service Inventory List online.

Courts: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many cases have been heard to date in each of the 'Nightingale Courts'. [HL11500]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is our top priority. By opening 18 Nightingale courts, we have added vital capacity and provided 33 extra court rooms, alleviating the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic. Additionally, we have secured £30m of funding to open a further 40 Nightingale court rooms in early 2021.

We do not break down data on cases heard in Nightingale Courts.

Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many hours each of the 'Nightingale Courts' have been (1) open, and (2) sitting for court business, in each month since July. [HL11501]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: As part of our recovery plans across all jurisdictions, Nightingale Courts have enabled us to open a great deal of additional court capacity.

All 18 of the existing Nightingale Courts operate regular court opening hours of 9-5pm, and this will apply also to the additional five Nightingale sites announced this week. Data on sitting days in each court is recorded under their parent court. It is therefore not possible to disaggregate the data with sufficient granularity to set out sitting hours in each Nightingale.

Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many cases were outstanding (1) in the Crown Court of England and Wales, and (2) in the magistrates' courts, in each month of 2020. [HL11504]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The volume of outstanding cases in the criminal courts is published routinely. The latest available data for the number of cases outstanding (1) in the Crown Court of England and Wales, and (2) in the Magistrates' courts, in each month of 2020 has been provided in the table below.

	Magistrates 1-3	Crown 1,2
Month	Outstanding	Outstanding
Jan-20	314,169	38,411

	<i>Magistrates 1-3</i>	<i>Crown 1,2</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
Feb-20	316,818	39,218
Mar-20	337,897	40,037
Apr-20	391,228	40,997
May-20	415,559	41,342
Jun-20	433,516	42,459
Jul-20	444,173	44,892
Aug-20	443,605	47,544
Sep-20	424,651	50,123
Oct-20	411,807	52,133

Notes:

1) The management information presented in this table reflects what is recorded on relevant case-management systems on the date of extraction. The case-management systems are continually updated and so the information presented will differ from previously published information.

2) The management information presented is different from the quarterly MOJ official statistics published due to timing and definitional reasons. The official statistics go through a more comprehensive quality assurance and analysis process to ensure quality and coherence.

3) Figures above include all case offence types. However, MOJ published statistics are filtered to include only the following offence types: Triable-either-way, Indictable Only, Summary Motoring, Summary Non-Motoring, Breaches.

Covid Winter Grant Scheme

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the Department for Work and Pensions will use the information it collects from councils on the implementation of the Winter Grant Scheme to inform future approaches to supporting vulnerable low-income families. [[HL11358](#)]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: We are working across-government to tackle a range of cost of living issues that affect not only the poorest in society but other households including those who are struggling financially due to the pandemic. The information provided by local authorities on how they are using the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support vulnerable households will feed into our future policy thinking as part of this work.

Credit Unions: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the credit union sector in the UK. [[HL11220](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government recognises the vital role of credit unions in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders. In April 2020, the Economic Secretary wrote to credit union trade bodies to thank frontline staff for their efforts to continue to provide essential services to their members.

HM Treasury officials have regularly engaged with the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Economic Secretary has also engaged with representatives from the credit union sector through the Consumer Finance Forum and Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, which are bringing financial services and consumer group representatives together to discuss how to best support people through this period.

Fair4All Finance, the independent body set up by Government to distribute dormant assets funding to support financial inclusion, has set up a £5 million resilience fund to support credit unions and community development finance institutions in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. On 20 May, the Government announced that additional funding through the dormant assets scheme would be released immediately to Fair4All Finance. This includes an expanded Affordable Credit Scale-up Programme, which aims to improve the access and availability of affordable credit, and which I expect to be of benefit to credit unions.

Crown Court: Trials

Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many trials have been completed in the Crown Court of England and Wales in each month of 2020. [[HL11502](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Crown Court trials which proceed on the planned date are recorded as effective. We do not record trials in the Crown Court under a category of completed.

Data showing effective trials in each month of 2020 in England and Wales, can be found in the table below.

Published data is up to September 2020 (the end of Q3) and we are unable to provide data past that point.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Number of effective trials¹</i>
2020	January	906
	February	824
	March	520
	April	-
	May	8
	June	61
	July	200
	August	275
	September	471

Notes:

1) The total number of trials listed during the reporting period indicated, is considered 'effective' once a jury is sworn in regardless of whether they go on to reach a verdict. Not all cases will go to trial, for the purposes of trial effectiveness we consider a 'trial' at the point of initial listing. A trial which goes ahead on the planned date and occurs is then considered as 'effective', a trial that is listed but does not go ahead is considered either cracked, ineffective or vacated.

Cycleways

Asked by Baroness Fox of Buckley

To ask Her Majesty's Government which local authorities the Prime Minister's Special Adviser on Transport and Infrastructure has had direct communication with since March about the installation of bicycle lanes; and whether he indicated to any councils that any local authority that failed to install bicycle lanes could have its powers as a local highways' authority removed. [[HL11348](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport understands that the Prime Minister's Special Adviser on Transport and Infrastructure has had discussions with a number of local authorities since March on cycle lanes and other matters; but that he has not given such an indication to any authority.

Department for Education: Data Protection

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking further to the findings in the report by the Information Commissioner's Office Department for Education: Data protection audit report, published on 7 October, that the Data Protection Officer of the Department for Education is not meeting the requirements of Articles 37 to 39 of the General Data Protection Regulation. [[HL11496](#)]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the findings in the report by the Information Commissioner's Office Department for Education: Data protection audit report, published on 7 October, what training staff at the Department for Education are receiving about (1) information governance, (2) data protection, (3) records management, (4) risk assessment, (5) data sharing, and (6) information, internal security and individual rights. [[HL11497](#)]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made Ofsted aware of the Information Commissioner's Office's Department for Education: Data protection audit report, published on 7 October. [[HL11498](#)]

Baroness Berridge: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave on 24 November 2020 to Question [HL10194](#).

The department mandates the "Responsible for Information" course provided by Civil Service Learning. We are reviewing the current training requirements. The department has been working closely with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) since the audit was undertaken in February 2020 to address all the recommendations. We will be publishing a formal response in January 2021, which will include an update on the training offering for the department.

Ofsted have been present at briefings on the audit the department has given to the data protection Arm's Length Body Network. The formal response to the ICO audit will also be available to Ofsted.

Department for Transport: Expenditure

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government why they have reduced Network Rail's enhancement budget for the current five year Control Period whilst increasing spending on trunk road schemes; and what assessment they have made of how such a change in spending will contribute to their net-zero carbon emissions target. [[HL11342](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Spending Review confirmed increasing investment in rail infrastructure in England and Wales, committing over £40bn. This sees over £2 billion of funding confirmed in 2021-22 for rail services, building on the estimated £12.8 billion of support for transport services that the Government has already committed to provide in 2020-21.

It remains the case that no schemes have been cancelled nor formal investment decisions taken as a result of the Spending Review. We are committed to building a railway that is greener and fit for the future and that is why we continue to look at ways to decarbonise our network in a way that makes best use of taxpayers funding. As part of this settlement we have committed to funding the Transpennine Route upgrade, including its full electrification.

Deportation

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the merits of only permitting deportation following a recommendation to do so by the courts. [[HL11298](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have an established process whereby all foreign national offenders sentenced to imprisonment are referred to Immigration Enforcement for deportation consideration, and a statutory duty under the UK Borders Act 2007 to deport any offender serving a custodial term of 12 months or more. Those falling outside that category may be

considered liable to deportation under the Immigration Act 1971.

Deportation: Homelessness and Sleeping Rough

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter sent on 6 November by homelessness organisations about making homelessness and rough-sleeping a discretionary ground for deportation; and what steps they intend to take in response to the representations they have received. [HL11297]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The new Immigration Rule which makes provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping, will be used sparingly and only where individuals have refused support offers such as accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

A person is expected to leave the UK if their leave is cancelled or refused. If they do not choose to leave voluntarily the Home Office may enforce their removal. They will not be subject to deportation action which is reserved for foreign national offenders with serious and persistent criminality as well as for reasons of national security.

The new rule will not be used until guidance for decision-makers has been published.

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government are working together to encourage local authorities and approved charities to resolve the immigration status of eligible rough sleepers and unlock access to any benefits and entitlements that rough sleepers may be eligible for.

Deportation: Offenders

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to remove foreign national offenders from the UK. [HL11290]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: One of this Government's key objectives is to protect the public by removing foreign national offenders who commit criminal offences and have no right to remain in the UK. Foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them. Since January 2019, we have removed 6,450 foreign national offenders from the UK.

Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity. Every week we remove foreign criminals from the UK to different countries who have no right to be here. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to return and deport foreign offenders and other

immigration offenders where flight routes have been available to us, both on scheduled flights and charter flights.

For non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals, deportation will be pursued where it is conducive to the public good including where a person receives a custodial sentence of 12 months or more, commits an offence that caused serious harm or is a persistent offender. Currently, European Economic Area (EEA) nationals are deported in accordance with European Union (EU) law on the grounds of public policy or public security.

The UK's departure from the EU means that, in future, an EEA national who commits an offence after the end of the transition period (31 December 2020) will be considered under the same deportation thresholds that apply to non-EEA nationals.

This Government's priority is keeping the people of this country safe, and we make no apology for seeking to remove dangerous foreign criminals.

Developing Countries: Family Planning and Genito-urinary Medicine

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 8 December (HL11055), what DAC codes are used to calculate all the listed annually estimated FCDO spending. [HL11328]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) codes included to calculate the estimated Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) spending under our usual methodologies for the written answer HL11055 includes health policy, health systems, reproductive health care, family planning, STD control, Water and Sanitation, Nutrition, Malaria, TB, and Infectious disease control. For more details please refer to: <https://euromapping.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/EM2018-Methodology.pdf>.

The DAC codes included under the Muskoka 2 report to calculate the estimated FCDO spending cover a similar list to the above with the addition of Humanitarian sector codes. For more details please refer to: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30005-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30005-X/fulltext).

Developing Countries: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 28 January (HL435), how they calculated the 13.6 per cent of UK Official Development Assistance spent on sexual and reproductive health and rights in 2017–18. [HL11329]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In the written answer HL435, the percentage's numerator was calculated as the sum of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child

Health spend using the Muskoka Methodology for Calculating Baselines and Commitments.

The percentage's denominator is FCDO total programme spend.

The data source used was the FCDO spending publication "Statistics on International Development 2017 to 2018: GPEX tables".

Digital Technology: Africa

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to consult with trade partners in Africa when developing their position on digital trade at the World Trade Organisation. [[HL11466](#)]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The UK supports inclusive multilateral trade that enables developing countries, including those in Africa, to engage at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

For example, the UK-funded Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund (TAF2+) provided advice to the African, Caribbean and Pacific and Least Developed Country groups, enabling their effective engagement with discussions on digital trade. The programme launched national-level studies in Senegal and Mauritius, helping them develop positions relevant to the WTO E-commerce negotiations.

The UK also co-sponsored a WTO Council for Trade in Services communication, calling on members to share information on activities undertaken to address the digital divide.

Digital Technology: Training

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce digital skills programmes targeted at unemployed elderly people. [[HL11509](#)]

Baroness Berridge: The government recognises the importance of digital skills for employability and participation in society. This is why we introduced a legal entitlement in August 2020 for adults with no or low digital skills to study new Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs) at entry level and level 1 for free. The digital entitlement mirrors the existing legal entitlements for English and maths and will provide adults with the digital skills needed for life and work. EDSQs are a new qualification type, based on new national standards for essential digital skills, designed to meet the diverse needs of adults with no or low digital skills. We also continue to support the provision of basic digital skills training for adults in community learning settings through the Adult Education Budget.

In April 2020, we launched The Skills Toolkit, which packages up over 70 free, high quality courses from everyday maths and essential digital skills, to digital marketing and coding.

We have also introduced the Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving adults aged 19 and over the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. In September 2020, these were launched in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Liverpool City Region (including Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral). They were initially focused on digital skills such as software development, digital marketing and data analytics. They will be extended to West Yorkshire, Devon, Somerset, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire in the new year. The bootcamps provide the valuable skills that employers need and are linked to job opportunities.

From April 2021, we will be investing a further £43 million through the National Skills Fund to extend Skills Bootcamps further in England. These bootcamps will cover not only digital skills but also technical skills training including welding, engineering and construction.

As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, from April 2021 any adult aged 24 and over looking to achieve their first level 3 (which is equivalent to a technical certificate or diploma, or two full A levels) will be able to access a fully funded course. The offer includes a range of qualifications that are valuable across the economy in multiple sectors including digital skills.

From early 2021, to support older people to find work and build the skills they need to get into work, the Jobcentre Plus will provide a new online one-to-one job finding support service to those who have been unemployed for up to 13 weeks to increase their chances of finding employment.

We have launched Local Digital Skills Partnerships (DSPs) in seven trailblazer regions across England. Local DSPs bring together cross-sector regional and national partners to work collaboratively to upskill the current workforce, advance digital inclusion, and build thriving regional economies. Local DSPs have been playing an important role in the response to COVID-19, collaborating with local organisations and national partners to help individuals and businesses build digital skills and resilience, and support vulnerable groups gain access to digital devices and connectivity.

We have also delivered a £400,000 Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund to help older and disabled people acquire digital skills. The three pilots aimed to help ensure that 'what works' on digital inclusion is identified, replicated and scaled. One of the pilots, run by the Uttlesford Council for Voluntary Service in West Essex, has designed 'smart homes' where more 'tech savvy' older homeowners are trained by 'digital boomers' on how to use the technology that is added to their homes. This allows these older people to showcase how to use the technology within their own homes to their peers before they have their own homes made into a smart home. A full independent evaluation will be published soon to share learnings from this fund.

Disability and Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional support they plan to provide to children with disabilities and special educational needs who are isolating during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11507]

Baroness Berridge: For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), teachers are best placed to know how their needs can be most effectively met to ensure that they continue to make progress, even if they are not able to attend school due to following COVID-19 guidance and the law. The requirement for schools to use their 'best endeavours' to meet the special educational needs of their pupils remains in place.

Schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place adjustments so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education alongside their peers. This expectation is set out in guidance for schools, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

To provide greater clarity, we have published a temporary continuity direction, which makes clear that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded school-age pupils, including those with SEND, where they are unable to attend school due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This came into effect on 22 October 2020. An explanatory note is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923539/Remote_Education_Temporary_Continuity_Direction_-_Explanatory_Note.pdf.

Where a child or young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan, it remains the duty of the local authority, and any health commissioning bodies, to secure or arrange any special educational and health care provision specified in the plan. We recognise that it may become very difficult to do so in certain circumstances, including where the child or young person is self-isolating. In these circumstances, decisions on how provision can be delivered should be taken on a case-by-case basis, informed by the factors relevant to the individual case. This includes, for example, the types of services that the child or young person can access remotely, such as online teaching and remote therapy sessions.

To support the hard work of schools in delivering remote education, we have made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for reception up to year 11. Specialist content for pupils with SEND is also available. This covers communication and language, numeracy, creative arts, independent living, physical development and early development learning. Additionally, Oak offers

therapy-based lessons and resources across occupational, physical, sensory, and speech and language therapy.

As part of over £195 million invested to support access to remote education and online social care, over 340,000 laptops and tablets are being made available this term to support disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11, whose face-to-face education may be disrupted.

This supplements over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers, which have already been delivered during the summer term. Schools, trusts, and local authorities are responsible for distributing the laptops and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

Schools are expected to lend these laptops and tablets to disadvantaged pupils who would not otherwise be able to access remote education in years 3 to 11, including those with SEND. Schools will also be able to order laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children across all year groups who are shielding as a result of official or medical advice, all year groups who attend a hospital school that is required to close, and those completing their key stage 4 at a further education college that is required to close.

The department has announced £37.3 million for the Family Fund this year to support over 75,000 families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This includes £10 million to specifically address needs arising from the COVID-19 outbreak.

Disadvantaged

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conclusion by the Local Government Association in its report Spending Review 2020: On-the-Day Briefing, published on 25 November, that "no proposals for putting local welfare funding on a more sustainable footing to ensure a consistent approach to locally-led support to address financial hardship and economic vulnerability" are included in their Spending Review; and what plans they have to implement any such proposals after March 2021. [HL11356]

Lord Greenhalgh: Spending Review 2020 confirmed that local government's Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.5% in cash terms- a real terms increase. This package means local authorities will be able to access an estimated additional £2.2 billion to support Adult and Children's Social Care and to maintain universal services.

We have taken unprecedented measures during the pandemic to protect the most vulnerable, and put in place a strong package of financial support to support families and children, including our new £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme for local authorities, which is helping tens of thousands of vulnerable children across the country stay warm and well-fed this winter.

Our long-term ambition is to level up opportunity across the UK by helping people back into work as

quickly as possible based on clear and consistent evidence around the important role that work can play in tackling poverty. Our £30 billion plans for jobs is the first step on the ladder to achieving this and will support economic recovery through new schemes including Kickstart and Job Entry Targeted Support.

*Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide long-term sustainable funding to local government for councils (1) to undertake preventative work to address the causes of hardship and disadvantage, and (2) provide support to those households who need it. [HL11357]

Lord Greenhalgh: Spending Review 2020 confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.5 per cent in cash terms- a real terms increase. This package means local authorities will be able to access an estimated additional £2.2 billion to support Adult and Children's Social Care and to maintain universal services. Within their Core Spending Power, councils will have access to an additional £1 billion for social care next year, made up of a £300 million increase to the social care grant and 3 per cent Adult Social Care precept. The additional £1 billion of grant funding announced at SR19 for Adult and Children's Social Care will be continuing, along with all other existing social care funding including the improved Better Care Fund. The Settlement is unringfenced to ensure local areas can prioritise based on their own understanding of the needs of their local communities. We also recently announced that the Troubled Families Programme, which provides early, effective and joined up support for families with complex needs, will continue into a new phase in 2021-21. Up to an additional £165 million has been available for the programme, which will continue to drive system change, both locally and nationally, to serve vulnerable families with the intensive, integrated support they need to overcome their problems before they escalate.

The Troubled Families Programme's evaluation shows that it has been successful in improving outcomes for vulnerable families and driving progress towards intensive, integrated support services. As of September 2020, the programme had funded areas to work with 439,956 families in most need of help. However, we know that local authorities are working in a whole family way with at least 865,000 families. As of September 2020, 382,626 families have made sustained improvements with the problems that led to them joining the programme. In 31,798 of these families one or more adults has moved off benefits and into sustained employment

At the Spending Review we announced an unprecedented package of support for local authorities to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, including measures worth an estimated circa £3 billion of additional support for Covid-19 pressures next year, along with extending the current Sales, Fees and Charges scheme (which refunds 75 per cent of eligible income loss beyond a 5 per

cent threshold) into the first three months of 2021-22. This is on top of the support committed this financial year, including over £7.2 billion for local authorities, even before the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for those authorities under the highest level of restriction – potentially worth over £200 million a month – announced as part of the Covid-19 Winter Plan. This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of Covid-19 to over £10 billion.

Disinformation: Curriculum

*Asked by **Lord Mendelsohn***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to incorporate content into the national curriculum to support educators to counter conspiracy theories. [HL11234]

Baroness Berridge: In June 2019, we published guidance on teaching online safety in schools, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>.

This non-statutory guidance outlines how schools can ensure their pupils understand how to stay safe and behave online as part of existing curriculum requirements. It complements existing and forthcoming subjects, including Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, Health Education, Citizenship, and Computing.

There are many aspects of the curriculum that can help young people develop the knowledge and digital skills they need to recognise misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories. For example, citizenship teaches about critical media literacy in relation to the proper functioning of a democracy. Pupils learn about distinguishing fact from opinion, as well as exploring freedom of speech and the role and responsibility of the media in informing and shaping public opinion. History teaches pupils to understand how different types of historical sources are used to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed. The computing curriculum, introduced in 2014, is providing children and teachers with the fundamental knowledge to make well-informed decisions on e-safety, from Key Stages 1 to 4. There is progression in the content, to reflect the different and escalating online risks that young people face.

Additionally, 'Education for a connected world', developed by the UK Council for Internet Safety Education group, provides schools support to develop a rich, effective and developmental curriculum, which will support young people to be safe, healthy and thrive online. It includes a section on the importance of children knowing how to identify and distinguish between fake news, disinformation, and misinformation.

Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Asked by Lord Polak

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much of the victims core grant funding Police and Crime Commissioner's spent between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 on (1) domestic abuse services, (2) domestic violence specialist services, (3) domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, (4) family court domestic abuse support, and (5) Independent Domestic Violence Advisers. [HL11428]

Asked by Lord Polak

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much additional expenditure outside of the victims core grant funding Police and Crime Commissioner's spent between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 on (1) domestic abuse services, (2) Independent Domestic Abuse Advisers, (3) domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, (4) family court domestic abuse support, and (5) Independent Domestic Violence Advisers. [HL11429]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: In 2019/20 Police and Crime Commissioners received £70.3m from the Ministry of Justice to provide or commission support services for victims of crime, including victims of Domestic Abuse. PCCs also spend additional money from other sources on victims' services.

It is not possible to provide the spend on specific sub-categories of Domestic Abuse services, as it cannot be disaggregated from overall spend for all PCCs.

Education: British National (Overseas)

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to facilitate access to education for the children of people entering the UK under the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa scheme; what assessment they have made of (1) the scale of demand for school places for these children, and (2) where such demand will arise; and what discussions they have had with (a) Local Education Authorities, and (b) Regional Schools Commissioners, about ensuring that plans are in place to meet this demand. [HL11194]

Baroness Berridge: The government's estimate of the number of British National (Overseas) citizens that may migrate to the UK was set out in an Impact Assessment published on 22 October, available here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/1147/impacts/2020/70>. The dependants of British National (Overseas) citizens from Hong Kong choosing to settle in the UK have a right to attend school in the UK. Local authorities hold the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have written to all local authorities in England to update them on the new immigration route for

BN(O) citizens and will be communicating further with those areas which may see higher numbers arriving to support their planning. The department is fully involved in planning and communications with local authorities, including Regional Schools Commissioners. We are using data from the 2020 Spring School Census and the 2011 National Census to inform planning and are working with Home Office to monitor BN(O) and BN(O) dependant arrivals.

Education: Overseas Aid

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the provision of aid for the education of boys and young men overseas is conditional upon the inclusion of teaching on the importance of respect and understanding for girls and women. [HL11134]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to standing up for the right of every girl to access 12 years of quality education. Girls' education matters because it is one of the greatest tools for addressing discrimination against women and girls. It initiates a virtuous circle, giving women and girls a greater voice to advocate for changes in their own lives and the lives of others. Between 2015 and 2019 the UK supported 14.3 million children to gain a decent education, of which at least 5.8 million were girls.

Through its programmes, the FCDO works with whole communities, including boys and men, to change their attitudes and behaviours towards girls and women. However, gender bias and discrimination is widespread within and across education systems, from teacher recruitment and training to curriculum and material development, to gender-based violence in and around schools. FCDO staff ensure that the teaching and learning materials we fund are inclusive and reflect gender equality. Staff do this by working closely with experts to develop gender-friendly materials with strong role models, ensuring that text and visuals are independently quality assured and vetted, supporting inclusive and learner-focused teaching methods and funding student clubs that facilitate discussions around gender equality.

Educational Institutions: Inspections

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that education inspection bodies focus on skills provision when inspecting education providers. [HL11559]

Baroness Berridge: This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the peer and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Elections

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the legislative framework governing the conduct of election petitions; and what plans they have, if any, to change any such framework. [HL11129]

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the integrity of elections, and (2) the time taken to determine outcomes of disputed elections, in England. [HL11130]

Lord True: We have a robust electoral system that commands public confidence. Electoral fraud is unacceptable on any level and the Government committed in its 2019 manifesto to introduce a range of measures to strengthen further the electoral process, including introducing a requirement to show identification to vote at polling stations and tightening up postal vote provisions to close off opportunities for fraud in the system.

The current election petition process is designed to ensure certainty of election results and to avoid vexatious challenges by candidates or electors. The Government is aware that issues have been raised with the current challenge system, notably the high cost and complexity of the process, and will consider these matters further in consultation with stakeholders.

Elections: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord True on 23 November (HL10099) and 9 December (HL10705) and the letter sent by the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution to Electoral Returning Officers, published on 16 September, whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what plans they have, if any, to change requirements so (1) nomination papers require only two signatures, and (2) that nominations may be accepted by email. [HL11430]

Lord True: The Government has considered issues around the nominations process for the May 2021 elections with the electoral sector and Public Health England and is of the view that the current process can be carried out in a covid-secure way. The Electoral Commission has published supplementary guidance to support this process and the Government is working to ensure that nominations activity is not affected by possible restrictions. There are no plans to change the number of signatures required for nomination papers at the May 2021 elections, or to allow nominations to be accepted by email. Returning Officers may allow parts of the nominations process to be carried out online, such as the arrangement of the necessary documents, but the final nomination papers must be delivered in person. The

current procedures help ensure the veracity of the nominations process.

Elections: Proof of Identity

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of introducing mandatory voter ID on the Traveller and Roma communities' ability to vote. [HL11488]

Lord True: Requiring proof of identity to vote in a polling station will strengthen the integrity of our electoral system, and give the public confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century.

We will continue to work with the Electoral Commission, charities and civil society organisations, including those that represent Traveller and Roma communities, to make sure that reforms are delivered in a way that is inclusive for all voters.

As the legislation is brought forward the appropriate impact assessments will be provided for Parliament in the normal way.

Showing ID is something people of all backgrounds already do every day, for example, to take out a library book, claim benefits or pick up a parcel from the post office. Proving who you are before you make a decision of huge importance at the ballot box should be no different.

The list of approved photographic ID will not be limited to passports and driving licences, a broad range of commonly held photographic documents will be accepted. For any voter who does not have one of the required forms of photographic ID, a local elector ID will be available, free of charge, from their local authority. Everyone who is eligible to vote will have the opportunity to do so.

Elections: Visual Impairment

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accessibility of voting for blind and partially sighted people. [HL11486]

Lord True: The Government is committed to ensuring that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote and has been working with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) to improve the voting process for blind and partially sighted people.

At the 2019 General Election, the Government encouraged Returning Officers to support voters with sight loss to use their own, familiar equipment, such as smartphones, with specially designed apps for reading documents, or video magnifiers to help them cast their vote. This was publicised by partner organisations such as the RNIB and supported the voting experience of people with sight loss. The Government has also worked with relevant organisations, such as the Electoral Commission,

to improve disability related training for polling station staff.

We will continue to test further proposed interventions to improve accessibility for future elections.

Electoral Register: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on (1) the annual canvass of electors, and (2) the accuracy of the electoral register. [HL11407]

Lord True: Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) remain subject to the statutory duties placed on them to deliver the annual canvass and electoral registration. They continue to deliver these essential services despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cabinet Office officials have actively engaged with EROs throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to identify and mitigate any possible effect of the pandemic on the annual canvass. The reforms the Government had already introduced to the annual canvass process for this year allowed EROs to make more use of online and telephone communications than previously, meaning a canvass that was safer for both Electoral Services teams and the general public. In addition, the Representation of the People (Electoral Registers Publication Date) Regulations 2020 has also provided EROs with additional flexibility to conduct this year's annual canvass by allowing them an additional two months in which to publish their final revised register, if required - thus helping to safeguard the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register.

Embassies: Diplomatic Service

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many British embassies have a consular section; what is the remit of a consular section; and whether such sections keep a register of British citizens resident in their territorial scope. [HL11156]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is represented by 187 Diplomatic missions with a Consular presence, as well as a network of over 200 Honorary Consuls. We provide help and support 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, through our network of trained staff. Details of the remit of our consular support are set out in Support for British Nationals Abroad: A Guide (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914039/FCO_BritsAbroad_A4web_020920.pdf). We do not require British travellers to register with us when they are overseas.

Emma Stanton

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Emma Stanton is subject to the Business Appointment Rules for Civil Servants following her role as Director of Supplies and Innovation for NHS Test and Trace. [HL11549]

Lord Bethell: Emma Stanton is subject to Civil Service Business Appointment Rules and was notified of conditions relating to these rules regarding her future role with Oxford Nanopore. These related to restrictions on lobbying of the United Kingdom Government and related commercial activities and a reminder on the use of privileged information gained in her time at NHS Test and Trace and were commensurate with the short length of time she was working for them.

Employees' Contributions: Overseas Residence

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many British citizens who are resident overseas paid either (1) Class 2, or (2) Class 3, voluntary National Insurance contributions between 2010 and 2020. [HL11157]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. HMRC do not require individuals to declare their citizenship or nationality. Therefore while they are able to identify overseas residents who pay National Insurance contributions, they are unable to determine the proportion of these that are British citizens.

Employment Tribunals Service

Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many claims before employment tribunals were outstanding in each month of 2020. [HL11505]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The published number of outstanding single employment tribunal claims each month in 2020 are set out below:

<i>Month</i>	<i>Outstanding claims</i>
Jan-20	36,315
Feb-20	35,653
Mar-20	36,758
Apr-20	39,241
May-20	36,365
Jun-20	42,786
Jul-20	44,303
Aug-20	45,130
Sep-20	46,512

Environment Protection

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the The State of the Planet address by the United Nations Secretary-General at Columbia University on 2 December. [\[HL11349\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Secretary General's speech was the latest of a number of clarion calls he has made for action to address the biodiversity and climate change crises we face today.

The Government shares the Secretary General's concern. That is why the UK helped drive discussions to deliver the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, which was signed by 77 countries (including the UK) at the UN General Assembly in September, setting out urgent actions to tackle the international biodiversity and climate crises. In addition, as the Secretary General highlighted, the UK has already put in place commitments to deliver on many of his imperatives domestically. These include our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050 and the replacement of existing area based agricultural payments so that farmers will in future be paid for work that enhances the environment, such as tree or hedge planting, river management to mitigate flooding, or creating or restoring habitats for wildlife.

The need for a green and resilient recovery from the current pandemic is something which the UK is firmly committed to and the ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, which we published in November, will be central to delivering that. Whether in terms of delivering more renewable energy and lower emissions or additional protection of our natural environment, our plan will deliver on many of the Secretary General's calls and demonstrates UK leadership in doing so.

As the Secretary General outlined, 2020 was meant to be a "super year" for both biodiversity and the climate. That focus has now shifted to next year and we are committed to using the opportunities provided by our G7 Presidency and our Presidency of the UNFCCC CoP26, as well as opportunities provided by the CBD CoP 15, the UN Food Systems Summit and the UN Decade of Ecosystem restoration which will be launched in 2021, to demonstrate UK leadership and to drive global actions, not just words to address the crises.

Environment Protection: River Lugg

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of ecological damage to the banks of the River Lugg; and what plans they have to prevent similar events occurring elsewhere in England. [\[HL11273\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: A joint investigation is currently underway involving the main agencies (Environment Agency, Natural England and

Forestry Commission). This has included a recent site visit to establish the full detail and extent of recent work at the site. Further details will be made available in due course in line with the nature of the ongoing investigation.

Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission have respective regulatory powers to ensure the management of SSSIs, waterways and trees, providing advice to landowners and consents/licences where appropriate. They continue to monitor and investigate any incidences of damage to sites and rely on the support of the general public in reporting possible illegal activity and pollutions.

Environmental Land Management Scheme

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to establish, and (2) to publish, a register of participants of the Environmental Land Management Scheme; if so, where any such register will be published; and whether any such register will include detail on the scheme (a) requirements, and (b) participant's (i) land holdings, (ii) land area, (iii) land managers, (iv) joining date, and (v) other relevant matters. [\[HL11354\]](#)

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Section 2(8) of the Agriculture Act 2020 provides the Secretary of State with the power to make regulations requiring the Secretary of State or another person to publish specified information about any financial assistance that has been given under the Act.

In August 2020, Defra conducted a targeted consultation inviting the views of stakeholders on a proposed Financial Assistance Statutory Instrument which would require the publication of detailed beneficiary information of those participating in the Environmental Land Management National Pilot. Defra is currently considering the responses submitted during the consultation ahead of introducing the Statutory Instrument for Parliament to consider ahead of the launch of the National Pilot in 2021. A response to the views received on the consultation document will be shared with stakeholders in due course.

Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to make further payments to individuals who lost their savings following the collapse of Equitable Life. [\[HL11225\]](#)

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Equitable Life Payment Scheme closed to claims in 2015. There are no plans to reopen the Payment Scheme or review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it.

Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conflict in the Tigray region, including the impact of that conflict on (1) surrounding regions, and (2) access for humanitarian and human rights organisations to country. [[HL11164](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Humanitarian agencies, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have not had access to Tigray, and telephone and internet services there have not been functioning, since 4 November. This means we lack an understanding of both the full humanitarian picture in the region, including the protection context in camps and refugee hosting areas. The UK has been at the forefront, liaising closely with the 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 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.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports (1) that the Eritrean military is fighting in Tigray, (2) that people have been abducted and returned to Ethiopia, and (3) of the seizure of Tigrayan land by (a) the government of Eritrea, and (b) the Amhara regional government; and what assessment they have made of the impact of any such actions on the long-term stability of Ethiopia. [[HL11517](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Ambassador in Eritrea raised questions of Eritrean involvement with the Eritrean Foreign Minister on 2 December, who stated that there are no Ethiopian refugees in Eritrea, denied that Eritrea is involved militarily in the conflict, and categorically denied that Eritrean forces had forcibly returned Eritrean refugees to Eritrea. We are, however, concerned to note mounting but unconfirmed evidence since then of Eritrean involvement.

We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), do not have access to refugee

camps in Tigray, meaning our understanding of the humanitarian and protection context in camps and refugee hosting areas is limited. It is the responsibility of the host state to ensure refugees are protected and are not subjected to forcible return. This was acknowledged by the Government of Ethiopia when we raised the matter.

The UK is concerned by reports of ethnically-motivated attacks within Tigray and elsewhere in Ethiopia, and about the risk these events pose to Ethiopia's overall political stability and democratic transition, of which the UK has been supportive. In the Minister for Africa's statement of 17 December he called for the independent investigation of alleged violations of human rights.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken in response (1) to the statement by the government of Ethiopia that (a) its military shot at a UN convoy, and (b) it wants the UN to travel in armed convoy; (2) to reports that Tigrayans have been removed from their jobs at the UN; and (3) to reports that the government of Ethiopia is preventing aid reaching Ethiopians. [[HL11518](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for Africa urged all parties on 11 December to recognise that humanitarian workers must be protected from attack and are not a target. We have been consistent in our request to the parties that humanitarian actors be granted free and unfettered access in the Tigray region, most recently by the UK Special Envoy on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs in his meetings with the Government of Ethiopia on 15 December. We will continue to work constructively with the Ethiopian authorities, the UN and others to this end.

In the week commencing 14 December, the World Food Programme was able to deliver 18 trucks of food assistance to Adi Harush and Mai Ayni Refugee Camps, without a Government of Ethiopia security escort. Humanitarian agencies including UK funded partners in Tigray are working hard in extremely challenging circumstances to deliver assistance to those in need. Urgent access is still required so that humanitarian support can be provided and delivery of essential services can resume immediately.

Ethiopia: Eritrea

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) reports from UN refugee camps in Tigray of the forcible return of Eritrean refugees to Eritrea, and (2) whether any such refugees are at risk of (a) torture, and (b) imprisonment, in Eritrea; whether they have raised this matter with the government of Eritrea; and, if so, what response they have received. [[HL11062](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), do not have access to refugee camps in Tigray. UNHCR has, as a result, been unable to corroborate reports of abduction and forced return of Eritrean refugees, meaning our understanding of the humanitarian and protection context in camps and refugee hosting areas is limited. The UK continues to call 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), so that UNHCR can uphold its mandate towards refugees. It is the responsibility of the host state to ensure refugees are protected and are not subjected to forcible return.

The British Ambassador in Eritrea raised these questions with the Eritrean Foreign Minister on 2 December, who denied that Eritrea is involved militarily in the conflict and categorically denied that Eritrean forces had forcibly returned Eritrean refugees to Eritrea. He also stated that there are no Ethiopian refugees in Eritrea.

Ethiopia: Genocide

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Ethiopia about reports that it has refused the offer of international co-operation in investigating the Mai Kadra massacre; if they have, what response they received; and, if not, whether they intend to make representations. [[HL11265](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government of Ethiopia indicated on 8 December that it would conduct the initial investigation into the reported killing of civilians on 9 November in Mai Kadra. Since 8 December, we have spoken with representatives of the Government of Ethiopia about the nature of that investigation and to make clear that HMG supports the call by the Ethiopian Commission for Human Rights for the independent investigation of human rights abuses and violations.

Ethiopia: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the remarks by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 9 December about the situation in Ethiopia; what steps they intend to take (1) to implement independent monitoring, (2) to protect human rights, and (3) to hold those responsible for human rights violations to account, in that country. [[HL11335](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We share the concerns about the situation in Ethiopia expressed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in her statement of 9 December. The UK has, alongside international partners,

called on all sides to ensure the protection of civilians and to respect human rights. There must also be accountability for any human rights abuses and violations. We welcome the call by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission for the independent investigation of human rights violations. We are tracking the situation and continue to raise the importance of respect for human rights with the Government of Ethiopia and leaders on both sides, while pressing for an early political solution.

Ethiopia: Humanitarian Situation

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports (1) that UN workers were shot at by Ethiopian forces in Tigray, and (2) that the provision of humanitarian aid to areas of Tigray that are not controlled by the government of Ethiopia has been blocked; and what steps they intend to take in response to the statement by the International Committee for the Red Cross on 8 December that the city of Mekele is "basically today without medical care". [[HL11336](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are deeply concerned by the reports of UN workers being shot at by Ethiopian forces in Tigray. The UK has been consistent in our request that humanitarian actors be granted free and unfettered access in Tigray and we will continue to work constructively with the Ethiopian authorities, the UN and others to this end. Ongoing impediments to access faced by relief actors puts civilians at risk in Tigray. The Minister for Africa reiterated this in his tweet of 9 December.

The UK is a major and longstanding humanitarian donor to Ethiopia. UK support has benefitted millions of Ethiopians; has saved lives, promoted dignity and supported poverty alleviation efforts. It is important that we can continue to support the people of Ethiopia including those impacted by the violence in Tigray. Humanitarian agencies including UK funded partners in Tigray are working hard in extremely challenging circumstances to deliver assistance to refugees and host communities including shelter; health; water, sanitation and hygiene; nutrition and protection support. Urgent access is required so that humanitarian support can be provided and delivery of essential services can resume immediately. We welcome the news of the International Committee for the Red Cross convoy reaching Mekele over the weekend of 12 and 13 December.

Ethiopia: Overseas Aid

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the EU is considering withholding aid from the government of Ethiopia until the impact of the conflict in Tigray on human rights in the region can be assessed; how much UK aid was given to Ethiopia (1) last year, and (2) over the past decade; and what plans they have, if any, to use UK

funding to the government of Ethiopia as leverage to help end the conflict in Tigray. [[HL11061](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is engaging with partners, including the EU, on the implications of the current situation in Tigray on development and humanitarian assistance, which plays a vital role in supporting the provision of basic services and lifesaving support across the whole country. Ethiopia is the UK's largest bilateral aid programme, reaching millions of poor people while supporting UK interests. In Financial Year 2019/2020 the UK delivered £292 million in bilateral aid, and about £3 billion over the last ten years.

We do not provide direct budget support to Ethiopia. Evidence from Ethiopia and other contexts suggests that withholding finance is not an effective lever. Withholding funding for basic services and lifesaving support would harm the most vulnerable poor people. We remain committed to the development of Ethiopia and its people, and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We continually review our support in light of changing circumstances.

Ethiopia: Peace Negotiations

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support peace and conciliation in the Tigray region. [[HL11163](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary spoke with Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November, calling for an immediate de-escalation of the conflict and for all parties involved to move swiftly to political dialogue. He reiterated these messages when he met Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 25 November. The Minister for Africa also stressed these points when he spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador in London on 18 November, as well as in his tweets of 24 and 19 November. Our Ambassador in Addis continues to engage across the Ethiopian leadership in support of these objectives.

The UK is also liaising closely with partners across the region and the wider international community to urge all parties involved to engage in political dialogue and find a political solution. The Foreign Secretary spoke on 16 November with Foreign Minister Pandor of South Africa, communicating our support of President Ramaphosa's efforts towards a political solution. He also discussed approaches with his French and German counterparts in Berlin on 23 November, with President Kenyatta of Kenya on 24 November, and with Prime Minister Hamdok of Sudan on 12 November. The Minister for Africa also reiterated our concerns about the need for an urgent peaceful settlement in Tigray when he spoke with Foreign Minister Kutesa of Uganda on 26 November, and raised the situation in Ethiopia, and the role Ethiopia plays in regional stability, with the Governments of Somalia and Kenya during his visit to those two countries on 9 and 10 December. The Minister for Middle East and North Africa has done similarly with counterparts in the Gulf.

European Convention on Human Rights

*Asked by **Lord Lexden***

To ask Her Majesty's Government which countries have yet to ratify Protocol 15 amending the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; and what reasons any such countries have given for the delay. [[HL11145](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Of the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe, 46 have signed and ratified Protocol 15 amending the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Italy is the only Member State that has signed but not yet ratified the protocol. I understand that the Government of Italy has assured the Council of Europe that the parliamentary procedures required for ratification are currently in progress, and that a date for discussion of Protocol 15 at the plenary of the Senate will be decided in due course.

European Union: Northern Ireland

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to allow the EU to open an office in Northern Ireland; and what kind of presence in Northern Ireland the EU has requested. [[HL11208](#)]

Lord True: As is detailed in the Command Paper published on Gov.uk on 10 October, the arrangements we have reached in principle with the European Commission, are clear that there will be no EU Belfast embassy or mission. Instead, the arrangements we have agreed will enable the EU to exercise their rights under Article 12, including with appropriate access to the information needed to do so, while fully respecting the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.

Exports: Trade Agreements

*Asked by **Viscount Waverley***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there are any differences between the existing EU agreements and those that the UK has negotiated within the Trade Agreement Continuity programme that affect UK exporters; and if so, when business readiness advice will be published to help those exporters understand those changes. [[HL11188](#)]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: With our Trade Agreement Continuity programme, we have sought to replicate the effects of existing EU free trade agreements with trading partners to ensure continuity for businesses following the transition period.

Whilst we have transitioned our existing EU agreements for the most part, in some cases we have applied bespoke solutions in individual agreements for technical reasons. Exact changes are specified in each Agreement and in its accompanying Parliamentary Report.

HM Government is committed to ensuring that all British businesses can take advantage of the significant economic benefits of exporting. Our ambitious free trade agreement programme and market access work is already helping to unlock new opportunities for exporters worldwide.

We provide direct support to both new and existing exporters, to make sure firms have the confidence and expertise they need to export around the world. Access to finance is also important to business, and the export finance available from UK Export Finance, our export credit agency, helps companies win export contracts, fulfil contracts, and get paid.

Financial Services: Safety

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Intellectual Property Office about the development of guidance similar to "know your customer" guidance for financial services, for wider application under any future online harms legislation. [\[HL11528\]](#)

Baroness Barran: Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with organisations on a range of issues, including the challenge of fraud and anonymity online. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](#) website.

The Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, published in December 2020, sets out expectations on companies to keep their users safe online. This includes a proposed legal duty of care on companies and the appointment of a new communications regulator, Ofcom, to ensure that new laws are enforced.

There are many legitimate reasons why an individual would not wish to identify themselves online. Whistleblowers, victims of modern slavery and survivors of domestic abuse may wish to stay anonymous, to protect their identity online. Our proposals strike the right balance between protecting users' rights online, while preserving freedom of expression. The Online Safety Bill will be introduced next year.

Fishing Vessels

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the size of the UK Fishery Protection Squadron fleet that will be needed in the event that a trade agreement is not reached with the EU by 31 December. [\[HL11256\]](#)

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) are prepared to respond to the challenges of controlling fisheries in English waters at the end of the transition period. The MMO is ready to deploy its assets, personnel and enforcement plan. As this is a devolved policy area, Defra and the MMO are working closely with the Devolved

Administrations to ensure there is a consistent and robust UK-wide approach.

In England, the MMO has assessed, and continues to assess, the number of maritime surveillance assets dedicated to fisheries protection in preparation for the end of the transition period. Current provision includes two MMO offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) and two OPVs from the Royal Navy Overseas Patrol Squadron, with a further two Royal Navy OPVs available for surge capacity if required. This strong presence will deter against fisheries infringements, while also enabling our agencies to take robust action where they may occur. The MMO is extensively testing its end of transition period operational approach based on a range of potential scenarios, working closely with the Ministry of Defence, Department for Transport and Home Office as well as the Devolved Administrations, to ensure a comprehensive approach to maritime security.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 11 December (HL11105), where information on the number of children diagnosed as having foetal alcohol spectrum disorder is held. [\[HL11510\]](#)

Lord Bethell: This information is not currently collected and only estimates are available. The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network 156 published in January 2019 estimated that approximately 3.2% of babies born in the United Kingdom are affected by foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Further estimates on prevalence are calculated by academic institutions and voluntary organisations and vary greatly.

Fraud: Finance

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) scale, and (2) type, of financial scams targeted at people in the UK. [\[HL11221\]](#)

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of financial scams to the UK economy. [\[HL11222\]](#)

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Office for National Statistics publishes estimates on the volume of fraud against adult individuals in England and Wales in the Crime Survey for England and Wales quarterly releases. ^[1]

The ONS estimated that in the year ending June 2020 there were approximately 4.3 m fraud offences against adults in England Wales.

The ONS also publishes, as part of its data on crime, the total number of fraud offences that are referred to the

National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) by industry bodies (UK finance and CIFAS) or recorded by Action Fraud each year. In the year ending June 2020, 733,967 cases were referred to the NFIB or recorded by Action Fraud. The ONS also provide a breakdown of this data by fraud type. For example, there were 415,274 cases of banking and credit industry fraud reported and 14,616 cases of financial investment fraud. ^[2]

The Home Office has estimated that the total cost of fraud to individuals in England and Wales in 2015/2016 was £4.7bn ^[3]. They also estimated that the economic cost of organised fraud against businesses and the public sector in the UK was £5.9bn. ^[4]

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2020>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesappendixtables>

[3]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf

[4]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782656/understanding-organised-crime-mar16-horr103-2nd.pdf

Further Education

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many 18 to 24 year olds started a course at (1) Level 4 and (2) Level 5, qualification level in each year from 2010 until 2019. [HL11110]

Baroness Berridge: Research published by both the department and Gatsby Foundation provides a full mapping of level 4 and 5 technical education. This research is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913988/L4-5_market_study.pdf and

<http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/mapping-the-higher-technical-landscape-final-version.pdf> respectively.

The latter showed that in the 2015/16 academic year, approximately 87,000 learners aged 24 or under were studying at level 4 or 5 in England.

The department collects and publishes data separately on regulated further and higher education, which includes learning at level 4 and 5. The department is investigating whether these data collections could be combined to produce a more comprehensive data series for learners starting level 4 and 5 qualifications.

Further education and apprenticeships data are published by the department, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr>.

Statistics on students at higher education providers by specific qualification aim are published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Latest figures refer to the 2014/15 to 2018/19 academic years and are available here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-01-2020/sb255-higher-education-student-statistics>.

Statistics for earlier years are available here: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/statistical-first-releases?date_filter%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=&topic%5B%5D=4.

Further Education: Finance

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial sustainability of the further education and skills sector. [HL11178]

Baroness Berridge: A recent National Audit Office report on the financial sustainability of colleges in England found that 65% of colleges had good or better financial health in academic year 2018/19, up from 61% in academic year 2013/14. Early analysis by the department suggests our programme of Area Reviews helped bring this improvement about. Over the same period, quality remained high, with 82% of further education (FE) Colleges rated good or better by Ofsted in both 2019 and 2014.

The 2020 Spending Review provided £291 million in financial year 2021/22 to ensure that core FE funding for 16 to 19-year-olds is maintained in real terms per learner. This is in addition to the £400 million that the government provided from September this year, the biggest injection of new money into 16 to 19 education in a single year since 2010.

We continue to monitor the financial health of the FE sector. Financial forecasts for the current year were submitted by colleges in July, and updated cashflow projections were provided in November. We are receiving further submissions throughout the 2020/21 academic year.

Any colleges facing issues with financial sustainability due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak can access relevant support.

Gambling: Credit Cards

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Government Response to the House of Lords Gambling Industry Committee Report: Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry, published on 8 December, what plans they have to mandate a ban on all gambling transactions via credit cards. [HL11492]

Baroness Barran: In April this year, new licensing conditions came into effect which banned both online and land-based gambling operators from accepting payments from credit cards (including via e-wallets) for gambling services. National Lottery products already could not be purchased with a credit card online.

National Lottery and society lottery products can still be purchased via credit cards in retailers. Following the Gambling Commission's consultation on the use of credit cards for gambling, requiring retailers to identify and block credit card payments for lottery products was seen as disproportionate since they are often purchased alongside other items as part of a wider shop. National Lottery retailers are also trained in preventing excessive play, and lottery products are consistently shown to be associated with lower problem gambling rates than commercial gambling products.

Gambling: Young People

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to Government Response to the House of Lords Gambling Industry Committee Report: Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry, published on 8 December, what assessment they have made of why the prevalence of gambling among those aged 11 to 16 has increased. [HL11546]

Baroness Barran: Data published by the Gambling Commission shows the percentage of 11-16 year olds who had taken part in gambling in the past seven days fell from 23% in 2011 to 11% in 2019. The 2020 survey was truncated by Covid-19, so is not directly comparable, but data has been published which shows a 9% past-week participation rate for England and Scotland. An increase in the rate of gambling participation amongst children has not been recorded since 2018, when it rose to 14%, from 12% in the previous year. The majority of gambling participation by children is on forms of gambling which are legal for them to participate in, including private bets with friends and family, or low stake gaming machines.

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. The Review will be wide-ranging and evidence led, and aims to make sure that the regulation of gambling is fit for the digital age. The government remains committed to protecting children from gambling related harm, and is inviting specific evidence on children's access to gambling, including on children's access to Category D slot machines, the effectiveness of age controls, protections for young adults and the age limit for society lotteries.

Gaza: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Sheehan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the warning by the World Health Organization's Gaza office that Gaza's healthcare

system could be overwhelmed by COVID-19. [HL11443]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza and the impact of COVID-19 on an already fragile healthcare system. Recognising the severity of the situation, we were one of the first donors to provide funding to support the health and humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We have provided £1.25 million funding (the World Health Organisation with £630,000 and the United Nations Children's Fund with £620,000) to purchase and co-ordinate delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline health workers and scale up laboratory testing capacity - mainly in Gaza. In addition, we are providing £2.5 million to the World Food Programme to provide food and cash assistance for the most vulnerable Palestinians to help alleviate the humanitarian situation. We have also contributed £1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's Emergency Appeal in the OPTs which will help provide emergency food to over one million food-insecure refugees in Gaza.

GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government who will comprise the membership of the expert group that will advise the Secretary of State for Education on arrangements for GCSE and A level examinations in 2021. [HL11458]

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to receive the report of the expert group tasked with advising the Secretary of State for Education on arrangements for GCSE and A level examinations in 2021. [HL11459]

Baroness Berridge: The department recognises the challenges faced by schools, teachers, and students, and understands that disruption has been felt differently across the country, between schools and colleges in the same area, and between students within individual institutions.

In addition to a package of measures announced to ensure exams are delivered fairly next summer, the department confirmed the launch of an expert advisory group to consider the differential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on pupils and recommend mitigations for these impacts:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-support-the-summer-2021-exams>. The expert advisory group is expected to provide initial advice in the early Spring, ensuring that any further policies recommended to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education support the measures already announced and are developed with the education sector. We are working to finalise the terms of reference and membership of the group and will ensure that membership is representative of the sector, and geographically diverse.

Gender Recognition

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they undertook any review in 2018 into the reasons for the increase in the number of girls seeking gender reassignment; and if so, what was the outcome of that review. [HL11215]

Baroness Berridge: The work by the Government Equalities Office has been superseded by NHS England commissioning an independent review into adolescent transgender healthcare, led by Dr Hilary Cass. One of the issues it will consider is the increase in the number of adolescents seeking the use of gender identity services.

Gender Recognition: Children

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the High Court judgment in R (on the application of) Quincy Bell and A -v- Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust and others [2020] EWHC 3274, issued on 1 December, what plans they have, if any, (1) to close the Tavistock Clinic, and (2) to instigate a criminal inquiry into its practices. [HL11063]

Lord Bethell: There are no plans to close the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust's gender identity service for children and young people and we are not aware of any plans to instigate criminal proceedings.

NHS England has previously announced that Dr Hilary Cass will undertake an independent external review of the gender identity development service and make recommendations to NHS England on how the service should operate.

Gender Recognition: Health Services

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust about the steps that Trust is taking to assess whether the treatment provided by the Gender Identity Development Service adequately considers instances where patients present conditions of gender dysphoria which may resolve itself without intervention. [HL11540]

Lord Bethell: The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust is primarily a psycho-social service that focuses on enabling the young person to choose the path which best suits their needs.

In September 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement, who commission the service, announced that Dr Hilary Cass will lead an independent review into gender identity services for children and young people.

The review will be wide-ranging in scope looking into several aspects of gender identity services, with a focus on how care can be improved for children and young

people including key aspects of care such as how and when they are referred to specialist services, and clinical decisions around how doctors and healthcare professionals support and care for patients with gender dysphoria.

The independent review will present recommendations to NHS England and NHS Improvement's Quality and Innovation Committee.

Gender Recognition: Research

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of (1) pressure from activist groups, and (2) decisions not to allow academics to speak at universities, on the amount of research commissioned by universities into the number (a) of girls presenting with gender dysphoria at clinics, and (b) of people who regret that they undertook medical treatment for their gender dysphoria; and what steps, if any, they intend to take in response. [HL11473]

Lord Callanan: Universities are independent, autonomous organisations and are therefore responsible for their decisions relating to research priorities and which activities to support.

General Practitioners: Registration

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what percentage of the adult population, and (2) how many adults, in England are registered with a general practitioner. [HL11493]

Lord Bethell: The percentage of the adult population in England who are registered with a general practitioner is not held centrally.

The number of adults aged 18 or over on 1 December 2020 registered at a general practitioner practice in England was 48,313,398.

Georgy Bedzhamov

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the fraud and corruption charges against Georgy Bedzhamov in the context of his application for British citizenship. [HL11217]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I cannot comment on the specifics of individual cases.

German Property Group: Insolvency

Asked by Lord Morrow

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received about allegations of fraud connected to the Dolphin Trust; what steps they plan to take to safeguard UK investors' investments in

the Trust; and whether the Trust is operating in the UK. [[HL11476](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government are aware of the allegations of fraud made against the German Property Group (GPG), formerly known as the Dolphin Trust.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) are working closely with financial advisers who have advised customers to make these investments and operators of Self Invested Personal Pensions (SIPPs) whose customers currently hold investments with GPG.

The FCA have published a joint statement with the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and the Financial Ombudsman Service. The statement sets out what UK consumers should do if they invested in GPG via an FCA authorised firm, either a financial adviser firm or a SIPP operator, and they believe they were mis-sold. It can be accessed on the FCA's website.

Companies under the German Property Group are incorporated in Germany and have never been authorised by the FCA. However, consumers should be assured that the FCA are working closely with all relevant external stakeholders on this matter and will share any further updates as and when they are able to.

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that a suspect, accompanied by police officers, was required to wait three hours for treatment at Gloucester Royal Hospital; and what discussions they have had with Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to ensure such incidents do not reoccur. [[HL11542](#)]

Lord Bethell: Patients are treated in order of clinical priority. Therefore, whilst there is a need to not delay police officers in accident and emergency departments (A&E) any longer than is necessary, patients with non-urgent needs may have to wait during busy times.

The national A&E performance target is target is for 95% of patients to be admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours. Therefore, a three hour wait is within the national guidelines.

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital: Death

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many patients awaiting transfer to wards have died in (1) corridors, (2) nurses' stations, and (3) cubicles, at Gloucester Royal Hospital in the last six months. [[HL11543](#)]

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

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital: Road Traffic

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to prevent ambulances from being unable to access Gloucester Royal Hospital Accident and Emergency Department due to congestion; and what plans they have to reopen Cheltenham General Hospital Accident and Emergency Department to ease ambulance congestion at Gloucester Royal Hospital. [[HL11541](#)]

Lord Bethell: Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust continues to manage combined pandemic and urgent care pressures. The Trust is not aware of traffic congestion causing delays in ambulance access.

The temporary closure of the accident and emergency department at Cheltenham General Hospital was agreed until 31 March 2021, when services are planned to resume.

Government Departments: Staff

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the value for money of the use of management consultants during the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL11434](#)]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of their outsourcing during the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL11435](#)]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with those private companies which provide services to Government about (1) employment practices, and (2) the safety of their staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL11436](#)]

Lord True: Working effectively with the private sector is a vital part of our response to tackling the covid-19 crisis, allowing us to procure quickly and innovatively and to obtain specialist solutions to the myriad challenges that are facing us. The private sector is responsible for the miracle of vaccines being available in record time.

We have always made it clear that contracting authorities must use good commercial judgment and continue to achieve value for money for taxpayers, and we have engaged in both internal and external audit to satisfy ourselves that that has been the case.

Through "The Outsourcing Playbook" we are also improving the decision making and quality of contracts that the Government place with industry, and we are building our internal civil service capability, as we believe it is important that we invest in our in-house

capacity and expertise so that we rely less on external consultants and contractors.

We recognise the important role that Government suppliers have played supporting the Government's Covid-19 efforts in addition to delivering on their existing public sector contracts. The safety of all staff is paramount, and all suppliers must adhere to Health and Safety legislation, as well as specific departmental policy when staff are working at Government sites.

Greece: Immigrants and Refugees

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking with international partners to reduce the number of refugees and migrants in Greece. [[HL11295](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have a long standing and strong relationship with Greece and are committed to supporting Greece's efforts to manage migration effectively. On 22 April, the UK and Greece signed a bilateral migration action plan to reaffirm our commitment to cooperation and to establish a strategic migration dialogue. The Plan includes a UK-Greece exchange of expertise on asylum and returns processes and organised immigration crime. This also forms part of our regional and international cooperation response, as part of a 'whole of route' approach to tackling the challenges of, and risks posed by, irregular migration. For example, our co-operation with Turkey is key to effectively managing migratory flows and preventing people risking their lives while attempting to cross the Aegean. We are actively engaging to help shape the international response on migration further up the route, working through an increasingly diverse set of partners and source and transit countries.

Health Services: Standards

Asked by Lord Moylan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to undertake an independent audit of the clinical outcomes of NHS England; and what discussions they have had with the devolved administrations about undertaking similar audits of the clinical outcomes of (1) NHS Scotland, (2) NHS Wales, and (3) Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland, in order to compare performance across the UK. [[HL11477](#)]

Lord Bethell: National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme audits on National Health Service healthcare services in England are commissioned and managed by the independent Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership on behalf of NHS England. It is a requirement of the NHS standard contract in England that all providers of NHS care in England participate in the programme which supports trusts in identifying necessary improvements for patients. Most of the audits involve services in England and Wales. Some also include services from Scotland and Northern Ireland.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Bromford

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current estimated cost of the tunnel proposal at Bromford on the HS2 Phase One route; and whether they expect that the Transport and Works Act 1992 Order procedure used for its construction will delay the introduction of HS2 Phase One services. [[HL11113](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The proposed tunnel extension at Bromford does not result in additional cost to the HS2 Phase One route. The changes to the civil works for the extension of the tunnel are estimated to result in a net saving of £70 million (base date 2018) compared to the original surface route. Additional consent for the tunnel extension is being sought via a Transport and Works Act Order. The design changes for the tunnel extension were initiated following contract award for the Main Works Civil Contractor in the area (BBV) in 2017 and public consultation on the proposed order has now completed. The current schedule for finalising the proposed order is not expected to have any adverse impact on the introduction of HS2 Phase One services.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Chilterns

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton 9 October (HL8505), what procedure was used to change the location of the Chiltern Tunnel North Portal at Frith Hill in South Heath on the HS2 Phase One line of route; and whether the move was authorised by a Transport and Works Act 1992 Order or another procedure. [[HL11111](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: As set out in my written answer of 9 October, the location of the Chiltern Tunnel North Portal was changed by means of an Additional Provision (known as AP4) to the then HS2 Phase One Bill, introduced on 12 October 2015. The changes brought about by AP4 are part of the Phase One Act which subsequently received Royal Assent in 2017. The change does not therefore require a Transport and Works Act Order and none has been sought.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a Transport and Works Act 1992 Order can be used to grant a tunnel at Wendover for HS2. [[HL11112](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Transport and Works Act Orders are one way of securing the necessary powers for railway infrastructure works. Other ways include securing a Development Consent Order, seeking local planning permission or setting out the intended works in dedicated primary legislation. The powers to construct HS2 are set out in primary legislation (the Phase One Act) and are permissive.

If the Government were minded to deliver infrastructure which went beyond that permitted by the Phase One Act then a Transport and Works Act Order would be one way of securing the necessary powers. However, there are no plans to change the consented scheme at Wendover and this means that no new powers are being sought there.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the HS2 Phase One main works contractor for the section of the line past Wendover has produced an assessment of the Wendover Short Mined Tunnel Proposal and, if so, whether they will place a copy in the Library of the House. [HL11114]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The proposal for a short-mined tunnel at Wendover has not been formally assessed by the main works civil contractor for the area (EKFB). Following initial assessment by HS2 Ltd, the Government does not consider the proposal to be viable in value for money terms and judges any further assessment by contractors to not be an efficient use of taxpayers' money. The contractor has however been consulted and engaged on the proposals in order to inform the content of Ministerial correspondence on this issue.

Higher Education: Royal Charters

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government which higher education institutions have sought to amend their Royal Charters in each of the past three years; which changes were proposed in each case; and why those institutions made any such proposals. [HL11463]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Requests by chartered higher education providers for amendments to their governance arrangements are received and co-ordinated by the Privy Council Office.

The Privy Council Office consults the advisers to the Privy Council, including the Department for Education, in reviewing these requests, in order to gain the necessary advice to inform the Privy Council's recommendation to Her Majesty on whether Her approval may be given to the chartered bodies' proposals.

The Privy Council Office records requests it has received, but does not separately identify the changes proposed and the reasons for the request. Each case is treated on its own merits and case papers filed on a unique basis. The Privy Council Office and the department have carried out a preliminary co-ordinated scoping of both of their records, and this has revealed about 40 instances where a case was opened for a chartered body seeking to amend its governance arrangements during the period 2018-20.

To answer the questions raised more fully would take very considerable time and resource to achieve, as the needed information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

However, all higher education provider chartered body amendments which have been approved by Her Majesty in Council can be found at: <https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/orders/>.

Holyhead Port: Large Goods Vehicles

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the requirement for trucks from the Republic of Ireland to travel between Holyhead and registration parks in Warrington, following the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11166]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Warrington and Birmingham inland border facilities will provide interim support for Common Transit Convention movements through Holyhead for January 2021 ahead of a long term site being developed. Due to the nature of the road networks these locations are along the route that 'land bridge' traffic from Holyhead will be likely to take.

In addition, there will be some facilities in Holyhead from January 2021. The small facility at Roadking in Holyhead, which was prepared last year, will remain for drivers seeking to complete their ATA Carnet paperwork. A very limited service will also be provided to start and end transit movements there.

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they anticipate that there will be additional lorries arriving at the Port of Holyhead from 1 January 2021; and where they plan for any additional lorries to park. [HL11489]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Transport policy is devolved and is a matter for the Welsh Government. The Department for Transport is working closely with and supporting the Cabinet Office's Border and Protocol Delivery Group on delivering the required preparations for the end of the transition period. The Government has committed to spending £470m on new border infrastructure to support ports in building extra capacity to meet the new control requirements where there is space to do so, and, if necessary, to build additional inland sites across the country where checks can take place. The Port Infrastructure Fund will support ports in preparing for any potential disruptions that may occur at the end of the transition period. All ports which submitted bids for the PIF have been informed of the outcome. Holyhead will be served by an HMG-provided inland border controls area.

Hong Kong: HSBC

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that HSBC has frozen the bank accounts of (1) the Good Neighbourhood North District Church in Hong Kong, and (2) its pastor and his wife; and what assessment they have made of whether

such action has been taken because of that Church's links with pro-democracy campaigners in Hong Kong. [HL11264]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are in close contact with a wide range of businesses in Hong Kong, but it is for businesses themselves to make their own judgement calls. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with HSBC Bank about the freezing of the bank accounts of pro-democracy campaigners from Hong Kong; what assessment they have made of the implications of such practices for the continued eligibility of HSBC to have a headquarters in London; and what specific plans they have to prevent financial institutions from subverting democracy. [HL11272]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are in close contact with a wide range of businesses in Hong Kong, but it is for businesses themselves to make their own judgement calls. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to HSBC Bank following that bank's suspension of the bank accounts of pro-democracy campaigners from Hong Kong. [HL11376]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are in close contact with a wide range of businesses in Hong Kong, but it is for businesses themselves to make their own judgement calls. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and

freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to HSBC Bank following that bank's suspension of the bank accounts of pro-democracy campaigners from Hong Kong. [HL11379]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are in close contact with a wide range of businesses in Hong Kong, but it is for businesses themselves to make their own judgement calls. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

Hong Kong: Human Rights

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken, if any, to protect the rights of people living in Hong Kong. [HL11229]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the situation in Hong Kong and has declared two breaches of the Joint Declaration in the last six months. In response to imposition of the National Security Law, the Government has put in place a new bespoke immigration path for BN(O)s, suspended our extradition treaty with Hong Kong, and extended our arms embargo on mainland China to Hong Kong. On 13 November, following the decision to arbitrarily remove elected pro-democracy legislators from their positions, the FCDO Permanent Under Secretary summoned the Chinese Ambassador to register our deep concerns.

We continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations. At the UN Human Rights Council in June the UK delivered a joint statement on behalf of 28 countries raising China's assault on Hong Kong's autonomy and rights and freedoms. At the Council in September, the UK reiterated these serious concerns in a national statement, and the UK joined a statement on these issues at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee on 6 October; 39 countries supported the

statement, a significant increase from June. On 18 November, the Foreign Secretary issued a statement with his Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and US counterparts, urging China to re-consider its actions against Hong Kong's elected legislature.

Asked by Lord Garnier

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to review the evidence of the government of China's non-compliance with international human rights law and respect for human rights in Hong Kong; whether they plan to designate identifiable officials of that government as pursuant to the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020; and if so, when. [HL11586]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, we have a duty to speak out when we have concerns. The UK has raised our deep concerns with China on a number of occasions and been clear with them that they should reconsider their actions. In light of our concerns we have taken three decisive actions in relation to the erosion of rights, freedoms and autonomy in Hong Kong - specifically in response to the National Security Law. This has included: a new immigration path for British Nationals (Overseas); suspending our extradition treaty with Hong Kong; and extending our arms embargo on mainland China to HK.

We will continue to consider designations under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations. It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under the sanctions regime in the future. To do this could reduce the impact of the designations. We continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

Hong Kong: Politics and Government

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the governments of (1) China, and (2) Hong Kong, about (1) the detention of Joshua Wong in December 2020, and (2) the treatment of those in Hong Kong who oppose those governments. [HL11031]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement of 2 December following the sentencing of Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Ivan Lam, prosecution decisions must be fair and impartial, and the rights and freedoms guaranteed to the people of Hong Kong under the Joint Declaration must be upheld.

We have raised our concerns about Joshua Wong's and other cases with senior members of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Beijing authorities and will continue to do so. We urge the Hong Kong and Beijing authorities to bring an end to their apparent campaign to stifle legitimate opposition and reconsider their current course.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take in response to the disqualification of four pro-independence opposition lawmakers from the legislative council of Hong Kong. [HL11162]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As Minister Adams, the Minister for Asia, said in Parliament on 12 November, the imposition of new rules to disqualify elected legislators in Hong Kong constitutes a clear breach of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration. We have raised our concerns directly with the Beijing authorities, including by summoning the Chinese Ambassador on 13 November.

Hospital Beds

Asked by Lord Robathan

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Bethell on 1 December (HL Deb, cols 717–21), how many hospitals have no spare bed capacity; and how many beds are currently occupied above the seasonal norm. [HL11370]

Lord Bethell: Data on overall spare hospital bed capacity is not collected in the format requested. Data collections on hospital beds are divided into key bed subgroups, including general and acute beds, critical care beds and mental health beds. Hospital bed capacity is not fixed and can be scaled according to requirement.

Additionally, there is no official agreed seasonal norm for bed occupancy.

Hospitality Industry: Qualifications

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include hospitality on the level 3 Lifetime Skills Guarantee qualification list. [HL11324]

Baroness Berridge: The new Level 3 adult offer forms part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, which also includes Skills Bootcamps, implementing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement and wider work around improving quality and access to apprenticeships.

The sector subject areas included in the Level 3 adult offer reflect those that align most strongly with strategic skills priorities, meet the labour market needs, and offer the strongest wage outcomes at Level 3. While the course list does not feature any sector-specific hospitality qualifications, it includes a range of qualifications that are valuable across the economy in most sectors, including digital, business management, accounting, and finance.

We have engaged with employers, education providers, industry bodies, Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority to ensure that we are delivering the skills that will best support the economy across the nation and help adults to advance their careers in the current labour market.

We will keep the list of qualifications and the Sector Subject Areas in scope under review to ensure they adapt to the changing needs of the economy, ensuring we deliver an effective offer for adults and employers.

Qualifications not included in this offer will still be eligible for Advanced Learner Loans, which support many thousands of adults a year to access high-quality provision.

The Plan for Jobs, announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in July, also introduces a package of measures to support jobs across the country, give businesses more confidence to retrain and hire, and provide people with the skills and tools they need to get better jobs.

The government plans to consult on the National Skills Fund in spring 2021 to ensure that we develop a fund that helps adults learn valuable skills and prepares them for the economy of the future.

Housing: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to Figure 2.3. on page 16 of the Updated energy and emissions projection 2019, published on 30 October, what steps (1) they have taken, and (2) they plan to take, to address any increase in CO₂ emissions by the residential sector; whether they have a target for the reduction of emissions of CO₂ in that sector; and if so, what that target is. [[HL11117](#)]

Lord Callanan: Between 1990 and 2018 UK greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 43%. Over the same period, emissions from domestic homes have decreased by around 17%, or 18 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in the coming months, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings. These actions include the deployment of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating as part of an ambitious programme of work required to enable key strategic decisions on how we achieve the mass transition to low-carbon heat and set us on a path towards our net zero targets.

Housing: Heating

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the number of heat pumps being installed in homes. [[HL11392](#)]

Lord Callanan: As my Rt hon Friend the Prime Minister outlined in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, we are putting in place policies to scale up the deployment of heat pumps. Our ambition is to reach 600,000 heat pump installations per year by 2028, by creating a market-led incentive framework to

drive growth, and we will bring forward regulations to support this. More details will be provided when our Heat and Buildings Strategy is published next year.

In addition, the Government is providing financial support to help install heat pumps. Through the Renewable Heat Incentive, we are spending an estimated £1bn in 2020/21 to encourage the deployment of low carbon technologies, including heat pumps, in homes and businesses across Great Britain. Furthermore, we have extended the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive until March 2022 and committed £100m to the Clean Heat Grant, which is expected to be introduced in April 2022. And heat pumps also qualify for the Green Homes Grant, the £2bn government-funded voucher scheme which is already helping people install energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures in their homes; reducing their energy bills and their carbon emissions.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish their Heat and Buildings Strategy. [[HL11485](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in the new year, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

These actions include the deployment of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating as part of an ambitious programme of work required to enable key strategic decisions on how we achieve the mass transition to low-carbon heat and set us on a path to decarbonising all homes and buildings.

Housing: Standards

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the support required by the built environment sector to adapt to the Future Homes Standard. [[HL11484](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: We expect that homes built to the Future Homes Standard will have carbon dioxide emissions 75-80 per cent lower than those built to current Building Regulations standards, which means they will be fit for the future, with low carbon heating and very high fabric standards. These homes will be 'zero carbon ready', with the ability to become fully zero carbon homes over time as the electricity grid decarbonises, without the need for further costly retrofitting work.

Some home-builders are already building to fabric standards above the current Building Regulations or installing low carbon heating systems, but it is important that all parts of industry are ready to build homes that are fit for a zero carbon future.

Our October 2019 consultation on an interim uplift to energy efficiency requirements acknowledged that in order to meet the Future Homes Standard, industry will need time to develop the necessary supply chains, skills and construction practices to deliver homes that

incorporate low-carbon heat and very high fabric standards.

The consultation set out a proposed implementation timeline for the Future Homes Standard, with indicative timings for further research, industry engagement and a full technical consultation. We anticipate that the two-stage approach that we are taking to implementing the Future Homes Standard will help to prepare the necessary supply chains by encouraging the use of low-carbon heating in new homes, while accounting for the skills of industry and market factors.

We will be publishing the Government response to the Future Homes Standard interim uplift consultation as soon as possible and this will set out a roadmap to the Future Homes Standard.

HSBC

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the independence of HSBC Bank from the undue influence of foreign governments. [HL11380]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The government monitors the operation and functioning of the financial sector and its participants on an ongoing basis, and does so across a wide range of matters. However, we do not comment on issues relating to individual private companies.

Immigration: Finance

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the review on how immigration (1) status, and (2) restrictions, in particular no recourse to public funds, interact with free school meals and other educational entitlements will be (a) completed, and (b) published. [HL11311]

Baroness Berridge: We are working with departments across government to evaluate access to free school meals for families with no recourse to public funds. In the meantime, the extension of eligibility will continue with the current income threshold until a decision on long-term eligibility is made.

Once the review is complete, we will update our guidance accordingly. Our current guidance regarding the extension can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups>.

Immigration: Sleeping Rough

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the new Immigration Rules applying from 1 January 2021, including those which

make rough sleeping grounds for refusing and cancelling someone's right to remain in the UK, do not deter people experiencing homelessness from accessing support. [HL11271]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The new Immigration Rule which makes provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping will be used sparingly, and only where individuals have refused support offers such as accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government are working together to encourage local authorities and approved charities to resolve the immigration status of eligible rough sleepers and unlock access to any benefits and entitlements that rough sleepers may be eligible for.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions have taken place between the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about ensuring that the new Immigration Rules applying from 1 January 2021, including those which make rough sleeping grounds for refusing and cancelling someone's right to remain in the UK, do not deter people experiencing homelessness from accessing support. [HL11312]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The new Immigration Rule which makes provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping will be used sparingly, and only where individuals have refused support offers such as accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government are working together to encourage local authorities and approved charities to resolve the immigration status of eligible rough sleepers and unlock access to any benefits and entitlements that rough sleepers may be eligible for.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what has been the cost of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse to date; and what they estimate the total cost of that Inquiry will be. [HL11365]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is operationally independent and responsible for the management of its own budget. The Inquiry publishes financial statements on a quarterly basis on its website <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/>.

The most recent financial statement, covering the Inquiry's 2020/21 spend as at 30 September 2020, can be

found here: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/news/inquiry-publishes-financial-report-q2-202021>.

The inquiry's total spend up to 30 September 2020 was £152m.

It is difficult to provide an expected final cost of the Inquiry at this stage, but the Inquiry has recently concluded its public hearings and will publish its full life costs at the close of the Inquiry.

India: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Hussain

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the other permanent members of the UN Security Council about (1) the four letters written by the UN rapporteurs on torture, arbitrary detentions, extra-judiciary and custodial killings in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir to the government of India, and (2) the absence of any response to date by that government to those letters. [HL10970]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the letters written by UN Special Rapporteurs. Kashmir was last discussed by the UN Security Council in August. The UK recognises that there are human rights concerns in India-administered Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure domestic laws are in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights violations or abuse is deeply concerning and must be investigated transparently, promptly and thoroughly. We raise our concerns with the Government of India where we have them. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary discussed Kashmir, among a number of issues, with the Indian External Affairs Minister on 15 December.

India: Protest

Asked by Lord Singh of Wimbledon

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of India's response to the protests against the proposed reforms on the sale, pricing and storage of farm produce; and what representations they have made to that government about its response. [HL11244]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is conscious of concerns in India, and from communities in the UK, about India's agricultural reforms. The Foreign Secretary discussed protests on this issue with his counterpart, Minister of Exterior Affairs Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, during his visit to India 14-17 December.

Our position is that the right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Democratic governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality.

Intellectual Property

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to introducing criminal provisions for intentional unregistered design infringement. [HL11483]

Lord Callanan: The Government has considered this issue in detail in recent years. There were - and continue to be - mixed views on criminal sanctions for unregistered designs, and many design-intensive industries have argued against their introduction.

Taking account of all views, the Government remains of the view that it is not appropriate to extend criminal penalties to unregistered designs.

Intellectual Property: Small Claims

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to bring forward proposals to include registered designs within the scope of the small claims track of the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court. [HL11481]

Lord Callanan: The Government recently sought stakeholder views on the inclusion of registered designs in the small claims track of the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court and is currently considering the responses received and the best way to take this work forward.

International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to consult with (1) civil society, (2) faith groups, and (3) other humanitarian actors, before drafting any legislation to amend the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015. [HL11257]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In light of economic and fiscal circumstances the Government has taken the difficult but temporary decision to spend 0.5 per cent of our national income next year on official development assistance, rather than the usual 0.7 per cent.

The Government will continue to monitor the fiscal circumstances in order to plan accordingly. We are working closely and consulting with our partners on the on impacts and priorities of our ODA spend, including through roundtables with Civil Society Organisations such as one recently chaired by Lord Ahmad. Further similar meetings are planned in early 2021.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to including a sunset clause in any legislation amending the International

Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015. [HL11259]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The seismic impact of the pandemic has forced us to take tough decisions, including temporarily reducing our aid budget to 0.5 percent of our national income. Our intention is to return to this level as soon as the fiscal situation allows.

Internet: EU Law

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to amend the Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002 to require intermediaries providing commercial services for online businesses to undertake due diligence measures for the verification of the identities of those conducting digital business services. [HL11526]

Baroness Barran: Her Majesty's Government has no plans to amend Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002 to require intermediaries providing commercial services for online businesses to undertake due diligence measures for the verification of the identities of those conducting digital business services.

Iran: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take in response to the statement by UN Special Rapporteurs on the execution of Ruhollah Zam, published on 14 December; what assessment they have made of that statement calling his conviction, treatment in detention and execution a "serious violation of Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights"; and what assessment they have made of the human rights situation in Iran. [HL11384]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As we said on 13 December, we are appalled by the execution of Iranian journalist Ruhollah Zam. The UK Government opposes the death penalty in all circumstances, as a matter of principle. We assess that Iran's human rights situation has worsened over the course of this year. Its record remains of serious concern to the UK and the FCDO has designated Iran as one of its Human Rights Priority Countries.

We regularly raise human rights with the Iranians at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record.

Iran: Nuclear Power

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the incoming US presidential administration about the future of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran, Germany

and the UN Security Council permanent members. [HL11317]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: President-elect Biden has said that if Iran returns to compliance with the deal, the US would re-enter the agreement and seek to both strengthen it and extend it. This is an important opportunity to restart engagement between Iran and the US, and to realise the objectives of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which we support. We look forward to engaging with the new administration as soon as possible.

Iran: Political Prisoners

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter sent by UN Human Rights special rapporteurs to the government of Iran on 3 September about the alleged extrajudicial mass executions of political dissidents in 1988 in Iran; and what plans they have to support the call for an international investigation into reports of such executions in prisons perpetrated by that government. [HL11382]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We read the letter of 3 September with deep concern. The UK Government opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances and takes any allegations of extrajudicial killings seriously. We strongly support the work done by the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, and have always been clear that Iran must uphold its international legal obligations, including conducting thorough and independent investigations into suspected human rights violations.

We regularly raise human rights with the Iranians at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record. Furthermore, we urge Iran to allow the Special Rapporteur access to the country, so that he can conduct research and investigations into human rights concerns reported there, including the 1988 incident.

Islam: Religious Hatred

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the adoption of the resolution by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/75/L.36/Rev.1), published 1 December, and (2) the reference by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in his address relating to that resolution to the 75th Session of the UNGA on 25 September, to Islamophobic incidents in Europe of Muslims being targeted; and what assessment they have made of (a) that reference in view of Article 7 of the former version of that resolution (A/75/L.25), published on 4 December 2019, which "condemns any advocacy

of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audiovisual or electronic media, social media or any other means", and (a) whether that reference may be used to create an offence of blasphemy against Islam. [[HL11276](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities is a longstanding priority for the UK Government. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate for respect amongst different religious groups is to encourage countries to uphold their human rights obligations, particularly through international institutions such as the UN. While the UK supported the underlying theme of A/75/L.36/Rev.1 at the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly, Her Majesty's Government abstained in the voting on the resolution because there were elements of the text which the UK, along with others, were unable to support.

The UK's views on the Resolution are clear. While the UK and Pakistan do have differences in approach to FoRB and Freedom of Expression, the large bulk of operative paragraph 7 of the previous version of the Resolution is a verbatim copy of Article 20.2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the UK ratified in 1976. In the ongoing academic and legal debate about whether this reference can be used domestically to justify blasphemy legislation, the longstanding UK position is that this provision does not require that. We remain deeply concerned by the misuse of blasphemy laws. These laws generally limit Freedom of Expression and are only compatible with international human rights law in narrow circumstances. We regularly raise at a senior level the issue of blasphemy laws with the authorities in Pakistan and elsewhere. We believe that people must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, including exercising their right to Freedom of Expression, to invoke, peacefully, discussions about thought, conscience and religion.

Israel: Armed Forces

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that Muhammad Munir Moqbel was injured during his arrest. [[HL11183](#)]

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the injuries caused by the use of live ammunition by the Israel Defence Force against Palestinian minors; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel about such reports. [[HL11184](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that the Israel Defence Force is using explosives to gain entry into Palestinian homes at night. [[HL11185](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not raised these specific reports with the Israeli authorities. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the Israeli security forces' rules of engagement. While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and to use appropriate force.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about (1) the reported killing of a Palestinian child near Ramallah on 4 December, and (2) reports that the child was shot by the Israel Defence Force. [[HL11314](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is very concerned at the high numbers of Palestinians, including children, killed by Israel Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. The UK Minister for the Middle East and North Africa expressed the UK's sadness to hear of the death of Palestinian child Ali Ayman Abu Alaya, following clashes between the Israeli Defence Forces and Palestinian civilians. We have urged Israel to ensure that its investigation is swift and comprehensive. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate transparent investigations.

Asked by Baroness Sheehan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about (1) lifting the closure of Gaza, and (2) ending all practices intending to be collective punishment of the inhabitants of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [[HL11444](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have serious concerns about the use of punitive acts against the families of Palestinians who have been accused of violent acts by Israel, including Israel's policy of demolitions to destroy the homes belonging to suspected Palestinian terrorists or their families. Such punishments, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to international humanitarian law. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have registered concerns about this policy with Israeli authorities. The UK also remains deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza. We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions are doing to the economy and to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. There remains an urgent need for all parties to reach an agreement that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict in Gaza.

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports about recent remarks by Israel's Ambassador to the United Kingdom about (1) the Nakba, and (2) the displacement of Palestinians since 1948. [HL11450]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa met with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 15 December and reiterated the UK's position on the Middle East Peace Process, including our commitment to a two state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital. The UK is clear that the status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. Until that time, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We support a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1515. In practice, this means that any such agreement must be demographically compatible with two states for two peoples and a generous package of international compensation should be made available. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestinian refugees. The operational definition of a Palestinian refugee is any person whose "normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict".

Jerusalem: Churches

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that an Israeli settler attacked Gethsemane Church in East Jerusalem; and what steps they are taking to protect Christian churches from any damage caused by Israeli settlers. [HL11452]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: UK Consul General Jerusalem visited the Church of All Nations in the Garden

of Gethsemane on 7 December, following the attack on the church. The UK stands in solidarity with Christian communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and condemns all attacks on freedom of religious belief. Holy sites in Jerusalem hold particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. We condemn all forms of violence, including against places of worship, and raise this with the authorities when necessary. We also condemn any incidence of violence by Israeli settlers.

Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the demolition of a historic stairway which leads to Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Jerusalem Municipality as part of their plans to establish the "Biblical garden path". [HL11454]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has not made representations on this specific issue. The holy sites of Jerusalem hold particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The UK is committed to working with all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the status quo in order to ensure the safety and security of Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and all who worship and visit there. We support the freedom of Muslims to worship at Al Haram Al Sharif. In our meetings with the Israeli authorities we regularly raise the need to respect the status quo of the holy sites in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Journalism: Public Interest

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to (1) promote, (2) encourage, and (3) support, charitable status for public interest journalism. [HL11270]

Baroness Barran: As set out in the response to the Cairncross Review, published in January 2020, the government has concluded that the current Charities Act system accommodates appropriate options for public interest journalism. Therefore the government has worked with the Charity Commission which has published advice on when undertaking or funding public interest journalism can be charitable. This advice also raises awareness of the more detailed guidance available for those publishers in England and Wales interested in pursuing charitable status.

Julian Assange

*Asked by **Lord Hylton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) HMP Belmarsh, and (2)

healthcare providers, about the provision of care for Julian Assange; and what assessment they have made of the case for reviewing his care. [[HL11299](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The MoJ does not hold any information in relation to the provisions of health care to Mr Julian Assange. This is because NHS England and the Welsh Government have primary responsibility for the commissioning of healthcare services in public prisons. The commitment to working with health and justice partners is set out in the National Partnership Agreement for Prison Healthcare in England, which was published in April 2018. Prisoners do, however, receive the same healthcare and treatment as anyone outside of the prison. NHS practitioners use their professional judgement to ensure that a high level of care and confidentiality is provided to prisoners that is equal to that care given to patients in the wider community. HMPPS is committed through the National Partnership Agreement to safeguarding the public health of those in prison.

Responsibility for Mr Assange's healthcare rests with Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust. Healthcare providers work in close partnership with Prison Staff to deliver the best care possible to all Prisoners. Due to patient confidentiality, it would not be appropriate to comment on the care of individual Prisoners.

Juries

Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the average wait time between charge and sentence for crimes tried by jury was (1) in each year from 2008 to 2019, and (2) in each month of 2020. [[HL11503](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The average number of days taken from charge to completion for crimes tried by jury in the Crown Court in England and Wales between the period of 2008 to 2019 has been provided in the table below.

The average waiting time between charge and completion for crimes tried by jury in the Crown Court in England and Wales in each month of 2020 is not available at this time. This is due to MoJ changing its data gathering, access and release practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

	<i>Number of defendants whose cases have completed</i>		<i>Charge to completion</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
2010 Q2-Q4	72,916	204	174
2011	92,813	210	178
2012	82,214	212	179
2013 7	76,134	196	165
2014	76,531	206	174
2015	76,818	232	189

2016	69,563	234	186
2017	64,592	224	178
2018	64,852	239	188
2019	57,463	226	178

Notes:

1) Includes cases with an offence to completion time greater than 10 years but excludes a small number of cases with identified data quality issues and breaches. 2) Includes all for trial criminal cases (triable-either-way and indictable only cases) which have received a verdict and concluded in the specified time period in the Crown Court. This data also includes cases where the prosecutor has chosen not to continue with the prosecution. Not all cases included in this data will have gone to a full jury trial, for example where the defendant has pleaded guilty before their trial date.

3) Only one offence is counted for each defendant in the case. If there is more than one offence per defendant that completes on the same day, a set of validation rules applies to select one offence only and these relate to the longest duration, seriousness and the lowest sequence number of the offence.

4) Data from Q1 2018 to Q4 2019 are not comparable with previous periods and there is a requirement to break the series. The data from Q1 2018 onwards has been revised following the identification of defendant attrition through the timeliness process, as a result these defendants have been put back into the analysis. It is our intention to investigate the more efficient and effective way to provide robust and reliable back series in future.

5) The number of defendants shows the number whose cases have completed and where it has been possible to match from initial appearance at magistrates' court to completion in the Crown Court. The match rate is typically between 90-95%, as for some cases, it is not possible to match defendants through the system and these cases are excluded.

6) Timeliness figures are only available from April 2010, so data for 2010 is presented above for Q2 to Q4 only.

7) Committal proceedings were abolished nationally on 28th May 2013. Triable-either-way cases are now sent rather than committed for trial.

Kameel Ahmady

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Kameel Ahmady being sentenced to eight years in prison in Iran on 13 December; and what assessment they have made of the impact of his research on (1) female genital mutilation, and (2) child marriage, on his conviction. [[HL11383](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are urgently seeking more information from the Iranian Government about reports that Kameel Ahmady, a dual British national, has

been sentenced. We do not have sight of the Iranian judicial process or what formal charges have been brought against him. We remain deeply concerned about all our dual British nationals detained in Iran.

Land Registry

Asked by Lord Allan of Hallam

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 23 September (HL7839), when the Land Registry expects to start publishing Unique Property Reference Numbers as part of its publicly available data referencing properties. [HL11381]

Lord Callanan: HM Land Registry (HMLR) is committed to opening its data where possible. HMLR already incorporates Unique Property Reference Numbers in its published Leasehold property data set and as part of its National Polygon Service. HMLR will incorporate UPRN and Unique Street Reference Number data where appropriate in future publishable data sets in line with the National Data Strategy.

Large Goods Vehicles: Republic of Ireland

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to curb any (1) extra pollution, and (2) extra congestion, caused as a result of the requirement for trucks from the Republic of Ireland to travel between Holyhead and registration parks in Warrington, following the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11167]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: As part of the work to support the Special Development Order submissions to enable the use of Warrington inland border facility, we are carrying out traffic modelling to analyse the potential for congestion of traffic moving from Holyhead to Warrington. We are also carefully considering environmental matters including noise and air quality to minimise any potential impacts.

Recent discussions with Stena Line and Port of Holyhead have also identified an option for conducting Office of Transit at the port temporarily until the enduring facility is available. This is due to the recent availability of extra space at the port and will limit the amount of traffic which is required to use Inland Border Facilities.

Learning Disability: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that people with learning disabilities do not face discrimination as a result of restrictions put in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11228]

Lord Bethell: Wherever possible we have made exemptions to restrictions, to enable people with a

learning disability to continue to access the support they need to live fulfilling lives, whilst balancing this with the need to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

We have recognised the need for support groups for disabled people to continue and formally organised groups of up to 15 can continue to meet, including day services. Government guidance is clear that people who are unable to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability are exempt from having to wear one. We have engaged with disability charities and other stakeholders using multiple channels to communicate this message to the general public. On 1 December we also published an accessible guidance online regarding the local restriction tiers.

Lebanon: Overseas Aid

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they have given to the government of Lebanon following the explosion in Beirut on 4 August. [HL11302]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains committed to supporting the Lebanese people deal with the tragic explosion in Beirut Port. The UK was one of the biggest donors to the crisis. We have now spent over £27 million in our response package which is helping support the most vulnerable people in Lebanon to meet their immediate survival needs. A British team of medics specialising in trauma, emergency nursing and rehabilitation flew out on 7 August, and we also provided medical equipment for Lebanese hospitals and clinics. In addition, the UK gave medical, strategic air transport, engineering and communications support to the Lebanese Armed Forces as they responded to the explosion and its aftermath, and the Royal Navy ship HMS Enterprise was deployed to survey the damage to the Port.

Lesotho: Environment Protection

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the report by the Legatum Institute The Legatum Prosperity Index 2020, published on 16 November, that Lesotho is among the top 10 worst countries in the world in the natural environment category. [HL11205]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by the ongoing impact of climate variability upon the prosperity of Lesotho, as well as the Legatum Prosperity Index's findings for natural environment ranking Lesotho as 166 out of 167 countries. Climate and Natural Resources have been a pillar of the UK Government's strategic approach to Africa since 2018, with an increased focus on these issues across the continent. We recognise how important natural resources are for Lesotho's long-term prosperity, and that is why climate change and environmental issues

are key priorities for the recently re-opened British High Commission in Maseru.

The UK is supporting Lesotho to improve the management of their shared water resources, helping people to cope with the impacts of existing climate variability through the FCDO's regional Transboundary Water Management Programme. This is supporting efforts to respond to the urgent issue of wetland degradation across Southern Africa, and the declining capacity at the source of the Orange-Senqu river to retain, regulate and sustain base water flows, which are crucial for local livelihoods and for water supply within Lesotho and South Africa. The UK also recently announced a £7 million Southern Africa COVID-19 Humanitarian and Remittance Relief Fund, which will support countries across the region hit by the combined effects of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Life Expectancy

Asked by Lord Robathan

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Bethell on 1 December (HL Deb, cols 717–21), what assessment they have made of the life expectancy of people dying from COVID-19 compared with those dying from other illnesses. [HL11373]

Lord Bethell: Data are not available to estimate the life expectancy of people who are dying from COVID-19 or dying from other illnesses.

Liverpool City Council: Property Development

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Liverpool City Council about their process of awarding contracts to developers. [HL11323]

Lord Greenhalgh: It is a matter of public record that Merseyside Police have for many months been conducting an investigation which has resulted in a number of arrests made on suspicion of fraud, bribery, corruption and misconduct in public office, both in December 2019 and in September 2020. Further arrests were made on 4 December 2020 in connection with offences of bribery and witness intimidation. This investigation involves a significant connection to Liverpool City Council.

The Secretary of State met with Statutory Officers from Liverpool City Council at his request on Monday 7 December. He was given a range of assurances about the steps the council has taken to improve governance in the Council. Given the seriousness of the issues, the Secretary of State sought additional written assurances, including on any plans for further property disposals, and steps the authority has taken and proposes to take to secure effective governance. A copy of the letter that was sent to the council on Tuesday 8 December can be found

(attached) [here](#). Liverpool City Council submitted their response on Friday 11 December.

On 17 December the Secretary of State [announced](#) (attached) the appointment of Max Caller CBE to carry out an inspection of Liverpool City Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty in relation to the authority's planning, highways, regeneration and property management functions and the strength of associated audit and governance arrangements. The Secretary of State has asked Max Caller to report his findings by 31 March 2021.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

A copy of letter sent to the council [201222
Letter_to_Tony_Reeves - HL11323.pdf]

Statement [201222 Written statements - Written questions,
answers and statements - HL11323.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-09/HL11323>

Local Government Finance

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial reserves of each of (1) Belfast, (2) Birmingham, (3) Bristol, (4) Cardiff, (5) Glasgow, (6) Leeds, (7) Liverpool, (8) Manchester, (9) Newcastle, (10) Nottingham, and (11) Sheffield, local authorities; and what information they hold on such reserves in each case. [HL11321]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Department collects and publishes reserves data as part of annual data returns from local authorities in England. These figures can be found (attached) in the individual local authority data at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing>, in table RA of budget data, and in table RS of outturn data. The latest published reserves figures from these local authorities are shown in the table.

Non-ringfenced reserves at 31 March 2020 of requested local authorities

	<i>Other earmarked reserves (£m)</i>	<i>Unallocated reserves (£m)</i>
Birmingham	463.8	133
Bristol	80.6	17
Leeds	66.7	31.5
Liverpool	96.8	5.7
Manchester	348.7	21.4
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	87.7	10.1
Nottingham	153.7	2.2
Sheffield	252.1	13.2

Source: Provisional Revenue Outturn 2019-20 returns from local authorities in England to MHCLG

We also collect information on use of reserves in our Local Authority COVID-19 financial monitoring survey. The eighth round of the survey was live between 4th and 11th December.

The financial position of councils in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the relevant devolved administration.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Local authority revenue expenditure and financing [201222
Local_authority_revenue_expenditure_and_financing_England_20
20_to_2021_budget_HL11321.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-09/HL11321>

Local Government: Audit

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what, if any, conditions they have in place to require local councils to have completed audits of their accounts in order to receive central government funding; and what assessment they have made of whether Liverpool City Council is compliant with any such conditions. [HL11499]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government does not require local authorities to complete audits of their accounts in order to receive central government funding. However, there may be other conditions attached to individual grants to ensure the funding is used for its intended purpose.

The Accounts and Audit regulations 2015 (SI 234/2015) require councils to submit their draft accounts for public inspection within certain deadlines and, once the public inspection period is completed to approve them. The regulations also require the final accounts to be published (currently by 30 November 2020) once signed off by the auditor as complete. If the authority is unable to publish the completed accounts within the specified deadline they are required to post a notice saying why they are not being published. To help address the rising number of delayed audits and other concerns with the local audit framework, we commissioned Sir Tony Redmond to review arrangements supporting the effectiveness and quality of local authority financial reporting and external audit within the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Sir Tony published the outcome of his Review on 8 September and I am pleased to report that we responded, accepting the majority of his recommendations on 17 December. The report can be accessed at the following (attached) link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-financial-reporting-and-external-audit-government-response-to-the-redmond-review>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Government response to the redmond review [201223 Local authority financial reporting and external audit_ government response to the independent review - HL11499.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-15/HL11499>

Local Government: Elections

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the deferred local elections which are expected to take place in May 2021 will be for (1) three, or (2) four, year terms of office. [HL11350]

Lord Greenhalgh: Section 60(3) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides that for elected representatives whose elections scheduled for May 2020 were postponed, their term of office has been extended to May 2021; for those elected in 2021 as a result of the postponement, their term of office will be three years ending in 2024 rather than four years. This will maintain the pre-pandemic electoral cycles. By-elections postponed until May 2021 will be for the remaining term of office for that seat in May 2021.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the local elections due to be held in May 2021 are COVID-19-secure. [HL11487]

Lord True: The Government is working with the electoral sector and Public Health England to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections, including ensuring polling stations are safe and Covid-secure places to vote. People will be able to participate in the polls safely and in a way of their choice, whether by post, proxy or in-person.

This was outlined in the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution's letter to Electoral Returning Officers, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-chloe-smith-mp-to-returning-officers>.

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of using schools as polling stations for the local elections in May, in particular if those schools are required to close (1) for polling day, and (2) to undertake a deep clean following polling day. [HL11351]

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential for staffing problems at the local elections in England in May 2021 as a result of (1) reluctance among potential workers to volunteer to carry out duties at polling stations, and (2) the need for extra staff at polling stations to act as (a) 'greeters', and (b) cleaners. [HL11408]

Lord True: The Government appreciates the issues around using schools as polling places and asks that returning officers consider other venues where possible to minimise disruption to education. Where schools are designated as polling places, it should be with due consideration and for sound practical reasons. It can be the case that schools represent the most suitable and accessible locations and, in some instances, provide the only appropriate location for the situation of a polling station. Schools and local authorities should follow public health advice with regard to necessary cleaning and consider how this can be undertaken efficiently to ensure minimal disruption.

The Government has considered issues around staffing at the May 2021 elections with the electoral sector and Public Health England, and the Electoral Commission has included reference to this in recent guidance.

Local Government: Subsidiary Companies

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of appointments of councillors who lack specialist knowledge being appointed to the boards of council-owned companies. [HL11322]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government is clear that councillors serving on company boards need particular skills, experience and training, as identified, for example, in the Public Interest Report issued by Nottingham City Council's external auditors on 11 August 2020. This Public Interest Report followed the identification of serious issues associated with the council's private energy company Robin Hood Energy.

On 17 December the Secretary of State published a response to the rapid non-statutory review into Nottingham City Council commissioned on 2 November. In his response, the Secretary of State acknowledged the review's recommendation that the Department publish sector guidance on council-owned companies. This is being considered and an announcement will be made in due course.

Nottingham City Council's non-statutory review report and Secretary of State response can be found (attached) here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nottingham-city-council-rapid-review>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Nottingham city council rapid review [201222_NCCreport - HL11322.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-09/HL11322>

M6: Speed Limits

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the speed limit on the M6 motorway northbound from junction 21A to 26 is 60mph while the same stretch southbound is 50mph. [HL11495]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There are currently no speed restrictions in place on the M6 motorway from junction 21A to 26 other than the 70mph national speed limit.

Mayors

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the robustness of (1) checks and balances on, and (2) scrutiny of, directly-elected mayors in England. [HL11248]

Lord Greenhalgh: All principal and combined authorities that operate with a directly-elected mayor are required to have at least one overview and scrutiny committee to hold the executive to account. Combined authorities must also put in place an audit committee to provide additional challenge and, although it is not a statutory requirement, most principal authorities do the same. Overview and scrutiny committees have powers to investigate executives' policies and their implementation, call in decisions that have been made but not yet implemented, issue reports and draw attention to shortcomings.

Overview and scrutiny arrangements are just one element of the wider accountability framework for local government. Other key elements include: independent audit, codes of conduct, complaints handling and whistleblowing procedures, statutory officers, and transparency of information and meetings. As with all government policy, we keep the accountability framework for local government under review.

Local authorities are independent of central government. Ministers have no remit to intervene in the day to day affairs of local authorities, except where specific provision has been made in legislation. However, this does not mean there is no accountability for local councils. Local authorities must act in accordance with legislation and are ultimately accountable through the ballot box for the decisions that they make.

Meihong Wang

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of China about the reported abduction of Meihong Wang by police in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province on 23 November. [HL11133]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the reported abduction of Meihong Wang in Harbin, China. We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practise, change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We regularly raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Chinese authorities, and will continue to do so.

Mental Health: Education

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of mindfulness teaching in (1) schools, (2) colleges, and (3) universities. [HL11313]

Baroness Berridge: The Department for Education remains committed to long term improvements to support children and young people's mental health, set out in the government's response to its Green Paper and NHS Long Term Plan. This includes the roll-out of mental health support teams and the provision of training for Senior Leads for Mental Health in schools and colleges.

As part of this, we are producing evidence about what works to support mental health and wellbeing in schools, so that they can make evidence-based decisions about how to best support their pupils' mental health and wellbeing. The department is funding a large-scale programme of randomised control trials of mental health interventions in schools. The aim of this programme is to provide robust evidence on what works to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and whether programmes can be delivered effectively in a school setting.

The programme is testing the effectiveness of 5 different approaches to supporting pupil mental health and wellbeing in primary and secondary schools across England. It includes a programme of brief mindfulness-based exercises to be run by teachers in the classroom, which provides teachers with a short training session and materials to run brief mindfulness-based exercises with their classes.

The government has not made an assessment of the effectiveness of mindfulness in colleges and universities. It is for higher education providers as autonomous bodies to identify and address the needs of their student body and decide what mental health and wellbeing support to put in place.

Mental Health: Surveys

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Government Response to the House of Lords Gambling Industry Committee Report: Social and Economic

Impact of the Gambling Industry, published on 8 December, what plans they have to ensure that any company that (1) was previously connected to, or (2) has a conflict of interest with, the gambling industry is not procured by NHS Digital to carry out the 2021 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey. [HL11491]

Lord Bethell: Crown Commercial Services, through their RM6018 Research Marketplace Dynamic Purchasing System, ran a Call for Competition (CFC) on behalf of NHS Digital to put in place a contract for the provision of the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2021.

The CFC requested bidders to declare any conflict of interest, which as part of the tender process we would have subsequently conducted due diligence on. In this case we not aware of any such conflicts of interest for bidders. As of 18 December 2020, this is a live procurement.

Migrant Workers: Visas

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to extend the visas of health and care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11292]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government recognises the vital contribution overseas NHS, health and social care workers have and continue to make in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier in the year we offered free visa extensions for key, frontline health professionals whose visas were due to expire between 31 March 2020 and 1 October 2020.

On 20 November, we announced we will renew this offer for those eligible health professionals and their family dependants whose visas expire between 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2021.

More details of this announcement can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-health-workers-to-benefit-from-visa-extensions>.

Military Aircraft: Exhaust Emissions

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the indirect impact on the climate of RAF flights from the formation of aircraft contrails. [HL11426]

Baroness Goldie: There has not been a direct assessment of contrails formed by RAF flights. However, the Department for Transport has published scientific assessments covering all aviation.

The most recent scientific assessment of the historical, global, impact of aviation on the environment, including through contrails, is presented in the recent publication "The Contribution of global aviation to anthropogenic climate forcing for 2000 to 2018" by Lee *et al.*, 2020, a copy of which is available in The Library of the House.

Monetary Policy

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 3 December (HL10488) and the exchange of letters between the Bank of England and HM Treasury on the Asset Purchase Facility on 29 January 2009, whether the Monetary Policy Committee still requires the consent of HM Treasury to engage in quantitative easing through the Asset Purchase Facility. [HL11242]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 3 December (HL10488) and the exchange of letters between the Bank of England and HM Treasury on the Asset Purchase Facility on 29 January 2009, what assessment they have made of the implications of the confirmation in these letters that the financing of the Asset Purchase Facility by central bank money would require HM Treasury consent for the question of whether it is appropriate for the Government to comment on the effectiveness of quantitative easing; and what assessment they have made of the effects of quantitative easing on the increase in house prices compared to increases in wages. [HL11243]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Bank of England's Asset Purchase Facility is indemnified by HM Treasury. Due to this indemnity any decision to increase the limit of purchases to be financed through the issuance of central bank reserves requires Chancellor authorisation. However, the judgement of what size and composition of the Asset Purchase Facility is warranted is for the independent Monetary Policy Committee. The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, and the Government does not comment on the conduct and effectiveness of monetary policy.

Money: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the (1) use, and (2) circulation, of cash in the UK. [HL11218]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government remains closely engaged with the financial regulators, including through the Treasury-chaired Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, to monitor and assess risks around cash relating to COVID-19.

It is too early to predict what permanent impacts the COVID-19 pandemic will have on cash usage and payments more broadly. However, it is reasonable to expect that knock on changes in how people purchase goods and services, and social distancing measures, have accelerated the decline in the use of cash, as people have

become more comfortable with other forms of transactions and payments, for example contactless card payments.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the value of notes in circulation; the Bank of England considers this may be because of banknotes being held for contingent purposes. The return of coin to banks by businesses and the public has varied from its usual pattern. As a result there has been a greater demand for new coin from the Mint than forecast prior to the pandemic.

Motor Vehicles: Advertising

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ban the advertisement of high-polluting vehicles. [HL11339]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government has no plans to ban advertising of high polluting vehicles. However, the Government is going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emission at the tailpipe. Coupled with the new phase out dates we have pledged a further £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles.

The point-of-sale environmental label for new cars has recently been redesigned to present vehicle-specific environmental information in a clear, easy to understand and highly visible way. This ensures that consumers are provided with the right information at the right time to make informed purchasing decisions. A new 'running costs' section helps to emphasise the savings possible from electric and the most fuel-efficient cars. In addition, the Vehicle Certification Agency hosts a variety of tools that inform consumers of emissions data for new and used cars.

Motorways: Publicity

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to launch a campaign to improve levels of public understanding of smart motorway rules. [HL11545]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Highways England is developing a nationally-targeted campaign to increase road user confidence on All Lane Running (ALR) motorways, including what to do in the event of a breakdown in a live lane. The campaign concept has been tested on a number of audiences. Stakeholders in the recovery and insurance industries have been engaged throughout the process and have helped to shape the campaign.

Highways England is now in the production phase of the campaign, which will launch in January 2021. The campaign will be seen widely across the country

including on TV, social media and national radio to ensure maximum reach amongst the target audience.

Mozambique: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to (1) the government of Mozambique, (2) the African Union, (3) the Southern African Development Community, and (4) other regional groups, about the humanitarian and security situation in Cabo Delgado province; and what advice they have offered the government of Mozambique with the aim of (a) preventing further loss of life and livelihoods, and (b) preventing further gains by Islamic State and its local affiliates. [HL11421]

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to (1) the United Nations, and (2) humanitarian organisations, about the provision of assistance to people in Mozambique who have fled their homes due to the security situation in Cabo Delgado province. [HL11422]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation in northern Mozambique with President Nyusi on 11 June, urging him to address the underlying causes of the insurgency as well as its effects. The Minister for Africa spoke to Foreign Minister Macamo on 23 July, noting Mozambique's efforts to address the causes of instability through the creation of the Integrated Department for the Development of Northern Mozambique (ADIN), and to encourage a holistic approach to tackling the insurgency. The Minister of State responsible for Human Rights also discussed these issues with President Nyusi on 24 August and offered UK support to tackle the growing humanitarian crisis.

We regularly engage with our international partners on Mozambique, including the US, France, Portugal, South Africa and the UN. The Minister for Africa spoke to the Deputy Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa on 16 July. They agreed on the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Southern African region, and on central role of the Southern African Development Community in achieving this. To date, the UK has provided £19m of humanitarian and development support to internally displaced people in northeast Mozambique through UN agencies, ensuring displaced people have access to food, shelter and basic healthcare.

Mozambique: Islamic State

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking in response to the humanitarian and security situation in Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique; what assessment they have made of reported atrocities

by (1) non-state armed groups, and (2) the Mozambique army and police; and what assessment they have made of the number of people displaced by fighters linked to Islamic State. [HL11420]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in northern Mozambique, and the increasing attacks by groups with links to Islamic extremism. To date, the insurgency has claimed over 2,000 lives and created over 515,000 internally-displaced people. On 10 November, the Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Africa publicly condemned the recent attacks in which over 50 people were reportedly beheaded. We were also deeply concerned at videos, released in September, of alleged human rights abuses by the Mozambique security forces. Acts committed in the video were horrific and unacceptable, and we have urged the Mozambican authorities to ensure there is a full investigation to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

We are working with the Government of Mozambique to address the root drivers of conflict and instability in northern Mozambique, including through engagement with the Government of Mozambique's regional development authority in Cabo Delgado, and by providing targeted technical assistance under the framework of a Defence Memorandum of Understanding. To date, the UK has provided £19m of humanitarian and development support to internally displaced people in northeast Mozambique through UN agencies, ensuring displaced people have access to food, shelter and basic healthcare.

Music: Education

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their timetable for the introduction of a new national plan for music education. [HL11138]

Baroness Berridge: To gather views on how the National Plan for Music Education could be refreshed and strengthened, the Department launched a Call for Evidence on 9 February 2020, which then closed on 13 March 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, analysis of the Call for Evidence and the refresh of the National Plan is currently on hold. The results of the Call for Evidence, the department's response to it, and the refreshed Plan will be published in due course.

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of report by the Incorporated Society of Musicians The heart of the school is missing, published on 6 December; and what plans they have to increase music provision in (1) primary, and (2) secondary, schools. [HL11179]

Baroness Berridge: Music and the arts are vital parts of children and young people's education, and the Department remains committed to making sure all

children have access to a high-quality music education. The Department has invested nearly £500 million of central programme funding between 2016 and 2020 on a diverse portfolio of music and arts education programmes.

In January, the Department announced a further £80 million investment in Music Education Hubs for financial year 2020-21 to ensure all children, whatever their background, have access to a high-quality music education.

The guidance for school opening is clear that all schools are expected to teach an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects, including music. The guidance also includes detailed advice on how to teach music safely given the additional risk of infection, including when singing and playing wind or brass instruments.

The Department notes that the survey underpinning the report was conducted in the first four weeks of the autumn term, during an unprecedented time for schools as they opened fully to all pupils. During this period, schools will have been busy implementing a wide range of measures, such as the extra measures to teach music safely.

Through close partnership working between the Department and Arts Council England, there are strong indications that more schools have been engaging with Music Education Hubs over the course of this term and are teaching music as part of their curriculum.

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the University of Sussex Music Education: State of the Nation, published in January 2019; and what steps they have taken to improve music education in schools. [HL11300]

Baroness Berridge: The government agrees with the report's stated ambition that all pupils should receive a high-quality music education.

That is why music remains compulsory in the National Curriculum from ages 5 to 14. Music is also stated as one of the subjects that schools should continue to teach as part of a broad and ambitious curriculum in the guidance on the full opening of schools earlier this autumn. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

To support teachers in providing high-quality lessons, the department has worked with an expert panel to develop a non-statutory model music curriculum for Key Stages 1 to 3. This expands on the National Curriculum programme of study and acts as a benchmark for all schools. The model music curriculum will be published shortly.

The department has also invested nearly £500 million of central programme funding between 2016 and 2020 on a diverse portfolio of music and arts education programmes. This includes £300 million for Music

Education Hubs that provide specialist music education services to around 90% of state-funded schools. It also includes almost £120 million for the Music and Dance Scheme, which currently supports over 2,300 exceptionally talented children and young people to attend specialist music and dance schools and training centres each year. More information about this is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-culture-boost-for-children-in-schools>.

In January 2020, the department announced a further £80 million investment in Music Education Hubs for the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that all children, whatever their background, have access to a high-quality music education.

The government remains committed to continued support for music education, and following the one-year Spending Review settlement, our partner organisations will be updated soon on funding for the 2021-22 financial year.

Music: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce reciprocal arrangements for musicians from the UK to tour the EU following the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11137]

Baroness Barran: DCMS has engaged extensively with union bodies, companies, orchestras, individual musical practitioners and cultural organisations. We understand the importance of being able to tour. We recognise that this depends on musicians and crew being able to move quickly and easily between countries, taking necessary equipment with them.

Recognising the depth of the UK-EU relationship, the Government has proposed that we seek to agree reciprocal mobility arrangements with the EU. These will support businesses to provide services and to move their talented people. On temporary entry for business purposes (Mode IV), a reciprocal agreement based on best precedent will mean that UK citizens will be able to undertake some business activities in the EU without a work permit, on a short-term basis. The same would apply for EU citizens making business visits to the UK. The precise details, including range of activities, documentation needed, and the time limit, will be negotiated.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Armed Conflict

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports by Human Rights Watch that Azerbaijani forces have inhumanely treated ethnic Armenian troops captured in the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. [HL11072]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government welcomes the ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We have not made an assessment of the reports by Human Rights Watch. However, the UK Government is aware of reports that both sides may have mistreated civilians and military prisoners of war during the conflict and afterwards. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood has been in regular contact with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers since the outbreak of hostilities in September and has urged credible investigation of these reports.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their statement at the special OSCE Permanent Council on 29 September, what assessment they have made of whether a sustainable peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh region can be brought about by a negotiated settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. [HL11469]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government firmly believes that a negotiated settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in line with the Basic Principles, is the only lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh: War Crimes

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that two men were beheaded in the Nagorno-Karabakh region by men in the uniform of Azerbaijani armed forces; and what steps they intend to take (1) to investigate these reports, and (2) to refer this case to the International Criminal Court. [HL11462]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is aware of videos that purport to show appalling acts of violence including beheadings during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Where it is possible to verify the footage and reports, we raise our concerns with the relevant Governments. It is for those Governments to ensure that their armed forces do not commit war crimes and to investigate any allegations. Any decision to make a referral to the International Criminal Court must be made on the basis of what will be the most effective means to bring perpetrators of atrocities and those who have assisted them to account. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas has raised allegations of war crimes with both Governments and urged that they be thoroughly investigated.

National Curriculum Tests

Asked by Baroness Manzoor

To ask Her Majesty's Government who sets the date for SATS examinations; why the date for such

examinations has been set for the week beginning 10 May 2021; what assessment they have made of the impact of such examinations taking place in that week on those who will be celebrating Eid in that same period; what action they are taking to support any (1) schools, (2) families, and (3) children, affected; and what plans they have to change that date to avoid any such clash. [HL11359]

Baroness Berridge: The Standard and Testing Agency is responsible for the timetabling of National Curriculum assessments. The Key Stage 2 assessments are set for the week beginning 10 May 2021 to maximise teaching time in Year 6, whilst ensuring enough time for marking to take place and for results to be returned to schools before the end of the summer term.

In 2021, the Key Stage 2 tests will take place from Monday 10 May to Wednesday 12 May inclusive. The Department is aware that Eid al-Fitr will take place in the same week as these assessments and understands that, given the significance of Eid al-Fitr, Muslim pupils may be absent from school. Schools with pupils unable to sit their assessments on the dates specified in the statutory timetable can make an application for timetable variation (TTV) to enable these pupils, or the class as a whole, to take a test at a different time, or on a different day, from the rest of the cohort: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-varying-the-test-timetable>. Where pupils are unable to sit a test on the statutory date because they are observing Eid, this would be a valid reason to utilise the TTV process.

National Security and Investment Bill 2019-21

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government which transactions will be called in for scrutiny from the 17 sectors listed in the proposed National Security and Investment Bill. [HL11189]

Lord Callanan: The call-in power may only be used if the Secretary of State reasonably suspects that (i) a trigger event has occurred or is in progress or contemplation; and (ii) that trigger event has given rise to or may give rise to a national security risk. A trigger event refers to an acquisition of control over a qualifying entity or asset. The Bill's provisions set out a clear process for the Secretary of State to call-in an acquisition. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The 17 proposed sectors would be within scope of the 'mandatory regime' set out in the National Security and Investment Bill. This will require acquirers making investments in those sectors to notify and receive approval from the Secretary of State before completing certain types of acquisition.

The consultation on the sectors proposed to be subject to mandatory notification is currently open until 6 January.

Netflix

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Netflix about the inclusion of a disclaimer to explain to viewers of The Crown that the series is fictional. [HL11226]

Baroness Barran: The Secretary of State wrote to Netflix and outlined that while The Crown is a beautifully produced and acted drama, the company should be very clear it is a work of fiction. He also welcomed Netflix's continued commitment and investment in the UK.

NHS Test and Trace: Recruitment

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they were informed that the Director of Supplies and Innovation for NHS Test and Trace had been recruited by Oxford Nanopore Technologies; and who informed them of that recruitment. [HL11548]

Lord Bethell: Emma Stanton advised NHS Test and Trace on 25 November 2020 that she was intending to start work for Oxford Nanopore.

Nigeria: Boko Haram

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to establish what has happened to the students kidnapped by Boko Haram in Katsina on 11 December; what assistance they are giving to the government of Nigeria in securing the release of those students; what assessment they have made of (1) the statement by Abubakar Shekau claiming responsibility for the kidnappings, and (2) the impact of jihadist ideology on violence in northern Nigeria. [HL11516]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government was deeply concerned about the abduction of Nigerian schoolboys from their school in Kankara, Katsina State, North West Nigeria on 11 December. We welcome the news that they were released on 17 December. Following the attack, the Minister for Africa publicly stressed that schoolchildren need to be protected and subsequently welcomed their release. The UK Deputy National Security Advisor discussed the kidnap with the President's Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, on 15 December.

We are aware that Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. We are also aware that Boko Haram have previously claimed responsibility for attacks they have not directly conducted. For over a decade, terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, have caused immense suffering to local communities, predominantly in North East Nigeria and the wider Lake Chad Basin region. We continue to monitor developments closely, and to support Nigeria to tackle the terrorist threat. We are also

providing a comprehensive package of stabilisation and humanitarian assistance to support affected communities.

Nigeria: Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the re-designation of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern by the government of the United States; and whether they intend to take similar steps. [HL11262]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The decision by the US to designate Nigeria as a "Country of Particular Concern for Religious Freedom" is a matter for the Governments of Nigeria and the US.

The UK is committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief around the world. We are a strong voice internationally in defence of this fundamental right and promoting respect between communities of different religions and those of no religion. Nigeria is a secular state and the right to freedom of religion or belief is protected by the constitution. In Nigeria we engage with a range of faith-based communities and support inter-faith peacebuilding and dialogue. We continue to encourage the Nigerian Government to take urgent action to protect those at risk of violence, to bring perpetrators to justice, and to implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of violence and meet the needs of all communities.

Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many retail businesses that have traded throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have offered to repay any business rates relief they have received. [HL11307]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Several businesses have publicly announced their intention to return their business rates relief or otherwise entered discussions with the Government on this issue. The Government has been clear throughout the pandemic that businesses should use support appropriately, and it welcomes any decision to repay support where it is no longer needed. Any funds returned will support the continuing efforts to protect people's jobs and incomes.

Northern Transport Acceleration Council

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is (1) the purpose, (2) the terms of reference, and (3) the annual operating budget, of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council; what staff support this council has and who provides this; and what costs this council has incurred so far. [HL11410]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Northern Transport Acceleration Council is an advisory forum to provide the

North's leaders with regular and more direct access to Ministers to discuss priority transport and infrastructure projects, utilising their local expertise and knowledge to drive forward growth and development in the North of England. It is intended to provide a mechanism for speeding up key decision making and rapidly progressing projects, supporting the Secretary of State in his role as the Northern Powerhouse Minister.

The Council does not have an operating budget in and of itself as it functions as an advisory forum to progress and unblock existing priority transport projects – it is not vested with its own decision-making or funding powers.

The Council is supported by a Secretariat of DfT staff currently based in the North. Beyond the time of these existing staff, the work of the Council has not incurred any additional costs to date.

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in relation to the meeting of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council on 9 December, (1) what was the agenda, (2) who attended the meeting and which bodies they represented, (3) what decisions were made, (4) whether the meeting was streamed, (5) whether the minutes have been published, and (5) was a press statement issued; and when the next meeting of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council will take place. [HL11411]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Northern Transport Acceleration Council provides the North's leaders with regular and more direct access to Ministers to discuss priority transport and infrastructure projects. The agenda items for the meeting on the 9 December included the outcome of the recent Spending Review, the role of the Department's Acceleration Unit, reform to the Green Book and the Integrated Rail Plan.

The meeting was chaired by the Secretary of State and was attended by Transport Ministers as well as representatives from each of the local transport authorities in the North, John Cridland in his capacity as President of the Council and the Chair of NP11.

The Northern Transport Acceleration Council is an advisory forum and whilst it is intended to speed up key decision making, the Council itself does not have decision-making powers.

A press statement was issued with regards to the Northern Transport Acceleration Council, however the meeting was not streamed nor have the minutes been published. A date for the next Council meeting has not yet been arranged.

Ofcom

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the technical capabilities of Ofcom to implement the Telecommunications (Security) Bill under the revised powers proposed for Ofcom in that Bill. [HL11334]

Baroness Barran: Ofcom will have the staff, equipment and resources it needs to carry out its role following passage of the Bill. Ofcom's annual budget is approved by its Board and must be within a limit set by the government. This will be adjusted to take account of the increased costs it will incur, due to its enhanced security role.

The National Cyber Security Centre will also provide expert advice to Ofcom in support of Ofcom's role in the new regime.

Ofwat: Standards

Asked by Baroness Harris of Richmond

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Ofwat has met its statutory requirements set out under the resilience clauses in the Water Act 2014. [HL11125]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Water Act 2014 placed a new duty on Ofwat to further the resilience objective, which is to secure the long-term resilience of water supply and sewerage systems. It is for Ofwat, as the independent economic regulator, to consider how best to deliver its statutory duties when carrying out all relevant regulatory functions.

Ofwat has set out how it has met the resilience duty in its response to the UK Government's Strategic Policy Statement at the Price Review Final Determination 2019. The document is available online: www.ofwat.gov.uk/publication/uk-government-priorities-and-our-2019-price-review-final-determinations.

Organised Crime and Terrorism

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that organised crime and terrorism can be addressed effectively after the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11433]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The safety and security of our citizens is the Government's top priority.

Negotiations continue, and on law enforcement and criminal justice, there is a good degree of convergence in what the UK and EU have been negotiating in terms of operational capabilities.

In the event that it is not possible to reach an agreement, the UK has well-developed and well-rehearsed plans in place. We will transition cooperation with EU Member States to alternative, non-EU arrangements by the end of the Transition Period, where available and relevant. Broadly speaking, this means making more use of Interpol, Council of Europe Conventions and bilateral channels.

Specifically on counter-terrorism, cooperation with European partners on national security takes place outside EU structures and so is not dependent on the EU. Our bilateral and multilateral cooperation will continue, regardless of the outcome of any negotiations

The UK will continue to be a global leader on security and one of the safest countries in the world.

Overseas Aid

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of when the economic situation in the UK will allow a return to the target for official development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. [HL11258]

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 Lord Bishop of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to call for the reform of the international aid spending rules set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee. [HL11261]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary has been clear that we remain committed to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) rules set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

The UK has led the way in working with others to modernise the rules where they are out of step with modern development challenges. We continue to review priorities for further reform and maintain active engagement with the DAC and DAC members.

Overseas Aid: Charities

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of small international development charities on (1) the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and (2) furthering the international reputation of the UK and its contribution to overseas development. [HL11568]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Through FCDO's UK Aid Direct programme, we have a portfolio of 89 live grants to small international development charities (those with an annual income under £250,000); who are contributing to 10 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. As of August 2020, 54 of the small international charities supported through the Small Charities Challenge Fund (SCCF) had reached 197,411 beneficiaries, in 22 developing countries, 53% of whom were women. The FCDO's funding to small charities supports building the capacity of small charities in order for them to continue their work after the funding is over. We also recognise the

important role they play in raising awareness in the UK of the issue of global poverty and the role UK Aid can play.

The first round of SCCF grants are currently coming to an end and the FCDO will assess their achievements against agreed outcomes and numbers of beneficiaries supported; their overall impact, the strengths and challenges of delivering projects through small charities as well as the lessons that can be learnt from their approaches. This will contribute to our understanding of their contribution to furthering the reputation of the UK and its contribution to overseas development.

Overseas Aid: Impact Assessments

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to produce and publish an impact assessment for the proposed reduction in the UK's spending on official development assistance. [HL11260]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 - even if the budget is reduced. The Government will continue to robustly monitor the impact of our aid programmes through annual reviews of our programmes, independent evaluations and input from assessments made by Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) which are all routinely published.

Overseas Trade: Africa

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made since the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January in relation to their (1) trade policy for, (2) investment in, (3) exports to, (4) trade, but not export, finance with, and (5) trade agreements with, countries in Africa; and how UK trade objectives support the objectives of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement. [HL11331]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: At the United Kingdom-Africa Investment Summit we committed to be Africa's trade and investment partner of choice. Nearly one year on, and despite the challenging backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, we have sustained this effort. All the deals and investor commitments made around the event have progressed, with further investments added since.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has directly supported exports to Africa returning over £1bn to the UK economy already this year, and we have now signed 7 trade agreements covering 14 African nations total trade (exports and imports) in goods and services, worth £20.4bn in 2019. Total trade between the United Kingdom and these 14 African nations has grown by 21% since 2009. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will start trading on 1 January 2021, offers great promise. We are a leading supporter of

AfCFTA negotiations as recently recognised by AfCFTA champion, President Issoufou of Niger. We will support the new Secretariat in Accra, national level implementation, as well as the on-going negotiations.

These efforts will keep the UK at the forefront of African trade policy development, supporting delivery of our economic development and poverty reduction objectives, and drive the establishment of a new market for UK investors and businesses.

Pakistan: Forced Marriage and Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Pakistan about its publication Policy Brief by National Commission on the Rights of the Child on Forced Conversion with Recommendations after Analysis of Arzoo Case, published on 7 December; and what steps they are taking to prevent the practices analysed in the publication. [[HL11266](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the policy brief by Pakistan's National Commission on the Rights of the Child on forced conversions published on 7 December. The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, I raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 16 November. In addition, I raised our concerns about child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from minority religious communities, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 19 October.

Through the UK's development support, we are encouraging policy reform at federal and provincial level to strengthen child protection laws in order to prevent child marriage. In addition, the UK's Strengthening Rule of Law in Pakistan programme aims to increase public confidence and trust in the Rule of Law. It focuses on delivering outputs that improve the justice system for victims, witnesses and offenders, including vulnerable women and girls.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they have given to the government of Pakistan (1) to expedite prosecutions of those responsible for, and (2) to secure redress for those affected by, forced marriages and conversions. [[HL11267](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, I raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of

Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 16 November. In addition, I raised our concerns about child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from minority religious communities, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 19 October.

Through the UK's development support, we are working with the Government of Pakistan to strengthen and improve Pakistan's police and judicial systems. The UK's Strengthening Rule of Law in Pakistan programme aims to increase public confidence and trust in the Rule of Law. It focuses on delivering outputs that improve the justice system for victims, witnesses and offenders, including vulnerable women and girls.

Palestinians: Children

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the rights of children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child of reports that the Israel Defence Force is conducting night time raids on families in Palestine; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel about respecting such rights as a signatory to that Convention. [[HL11254](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children.

Palestinians: Detainees

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Defense for Children Palestine Isolated & Alone: Palestinian children held in solitary confinement by Israeli authorities for interrogation, published in December. [[HL11186](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by the findings of the Defense for Children's report entitled, 'Isolated and Alone: Palestinian children held in solitary confinement by Israeli authorities for interrogation'. We remain concerned about the treatment of Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons. Reports of the heavy use of painful restraints and the high number of Palestinian children who are not informed of their legal rights, in contravention of Israel's own regulations, are particularly concerning, as is the continued transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We

remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv have a regular dialogue with Israel on this issue. We also fund projects providing legal aid to minors and capacity building to local lawyers. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

Palestinians: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that Palestinians who have been shot by the Israel Defence Force are being denied medical care. [HL11451]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The long-lasting movement restrictions and the serious constraints imposed by the occupation can impact the provision of medical care. Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the Occupying Power, has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) to the fullest extent of the means available and with the cooperation of the local authorities. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the matter of access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities. We have also publicly and privately expressed our longstanding concerns about the use of live ammunition and excessive force by the Israel Defence Forces.

Palestinians: Israel

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they have taken to prevent the construction of any illegal settlement infrastructure by the government of Israel on Palestinian territory. [HL11182]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including settlement expansion within the West Bank. As the UK made clear on 16 October, in a joint statement alongside France, Germany, Italy and Spain, we are deeply concerned by the recent decision taken by the Israeli authorities to advance more than 4,900 settlement building units in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Minister for the Middle East also expressed concern about settlement advancement in Givat Hamatos on 18 November and Har Homa on 25 November. We regularly raise settlements with the Government of Israel; UK officials raised settlements with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 18 November. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. Settlement expansion is also a counterproductive move in light of the positive developments of normalisation agreements reached

between Israel, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

Pension Protection Fund

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government which company pension schemes have been put into the Pension Protection Fund since 2015; and when were each of these schemes transferred to the Pension Protection Fund. [HL11417]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The information requested is in the attached table.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table 1 [PPF Schemes Transferred since 2015.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-14/HL11417>

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government, for each company pension scheme which has been put into the Pension Protection Fund since 2015, what was (1) the amount of liability on transfer, and (2) the contribution by way of cash or assets made to reduce the amount of liability on transfer. [HL11418]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The information requested is in the attached table.

The table shows schemes transferred to the Pension Protection Fund (PPF) from 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2020 which is the latest date for which figures are available. The liabilities are calculated in line with PPF's accounting practice on the date the scheme transferred. The total assets in respect of each scheme are provided but a further breakdown into asset types is not available

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table 1 [PPF Transferred Assets + Liabilities April 2015 to Sept 2020.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-14/HL11418>

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether all guidance provided by the PHSE Association to schools, including the resources produced by other organisations recommended in that guidance, is in line with (1) the law, and (2) the current advice issued by the Department for Education. [HL11132]

Baroness Berridge: The department does not comment on resources from subject associations or other providers.

The statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance sets out clear advice on choosing resources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>. Schools should assess each resource they intend to use, to ensure that it is appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils, and sensitive to their needs.

The RSHE guidance and training resources have been designed to equip all schools to provide comprehensive teaching in these areas in an age-appropriate way. The guidance and materials should give schools the confidence to construct a curriculum that meets the needs of their pupils and reflects a diversity of views and backgrounds, whilst fostering all pupils' respect for others, understanding of healthy relationships, and ability to look after their own wellbeing.

The department expects schools to consult with parents and to make reasonable decisions about the content of their curriculum.

Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by Ofsted COVID-19 series: briefing on early years, October 2020, published on 10 November, what plans they have to support children in early years settings whose communication and language skills have fallen behind since the first COVID-19 national lockdown. [HL11514]

Baroness Berridge: In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are spending up to £9 million of the National Tutoring Programme fund, in the 2020/21 academic year, on the Nuffield Early Language Intervention, a robustly evidenced programme proven to improve oral language skills in the reception year.

The recent Spending Review has confirmed that the department will fund further expansion of an evidence-based reception year early language programme in the 2021/22 academic year.

We are also investing £20 million in a high-quality professional development programme for early years practitioners to drive up standards in maths, early language, and literacy amongst pre-reception children in disadvantaged areas of 51 local authorities.

Additionally, over 3,000 early adopter schools are implementing the reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) from September 2020, ahead of statutory roll out in September 2021. One of the main aims of the revised framework is to improve early years outcomes for all children, particularly disadvantaged children, in the critical areas that build the foundation for later success, such as language development.

As part of the reforms, we have revised the educational programmes to strengthen teaching practice in communication and language, providing a deeper focus on building vocabulary to address the word gap between

disadvantaged children and their peers. Further information on the early adopter EYFS framework can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896810/EYFS_Early_Adopter_Framework.pdf.

Private Equity: Taxation

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the taxation of carried interest. [HL11419]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The UK's approach to the taxation of carried interest is in line with the approaches currently taken by other G7 countries.

It is a balanced approach, which recognises that the hybrid nature of carried interest limits capital gains treatment to carried interest relating to long-term investments. The government keeps all taxes under review.

Prosecutions: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what safeguards they have put in place to ensure equitable outcomes for prosecutions using the single justice procedure introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11377]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: No additional safeguards have been put in place for Single Justice Procedure cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A case dealt with under the Single Justice Procedure is dealt with in the same way as any other case, except that a single magistrate can deal with it (rather than two) and the hearing need not be in public. Therefore, the magistrate must comply with the same legislative safeguards as all other proceedings, and the Sentencing Council Sentencing Guidelines apply in the same way.

In addition, the Single Justice Procedure has a number of further safeguards in place. All defendants can veto the procedure and insist on a hearing in open court. In addition, the magistrate can decide to refer the case to open court if they deem the case is not appropriately dealt with using the Procedure. As with any conviction and sentence by a magistrates' court, the defendant has the right of appeal against conviction and sentence to the Crown Court.

If a defendant was unaware of the proceedings they are entitled to make a statutory declaration which revokes the conviction and recommences the proceedings.

Protective Clothing: Procurement

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask Her Majesty's Government who are the members of the clearance board put in place by the

Department of Health and Social Care and the Cabinet Office to approve contracts for personal protective equipment worth more than £5 million; and how many contracts have they approved so far this year. [HL11175]

Lord Bethell: The clearance board was chaired by the Government's Deputy Chief Commercial Officer or the Department's Commercial Director. Standing members were the Commercial Officer, the Commercial Director and the Department's Deputy Director of Procurement and the Deputy Director of Finance. It was also attended by a number of cross Government and cross functional teams including Government Legal Department, the Department's anti-fraud unit, and Department for Health and Social Care and Cabinet Office's commercial colleagues. All these personnel were Government officials.

The role of the board was to decide whether any deal of £5 million or more should be passed to the Department's procurement and finance teams for accounting officer consideration and final formal approval.

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 1 December (HL10548), what representations they have received about the inexperience of personal protective equipment suppliers awarded a Government contract this year; and what assessment they have made of the impact on public confidence in the probity of their procurement process of their refusal to disclose non-commercial information about the companies whose offers were reviewed in a timely manner. [HL11177]

Lord Bethell: The Government issued a public call to action to support the increased requirements of personal protective equipment (PPE) in March and has always been clear that the purpose of this was to reach suppliers who not only had experience of supplying PPE but also those who had no prior experience but who had access to sources of PPE through their business contacts or could re-purpose to supply PPE. This resulted in over 15,000 suppliers offering their help and support.

All offers went through the same eight stage assurance process which selected suppliers based on the product type, clinical acceptability, price, forecasted delivery dates, volume and financial standing.

All the Contract Award Notices for these PPE contacts have now been published online as well as the majority of the contracts themselves and the balance will be published shortly. These contain the details of all suppliers awarded a PPE contract, the value of the contract and the items ordered under the contract.

Public Order: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to maintain public order during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11289]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The police are tasked with the critical responsibility for maintaining public order and are operationally independent of Government. They will continue to engage, explain and encourage people to follow the rules during the pandemic, but will enforce where necessary.

The Home Office continues to work closely with the police and operational partners to ensure they have the powers, resources and guidance they need.

Public Sector: Procurement

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask Her Majesty's Government which contracts they have awarded this year under the 'extreme urgency' provision of Regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 that do not relate directly to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11176]

Lord True: This information is not held centrally.

Details of central government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

Public Sector: Redundancy Pay

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020 require the amount of employer's national insurance contributions in relation to an exit payment to be included when calculating the value of an individual's total exit payment. [HL11471]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: For the purpose of the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payment Regulations, employer's national insurance contributions in relation to an exit payment should not be included when calculating the value of an individual's total exit payment.

Racial Discrimination

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings from Race on the Agenda's survey, featured in Channel 5's Everyday Racism programme on 25 November, on experiences of racism and, in particular, that 95 per cent of respondents identifying as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic have faced racism or racial prejudice. [HL11054]

Baroness Berridge: This Government is committed to tackling racism and racial prejudice in all its forms. That

is why the Prime Minister appointed the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in July, to examine all aspects of continuing racial and ethnic disparities in Britain. The Commission aims to set out a new, positive agenda for change - balancing the needs of individuals, communities and society, maximising opportunities and ensuring fairness for all. It aims to report by the end of the year.

Radicalism

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken in response to the report by the Commissioner for Countering Extremism *Challenging Hateful Extremism*, published in October 2019, in the last year. [HL11230]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government engages with the Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism on a regular basis and this includes discussing the report on *Challenging Hateful Extremism* that was published last year. The Government will respond formally to the report in due course.

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made by the Commissioner for Countering Extremism's legal review, announced in June, examining the effectiveness of legislation in relation to hateful extremism. [HL11231]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The work of the Commission for Countering Extremism is independent from government. The Government engages closely with the Commission for Countering Extremism on their work. We look forward to considering their upcoming legal review, which we understand is expected to be published in early 2021.

Radicalism: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations in the report by the Commissioner for Countering Extremism COVID-19: How hateful extremists are exploiting the pandemic, published in July. [HL11232]

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Commissioner for Countering Extremism COVID-19: How hateful extremists are exploiting the pandemic, published in July, what new financial provision and resources are being made available, and to whom, to prevent extremists capitalising on the impacts of COVID-19. [HL11233]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government engages closely with the Commission for Countering Extremism on their work on COVID-19 and extremism. After publication of their initial findings in July, we have

supported further work undertaken by them on this subject.

The Home Office has undertaken work to counter the spread of hatred and extremism during the pandemic, both online and offline, including working with the National Police Chiefs' Council on additional hate crime support and community work and working with civil society partners and social media platforms to encourage victim reporting of online hate crime.

The increased use of the Internet as a result of Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the need to be vigilant against those seeking to exploit the situation to radicalise others into terrorism. We are working closely with tech companies to ensure preventing terrorist use of their platforms continues to be a priority and that companies are responding quickly to any emerging threats. As well as engaging with companies, we are working with our Five Country partners to deliver a joint assessment on the impacts of Covid-19 on the online process of radicalisation, as agreed at the Virtual Five-Country Ministerial meeting in June. We also continue to support efforts by DCMS to work alongside social media platforms to analyse and quickly remove Covid-19 disinformation content.

Railways and Roads: Finance

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the funding allocation in the 2020 Spending Review for (1) enhancements and (2) new works, in the next five years for (a) Network Rail, (b) HS2, and c) Highways England; and for each (i) when such enhancements or works are planned to be complete for the use of the public, and (ii) how such enhancements or works contribute to the net-zero carbon emissions target. [HL11343]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport received a significant multi-year settlement as a result of last month's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 20), including funding for our major rail and road programmes, underlining this Government's commitment to long term investment in infrastructure.

The responses to points (1) and (2), are summarised in the table below. For reasons of clarity (as there is potential overlap between 'enhancements' and 'new works'), we have defined "enhancements" as works to increase the capacity of the transport network, and "renewals" as works which replace existing infrastructure with modern equivalent.

	Network Rail	High Speed Rail (HS) 2	Highways England (RIS2)
Enhancements	£17.5bn (in respect of both Enhancements and Renewals)	£22.6bn	£13bn

Renewals	N/A (this programme is identified as an enhancement)	£5bn
----------	--	------

With regards to completion dates, taken together these programmes represent a wide range of individual projects and milestones.

In respect of HS2 Phase One, the Delivery into Service (DIS) range for initial services from Old Oak Common to Birmingham Curzon Street remains 2029 to 2033. The range for initial opening of services from Euston remains 2031-2036, subject to further work on the study of design and delivery options.

Network Rail's operations, maintenance and renewals budgets have not been changed as a result of Spending Review 2020 and workbanks will continue to be based on the five-year regulatory funding settlement for 2019-2024. The Spending Review confirmed that the Government will continue to support the railway, investing in ambitious improvements to modernise the rail network. In terms of impacts on individual schemes, it remains the case that no schemes have been cancelled nor formal investment decisions taken as a result of the Spending Review. We are currently working with Network Rail and Ministers to agree a new baseline for the portfolio that fits with the new funding envelope. Furthermore, schemes will be regularly published as part of the enhancement delivery plan by Network Rail.

Highways England published its Delivery Plan for RIS2 in August, setting out the planned "start of works" and "open for traffic" dates for each enhancement scheme. The Delivery Plan is available on the Highways England website.

The Government is committed to building a transport network that is greener and fit for the future and we continue to look at ways to decarbonise our network in a way that makes best use of taxpayers' funding.

Railways: Finance

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government which rail upgrade projects will be (1) cancelled, and (2) reduced in scope, as a result of the reduction in the five year rail enhancements budget. [[HL11366](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Spending Review confirmed that the Government will continue to support the railway, investing in ambitious improvements to modernise our railway.

In terms of impacts on individual schemes, it remains the case that no schemes have been cancelled nor formal investment decisions taken as a result of the Spending Review. We are currently working with Network Rail and Ministers to agree a new baseline for the portfolio that fits with the new funding envelope.

Railways: Tickets

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions have taken place with ministers from Her Majesty's Treasury since 1 July about the introduction (1) of flexible season tickets, and (2) single leg pricing, on the railways; what was the outcome of any such discussions; whether they still intend to introduce those new products; and if so, when those products will be available across the rail network. [[HL11159](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Following the outcome of discussions between the Department for Transport and Her Majesty's Treasury, we are working closely with industry to develop a solution that offers better value and convenience for those who work flexibly. We will provide further details in due course.

There have been no discussions with HMT on single leg pricing proposals since 1 July. On 2 January 2020 we launched a single leg pricing trial on LNER routes from London to Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh. Once demand recovers the trial will be evaluated and those findings used to inform the development of wider plans for improving fares.

Redundancy

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have made to mitigate any job losses following the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [[HL11439](#)]

Lord True: The Government believes that leaving the EU will lead to long-term benefits for the UK economy. Whilst many businesses would have been preparing for the end of the Transition Period since last year, we recognise the impact COVID-19 will have had on their ability to plan and prepare.

We have a number of support schemes available including loans, grants, income support schemes and tax deferrals to support businesses through this period. Details are available on [GOV.UK](#).

Refugees: Children

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they intend to replace the EU's mechanisms for family reunification in relation to unaccompanied children. [[HL11490](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: This Government has made it clear that we are embarking on an ambitious programme to fix our broken asylum system to make it firm and fair. As the Home Secretary said in her Conservative Party Conference speech, we will seek to stop abuse of the system while ensuring it is compassionate towards those who need our help, welcoming people through safe and legal routes.

Section 3 of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020 (the Act) sets out a statutory obligation to review the ways in which protection claimants, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), who are in an EU member state are able to enter the United Kingdom lawfully. As a part of this review, the statutory obligation includes a public consultation on legal routes for UASC in the EU seeking to join family in the UK.

The Act includes a requirement to lay a statement before Parliament by 10 February 2021 providing further details of the review and consultation.

The Government has also made a commitment, in the event of a non-negotiated outcome with the EU, to seek to pursue new bilateral negotiations on post-transition migration issues with key countries of mutual interest, including on new arrangements for the family reunion of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Refugees: Resettlement

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with local authorities about the commencement of their new, consolidated, global resettlement scheme and the resettlement of 5,000 refugees in one year at the conclusion of the Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme; and what was the outcome of any such discussions. [HL11301]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have been working closely with key domestic and international stakeholders on plans to safely resume UK resettlement arrivals against the backdrop of unprecedented restrictions and pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of this work, and as announced by Baroness Williams of Trafford in the House of Lords on 9 November, the UK will shortly restart UK resettlement arrivals to fulfil our commitment of resettling 20,000 refugees affected by the conflict in Syria under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and we are working closely with partners to deliver this commitment.

Due to the lead times for refugee arrivals, it is likely that we will see most refugees start to arrive early in the new year.

Decisions regarding resettlement beyond the completion of this scheme are yet to be made and will need to take account of the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing pressures on the asylum system. We have committed to a review of safe and legal routes to the UK. We are aware that the pause in resettlement has had an impact on our resettlement partners and will continue to work with them as future plans are developed.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 22 July (HL Deb, col 2294) and the "pledge to resettle a further

5,000 vulnerable people seeking refuge, from not just Syria but anywhere in the world", when they estimate they will begin to resettle the 5,000 refugees pledged to occur within one year under the new global resettlement scheme. [HL11310]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK will shortly restart UK resettlement arrivals to fulfil our commitment of resettling 20,000 refugees affected by the conflict in Syria under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and we are working closely with partners to deliver this commitment.

Due to the lead times for refugee arrivals, it is likely that we will see most refugees start to arrive early in the new year.

Decisions regarding resettlement beyond the completion of this scheme are yet to be made and will need to take account of the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing pressures on the asylum system. We have committed to a review of safe and legal routes to the UK. We are aware that the pause in resettlement has had an impact on our resettlement partners and will continue to work with them as future plans are developed.

Remote Education: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the mental health of pupils of their update to the guidance on remote education expectations advising that teachers should check in on self-isolating pupils on a weekly, rather than a daily, basis. [HL11249]

Baroness Berridge: The government has reviewed remote education guidance and published updated expectations to provide further clarity for schools, colleges, parents and pupils.

Where a class, group or a small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or local restrictions require pupils to remain at home, we expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education.

Primary schools are expected to provide a minimum of three hours a day of remote education on average across the school cohort, with secondary schools expected to provide at least four hours' worth per day for pupils. The number of hours set has been carefully considered and was informed by the department's work with schools.

Schools will be expected to check and provide feedback on pupils' work at least weekly. Schools will also be expected to have systems for checking, at least weekly, whether pupils are engaging with their work, and inform parents immediately where engagement is a concern.

In the spring term, the department will also ask schools to set out details of their remote provision on their websites, so that parents can better understand their school's remote education offer.

Renewable Energy: VAT

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the impact of (1) removing, and (2) reducing the rate to 0 per cent for, VAT on domestic (a) renewable energy installations, and (b) energy efficiency measures, for 10 years on increasing the uptake of microgeneration in domestic properties. [HL11337]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The installation of many energy saving materials, including solar panels and micro combined heat and power units, is already subject to the reduced rate of VAT when certain conditions are met.

There are no current plans to extend the scope of the relief already in place. However, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

Respiratory System: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that funding is provided so that the respiratory commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan can be delivered in full. [HL10354]

Lord Bethell: The National Respiratory Programme is a sub-programme of the wider Cardiovascular Disease and Respiratory programme. The Cardiovascular Disease and Respiratory Programme was allocated NHS Long Term Plan funding as follows:

- 2019/20 - £8.4 million.
- 2020/21 - £15 million.

Russia: NATO

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likelihood that tensions between Russia and NATO will lead to military confrontation; what plans they have put in place to deal with such a scenario; and whether such plans include (1) re-establishing military to military dialogue, (2) establishing stabilising measures in contact zones in the (a) High North, (b) Black Sea, and (c) Baltic Sea, regions, and (3) codifying confidence-building measures in border areas. [HL11255]

Baroness Goldie: The UK is committed to holding Russia to account for its aggression and destabilising behaviour, collectively with our Allies and partners. We can only have a different relationship with Russia if it changes its behaviour in line with the rules based international system.

The UK and NATO continuously track and assess hostile state activity. NATO has a range of crisis management mechanisms and contingency plans in the event of military confrontation with Russia. These are supported by the UK as a core member of the Alliance.

For the purposes of transparency and in order to reduce the risk of miscalculation, the UK engages Russia through diplomatic and military channels, and supports conflict resolution and confidence-building measures through the OSCE. NATO also has channels in place, both military and civilian, for the purposes of risk reduction.

UK and NATO military activity in the High North, Baltic, and Black Sea regions is conducted in a safe and professional manner in accordance with international law and United Nation Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS). A bilateral Incidents at Sea Treaty promotes practical mechanisms to reduce risk during interactions between UK and Russian units.

Rwanda: Politics and Government

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the report by the Legatum Institute The Legatum Prosperity Index 2020, published on 16 November, that Rwanda is among the top 10 most improved countries in the world in the categories of (1) governance, (2) investment environment, and (3) market access and infrastructure. [HL11206]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Good governance, a sound investment environment and strong market access and infrastructure are all important for economic growth. As indicated by the findings of the report, Rwanda has made good progress in many of these areas over the past ten years. UK support has helped strengthen the Rwanda Revenue Authority to dramatically improve tax collection, create a national land title system to support investment, support Government to deliver an electronic system reducing the time and cost of clearing goods across borders, and increase the involvement of citizens in some areas of policymaking. These investments also create opportunities for UK trade and support Rwanda to exit from aid. We continue to regularly raise with the Government of Rwanda the need to match its impressive developmental progress with increased political and civic rights for citizens.

Schools

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of road congestion resulting from disruption linked to the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU on the ability of schools in affected areas to open. [HL11447]

Baroness Berridge: We are working with the Department for Transport to understand the impact travel disruption may have on schools following the end of the transition period. We are working closely with stakeholders, including Kent County Council, to support their planning for any potential disruption and ensure

contingency plans are in place. Schools should remain open wherever it is possible and safe to do so.

Schools: Discipline

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the use of restorative practice, and (2) prioritising conflict resolution over punishment in schools, to reduce the number of pupil exclusions. [HL11460]

Baroness Berridge: Good behaviour in schools is crucial if children are to learn and reach their full potential. As well as delivering excellent teaching, schools should be calm, orderly, and disciplined environments free from the low-level disruption that prevents teachers from teaching, and pupils from studying.

All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy outlining measures to encourage good behaviour and the sanctions that will be imposed for misbehaviour. Schools may use a range of techniques to support good behaviour, and the department trusts schools to have policies which suit the communities they serve. There is no right number of expulsions, but we are clear that expulsion should only be used as a last resort. Expulsion from school should not mean expulsion from a good quality education and support to reduce risk and vulnerability.

The department has published a range of advice and guidance to support schools to develop effective behaviour approaches. This advice can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools>.

We have an ambitious programme in place to improve behaviour across the school system, including improving Continuing Professional Development for teachers and school staff through the Early Career Framework and the revised National Professional Qualifications, which are due to launch in September 2021. The department is investing £10 million through the behaviour hubs programme, so that schools with exemplary behaviour cultures can work closely with schools that want and need to improve their behaviour. The first hubs are planned to launch in Spring 2021 and will run for an initial period of 3 years. More information about the behaviour hubs programme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/behaviour-hubs>.

Secondary Education

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce (1) minimum, and (2) average, class size targets for post-16 education providers. [HL11251]

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to create a single post-16 education commissioning and regulatory process. [HL11252]

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to invest in post-16 education hubs for (1) specialist, and (2) minority, provision. [HL11325]

Baroness Berridge: We welcome the Association of College's recent report on post-16 provision, 'The impact of competition in post-16 education & training', and note the proposals for longer-term reform to the sector, including class size targets, a single commissioning and regulatory process, and education hubs.

We will set out our future plans for post-16 education providers in the soon to be published Further Education White Paper.

In developing our proposals for the White Paper, we have engaged extensively with the Association and other representative bodies and look forward to continuing to do so over the coming months. In the meantime, we are most grateful for the work they have done, and we share their commitment to reform to improve post-16 education.

Secondary Education: Protective Clothing

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote the wearing of face masks in secondary schools. [HL11396]

Baroness Berridge: The department has published comprehensive guidance on the use of face coverings in schools, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>.

At each stage of its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has listened to and acted on the latest medical and scientific advice, and if we think that the guidance should be revised based on further evidence then we will not hesitate to act swiftly and decisively.

When an area moves to the local restriction tier 2: 'high', 3: 'very high' or 4: 'stay at home', in schools where year 7 and above are taught, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around indoors, outside of classrooms, for example in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

As the guidance outlines, based on current evidence, and in light of the mitigation measures that schools have put in place, face coverings are not necessary in the classroom. Schools and colleges that are in local restriction tier 1: 'medium' will have the discretion to require the use of face coverings in indoor communal areas, outside of classrooms, where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is appropriate in their particular circumstances.

We continue to provide information to schools and other education and childcare settings on our guidance, and any changes to it, through regular departmental communications.

Service Industries: Overseas Trade

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the objectives of their trade in services strategy are, beyond those regarding exports; and how they plan for those objectives to be delivered through (1) bilateral trade negotiations, and (2) plurilateral and multilateral dialogue at international institutions. [[HL11187](#)]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: As the world's second largest exporter of services, it is in the British national interest to champion greater services liberalisation globally, now we have left the EU.

We will use our independent trade policy to tackle barriers to trade in services and ensure open, fair market access overseas for British businesses. We will negotiate best-in-class rules for all services sectors, as well as sector specific rules for key export sectors such as financial services, professional and business services, telecommunications and transport services. We aim to secure certainty and predictability for British services exporters overseas, along with transparency on services regulation internationally. We want to secure opportunities for British services suppliers and investors to operate overseas through provisions for temporary business travel and supporting the recognition of professional qualifications.

At the same time, we will make sure that decisions about how public services, including the NHS, are delivered are made by HM Government (or the devolved administrations, as appropriate). We will do this through multilateral or plurilateral engagement at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), such as the Joint Initiatives on e-commerce and domestic regulation, and by negotiating ambitious services chapters into new free trade agreements that benefit both British businesses and the British people.

Shipping: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent seafarers' employment contracts from being extended because of COVID-19. [[HL11413](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The UK strongly supports the United Nation General Assembly's resolution on international cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers to support global supply chains and the International Labour Organization's resolution on maritime labour issues, both in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has published an information note which aims to help address

serious concerns about seafarer wellbeing arising due to COVID-19 restrictions. The MCA considers any request for an extension of a Seafarer Employment Agreement on a case by case basis. An extension will only be given if they are completely satisfied that any health, safety or wellbeing concerns are being addressed and only with the consent of the seafarer.

Skipton-Colne Railway Line

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 23 November ([HL10065](#)), what stage the project to reinstate the railway between Colne and Skipton had reached in the Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process; whether the GRIP process has now been paused or abandoned for this project; and if so, what would be the criteria to restart the GRIP process for this project. [[HL11409](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The work carried out to date on infrastructure options for this scheme by Network Rail and Steer is assessed overall by Network Rail as being 'pre-GRIP'. Further work on developing the infrastructure options is included within the proposals for initial 'Develop' stage work referred to in my answer of 23rd November ([HL10065](#)).

Slavery

Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what checks they undertake into the potential incidence of modern slavery in the supply chains of each recipient of Official Development Assistance. [[HL11405](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is committed to tackling all forms of modern slavery and achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7. We are taking active steps to identify and prevent modern slavery in government and partners' supply chains. In March 2020, we published the world's first Government Modern Slavery Statement, setting out steps taken to eradicate modern slavery from our supply chains.

The FCDO's Supply Partner Code of Conduct requires ODA-funded commercially contracted supply partners to go through a comprehensive code compliance process. This process considers supply chain risk and requires compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The FCDO is exploring applying the Code more broadly to other funded partners, such as accountable grants and Memorandum of Understandings. The FCDO encourages supply partners to use the Her Majesty's Government Modern Slavery Assessment Tool, which provides tailored recommendations to improve anti-slavery management and due diligence activity in their supply chains, including conducting risk assessments to reduce the risk of exploitation. From 2021, all Ministerial government departments, including the FCDO, will

publish annual modern slavery statements, reporting on specific steps taken to tackle modern slavery in commercial supply chains.

Social Security Benefits

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much was paid in social benefits in England and Wales in the last five years for which records are available. [\[HL11531\]](#)

Baroness Stedman-Scott: In the last 5 years the overall benefit expenditure in England and Wales can be found on the table below.

<i>Great Britain welfare spending, £ billion, nominal terms</i>	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>
	<i>Outturn</i>	<i>Outturn</i>	<i>Outturn</i>	<i>Outturn</i>	<i>Outturn</i>	<i>Forecast</i>
People of working age and children	94.4	93.7	94.6	95.2	97.1	113.4
Pensioners	116.4	118	119.9	122	124	125.5
Total	210.7	211.7	214.4	217.2	221.1	238.9
of which DWP	171.8	173.9	178.1	183.8	192.4	213.1
of which Non-DWP	38.9	37.9	36.4	33.4	28.7	25.7

Further detailed information relating to benefit expenditure can be found in our published expenditure tables.

Social Security Benefits: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to investigate any link between the 'two-child limit' restricting the amount that families can receive in social security benefits and the reported rise in the number of abortions among women with two or more children. [\[HL11399\]](#)

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the study by the British Pregnancy Advice Service Forced into a corner: the two-child limit and pregnancy decision making during the pandemic, published on 3 December; and what plans they have to review the 'two-child limit' restricting the amount that families can receive in social security benefits. [\[HL11400\]](#)

Baroness Stedman-Scott: DWP has made no such plans or assessment.

This is an uncertain time for families which is why DWP have taken unprecedented steps to support incomes and help with living costs. The support available through the welfare safety net reflects the fact that the majority of households in Britain (85%) have two or fewer children.

Society of Antiquaries: Rents

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in reaching a resolution with the Society of Antiquaries with regard to the rent paid for its premises in Burlington House. [\[HL11416\]](#)

Lord Greenhalgh: The Society of Antiquaries, along with four other Learned Societies, pay rent under the current rent agreement which was formally agreed between the Learned Societies and the Government following a High Court settlement in 2005. The agreement was also approved by the Charities Commission.

Special Envoy for Gender Equality

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to replace the role of Special Envoy on Girls Education; and, if so, when will that be announced. [\[HL11293\]](#)

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to replace the role of Special Envoy on Gender Equality; and, if so, when will that be announced. [\[HL11294\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Gender equality is a core part of the FCDO's work as a force for good in the world. The UK is committed to promoting every girl's right to 12

years of quality education, by working to accelerate progress towards getting marginalised girls into schools, staying there, and staying safe. Between 2015 and 2020, we supported 8.1 million girls gain access to a decent education. The Strategic Vision for Gender Equality reflects and responds to the UK Government's ambitions and works alongside our National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. We will update on the Envoy in due course.

Speech and Language Disorders

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to mark International Stammering Awareness Day on 22 October, and (2) to develop technology across the NHS which ensures equal access to specialist speech and language therapy for people who stammer. [HL9456]

Lord Bethell: While there were no specific events to mark World Stammering Day on 22 October, we acknowledge the unique role that speech and language therapists play in the identification and assessment of children and adults with fluency disorders which affect their communication, including stammering. Their skills allow the diagnosis of specific fluency disorders, the associated consequences, as well as retained communication abilities.

NHS England provides assessment and treatment for children and adults with a stammer. There are different treatments available for stammering, depending on a person's age and their circumstances. These include direct and indirect therapy, and other treatment options such as psychological therapies and the use of feedback devices which alter the way an individual hears their voice.

Sri Lanka: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Sri Lanka about human rights in that country. [HL11240]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Sri Lanka is a human rights priority country for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and we regularly raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Government of Sri Lanka. These concerns include the increased harassment of civil society, the militarisation of civilian functions, and the government's withdrawal of support for the UN Human Rights Council resolution on post-conflict truth, accountability and reconciliation. I have raised concerns on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, most recently during calls on 4 and 5 November. The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka also regularly raises human rights issues in her discussions with the government of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Politics and Government

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of (1) the economic and (2) the political, situation in Sri Lanka. [HL11305]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government monitors economic and political developments in Sri Lanka very closely, including through the British High Commission in Colombo. Like all countries, Sri Lanka has been affected by the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, and the government of Sri Lanka has introduced measures to respond to this. On 10 December, the Sri Lankan parliament passed the government's budget for 2021. The UK Government has underlined the importance of an inclusive economic response, including for marginalised groups and those most affected by the impacts of the pandemic.

Sri Lanka held parliamentary elections in August. In November, the government passed a constitutional amendment which consolidated executive power over appointments to the judiciary and independent institutions. The human rights situation remains concerning, including harassment of civil society, continued militarisation of civilian functions, and increased anti-Muslim sentiment. The UK Government regularly engages with the Government of Sri Lanka up to ministerial level on a broad range of issues, including our human rights concerns.

STEM Subjects: Teachers

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that secondary school teacher recruitment meets targets in all STEM subjects. [HL11180]

Baroness Berridge: It is a top priority of the government to ensure we continue to attract, retain, and develop high quality teachers to inspire the next generation. The department is making progress in delivering the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, which we published in January 2019:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786856/DFE_Teacher_Retention_Strategy_Report.pdf. This includes commitments to reduce teacher workload, improve continuing professional development, and offer greater opportunities for flexible working.

Recruitment to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects remains challenging. Despite this challenge, 7,066 trainees were recruited to teacher training this academic year (2020/21) in a STEM subject, compared to 5,865 last year (2019/20), which is an increase of 1,201.

We know there is further to go to ensure teaching continues to be an attractive proposition. The department

recognises that graduates in STEM subjects often attract the highest salaries outside teaching, which is why we are offering £24,000 tax-free bursaries for trainee teachers in chemistry, computing, mathematics, and physics. We are also offering prestigious scholarship schemes in partnership with professional bodies for chemistry, computing, mathematics, and physics, where trainee teachers receive £26,000 tax-free and a package of tailored support provided by the professional body.

We are also piloting several retention payment schemes for STEM teachers, including Early-Career Payments, Teachers' Student Loan Reimbursement and the Mathematics and Physics Teacher Retention Payments Pilot. We are conducting full evaluations to assess the impact of each of these pilots, and we will consider our future retention offer in light of the evaluation findings.

Students: Loans

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many loans were taken out by students aged between 18 and 24 studying for (1) Higher National Certificates, and (2) Higher National Diplomas, for the years (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020; and how many of these students also took out maintenance loans. [HL11268]

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average value of (1) fee loans, and (2) maintenance loans, taken out in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019, and (d) 2020, by 18 to 24-year-old students studying for (i) Higher National Certificates, and (ii) Higher National Diplomas. [HL11269]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Government recently outlined reforms which aim to increase the take-up of high-quality higher technical qualifications. We have introduced a new approval scheme to show which higher technical qualifications meet employers' skills needs, and we will support providers in this area and improve information, advice, and guidance for learners and employers alike.

Table 1, attached, details management information from the Student Loans Company (SLC) on the average value of loans taken out by 18 to 24-year-old students (as of 1 September in the relevant year) studying for a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND). It covers the academic years 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20 for English-domiciled students studying in the UK and EU-domiciled students studying in England.

Students are around four months into the 2020/21 academic year; as such, the number of students and average loan amounts are subject to change. Comparable figures for 2020/21 will be available after the end of the academic year.

The figures in Table 1 have been rounded to the nearest pound.

Table 2, attached, details SLC management information on the number of 18 to 24-year-old students in receipt of a loan (broken down by tuition fee loan and maintenance loan) and studying for a HNC or HND. It covers the academic years 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20 for English-domiciled students studying in the UK and EU-domiciled students studying in England.

Students may take out a maintenance loan, a tuition fee loan, or both. Therefore, the average overall loan per academic year for HNCs or HNDs will not be the sum of the average loan for each product. Similarly, the total number of students taking out loans for HNCs or HNDs is not equal to the number in receipt of each loan product.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL11268_HL11269_table [HL11268 and HL11269 tables showing loans taken out by students studying Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-09/HL11268>

Sub-Saharan Africa: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that countries in sub-Saharan Africa will have equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. [HL11241]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines as demonstrated by our strong support for the Access for COVID19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. The UK has contributed up to £813 million to the ACT Accelerator partners. This includes the UK's commitment of up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is the largest bilateral donor. Our commitment to the COVAX AMC will support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, including in sub-Saharan Africa, by contributing to the supply of 1 billion doses in 2021, and vaccinations for up to 500 million people (subject to vaccines successfully securing stringent regulatory approvals).

Syria: Detainees

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many women and children who have been detained in the al-Hol or al-Roj camps at any point since 25 November they (1) have withdrawn, and (2) plan to withdraw, British citizenship from; whether those people were subject to specific charges or received a hearing before any such withdrawal; whether any of those people are now stateless; and what duty of care they have to such people. [HL11135]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We do not comment on individual cases.

Figures for conducive deprivation orders, which are made under Section 40(2) of the 1981 British Nationality Act, have been published as part of the HM Government Transparency Report: Disruptive and Investigatory Powers. Four reports have been published to date in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2020.

Figures are provided on an annual basis and a breakdown for other time periods or for deprivations linked to specific locations is not available.

Deprivation of citizenship will only be used when it is necessary and proportionate and is a serious step that is not taken lightly. Criminal charges or proceedings are not a pre-requisite for deprivation.

When seeking to deprive a person of their British citizenship on the basis that to do so is 'conducive to the public good', the law requires that this action only proceeds if the individual concerned would not be left stateless.

Requests for consular assistance made by individuals abroad, are considered on a case by case basis.

Those who remain in the conflict zone include some of the most dangerous, choosing to stay to fight, or otherwise support Daesh. These individuals often pose a greater threat to the UK than individuals who returned earlier in the conflict.

It is important that we do not make judgements about the national security risk someone poses based on the gender or age. Women can pose as significant risk to our national security as returning male fighters.

Syria: Military Intervention

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many members of the British Armed Forces were in Syria on the latest date for which figures are available; and what is the mission of such deployment. [HL11403]

Baroness Goldie: UK Armed Forces continue to play a leading role in the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh. The UK has around 1100 military personnel committed to counter-Daesh operations across the Middle East.

Syria: Sanctions

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the government of the United States' special representative for Syria engagement and special envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, on 9 December that sanctions against Syria have been a "very effective strategy". [HL11401]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: US Sanctions are a matter for the US government. The UK has imposed sanctions on Syria to end the violent repression of

civilians in Syria. These sanctions send a clear message to the regime and its supporters, that we will not stand by whilst the regime continues to commit serious human rights abuses. We continue to impose sanctions on those responsible in order to maintain pressure for a political settlement to end the conflict.

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the government of the United States' special representative for Syria engagement and special envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, on 9 December, what discussions they have had with that government about whether its objectives in Syria include (1) the denial of territory, and (2) resources to, the government of Syria. [HL11402]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: HMG regularly discusses the situation in Syria with the US administration. On 22 October the Foreign Secretary and US Secretary of State, along with foreign ministers of other likeminded countries, issued a joint statement that made clear our support for a political solution to end the conflict, as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2254. That statement once again reaffirmed our shared position that such a solution must preserve the territorial integrity, unity, and sovereignty of Syria. We will continue to use targeted sanctions to increase pressure on the Assad regime to engage seriously with the political process.

Syria: Yazidis

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of arrests by Faylaq Al-Sham of people in Yazidi villages near Afrin in northwest Syria on 4 December; what assessment they have made of the wellbeing of those who have been arrested; and what representations they have made to the government of Turkey about (1) the release of any such people, and (2) the protection of Yazidis in Afrin. [HL11263]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of reports of arrests near Afrin in north-west Syria. Ministers and officials regularly discuss the situation in Syria with the Government of Turkey. In those discussions we make clear the importance of all parties to the Syrian conflict abiding by their obligations under international law. We have not raised the specific report of arrests near Afrin or made any assessment of the welfare of those detained.

Taiwan: Sovereignty

Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to coordinate international partners to support Taiwan's sovereignty. [HL11344]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our international partners are aware of the UK's longstanding position on

Taiwan, which has not changed. The Taiwan issue is one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, through constructive dialogue. The UK does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan but we do have a strong, unofficial relationship, based on dynamic commercial, educational and cultural ties.

Tanzania: Elections

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the outcome of the general election in Tanzania, and (2) reports that opposition communications were censored during that election using UK companies. [HL11165]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for Africa issued a statement on 1 November setting out our concerns over widespread allegations of interference during the Tanzanian elections on 28 October, and urging a transparent investigation by the electoral authorities. In the run up to elections we were troubled by reports of violence and heavy-handed policing, including the arrest of opposition political leaders. Our High Commissioner raised our concerns with the Tanzanian Foreign Minister on 26 October.

We are also concerned about reported restrictions to communications, including the internet and social media. We are aware of a directive issued by the Tanzanian Communications Regulatory Authority requiring the temporary suspension of bulk short messaging and bulk voice calling services. The High Commissioner to Tanzania raised our concerns around increasing restrictions on media freedom with Tanzanian Minister of Foreign Affairs on 22 September. A free media is vital to ensure credible, transparent democratic processes that are key to Tanzania's future stability and prosperity.

The UK welcomes recent steps taken towards forming a Government of National Unity on Zanzibar, and encourages all parties to commit to genuine and transparent change.

Teachers: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase recruitment of (1) Black, (2) Asian, and (3) other ethnic minority, teachers. [HL11445]

Baroness Berridge: We recognise the importance of having a diverse teaching workforce. It enriches our schools, benefits our teachers and supports more diverse role models for our young people.

The department is building and rolling out a new application service for initial teacher training (ITT). 'Apply for teacher training' has been designed and extensively tested with a diverse range of potential applicants, to ensure it helps remove barriers to potentially great teachers applying for ITT courses. 'Apply for teacher training' is currently in public beta,

running alongside the existing application service for teacher training: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-teacher-training>. As we roll the service out further, we will continue to develop and test interventions to support people from diverse backgrounds to become teachers.

The department's 'Teaching – Every Lesson Shapes A Life' recruitment campaign is targeted at audiences of students, recent graduates and potential career changers inclusive of all ethnicities, and we take every effort to ensure that our advertising is fully reflective of this across the full range of marketing materials we use.

Our two most recent TV advertisements reflect the diversity of the profession, featuring teachers from black, Asian and ethnic minorities (BAME) in both primary and secondary settings. We also feature BAME teachers across the rest of our campaign, including in newspapers, email communications, printed information materials, on the internet and across social media, which helps us to achieve this balance overall.

Teachers: Health

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the mental health and wellbeing of teachers. [HL11446]

Baroness Berridge: The government recognises the pressure that head teachers and teachers are under. We thank them for all that they have done, and continue to do, to educate and support children and young people as we respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Last year, the government set up an expert advisory group to advise on the wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. The group's recommendations were accepted by ministers and published in June 2020. They can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/890547/Nick_Gibb_letter_to_EAG.pdf.

As a result, the department has made a range of commitments to support the wellbeing of teachers and other education professionals in schools and colleges. These include the creation of a wellbeing charter for the teaching sector. The charter will help create an open culture around wellbeing and mental health, breaking down stigma, and will include a range of commitments by the government, and for employers in schools and colleges, to promote and protect staff wellbeing.

The department also took rapid action to help support the mental health needs of school leaders, by funding a pilot, led by Education Support, to provide online peer-support and telephone supervision from experts to school leaders. This service will run until March 2021.

Alongside this, the government has invested millions in mental health charities and in support for teachers. This includes £8 million on a training programme run by experts to tackle the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on

pupils, parents, and staff. Through the 'Wellbeing for Education Return' training programme, we are supporting staff in schools and colleges to respond to the additional pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as any anxieties they, or their teachers, may be experiencing. Further information on this programme can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/8m-programme-to-boost-pupil-and-teacher-wellbeing>.

Television: Disability Aids

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Prime Minister on 9 December (HC Deb, col 840), what plans they have to set up a working party to take forward the Turn on the Subtitles campaign that includes representatives of (1) that campaign, (2) Government departments, and (3) children's programming broadcasters. [HL11347]

Baroness Barran: The government is engaging with the Turn On The Subtitles campaign and other stakeholders, including broadcasters, to consider the evidence on the costs and benefits of switching on subtitles by default. A decision on next steps will be made in due course.

Tidal Power

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are giving to the stimulation of the development of tidal power. [HL11209]

Lord Callanan: To date, nine tidal stream developers have received funding from BEIS under the Renewables Obligation scheme. In addition to that, one tidal stream developer has received funding through BEIS' Energy Innovation Programme. Tidal stream projects are also eligible for Contracts for Difference (CFD) auctions. We will consider the role of wave and tidal energy, following further evaluation of the commercial and technical evidence.

Trade: Armenia and Azerbaijan

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the total value of goods and services (1) exported by the UK to, (2) imported to the UK from, (a) Armenia, and (b) Azerbaijan in each year since 2015; and how much Official Development Assistance they provided to those countries in each of those years. [HL11470]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The table below illustrates the total value of goods and services (1) exported by the UK to, (2) imported to the UK from, (a) Armenia, and (b) Azerbaijan in each year since 2015 (non-seasonally adjusted ONS data):

UK Trade, goods and services, nominal basis.	£ million				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
UK Exports to					
Armenia	24	31	104	27	28
Azerbaijan	1,102	727	543	679	780
UK Trade, goods and services, nominal basis.	£ million				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
UK Imports from					
Armenia	1	7	13	4	6
Azerbaijan	149	207	168	363	309

Since 2015 the UK's main contribution of ODA to Armenia and Azerbaijan has been through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), delivering projects in support of stability objectives, including economic and governance reform. In Armenia this totals approximately £11.5 million and in Azerbaijan £700k. In addition, the UK has delivered a range of other projects through funds such as the FCDO's International Programme, the Magna Carta Fund and the Open Futures Fund.

This table illustrates CSSF direct spend in country per year; figures are rounded and approximate due to, for example, changes in exchange rates and do not reflect regional projects which also benefit both countries. In addition, Conflict Pool programmes (CSSF's predecessor) that operated in the region prior to FY2015/16 are not reported here.

Financial Year	Armenia	Azerbaijan
2015/16	£0.05m	£0.12m
2016/17	£0.65m	£0.26m
2017/18	£0.61m	£0.12m
2018/19	£2.43m	£0.07m
2019/20	£3.71m	£0.09m
2020/21 (to date)	£4.07m	£0.03m

Trade Agreements: Africa

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that future trade agreements with countries in Africa align with (1) the Sustainable Development Goals, and (2) the Paris Climate Agreement, including committing to conducting

sustainable development impact assessments for any such trade agreements. [HL11468]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The United Kingdom has long supported the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and remains committed to the Paris Climate Agreement, as indicated by HM Government's target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

As we look toward our future trading relationships with all countries, including those in Africa, HM Government will continue to uphold the United Kingdom's high environmental standards, and has committed to publishing a full impact assessment of all new free trade agreements alongside the full treaty text at the end of negotiations.

Trade Agreements: Brexit

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to begin negotiations on a fully-revised free trade agreement in the case of each continuity agreement they have reached in preparation for the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the EU. [HL11512]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: In under two years, HM Government has signed or agreed in principle trade agreements with 58 countries. Total United Kingdom trade with these countries was worth £198 billion in 2019.

Beyond the end of the transition period, the United Kingdom continues to have an ambitious Free Trade Agreement programme. We will continue to progress our negotiations with the USA, Australia and New Zealand, as well as prepare for our accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). We will also look to refresh a number of previously signed or agreed in principle trade agreements, where we are legally obliged to do so. This will help ensure we have deals that are specific to United Kingdom trading interests.

We will need to consider the timing of these agreements alongside a suite of other policy initiatives.

Training

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the rights of local communities to make decisions on the design and delivery of skills development programmes. [HL11448]

Baroness Berridge: We have devolved approximately 50% of the Adult Education Budget to 7 Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority, enabling those regions to have more control over design and development of adult skills and training programmes so that they meet better local needs.

We will set out our future plans for post-16 education providers in the Further Education White Paper, which is

soon to be published. As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education set out earlier this year, this will give colleges a lead role in developing skills in their areas – through working with small, local businesses to support the introduction of new technology and processes and offering training in emerging skills, with high quality qualifications based on employer-led standards, they will drive an ambitious agenda that responds to local economic need.

Travellers: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the last six months to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11395]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government are holding regular discussions with representatives from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities to understand the issues they are facing. We have written to local authority Chief Executives highlighting the need to mitigate potential impacts of COVID-19 amongst Gypsy and Traveller communities and published online guidance for those leading a nomadic way of life. In addition we have announced funding for GRT children and young people to get extra educational support and launched the £25 million Community Champions scheme, which will fund local authorities and community organisations to improve the reach of official public health guidance about the virus into specific places and groups most at risk from COVID-19.

The Government is determined to ensure everyone gets the support they need to look after themselves and their families during this pandemic.

Trident

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what criteria they use to assess the effectiveness of the UK's nuclear deterrent; and what assessment, if any, they have made of its efficacy in preventing the government of China from breaching the terms of Joint Sino-British declaration. [HL11415]

Baroness Goldie: The fact there has been no major conflict between Nuclear Weapons States, and that the United Kingdom has never needed to launch armed nuclear weapons, demonstrates the effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent.

The nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats to our national security and way of life, which cannot be deterred by other means. It is not intended to deter or respond to all possible threats or situations.

For details on the Government's actions in response to the situation in Hong Kong, I refer the noble Lord to the reply given by the Minister of State, Lord Ahmad of

Wimbledon, to Lord Alton of Liverpool in response to Question HL10654.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL10654 - Hong Kong; China [HL10654 - Hong Kong - China.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-14/HL11415>

Tunnels: West Yorkshire

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on their assessment of proposals for (1) the preservation of the Queensbury Tunnel, and (2) the use of that tunnel as part of a cycleway between Queensbury and Keighley. [HL11353]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department has agreed to provide up to £1 million for two studies to inform a decision on possible future uses of the tunnel. The studies are considering what would need to be done, and how much it would cost, to return the tunnel to a safe and usable condition, as well as options for possible new cycling and walking routes in the area. The work is being overseen by a steering group comprising representatives from the Department for Transport, Highways England, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council. Both studies are due to be complete by March 2021.

Uganda: Elections

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports of threats to the safety of opposition candidates in elections in Uganda, what assessment they have made of the prospects for conduct of a free and fair election in that country; and what support they are giving (1) to civil society organisations, and (2) to other organisations, to monitor these elections. [HL11066]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK continues to call on all parties to reject violence in relation to the recent elections, work to de-escalate the situation and to respect the rights of all Ugandans to express their views in a peaceful manner, as the Minister for Africa outlined in his tweet on 20 November. The British High Commissioner in Kampala has raised the importance of free and fair elections and respect for human rights directly with senior Government Ministers and will continue to do so. We are aware of a number of organisations that will be monitoring the upcoming elections in Uganda. As with previous years, staff at the British High Commission are planning to observe the election on the day.

Undocumented Migrants

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of undocumented people in the UK; and what steps they are taking to ensure that any such people are tested or treated for COVID-19. [HL11404]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: As you will appreciate, by its very nature, it is impossible to know the precise size of the illegal migrant population within the UK and thus the Home Office does not seek to make any official estimates.

The Home Office is following national guidance in relation to Covid-19 testing, as set out by Public Health England. Since quarantine measures were introduced in June, those individuals who are encountered illegally entering the UK have been placed in facilities where they must self-isolate for 14 days, given we cannot be certain which countries they have travelled through.

Anyone who is symptomatic will be taken to designated accommodation and tested according to Public Health England guidance. An adapted regime is in place in our facilities to enable social distancing and reasonable restrictions are in place to manage the risks of Covid-19 spreading.

Additionally NHS trusts have been advised that no immigration checks are required for overseas visitors that are known to be only undergoing testing or treatment for COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide>

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the agreement reached by the UK and the government of France on 28 November to address migrant activity in the English Channel, what plans they have for monitoring and evaluating the impact of (1) this agreement, and (2) any funds spent on its implementation; how, and by what body, any monitoring and evaluation will be conducted; and whether they intend to publish any such evaluation. [HL11474]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: In November the UK and France agreed a package of £28.1m to support a range of activity as part of ongoing efforts to address illegal migration. The impact on migration pressures of this investment is regularly assessed by France and the UK through jointly agreed results frameworks. We are not intending to publish detailed information on the evaluation of the funding agreed with the French Government, as it relates to sensitive operational activity.

Venezuela: Elections

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to support the statement by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on 6 December (1) that they do not recognise the result of the illegitimate Venezuelan National Assembly election held on 6 December, and (2) calling for democracy to be restored in Venezuela. [HL11318]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK does not recognise the legitimacy of the Venezuelan legislative elections held on 6 December. Electoral conditions were neither free nor fair, and did not reach international democratic standards. We welcome the strong international condemnation of the elections by the International Contact Group (ICG) on Venezuela, the Organisation of American States, the European Union, and others. Staff at our Embassy in Caracas, and in London talk regularly with opposition leaders. We are discussing next steps with like-minded partners in both Europe and the Americas.

Venezuela: Politics and Government

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of (1) the economic and (2) the political, situation in Venezuela. [HL11306]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The economic crisis in Venezuela continues to deepen, exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. It is forecast that by the end of 2020, Venezuela will be recording an 80% contraction in GDP since 2014. Chronic economic mismanagement, hyperinflation, a massive exodus of Venezuelan talent as a result of the disastrous political and humanitarian situation, and repeated critical infrastructure failures are all factors contributing to this. The UNHCR calculates that more than 5 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees have left Venezuela, the largest exodus of people in South American history. Economic activity is at minimal levels, and the fiscal balance has worsened.

The political crisis has been further complicated by the Maduro regime taking forward an illegitimate legislative election on 6 December. Many opposition parties, led by interim constitutional President Juan Guaido, refused to participate because of electoral conditions that were neither free nor credible. The FCDO published a statement on 7 December, making clear that the UK considers the election to have been illegitimate, and does not recognise the result. The International Contact Group on Venezuela, the Organisation of American States, the Lima Group, and others have all made similar statements. We will continue to work closely with like-minded partners.

Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether British citizens who are resident overseas and registered to vote with the local authority in which they last lived in the UK are included on the Electoral Register; and if not, whether there is an alternative national register of such citizens. [HL11237]

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of British citizens who are resident overseas and who can no longer vote in general elections due to the 15 year rule, since 2010. [HL11238]

Lord True: British citizens resident overseas who are registered to vote in UK Parliamentary elections as overseas electors are listed under 'other electors' at the end of the electoral register for each area/constituency.

The Government does not hold statistics on the number of British citizens living abroad who have been previously registered to vote in the UK.

Water Companies: Competition

Asked by Lord Dholakia

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures Ofwat has taken to increase competition in the non-household retail marketplace. [HL11284]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Ofwat's role is to promote competition through a well-functioning market where that will further the interests of customers. In furthering this role, since the market has opened the regulator has explored barriers to market entry, for example, credit security arrangements for smaller new entrants. Where appropriate, Ofwat has supported (and on occasions sponsored) market code amendments aimed at promoting new entrants to the market.

Over the past three years, we have seen greater choice for business customers with around twenty retailers operating in England. In addition, a number of larger customers have become licensed to operate as self-suppliers. The self-supply model enables customers to have greater control over their data, and has delivered price and water efficiency savings. In 2019/20, an additional three self-supply licences were granted bringing the total to 12 as at end March 2020.

Asked by Lord Dholakia

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of Parent Company Guarantees by water wholesalers to their associated retailers in the English water retail market; and their impact on market (1) competition, and (2) distortion. [HL11285]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Ofwat keeps under review the use and impact of Parent Company

Guarantees (PCGs) in the water business retail market. For example, it has previously reviewed the use of PCGs in the market and wrote an [open letter](#) (in January 2019) to retailers and their associated companies reminding them of their obligations under the market codes and competition law on this.

Use of PCGs, or other forms of intra-group credit, in and of themselves should not be of concern. For example, where a retailer is obtaining credit and paying a market orientated rate for that credit, then this should not distort competition. However, if the credit provision was below the market rate, i.e. not reflecting the economic risk specifically of that retailer (as opposed to the group as a whole), this could potentially distort competition. To increase transparency around use of PCGs, a requirement was introduced (though a change to the market codes) for retailers to provide information to Ofwat including: confirmation any PCG has been provided on an arm's length basis; and evidence which can be used to determine the commercial consideration (and any other relevant costs) of the PCG.

Asked by Lord Dholakia

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Ofwat is allowing SME customers in the English water retail market to be charged in advance. [\[HL11286\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: While there are a range of market codes in place to protect customers, Ofwat does not specifically prohibit retailers from charging customers in advance for the services they provide. Some customers may, for example, have made an active and informed choice to voluntarily enter contractual arrangements with retailers on terms which include some form of advance billing.

However, Ofwat has also taken steps to strengthen the protections for customers on deemed contracts (that is where the customer has not actively negotiated and agreed a contract with their retailer) against non-voluntary changes in their non-price terms, which would include changes in billing arrangements. Following a public consultation, in July 2019 Ofwat published its decision that for customers acquired on retail exit who have not subsequently switched retailer, their terms in the round should leave them no worse off than they were on retail exit.

While the example of advance billing was used as one example of a non-price change that could leave customers worse off, Ofwat's decision applied more widely to the fair treatment of customers who had not yet engaged in the market. To avoid stifling innovation or preventing retailers from making efficiency enhancing changes that may benefit customers, retailers should be able to alter the non-price terms for customers on deemed contracts so long as they are: transparent about any proposed changes; are able to clearly articulate what the impact on customers will be; and are able to demonstrate to customers why,

and how, they will be at least 'no worse off' as a result of those changes.

Asked by Lord Dholakia

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures Ofwat has taken to enable new entrants to the English water retail market to meet their credit support requirements. [\[HL11287\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: In 2017 Ofwat with KPMG undertook a review of the credit arrangements in the business retail market to establish whether the arrangements created an undue barrier to entry. The review found that, in principle, requiring collateral is not a barrier to entry in and of itself.

Ofwat has supported (and on occasions sponsored) market code amendments aimed at improving transparency and flexibility and reducing barriers to new entrant retailers. For example, Ofwat sponsored a code change to Wholesale Retail Code CPW021 (Negotiating Alternative Eligible Credit Support reasonably and in good faith) implemented in July 2017. This change provided greater certainty on wholesalers' obligations to negotiate 'alternative eligible credit support' and increases the scope for retailers to provide the required eligible credit support via a mechanism which suits their particular circumstances.

In some cases, Ofwat has rejected proposed market code amendments on credit where such proposals are not considered – on the basis of the evidence presented – to better facilitate the principles and objectives of the market codes.

In Ofwat's 'review of incumbent company support for effective markets' published in August 2020, it asked wholesalers to explain their approach to offering alternative credit arrangements and alternative payment terms and the extent to which they tailor their offerings to the characteristics of individual retailers. In its report Ofwat highlighted examples of good practice and where performance could be better. It emphasised that where different retailers have different risk profiles, a wholesaler is able to reflect this by offering these retailers' different or tailored terms, so long as the differences in terms objectively reflect the differences in risk. Ofwat plans to provide further guidance on this in early 2021.

Asked by Lord Dholakia

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the benefits the English water retail market has delivered for SMEs; and how many SMEs switched retailers in (1) 2018, and (2) 2019. [\[HL11288\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Since market opening, Ofwat has published annual reports on the business retail market, including with a focus on customer outcomes and benefits delivered to customers, including SME customers – see:

- [Business retail market - Open for business - Review of the first year of the market 2017-18](#)

- [State of the market Reviewing the second year of the business retail water market](#)
- [State of the market 2019-20 Review of the third year of the business retail water market](#)

Its most recent report, on the third year of the market (2019-20) noted that just over half (54%) of small/medium SMEs (10-249 employees), and 58% of micro-businesses (0-9 employees) are aware they can choose their retailer. The majority (91%) of all business customers who had switched retailer or renegotiated a new deal with their existing retailer in the 12 months to spring 2020 reported that they had received some form of benefit as a result of switching or re-negotiating.

Concerning switching rates, around 3.1% of small/medium SMEs (10-249 employees) and 4% of micro-businesses (0-9 employees) switched retailer or renegotiated a new deal with their existing retailer in the 12 months to spring 2020, compared to 6.2% (small/medium SMEs) and 3.6% (micro-businesses) in the 12 months to spring 2019.

Water Supply: Competition

*Asked by **Baroness Harris of Richmond***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans Ofwat has to review its market codes to encourage more companies to switch retailers in the coming year. [[HL11123](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Since the business retail market opened in 2017, customer awareness and engagement has increased. In 2019/20, 58% of business customers (and 96% of large business customers) were aware that they can choose their retailer, up from 53% in 2018/19 and 48% in 2017/18. The annual rate of switching and/or re-negotiating remains at around 4%. Market Codes help to govern and underpin the business retail market. However, it is the responsibility of retailers to promote their services to encourage switching.

Ofwat's role is to promote competition through a well-functioning market to further the interests of customers. Since market opening, Ofwat has published annual reports on the business retail market, with a focus on benefits delivered to customers. In August 2020, Ofwat also published its 'review of incumbent company support for effective markets', which made clear that a number of market frictions continue to impede the development of effective competition and better customer outcomes and challenged industry to address these as a matter of urgency. Ofwat recognises that industry efforts to improve market functioning have accelerated, aided by collaborative leadership from the market operator (MOSL), but also highlights that resolution of market frictions continues to require urgent attention from all trading parties to build on improvements seen to date.

*Asked by **Baroness Harris of Richmond***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Ofwat has fulfilled its role as regulator in promoting the entry of

new entrant water retailers into the Non-Household Water Retail market. [[HL11127](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Ofwat's role is to promote competition through a well-functioning market where that will further the interests of customers. In furthering this role, since the market has opened the regulator has explored barriers to market entry, for example, credit security arrangements for smaller new entrants. Where appropriate, Ofwat has supported (and on occasions sponsored) market code amendments aimed at promoting new entrants to the market.

Over the past three years, we have seen greater choice for business customers with around twenty retailers operating in England. In addition, a number of larger customers have become licensed to operate as self-suppliers. The self-supply model enables customers to have greater control over their data, and has delivered price and water efficiency savings. In 2019/20, an additional three self-supply licences were granted bringing the total to 12 as at end March 2020.

Water Supply: Conservation

*Asked by **Baroness Harris of Richmond***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps Ofwat has taken to promote water efficiency in the non-household water retail marketplace. [[HL11124](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: In March 2020, Ofwat and the Environment Agency (EA) wrote an open letter to water retailers and wholesalers requesting that they work together to develop an action plan to help deliver greater water efficiency in the non-household sector. Ofwat and the EA have proactively engaged with industry to develop the action plan, which is due to be signed off shortly. The action plan aims to:

- i) Provide greater clarity on expectations and ambition for business water efficiency;
- ii) Improve understanding of how business water is being used, where and how much;
- iii) Improve collaboration in water resource planning and in identifying and progressing options to meet future business and societal water needs;
- iv) Identify and address barriers to the delivery of business water efficiency; and
- v) Deliver insights into business customer motivations to save water using them to inform water saving campaigns and initiatives.

*Asked by **Baroness Harris of Richmond***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Ofwat has calculated the levels of water efficiency savings that were made in the non-household water retail marketplace in (1) 2018, and (2) 2019. [[HL11126](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Ofwat makes an annual Request for Information to retailers, concerning their activities in the business retail market. This includes

a request for information and data concerning water efficiency and the extent to which business customers have saved water as a result of water efficiency measures.

Business customers who have elected to become ‘Self-suppliers’ – generally large consumers of water - reported significant water efficiency savings in 2019. Eight self-suppliers, for example, reported saving around 567Ml in 2019 - approximately 5% of their 2019 consumption.

West Bank: Demolition

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of demolitions by the government of Israel of Palestinian buildings on the economic prospects for Palestinians; and what steps they are taking, if any, to protect any such prospects from the risk of such demolitions. [[HL11253](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are seriously concerned by increasing rates of demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. The UK is focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place through our legal aid programme, which supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel has charged Palestinians for the demolition of their homes by the Israel Defence Force. [[HL11449](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are seriously concerned by increasing rates of demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. The UK is focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place through our legal aid programme, which supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

West Bank: Palestinians

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Yesh Din, Physicians for Human Rights Israel and Breaking the Silence A life exposed: Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank, published in November. [[HL11453](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by the findings of the report by Yesh Din entitled, 'A Life Exposed: Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank'. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the Israeli security forces' rules of engagement. While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and to use appropriate force.

Xinjiang: Uighurs

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Uighur forced labour is being used in Xinjiang for the production of cotton for garments sold internationally; and what action they intend to take for breaches of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. [[HL11515](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government takes all allegations of modern slavery and forced labour extremely seriously, including the growing reports of forced labour in Xinjiang. We have repeatedly urged businesses involved in investing in Xinjiang, or with parts of their supply chains in the region, to conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support any human rights violations or abuses.

Under the Modern Slavery Act, the UK is the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the action they are taking to tackle and prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. Following an independent review, the Home Office announced plans in September to strengthen the Act and the transparency in thousands of business and public body supply chains. These measures will require legislative change and will be introduced as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

Yemen: Food Supply

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's assessment of the Food Insecurity Situation in Yemen that (1) 16,500 Yemenis are facing a “catastrophic, famine-like situation”, and (2) that this number could increase to 47,000 by June 2021; and

what plans they have to increase aid spending in Yemen. [\[HL11316\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is extremely concerned about increased levels of food insecurity and risk of famine in Yemen, with thousands of people already in famine conditions and 13.5 million Yemeni people at risk of starving or struggling to get enough food to feed their families according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) data. We have been sounding the alarm on Yemen since September, when we announced an additional £30.8 million in UK aid specifically for famine prevention.

On 3 December, in response to the release of the IPC data, the Foreign Secretary announced an additional £14 million in UK aid to Yemen. This new funding will help 1.5 million households access food and medicines, and takes the UK's commitment to £214 million this financial year (2020/21). We continue to urge the international community to step up, including through urgently disbursing humanitarian funding, supporting the economy and encouraging the parties to engage in new peace talks led by UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

Yemen: Overseas Aid

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of the United States about (1) their decision to designate the Yemeni Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, and (2) the impact of such a designation on the ability of aid agencies to deliver humanitarian supplies in that region. [\[HL11315\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has discussed this matter with the United States Government. We share the concerns about Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp destabilising activity in Yemen and condemn the ongoing Houthi cross-border attacks. However, Yemen is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises and our main priority is to support the UN's peace process and ensure life-saving humanitarian aid can reach the millions of Yemenis in need. We are not considering proscribing at this time. We keep the use of sanctions under review.

Youth Investment Fund

Asked by Lord Storey

Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards establishing the £500 million Youth Investment Fund. [\[HL11620\]](#)

Baroness Barran: The Youth Investment Fund remains a manifesto commitment for levelling up across England over the course of the parliament. In the recent announced Spending Review £30m of this was committed as capital investment for 2021-22. This will provide investment in new and refurbished safe spaces for young people, so they can access support from youth workers, and positive activities out of school, including sport and culture. Further details of the timetable for allocation and how the funding will be distributed will be announced in due course.

Government recognises the significant impact of Covid-19 on young people, particularly the most vulnerable, and on the youth services that support them. A £16.5m Youth Covid-19 Support Fund has been announced which will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country.

Zimbabwe: Politics and Government

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of (1) the economic and (2) the political, situation in Zimbabwe. [\[HL11304\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is deeply worried about the state of the Zimbabwean economy, which continues to face unprecedented challenges largely due to poor fiscal policies and mismanagement by the Government. Corruption continues to hamper Zimbabwe's development by capturing public and private resources, distorting economic-decision making and undermining governance and accountability. We continue to urge the Government of Zimbabwe to make the comprehensive and difficult reforms needed to address Zimbabwe's economic challenges.

We are equally concerned by the political and human rights situation. Zimbabwe remains one of the UK's 30 human rights priority countries globally. We have been clear that the Government of Zimbabwe must meet its international and domestic obligations by respecting the rule of law, safeguarding human rights, and committing to genuine political and economic reform for the benefit of all Zimbabweans. The Minister for Africa delivered these messages when he spoke to Foreign Minister Moyo on 8 June, and in a letter he wrote to the Foreign Minister on 12 August. Our Ambassador in Harare reinforced these messages when she met Foreign Minister Moyo on 3 December.

Index to Statements and Answers

Written Statements.....1	Canary Islands: Coronavirus..... 10
European Union (Future Relationship) Bill.....1	Canary Islands: Immigrants and Refugees 11
Written Answers.....2	Cars: Loans 11
5G2	Children: Computers..... 11
Abortion.....2	Children: Day Care 12
Africa: Diplomatic Relations.....2	China and Tibet: Human Rights 12
Africa: Foreign Relations2	China: HSBC 12
Africa: Human Rights.....2	China: Sanctions 13
Algeria: Ahmadiyya2	China: Uighurs..... 13
Apprentices.....3	Chronic Fatigue Syndrome 13
Apprentices: Coronavirus3	Climate Change Convention: Females 14
Apprentices: Standards3	Climate Change Convention: Travel 14
Asylum: Employment.....4	Commonwealth: Coronavirus..... 14
Asylum: Languages4	Communication Service Providers 14
Asylum: Reform4	Confucius Institutes 15
Avian Influenza: Disease Control4	Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme 15
Avian Influenza: Poultry4	Coronavirus: Disease Control..... 16
Aviation: Air Pollution5	Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups 17
Aviation: Coronavirus6	Coronavirus: Vaccination 17
Bank Services: Coronavirus6	Courts: Coronavirus..... 18
Batteries: Recycling.....6	Covid Winter Grant Scheme..... 19
Bicycles: Pedestrian Areas7	Credit Unions: Coronavirus..... 19
Biodiversity and Climate Change.....7	Crown Court: Trials..... 19
Biodiversity: Conferences7	Cycleways..... 20
Borders: Digital Technology8	Department for Education: Data Protection 20
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government8	Department for Transport: Expenditure..... 20
Brexit9	Deportation 20
Brexit: Festivals and Special Occasions9	Deportation: Homelessness and Sleeping Rough 21
British Nationals Abroad.....9	Deportation: Offenders 21
Broadband9	Developing Countries: Family Planning and Genito-urinary Medicine 21
Buildings: Insulation10	Developing Countries: Health Services..... 21
Burundi: Economic Situation10	Digital Technology: Africa..... 22
Business and Employment10	Digital Technology: Training 22
Business and Employment: Government Assistance10	

Index to Statements and Answers

Disability and Special Educational Needs:	Further Education	33
Coronavirus	Further Education: Finance.....	33
Disadvantaged	Gambling: Credit Cards.....	33
Disinformation: Curriculum	Gambling: Young People	34
Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes.....	Gaza: Coronavirus	34
Education: British National (Overseas).....	GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments.....	34
Education: Overseas Aid	Gender Recognition.....	35
Educational Institutions: Inspections.....	Gender Recognition: Children	35
Elections	Gender Recognition: Health Services.....	35
Elections: Coronavirus	Gender Recognition: Research	35
Elections: Proof of Identity	General Practitioners: Registration.....	35
Elections: Visual Impairment	Georgy Bedzhamov	35
Electoral Register: Coronavirus	German Property Group: Insolvency.....	35
Embassies: Diplomatic Service	Gloucestershire Royal Hospital: Accident and	
Emma Stanton	Emergency Departments.....	36
Employees' Contributions: Overseas Residence	Gloucestershire Royal Hospital: Death	36
Employment Tribunals Service	Gloucestershire Royal Hospital: Road Traffic...	36
Environment Protection.....	Government Departments: Staff	36
Environment Protection: River Lugg	Greece: Immigrants and Refugees.....	37
Environmental Land Management Scheme.....	Health Services: Standards	37
Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation	High Speed 2 Railway Line: Bromford	37
.....	High Speed 2 Railway Line: Chilterns	37
Ethiopia: Armed Conflict	Higher Education: Royal Charters.....	38
Ethiopia: Eritrea.....	Holyhead Port: Large Goods Vehicles	38
Ethiopia: Genocide	Hong Kong: HSBC.....	38
Ethiopia: Human Rights	Hong Kong: Human Rights	39
Ethiopia: Humanitarian Situation	Hong Kong: Politics and Government.....	40
Ethiopia: Overseas Aid.....	Hospital Beds.....	40
Ethiopia: Peace Negotiations.....	Hospitality Industry: Qualifications	40
European Convention on Human Rights	Housing: Carbon Emissions	41
European Union: Northern Ireland.....	Housing: Heating	41
Exports: Trade Agreements	Housing: Standards.....	41
Financial Services: Safety	HSBC.....	42
Fishing Vessels.....	Immigration: Finance	42
Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.....	Immigration: Sleeping Rough.....	42
Fraud: Finance	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse...	42

Index to Statements and Answers

India: Human Rights.....	43	Military Aircraft: Exhaust Emissions	52
India: Protest.....	43	Monetary Policy	53
Intellectual Property	43	Money: Coronavirus	53
Intellectual Property: Small Claims.....	43	Motor Vehicles: Advertising	53
International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015	43	Motorways: Publicity	53
Internet: EU Law	44	Mozambique: Humanitarian Aid	54
Iran: Human Rights	44	Mozambique: Islamic State	54
Iran: Nuclear Power.....	44	Music: Education.....	54
Iran: Political Prisoners	44	Music: EU Countries	55
Islam: Religious Hatred.....	44	Nagorno-Karabakh: Armed Conflict	55
Israel: Armed Forces	45	Nagorno-Karabakh: Peace Negotiations.....	56
Israel: Palestinians	45	Nagorno-Karabakh: War Crimes	56
Jerusalem: Churches.....	46	National Curriculum Tests.....	56
Jerusalem: Religious Buildings	46	National Security and Investment Bill 2019-21	56
Journalism: Public Interest	46	Netflix.....	57
Julian Assange.....	46	NHS Test and Trace: Recruitment.....	57
Juries.....	47	Nigeria: Boko Haram.....	57
Kameel Ahmady.....	47	Nigeria: Religious Freedom.....	57
Land Registry	48	Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus	57
Large Goods Vehicles: Republic of Ireland	48	Northern Transport Acceleration Council	57
Learning Disability: Coronavirus	48	Ofcom	58
Lebanon: Overseas Aid	48	Ofwat: Standards	58
Lesotho: Environment Protection.....	48	Organised Crime and Terrorism	58
Life Expectancy.....	49	Overseas Aid.....	59
Liverpool City Council: Property Development	49	Overseas Aid: Charities	59
Local Government Finance	49	Overseas Aid: Impact Assessments.....	59
Local Government: Audit.....	50	Overseas Trade: Africa	59
Local Government: Elections	50	Pakistan: Forced Marriage and Religious Freedom	60
Local Government: Subsidiary Companies.....	51	Palestinians: Children	60
M6: Speed Limits	51	Palestinians: Detainees	60
Mayors.....	51	Palestinians: Health Services.....	61
Meihong Wang	51	Palestinians: Israel	61
Mental Health: Education.....	52	Pension Protection Fund.....	61
Mental Health: Surveys	52		
Migrant Workers: Visas	52		

Index to Statements and Answers

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education	61	Sri Lanka: Human Rights	71
Pre-school Education: Coronavirus	62	Sri Lanka: Politics and Government.....	71
Private Equity: Taxation.....	62	STEM Subjects: Teachers.....	71
Prosecutions: Coronavirus.....	62	Students: Loans.....	72
Protective Clothing: Procurement	62	Sub-Saharan Africa: Coronavirus.....	72
Public Order: Coronavirus.....	63	Syria: Detainees	72
Public Sector: Procurement	63	Syria: Military Intervention	73
Public Sector: Redundancy Pay.....	63	Syria: Sanctions	73
Racial Discrimination	63	Syria: Yazidis	73
Radicalism	64	Taiwan: Sovereignty.....	73
Radicalism: Coronavirus	64	Tanzania: Elections.....	74
Railways and Roads: Finance.....	64	Teachers: Ethnic Groups.....	74
Railways: Finance	65	Teachers: Health	74
Railways: Tickets	65	Television: Disability Aids	75
Redundancy	65	Tidal Power.....	75
Refugees: Children	65	Trade: Armenia and Azerbaijan.....	75
Refugees: Resettlement	66	Trade Agreements: Africa	75
Remote Education: Coronavirus.....	66	Trade Agreements: Brexit.....	76
Renewable Energy: VAT	67	Training	76
Respiratory System: Health Services	67	Travellers: Coronavirus	76
Russia: NATO	67	Trident	76
Rwanda: Politics and Government	67	Tunnels: West Yorkshire	77
Schools	67	Uganda: Elections.....	77
Schools: Discipline.....	68	Undocumented Migrants	77
Secondary Education.....	68	Undocumented Migrants: English Channel.....	77
Secondary Education: Protective Clothing.....	68	Venezuela: Elections	78
Service Industries: Overseas Trade	69	Venezuela: Politics and Government.....	78
Shipping: Coronavirus.....	69	Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad	78
Skipton-Colne Railway Line	69	Water Companies: Competition	78
Slavery.....	69	Water Supply: Competition	80
Social Security Benefits	70	Water Supply: Conservation.....	80
Social Security Benefits: Children	70	West Bank: Demolition	81
Society of Antiquaries: Rents	70	West Bank: Palestinians	81
Special Envoy for Gender Equality	70	Xinjiang: Uighurs	81
Speech and Language Disorders.....	71	Yemen: Food Supply	81
		Yemen: Overseas Aid.....	82

Index to Statements and Answers

Youth Investment Fund82

Zimbabwe: Politics and Government82