

**Session 2019-21
No. 183**



**Thursday
4 February 2021**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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<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
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 Dirleton	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
Lord Wolfson of Tredegar	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Justice
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Thursday, 4 February 2021

COVID-19 Update

[[HLWS757](#)]

Lord Bethell: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock) has made the following written statement:

On 5 January 2021, the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 (All Tier Regulations) were amended. These amendments instructed people across England to stay at home and only to leave where they have a legally permitted reasonable excuse, as well as requiring the closure of many businesses and venues.

We are getting the virus under control, however the numbers of Covid-19 cases, hospital and ICU admissions, and deaths remain extremely high nationally. As a result, our hospitals are still under significant pressure from Covid-19.

As of 1 February, the weekly case rate in England has decreased to 294 per 100,000 for all ages, compared to a rate of 421 the week before and 233 per 100,000 in people aged 60 and over, in comparison to 332 per 100,000. There are 7 local authorities with case rates greater than 500 per 100,000. Overall positivity for England is 11.9%, which is a 1.8% decrease over the last 7 days. Case rates for all ages have decreased but remain high or very high across all regions. Case rates also remain very high in the West Midlands (350 per 100,000), the East of England (308 per 100,000) and the North West (320 per 100,000). The lowest case rates are in the South West (200 per 100,000) – a 30% decrease from last week. The highest positivity is in London (22%) and lowest in the South West (6.9%).

The measures the government have put in place are bringing down the number of cases however, these figures are significantly higher in comparison to early December and there still remains considerable pressure on NHS systems nationwide as although hospitalisations are now decreasing bed occupancy is still high and remains ~50% above the peak of the first wave. General and acute bed occupancy for COVID-19 across England has decreased by 4,023 to 26,216 from 30,239 last week. Mechanical ventilation bed occupancy for COVID-19 across England has similarly decreased to 3,366 from 3,736 in the previous week. Deaths within 28 days of a positive test remain high, there have been 7,898 COVID-19 related deaths in England, from 18 January 2021 to 24 January 2021.

In line with our commitments, I have kept the measures in place for the national lockdown under ongoing review. On 2 February I completed a review of the geographical allocations as required by the regulations and have determined that it is necessary for all areas in England to remain in Tier 4 in order to tackle the threat posed by the

COVID-19. Whilst there are early indications that new infections may have started to decline in those areas which have been under stricter measures for the longest, scientific advice and the latest epidemiological data is clear that lifting restrictions now would be too early. We recognise the strain that these restrictions have placed on people across the country, but we must continue to take the necessary steps to slow the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. The restrictions are kept under continual review and will be lifted as soon as it is safe to do so.

Ministerial and Other Maternity Allowances Bill

[[HLWS760](#)]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement:

The Government has today introduced the Ministerial and other Maternity Allowances Bill in order to make provision for ministers and opposition office holders to be able to take maternity leave. I am grateful to Her Majesty's Opposition for its constructive engagement in preparation of the Bill and welcome its support for the measure.

The choice between taking leave to recover from childbirth and care for a new-born child or resigning from office is not acceptable in modern times. The current provision for Statutory Maternity Pay for employees has in contrast been in place since 1987, and some form of maternity grant, even for those who are not employed, has been in place since the National Insurance Act of 1911.

Changes that I made to The Ministerial Code on becoming Prime Minister set out provision for junior ministers to be able to take maternity leave. However, this work-around relies on another minister taking on additional responsibilities and cannot be used for Secretary of State or individual offices, such as the Law Officers or the Lord Chancellor.

Until now, the limits on the number of salaries that can be paid overall, and for individual offices has left the Government with limited flexibility to appoint cover should a Minister want to go on maternity leave. In the absence of that flexibility, a senior minister wishing to go on maternity leave would likely need to resign from the Government.

The Bill creates a designation of "Minister on Leave" which provides for ministers to take maternity leave. This will also apply to certain Opposition post holders too. Ministers on leave will remain part of the government and be able to be briefed on matters and kept in touch with work, but will not be responsible for exercising the functions of the office from which they are on leave.

This is a necessary piece of legislation. However, it does not resolve wider issues such as adoption and parental leave, absences for sickness and other reasons, and unpaid roles. These are complex issues which require careful consideration, taking into account modern working practices and the wider constitutional context.

The Government will present a report to Parliament setting out considerations and proposals. I am placing in the Libraries of the House a policy document titled Maternity Leave and other absences by Ministers which provides further information, including on the practicalities of these arrangements. The Bill and its explanatory notes are being published today.

Ministerial Correction: Response to Lord Moynihan on Covid-19 Vaccines

[HLWS758]

Lord Bethell: During the debate on 12 November 2020 on the Covid-19 Update statement, made in the House of Commons on 10 November 2020, I was asked by Lord Moynihan about undertaking work with the World Anti-Doping Agency and the offer of advice to the sporting world regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

The response indicated that Colleagues at DCMS were aware of this concern and had sought advice from the WPA, which was incorrect. To clarify, we had not sought advice from DCMS at this point in time and I would like to correct the record on this point.

The House may be interested to know that UK Anti-Doping has provided several updates on the issue. The first was published on 14 December 2020 shortly after the World Anti-Doping Agency issued its statement assuring the vaccines would not contravene anti-doping rules: <https://www.ukad.org.uk/news/ukad-statement-following-wada-advice-covid-19-vaccines>.

UK Anti-Doping continues to update its website with relevant information and advice.

National Preventive Mechanism

[HLWS759]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: My right honourable friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland) has made the following Written Statement:

"The United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), which the UK ratified in December 2003, requires States Parties to establish a "National Preventive Mechanism" (NPM) to carry out visits to places of detention to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Government established the UK NPM in March 2009 (Hansard 31 March 2009, Vol. 490, Part No. 57, Column 56WS). The UK NPM is currently composed of 21 scrutiny bodies covering the whole of the UK.

Following previous practice, I have presented to Parliament the 11th NPM's annual report (Command Paper 366). This report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

I again commend the important work that the NPM has carried out over the year and the NPM's independent role

in safeguarding the human rights of detainees across the UK and its role in preventing torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. The Government takes allegations of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment very seriously and any allegations are investigated fully. The Government does not participate in, solicit, encourage or condone the use of torture for any purpose.

The NPM report includes observations in relation to prisons, mental health detention and social care, children in detention, immigration detention and police and court custody. Notably, the report sets out the NPM's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Government action since the beginning of the pandemic has helped to limit the spread of the virus in prisons. With the country now in national lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, prisons have introduced tougher measures to help save lives and protect the NHS. These include routinely testing all staff as well as new prisoners so we can better protect our staff and isolate those who test positive even earlier, and rolling out of the vaccine to older prisoners, mirroring the community roll-out and beginning with those aged 80+ this month, to protect the most vulnerable. This is in addition to the stringent safety measures already in place to protect staff, prisoners and children in custody, which Public Health England endorsed as being effective in limiting the spread of the virus, and ultimately in saving lives."

Police Grant Report (England and Wales)

[HLWS754]

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

My Rt Hon Friend, the Home Secretary, has today laid before the House the Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2021/22 (HC 1162). The Report sets out the Home Secretary's determination for 2021/22 of the aggregate amount of grants that she proposes to pay under section 46(2) of the Police Act 1996. Copies of the Report are available from the Vote Office.

The allocations that have been laid before the House today are as set out in my Statement and provisional Police Grant Report of 17 December 2020.

Available funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) is made up of Government grants and police precept. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has today set out the council tax referendum principles that will apply to the police precept, for approval by the House of Commons.

Council tax levels are a local decision and elected PCCs will rightly want to consider what they are asking people to pay to fulfil their strong desire to keep our streets safe.

The council tax referendum principles are not a cap, nor do they force local authorities to set taxes at the threshold level. Rather they are an additional local democratic check to prevent excessive increases. The forthcoming PCC elections also provide an opportunity for local

taxpayers to have their say on the spending decisions of their elected representatives.

In 2021/22, the overall funding settlement for the policing system will total up to £15.8 billion, a £636 million increase on the 2020/21 funding settlement.

Depending on local decisions, available funding to PCCs could increase next year by up to an additional £703 million. This would represent an increase to PCC funding of up to 5.4% in cash terms on the 2020/21 police funding settlement. If the public were asked to approve greater increases via a local referendum, and voted for such changes, precept funding would increase accordingly.

The attached table documents funding to PCCs for 2021/22, including Capital grant and precept.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Table PCCs funding [Funding to PCCs (Table).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2021-02-04/HLWS754/>

Votes A Annual Estimate

[[HLWS756](#)]

Baroness Goldie: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence (Ben Wallace) has today released the following written statement:

The Ministry of Defence Votes A Estimate 2021/22, will be laid before the House on 4 February 2021 as HC 1125. This outlines the maximum numbers of personnel to be maintained for each Service in the Armed Forces during Financial Year 2021/22.

Votes A Supplementary Votes

[[HLWS755](#)]

Baroness Goldie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (Ben Wallace) has today released the following written statement:

The Ministry of Defence Votes A Supplementary Votes 2020/21, will be laid before the House on 4 February 2021 as HC 1126. This outlines the increased maximum numbers of personnel to be maintained for Service in the Army Reserve full-time service (FTRS) and Air Force during Financial Year 2020/21.

Written Answers

Thursday, 4 February 2021

5G: Competition

Asked by **Viscount Waverley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the diversity of the market in relation to 5G infrastructure in the UK; and what plans they have, if any, for the diversification of that market. [[HL12744](#)]

Baroness Barran: The Government recognises the importance of diversity in the 5G infrastructure supply chain. That is why the Government published a 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy in November 2020.

This strategy sets out three core strands of activity to address the lack of diversity in UK 5G supply chains. These are: i) Protecting incumbent suppliers to ensure the resilience of our networks in the short term; ii) Attracting new scale suppliers to the UK market to increase diversity and competitiveness in the medium term; iii) Accelerating the development and deployment of open interface technologies in the RAN in order to reduce barriers to entry and diversify the supply chain in the long run.

The Government has also established a Diversification Taskforce, comprising key industry and academic figures and led by Lord Livingstone of Parkhead, to design and execute targeted measures for each of these strands. The Government has announced an initial investment of £250m to fund these targeted measures and deliver our long-term vision of a diverse, competitive, and healthy market for 5G infrastructure.

Addictions: Health Services

Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on their commitment to introducing a new addiction strategy. [[HL12807](#)]

Lord Bethell: Due to the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, the addiction strategy has been delayed. Work is expected to resume later in 2021.

Agriculture: Reform

Asked by **Lord Greaves**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their proposed schemes to encourage new entrants into farming will provide new funding for county and unitary authorities to acquire more land to add to existing county farm estates; and whether they are discouraging local authorities from any further disposal of county farms. [[HL12424](#)]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: This Government values the role that county farm estates play in providing a route into farming for new entrants. We want to encourage local

authorities to retain and invest in their farm estates. That is why we are developing a new entrant funding scheme to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access the land, infrastructure and support they need to establish successful and innovative businesses.

We want to encourage applications from local authorities, cooperative and community land organisations, local partnerships, and private and institutional landowners who have innovative ideas and the capability to provide long-term opportunities for talented new entrants.

The details of the scheme including the funding criteria are being developed through a consultative co-design process with stakeholders which includes representatives of local authorities with county farm estates. We aim to report more details about the scheme in the summer of 2021 and launch the scheme in 2022.

Armed Forces: Children

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether special provision is made to help children with special needs of military serving personnel. [[HL12429](#)]

Baroness Berridge: All teachers in state-funded schools across England and Ministry of Defence (MoD) schools overseas are teachers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with duties to identify and meet these needs as they arise.

The Children's Education Advisory Service within the MoD provides advice and guidance to Service parents, educational establishments and local authorities on educational issues relating to Service children, including issues relating SEND.

For those Service families living in England, the SEND Code of Practice has a specific section covering 'Children of Service personnel' (pages 219-221) that recognises that those SEND children whose parent(s) are Service personnel may face difficulties that are unique to the nature of their serving parent's employment, namely service induced mobility and deployment. This section reiterates the requirement to have regard to this Code of Practice and to meeting the aspirations of the Armed Forces Covenant, which attempts to eliminate or mitigate some of the potential disadvantages faced by Service families.

UK legislation does not generally apply to Service families living outside the UK. Nevertheless, for those Service families based overseas, the MoD seeks to mirror so far as is reasonably practicable the support that would be normally be available in the UK. The MoD also undertakes a thorough assessment to determine whether families' support needs can be met in overseas locations before an overseas assignment is agreed.

The MoD employs a team of educational psychologists, and other professionally qualified individuals, to assess need and provide support for children with SEND. MoD schools overseas routinely support children with SEND,

in line with the statutory guidance contained in the Department for Education's 2015 SEND Code of Practice. In overseas locations without MoD schools, assessments are made to ensure that host nation schools are able to provide any required SEND support before an overseas assignment is agreed.

Armenia: Churches

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Coventry***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Armenian Churches in areas returned to Azerbaijan have been labelled as 'Caucasian Albanian'; what discussions they have with the government of Azerbaijan about such reports; and what discussions they have had with the government of Russia about ensuring that Armenian culture is protected in line with the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement, made on 9 November 2020. [[HL12417](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has made no assessment of the mentioned reports. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas has emphasised to both the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments, most recently in December, the importance of protecting all cultural heritage sites. The UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan also raised this issue with representatives of the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration on 17 November. The protection of cultural heritage affected by conflict and the prevention of acts of destruction remains a priority for this Government. While we have not discussed this specific issue with the government of Russia, we continue to underline our support for the Co-Chairs of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group in reaching a lasting settlement to the conflict and for the important work of international organisations addressing the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas.

Brain: Tumours

*Asked by **Lord Jones of Cheltenham***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on (1) patients, (2) care homes, and (3) hospices, of brain tumour operations which have been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL12353](#)]

Lord Bethell: The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on services will not be known for some time. Cancer services remain a priority for the National Health Service and thanks to the efforts of staff, have been maintained throughout the pandemic.

In order to ensure that cancer treatment can continue during the pandemic, the NHS has established COVID-19 secure cancer hubs, consolidating cancer surgery and centralising triage to prioritise based on clinical need, and drawing on the independent sector (IS) to increase

capacity. Regions are drafting plans on how to maximise IS use over the next six weeks to cope with COVID-19 surges. Urgent cancer surgery patients are the first priority for accessing IS services. In local escalation plans, any decision to reschedule cancer treatment will be a last resort.

Care Homes

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the occupancy rate as a percentage of the nursing and care homes in England was for each month in 2015. [[HL12494](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the occupancy rate as a percentage of the nursing and care homes in England was for each month in 2016. [[HL12495](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the occupancy rate as a percentage of the nursing and care homes in England was for each month in 2017. [[HL12496](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the occupancy rate as a percentage of the nursing and care homes in England was for each month in 2018. [[HL12497](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the occupancy rate as a percentage of the nursing and care homes in England was for each month in 2019. [[HL12498](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the occupancy rate as a percentage of the nursing and care homes in England was for each month in 2020. [[HL12499](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Greengross***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the occupancy rate, as a percentage of the total capacity, of nursing and care homes in England for each month in 2021. [[HL12592](#)]

Lord Bethell: The information is not available in the format requested. Data on care home occupancy has not been systematically collected from care homes, whose residents are a mix of publicly and self-funded clients.

Care Homes: Ministers of Religion

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current arrangements for

chaplains of all faith groups to visit residents in care homes. [HL12664]

Lord Bethell: In the face of a new variant of the virus we have acted to protect those most at risk in care homes and ensure visits can go ahead safely in some form. Visits to care homes can continue to take place with arrangements such as outdoor visiting, substantial screens, visiting pods or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently allowed. However, visits in exceptional circumstances, including end of life, should always be supported and enabled.

Coal: Imports

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to permit greater coal imports for the UK's heritage market should the UK's coal industry fail to meet the demands of that market. [HL12439]

Lord Callanan: In line with our Net Zero target, the Government is committed to phasing out unabated coal-fired power generation by 2025, and is consulting on moving this date forward to 2024. This policy applies to coal-fired power stations only – it does not apply to other coal consumers such as heritage railways, or to domestic coal mines. Companies do not require permission from the Government to import coal; the sourcing of coal for use in heritage railways and other industries is a private commercial decision for the companies involved.

Companies: Taxation

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many penalty notices for late filing of company tax returns have been issued in accordance with each subsection of paragraphs 17 and 18 of Schedule 18 of the Finance Act 1998 for each of the last five years. [HL12453]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Company Voluntary Arrangements

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Company Voluntary Arrangements for financially distressed businesses were approved by HMRC in each of the last five years. [HL12455]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: HMRC only hold information on approved Creditor Voluntary Arrangements for the last three years, as follows:

2018: 118.
2019: 142.
2020: 118.

Coronavirus: Delivery Services

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the probability of being infected with COVID-19 as a result of contact with items that are delivered to a household compared with other means of infection. [HL12710]

Lord Bethell: We have made no specific assessment.

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact. Surfaces and belongings can also be contaminated with COVID-19 when people with the infection cough or sneeze or touch them. The risk of spread is greatest when people are close to each other, especially in poorly ventilated indoor spaces and when people spend a lot of time together in the same room.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by Lord Walney

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of travel-to-work areas that cross local authority boundaries when setting levels of COVID-19 restrictions for local areas. [HL9897]

Lord Bethell: Work travel patterns factored into the decision making. It is important to apply restrictions to broad geographical areas where there are significant interconnected economic and social networks. This approach enables the same restrictions to apply where people are likely to work and socialise.

Coronavirus: Screening

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the laboratory capacity for COVID-19 tests per week available in England (1) within the NHS, and (2) in private and other laboratories; and what is the utilisation rate of that weekly capacity in each group at the latest date for which information is available. [HL8217]

Lord Bethell: For the week commencing 18 January 2021 the number of tests conducted in pillar 1 was 592,698 against a capacity of 1,352,685, which is a utilisation rate of 43.82%. In pillar 2, the number of tests conducted was 3,233,418 against a capacity of 4,321,944, which is a utilisation rate of 74.81%.

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell (HL5829) on 21 October, what is the cost of sending 150,000 tests under the Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) to German laboratories; what impact did the additional time taken to process these tests in Germany have on NHS test and trace services; which company or companies process the tests in Germany;

whether the contract procurement process for the company or companies in Germany was completed in accordance with Cabinet Office rules and guidance; and what assessment they have made of the impact of any future trade deal with the EU on their ability to procure laboratory services in Germany. [[HL9702](#)]

Lord Bethell: The cost of sending tests to German laboratories as part of the REACT-1 study is variable subject to the volume of tests being completed per round. The testing process for this study has been expedient with it playing a vital role in supporting NHS Test and Trace with important surveillance information.

The tests for REACT-1 are processed in Germany by Eurofins Biomnis whose services have been procured in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. The impact of using laboratory services within the European Union has been and continues to be considered. No undue impact has been identified of any future trade deal on the future of the REACT-1 study.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the progress of trials of each of the COVID-19 vaccines for which they have placed orders; and when they expect to take delivery of the first doses of those vaccines. [[HL12442](#)]

Lord Callanan: The UK Government has secured early access to 407 million vaccine doses through agreements with seven separate vaccine developers. The Government is working closely with vaccine developers to monitor progress of clinical trials.

- The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and this vaccine is already being deployed in the UK.
- The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was approved by the MHRA and this vaccine is already being deployed in the UK.
- The Moderna vaccine was approved by the MHRA. Supplies of this vaccine will begin to be delivered to the UK from the spring once Moderna expands its production capability.
- The Janssen vaccine is currently in phase 3 clinical trials. If clinical trials prove the vaccine to be safe and effective, supplies of the vaccine could start to be delivered to the UK in the second half of 2021.
- The Novavax vaccine is currently in phase 3 clinical trials. If clinical trials prove the vaccine to be safe and effective, supplies of the vaccine could start to be delivered to the UK in the second half of 2021.
- The GlaxoSmithKline/SanofiPasteur vaccine is currently in phase 1/2 clinical trials. Deliveries of this vaccine are being discussed with the developer and

dependent upon the vaccine being found to be safe and effective.

- The Valneva vaccine is currently in phase 1/2 clinical trials. If clinical trials prove the vaccine to be safe and effective, supplies of the vaccine could be made available to the UK by the end of 2021.

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports of the effectiveness of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on new variants of COVID-19, what assessment they have made of the efficacy of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine in tackling the new strains of the virus; and when results of any such assessment will be published. [[HL12459](#)]

Lord Callanan: The UK Government is currently undertaking its own laboratory work as a priority to better understand the impact of the new variants on the vaccines currently in deployment, in particular the risk of vaccine resistance.

We continue to take a portfolio-based approach that monitors the landscape of coronavirus vaccine development and remain confident that the three vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford University/AstraZeneca and Moderna) we have purchased which have been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will continue to be effective against the virus.

Even though the first three vaccines have been proven to be effective, we must continue to explore every avenue available to us.

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the study from the Clalit Research Institute, published on 13 January, which found that the efficacy of one dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination was 33 per cent. [[HL12478](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has reviewed preliminary data from the Clalit Research Institute on vaccine effect, including the vaccine effectiveness estimate at day 14 after the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The JCVI concluded that the results are preliminary and there is a need for greater clarity, including full information on the dataset, before further consideration or comment. The JCVI will review this data carefully once the full study details are released.

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in (1) the Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group area, (2) the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group area, and (3) England, for the latest available date. [[HL12605](#)]

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

Culture: Coronavirus

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role of the cultural sector in aiding economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. [\[HL12821\]](#)

Baroness Barran: The government understands the importance of the cultural sector in aiding economic recovery post-Covid, evidenced by unprecedented support for the sector, including the £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund (CRF).

So far, over £1 billion worth of funding from the CRF has been allocated across all four nations of the UK. This funding is supporting over 3000 arts and heritage organisations in England affected by COVID-19 restrictions, and more than 75,000 jobs.

The second round of funding (which recently closed) will also support organisations to transition from the challenging months of lockdowns and social distancing to welcoming audiences and visitors back to the country's much loved and important theatres, museums, cinemas, music venues and heritage sites over the summer.

Cycling and Walking

*Asked by **Lord Berkeley***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when it plans (1) to consult on, and (2) to adopt, a new Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy; and whether the new Strategy will contain a long-term cycling and walking programme and budget. [\[HL12472\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy was published in 2017 and set out the financial resources available for cycling and walking across Government between 2016/17 to 2020/21 during the Spending Review 2015 period.

On 28 July 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking in England, so that half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked by 2030. This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over the next 5 years.

It is expected that the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS 2) will be published following the next Spending Review and will reflect the commitments outlined in the Prime Minister's Cycling and Walking Plan as well as setting out the financial resources available and the other matters required by the Infrastructure Act 2015. The Department will consult on CWIS 2 ahead of its publication, as required by the legislation.

Death: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Baroness Sherlock***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) NHS employees, and (2) social care workers, have died as a result of COVID-19. [\[HL9949\]](#)

Lord Bethell: The Office for National Statistics publish mortality data for deaths involving COVID-19 for healthcare workers and social care workers in England and Wales. The last iteration of this release showed that in England there were 305 deaths involving COVID-19 among healthcare workers; and 307 deaths involving COVID-19 among social care workers registered between 9 March and 12 October 2020 in England, of those aged 20-64 years, using last known occupation. The definition of healthcare workers used will include not only those employed in the National Health Service but wider healthcare sector workers

Developing Countries: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Viscount Waverley***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist less economically developed countries, in particular those countries where British civil servants and consular staff are based, in (1) accessing, and (2) administering, COVID-19 vaccinations. [\[HL12460\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. The UK has been instrumental in supporting the establishment of the COVAX Facility, which is the international initiative managed by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance that provides equitable access to safe and effective vaccines for 190 economies. High and upper-middle-income countries can access the self-financing window of the COVAX Facility. Low- and middle-income countries are eligible for support from the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), to which we have committed £548 million as one of its largest bilateral donors. Our network of health advisers in relevant AMC countries are working to support host governments to apply to the COVAX AMC, and prepare for vaccine delivery.

EGNOS

*Asked by **Lord Davies of Gower***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to retain access to the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service. [\[HL12422\]](#)

Lord Callanan: The UK no longer participates in the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) programme.

The UK sought continued access to EGNOS services through the UK-EU trade negotiations. However, an agreement could not be reached as the EU demanded a significant financial contribution to secure those services.

Despite not being able to reach an agreement, we expect that UK users will continue to be able to utilise the freely available EGNOS Open Service, which is used for a range of different applications, including precision agriculture and personal navigation.

The UK is exploring alternatives to fulfil its needs for secure and resilient position, navigation and timing

information through a dedicated programme of work led by the UK Space Agency.

Ferries: Republic of Ireland and Wales

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of the UK's departure from the EU on ferry crossings from Ireland to Welsh ports since 1 January. [HL12606]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Government continues to monitor traffic on ferry routes into and out of the UK, including Wales – Ireland routes. There have been changes to traffic, including some initial reductions on these routes compared to prior year figures. However, freight movements and businesses involved in international trade are early in the period of adjustment to a new customs and border regime, which may have impacted on volumes in the short term, but it is too early to identify any longer term trends.

Welsh ports, and Holyhead in particular, will continue to be critical routes to and from the Republic of Ireland and continental Europe, irrespective of direct links for haulage between Ireland and France. The land bridge route has significant advantages for hauliers over maritime routes and the Government is confident that Welsh ports will continue to thrive as we build on the opportunities provided by being an independent trading nation.

Government Securities: Bank of England

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion and value of UK Government bonds are held by the Bank of England. [HL12456]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: At 31 December 2020 in nominal values, the Bank of England's Asset Purchase Facility Fund held £625bn gilts, while a further £11bn of gilts were held in the Bank of England's Sterling Bond Portfolio. Combined these represent 32.8% of the value of outstanding Government bonds, or 42.8% of outstanding conventional Government bonds.

Hen Harriers

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to prevent the killing of satellite-tagged hen harriers. [HL12411]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which provides a powerful framework for the conservation of wild birds, their eggs, nests and habitats. The Government is committed to ensuring the protection afforded to wild birds of prey is effectively enforced. There are strong penalties for offenders, including imprisonment.

We are also committed to securing the long-term future of the hen harrier as a breeding bird in England. The Hen Harrier Action Plan sets out what will be done to increase hen harrier populations in England and includes measures to stop illegal persecution. The long-term plan was published in January 2016 and we believe that it remains the best way to safeguard the hen harrier in England. A copy of the plan is attached.

Raptor persecution is one of six national wildlife crime priorities. Each wildlife crime priority has a delivery group to consider what action should be taken and develop a plan to prevent crime, gather intelligence on offences and enforce against it. The Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group focuses on the golden eagle, goshawk, hen harrier, peregrine and white-tailed eagle. The National Wildlife Crime Unit, which is part funded by Defra, monitors and gathers intelligence on illegal activities affecting birds of prey and provides assistance to police forces when required.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL12411 Attachment [PQ HL12411 attachment (The Hen Harrier Action Plan) (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-01-21/HL12411>

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Euston Station

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of HS2 seeking access to undertake works on properties in Park Village East before (1) approval, and (2) independent auditing, of access tunnels at Euston Station; and whether HS2 has plans to fund an independent survey of (1) the property owners, and (2) the leaseholders, of Park Village East before work starts. [HL12626]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: HS2 Ltd has issued notices under Schedule 2 of the High Speed Rail Act 2017 for planned works beneath the properties on Park Village East. The planned works, which relate to the installation of ground anchors beneath the properties concerned, do not include any works on or to the properties on Park Village East.

At this time HS2 Ltd are not seeking access to undertake works on the access tunnels to Euston, which are currently still in the design phase. Construction of the first tunnels is not planned until summer 2022 and will not proceed until the detailed design is completed and has been audited by an independent design organisation. The purpose of the currently planned works (i.e. the installation of ground anchors) is to ensure stability of the existing Network Rail retaining wall during the subsequent tunnel construction. The design of these works is nearing completion, which will be subject to independent auditing, including acceptance by Network Rail, prior to implementation.

In parallel, HS2 Ltd's appointed contractor has requested access to undertake surveys for assessment of the structure and condition of the properties on Park Village East to further inform the ongoing design process. Enquiries have also been made with property owners, for any reports, sub-structure information or details relevant to the works to inform the assessment of the likely impact of installing ground anchors beneath the Park Village East facing properties.

and whether HS2 has plans to fund an independent survey of (1) the property owners, and (2) the leaseholders, of Park Village East before work starts.

HS2 Ltd is funding independent surveys of all potentially affected properties (within the criteria defined under the Act) and this is currently underway in a number of areas, including Park Village East, subject to access being granted by the leaseholders or owners.

HS2 Ltd's appointed contractor is seeking to undertake these surveys as soon as possible, but it is not essential that they are completed prior to the installation of ground anchors. For properties that are eligible for a Settlement Deed and where the owner/leaseholder has requested one within the published timescales, this survey will be undertaken (and the Deed will be in place) before the commencement of works identified as potentially causing settlement, such as the tunnelling works in the case of Park Village East. For clarity, the installation of ground anchors does not trigger the eligibility for Settlement Deeds and HS2's obligations with respect to the properties are not altered by the Deed.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether (1) HS2, or (2) its contractors, have comprehensive insurance to cover the proposed ground anchor installation under properties in Park Village East in Camden. [HL12627]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The High Speed Rail Act 2017 includes provisions for the protection of the public in the unlikely event that a property is damaged by activities relating to the HS2 scheme. HS2 Ltd has a comprehensive construction insurance programme covering all construction activities relating to Phase 1 and 2a, including public liability insurance covering HS2 Ltd and its contractors' legal liability for loss or damage to public property arising out of these activities. For the retaining wall support works Schedule 2, Part 2 of the Act makes clear that HS2 must compensate the owners and occupiers of the buildings or land on which the powers are exercised for any loss which they may suffer by reason of the exercise of the powers.

Hong Kong: Legal Profession

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the article by Matthew Scott in the Spectator The legal profession's troubling relationship with China, published on 20 January; and what plans they have to discuss the participation of

British lawyers serving as prosecutors in Hong Kong with (1) the Bar Council, (2) the Law Society, and (3) other professional and regulatory bodies. [HL12400]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: In order to uphold the constitutional principle of the rule of law, and under the framework established by the Legal Services Act 2007, the legal services sector in England and Wales is independent of Government. Barristers are regulated by the Bar Standards Board. The Government has not made any assessment of the article and has no plans to discuss this issue with the legal services professional bodies or regulators.

Honours: British Empire

Asked by Lord Moonie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to changing the names of the Order of the British Empire and the British Empire Medal to remove references to the British Empire. [HL12444]

Lord True: There are no such plans.

Hospitals: Ministers of Religion

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the number of chaplains from all faith groups active in NHS hospitals since March 2020. [HL12662]

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

Insolvency: Taxation

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many proceedings for insolvency have been initiated by HMRC for failure to pay taxes when they were due. [HL12454]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Routine insolvency action has been paused by HMRC since the first lockdown in March 2020.

The figures below are for the 2020 calendar year relating to proceedings for insolvency which have been initiated by HMRC for failure to pay taxes when they were due:

Bankruptcy/Sequestration

January – March 2020 – 409.

April – June 2020 – 0.

July – September 2020 – 0.

October – December 2020 – 0.

Companies Winding Up/Liquidation

January – March 2020 – 1108.

April – June 2020 – 9.

July – September 2020 – 1.

October – December 2020 – 1.

These figures cover England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Internally Displaced People: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the estimate by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that more than 58,000 refugees have fled into neighbouring countries to escape the conflict in Tigray; and what estimate they have made of the percentage of the 79.5 million people estimated by the UNHCR to be currently displaced worldwide who are so displaced as a consequence of conflict. [HL12399]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: It is clear that the conflict in Tigray has had significant consequences and has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, internally and externally, as well as adversely impacting upon those that were already in need of humanitarian assistance. We are concerned by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates on the numbers of people displaced, and as of 19 January, 59,280 people have sought refuge in Sudan. We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the UNHCR, still do not have access to refugee camps in northern Tigray, who have been without aid for many weeks. The Foreign Secretary visited Gondar on 22 January and saw first-hand how £11 million of UK Aid is supporting the World Food Programme and NGOs to ensure the delivery of aid to those affected by the conflict. The UK continues to call for sustained, free and unfettered access to enable the delivery of much needed humanitarian assistance.

The UN estimates that up to 1.3 million additional people affected by the conflict in Tigray need humanitarian assistance, on top of an existing humanitarian caseload of one million people in the region. We are concerned about the impact of the conflict and displacement on food security and nutrition in Tigray. Displaced persons, including refugees, are amongst the most vulnerable. At the end of 2019 there were 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, and violence. These include some 26 million refugees who have crossed a border to seek protection, and around 45.7 million people who have been forced to flee their homes but remain internally displaced in their own country.

Music: UK Relations with EU

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports following the meeting between representatives of the music industry and the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on 20 January that they plan to set up a working group to investigate ways to support the music industry following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, what will be the remit of that group; whether any such group will cover other areas of the arts; and

who will make up the membership of that group. [HL12637]

Baroness Barran: DCMS is establishing a working group, including representatives across the creative and cultural sectors and other key government departments, to look at the issues facing those in these sectors when touring in the EU.

The group will work together to provide clarity regarding the steps that need to be taken by practitioners when touring in the EU, and explore what more could be done to help them work as confidently as possible in the EU.

The membership of the group will be announced shortly.

Myanmar: Elections

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by General Zaw Min Tun that the Myanmar Army would "take action" if allegations of electoral fraud during the general election in Myanmar on 8 November were not investigated, what assessment they have made of the political situation in Myanmar. [HL12729]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Following unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud in the November 2020 elections, Myanmar's armed forces took control of the country on 1st February, declaring a state of emergency. The country is now under effective control of the Commander in Chief and the military Vice President Myint Swe.

The UK condemns this military coup and the detention of members of the civilian Government and civil society, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. The UK calls for the peaceful reconvening of the elected National Assembly, and respect for the results of the November 2020 general election and expressed wishes of the people of Myanmar. We are considering UK actions in response to the coup.

Myanmar: Politics and Government

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Shan Human Rights Foundation *Blackening our future: Burma Army-linked coal mining expansion in war-torn northern Shan State*, published on 27 January, what representations they have made to the government of Myanmar about (1) the expansion of coal-mining operations by their army and Ngwe Yi Pale in Shan State, and (2) any resulting (a) destruction of property, and (b) forced displacement of people, resulting from such expansion. [HL12705]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is aware of the recent displacements caused by the expansion of the coal-mining operations in Shan State, and mounted a response

through its partners within the first week. Initially, 82 houses were destroyed, resulting in 3,891 people being displaced. UK humanitarian assistance targeted and is reaching 2,325 of those displaced with emergency food and medical support. Since 22 January, there are 1,073 people who remain displaced, with the rest now staying with host families or returning to Ngwe Yi Pale.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Diplomatic Relations

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the tripartite meeting between the governments of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on 11 January, what discussions they have had with the government of (1) France, and (2) the United States, about encouraging further involvement of the OSCE Minsk group in discussions about reaching a final settlement on the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. [[HL12419](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK engages regularly with the Governments of France and the United States on the question of Nagorno Karabakh, including since the 11 January tripartite meeting. We continue to emphasise, to all partners, the UK's support for the Co-Chairs of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group in reaching a lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, in line with the Madrid Principles.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Prisoners of War

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government, what assessment they have made of reports of Azeri forces committing human rights abuses against Armenian prisoners of war; what steps they are taking to assist the return of all prisoners of war currently held following the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region; and what plans they have to collate any information they have received relating to such abuses in order to refer such reports to the International Criminal Court. [[HL12418](#)]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan about returning prisoners of war currently held following the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. [[HL12420](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government welcomes the ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The UK Government is aware of reports that both sides may have mistreated civilians and military prisoners of war during the conflict and afterwards. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas has been in regular contact with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers since the outbreak of hostilities in September and has urged credible investigation of these reports. During a call in December she welcomed the news that Azerbaijani investigations

were underway. The UK Government has no plans to refer these reports to the International Criminal Court as we believe these matters are for the relevant Governments to investigate.

National League: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the distribution of funds to football teams in the National League during the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL12820](#)]

Baroness Barran: On 19 November 2020, the government announced a £300 million Sports Winter Survival Package (SWSP) to provide a lifeline to organisations that would otherwise not survive the winter as a result of the restriction on spectators announced from 1 October. A provisional allocation of up to £25 million was made to support the National League. This is in addition to the £10 million cash injection from the National Lottery in October last year, the result of a unique promotional deal facilitated by the government.

Whilst the distribution of National Lottery support is a matter for the National League, the government was clear in supporting the deal that it expected the proceeds to be allocated sensibly to support clubs for as long as possible.

The government further confirmed on 27 January 2021 that Steps 3-6 of the National League system will receive up to £10 million of grant support from the Package to protect the immediate future of approximately 850 clubs over the winter period. This support is being distributed at pace by the Football Foundation and is available with immediate effect.

The National League has also benefited from the multi-billion pound package of cross-sector business support from the Government that has enabled many sports clubs and leisure businesses to survive, including the furlough scheme and business interruption loan scheme. Sports have accessed many hundreds of millions of pounds of support through this.

Neonicotinoids

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they made of (1) the effect on bee populations of a pesticide containing neonicotinoid thiamethoxam, and (2) the effectiveness of other products that are less harmful to bees, before approving the emergency use of that pesticide to treat sugar beet seed. [[HL12413](#)]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The process for considering an emergency authorisation for a pesticide is set out in the legislation and includes consideration of potential risks to people and to the environment. This process was followed for an application to use the neonicotinoid seed treatment Cruiser SB (containing thiamethoxam) on sugar beet in 2021.

The assessment of environmental risks included consideration of risks to bees and other insects, amongst other factors. Sugar beet is a non-flowering crop and the risks to bees from the sugar beet crop itself were assessed to be acceptable. Risks to bees were identified arising from soil residues taken up by following crops or flowering weeds. Mitigation measures were therefore set as requirements of the emergency authorisation. These conditions include ensuring that no flowering crops are planted as following crops for a period of at least 22 months, with an extended period of exclusion for oilseed rape (of 32 months), to minimise the risk to bees. An industry-recommended herbicide programme must be followed to limit flowering weeds in and around any treated sugar beet crops.

The insecticide Teppeki is available to beet growers for control of aphids but only one spray application per season is currently permitted. This is not adequate to control beet yellows virus in the crop under sustained aphid population pressure and virus transmission during the critical risk period. Similarly, cultural approaches are helpful but not in themselves sufficient to protect the crop. As part of the application for emergency authorisation, a plan was outlined for developing alternative approaches to protect crops without the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments.

NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

*Asked by **Baroness Sherlock***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support is available to the estates of deceased frontline workers who are not eligible for the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme. [[HL9954](#)]

Lord Bethell: The NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme provides a safety net for the families of National Health Service and social care staff who have no life insurance cover provided by their employer or a pension scheme. For those who do, it provides an extra level of financial protection in addition to death in service benefits they have bought through their pension scheme.

NHS staff receive good quality death in service benefits through the NHS Pension Scheme, providing a lump sum and survivor pensions for a partner and dependents for qualifying members. NHS staff who claim their pension are guaranteed five years' worth of pension payments plus ongoing survivor pensions. Around 90% of NHS staff participate in the scheme.

The 'What to do when someone dies' online resource provides a step by step guide on what to do after a death, including how to manage financial issues. This guide covers the financial support available to help with paying for a funeral and how to check entitlement to bereavement benefits. For those in receipt of income related benefits or tax credits, the Department for Work and Pensions Funeral Expense Payments scheme can offer a significant

contribution to the cost of a funeral. Also, the Bereavement Support Payment provides short-term financial support to working age people whose deceased spouse or civil partner has paid sufficient National Insurance contributions. It is intended to help with the immediate costs of bereavement and can be paid to both widows and widowers.

NHS: Staff

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide special leave and psychological support to NHS staff who have worked longer hours in a more stressful work environment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL12407](#)]

Lord Bethell: In April 2020, we put in place a comprehensive package of wellbeing resources for National Health Service staff including counselling helplines, free access to wellbeing apps, virtual staff commons rooms, and specialist bereavement and psychological support. This was reinforced in the autumn with £30 million invested in enhanced occupational health support and the creation of mental health hubs which are focused on improving outreach, assessment and referrals to specialist services.

Taking leave is important to allow staff the opportunity to rest and recuperate. The NHS employment offer already includes annual leave arrangements beyond the statutory minimum and management of annual leave is a local matter for employing organisations. Where staff have been unable to take annual leave due to the pandemic, agreements can be reached to ensure that annual leave can be carried over into the next two years.

Obesity

*Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of improving labelling on alcohol products on reducing obesity. [[HL12805](#)]

Lord Bethell: We are committed to consult shortly on our intention to make companies provide calorie labelling on all pre-packaged alcohol they sell. The consultation will also cover introducing calorie labelling on alcoholic drinks sold in the out of home sector, for example bought on draught or by the glass. An impact assessment will be published alongside the consultation.

Pakistan: Politics and Government

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported (1) abduction, and (2) forced marriage, of Farah Shaheen in Pakistan; what assessment they have made of the number of similar cases in that country; how, and with whom, they raise cases of (a) abduction, (b) forced

marriage, and (c) forced conversion, in Pakistan; when they last raised those issues with the government of Pakistan; and what response they received. [[HL12397](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Pakistan remains a FCDO Human Rights Priority Country. The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. NGOs assess that there may be around 1000 cases a year of forced conversion and child marriage, affecting girls from minority communities. The FCDO does not comment on individual cases. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, I raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister to the Interior, Shahzad Akbar, on 7 December. I raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 16 November 2020. I also raised our concerns about child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from minority religious communities, with Dr Mazari 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.

Parliamentary Estate: Security

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what plans there are to ensure that those requiring access to the Parliamentary estate can renew their passes efficiently once the restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic are lifted. [[HL12546](#)]

Lord McFall of Alcluith: A large backlog of expired or new passes has built up during the pandemic and systems and plans are in place to deal with this once the COVID-19 restrictions start to ease. Extensive communications are going out to all passholders to remind them to check the expiry date on their pass before they return, and to send in a renewal application if it has expired or will expire shortly.

An appointments system has been introduced for anyone returning to the Parliamentary estate who needs to collect a pass, so that the flow of people into the Pass Issuing Offices can be managed in a way that avoids long queues and respects social distancing. A new Pass Issuing Office is expected to open shortly, which will double the number of customer services desks currently offered by the two existing Pass Issuing Offices. The new Office will ultimately replace one of the existing Offices, however all three will remain open over the summer to help manage

any peaks in demand that may arise as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Consideration is being given to extending the opening hours of the Pass Issuing Offices during periods of high demand, and contingency arrangements, such as opening desks in Portcullis House and other locations on the estate to issue renewal passes if the Issuing Offices risk being overwhelmed, are also being considered.

These measures will be kept under review as access restrictions change in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pensions: Canada

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the government of Canada's request for a reciprocal social security agreement covering the uprating of pensions. [[HL12654](#)]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department for Work and Pensions plans to respond shortly on this issue.

Personal Income

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many individuals have an annual income of less than the £12,500 Personal Tax Allowance. [[HL12457](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The estimated number of individuals who have an annual income of less than the £12,500 Personal Tax Allowance in the 2019-20 tax year is 18.4 million.

Note:

- 1) Taxpayer numbers are shown to three significant figures.
- 2) Figures provided are estimates for the 2019-20 tax year, when the Personal Tax Allowance reached £12,500.
- 3) The figures for 2019-20 are based on outturn data derived from the 2017-18 Survey of Personal Incomes (SPI) and projected using economic assumptions consistent with the Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

This estimate is based on the Survey of Personal Incomes which represents a sample of individuals in contact with HMRC. However, HMRC do not hold information for all people with personal incomes below the income tax threshold. Further details are set out alongside the Income Tax Liabilities Statistics.

Premium Bonds

Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the total value of outstanding unclaimed Premium Bond prizes; how many of those are £1 million prizes; and what

efforts are made to trace the winners of such unclaimed prizes. [HL12437]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: As of July 2019, there are currently 1,905,681 unclaimed Premium Bonds prizes worth £69,850,900. NS&I considers a prize as unclaimed when it has not been paid to or cashed in by the Bond holder within 18 months of the prize being issued.

There are no £1 million prizes unclaimed. NS&I undertakes regular media activity to raise awareness of unclaimed Premium Bonds prizes. NS&I also encourages customers to have Premium Bonds prizes paid directly to their bank accounts to reduce the risk of prizes going unclaimed.

Table: Total value and number of unclaimed Premium Bonds prizes

<i>Unclaimed</i>	<i>Number of prizes</i>	<i>Prize value</i>
	<i>unclaimed</i>	
NS&I definition of unclaimed prizes (prizes issued up to and including July 2019)	1,905,681	£69,850,900
Industry standard definition of unclaimed prizes (prizes issued up to and including January 2006) *	397,951	£23,049,075

* The banking industry's standard definition of an unclaimed asset is one that has lain dormant for a total of 15 years.

Prisoners' Release: Females

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to enhance the availability of support services, and in particular housing support, for women being released from prison. [HL12435]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: HMPPS have developed a national Accommodation Framework that sets out our responsibilities, our partners' responsibilities and a framework for how to build on success and work together with partners to ensure that offenders can access and maintain settled accommodation that is safe and appropriate for their needs. This framework contains specific aims in terms of women's access to post release accommodation, including the provision of more places in Approved Premises and more appropriate accommodation

through the Bail Accommodation and Support Services (BASS) that are currently run by NACRO.

There are seven Approved Premises (APs) for women who have high risk complex needs covering England and Wales. We are working hard to the expand the geographical coverage of the provision and opened a new women's AP in London during 2020 and we expect to open a further provision in the south west during 2021. APs support a safe transition from custody into the community and provide a high-level of monitoring and public protection and are staffed 24 hours a day and balance care with control, whilst imposing various constraints on residents' freedom.

The MOJ has secured £11.5 million to support individuals at risk of homelessness on their release from prison. Following the reintroduction of national restrictions, this scheme has been extended to 31 March and is subject to regular review. Individuals may receive temporary accommodation support up to the 26 May and we have started to analyse the outcomes for different cohorts arising from the interventions, with the intention of publishing a report in Autumn 2021. Seven Homelessness Prevention Taskforces (HPT) have also been set up to help find accommodation for offenders upon release and we are exploring how the regional HPTs might be a feature of future provision, ensuring that the specific needs of women are fully considered.

To reduce reoffending and provide health and wellbeing support, we are launching a new accommodation service, providing up to 12 weeks of basic temporary accommodation for prison leavers who would otherwise be homeless. This service will launch in five of the twelve probation regions: East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber, Greater Manchester, Kent Surrey and Sussex, and the North West. All individuals, aged 18 and over, released from prison at risk of homelessness to one of the five selected regions will be eligible. It is anticipated that the new intervention will commence in Summer 2021 and will provide support for approximately 3,000 service users.

Prisons: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the rate of COVID-19-related deaths in prison; and how any such steps are designed (1) to reduce the level, and (2) to mitigate the impact, of COVID-19 infections amongst women in prison. [HL12434]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The safety of our staff and those under our supervision remains a top priority. We have taken quick and decisive action – backed by Public Health England and Wales – to limit the spread of the virus across all prison establishments, including the women's estate.

Our measures have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising

our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals. A comprehensive testing regime of staff weekly and prisoners on reception and transfer is in place and is key in helping to prevent the spread of the virus. Our experience and evidence gathering provides an indication that these measures have had a positive impact on limiting deaths and the transmission of the virus in prisons. Whilst every death is a tragedy, taking decisive action has meant that the number of deaths we have seen in prisons is significantly lower than approximately 2,700 prisoner's deaths Public Health England modelled last spring if there were no changes to regimes or counter measures out in place in prisons. We are now working closely with the NHS to support the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccinations for eligible groups in custody in line with those receiving in the community.

Due to the current risk level posed by Covid-19, all adult prisons are currently operating a Stage Four regime, as outlined in our National Framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>). This involves restrictions to reduce contact between people and therefore reduce the chance of transmission. We are keeping the level of restriction necessary under close review. We must continue to respond in a measured way in line with public health advice to ensure our approach is proportionate and legitimate, as we have done throughout.

A women's self-harm taskforce has been set up to coordinate and drive forward work aimed at reducing levels of self-harm in the women's estate which includes the introduction of wellbeing checks for women during Covid-19 restrictions.

Additional training focused on female-specific issues has been deployed for prison officers entering the service, to provide new officers with better understanding of women prison residents. As women make a minority of the prison estate, tailored training for officers working with this group will ensure that officers can be more responsive to their needs.

Sahel: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the benefits to the rural populations of the Sahel of planting acorn varieties with regard to reducing (1) internal violence, (2) external migration and (3) desertification, and what plans they have to publicise any such benefits. [HL12432]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is committed to tackling the root causes of fragility in the Sahel, including through supporting families affected by food insecurity with humanitarian aid (we are the 4th largest humanitarian donor in the region). Through the FCDO's charity appeal, UKAID match, we also support a project in Mali that helps women to grow trees, providing food and an income for households.

The UK Government has not made an assessment of the benefits of planting different acorn varieties for rural populations in the Sahel.

Solid Fuels

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there will be any legislative restrictions placed on the burning of coal by the UK heritage industry other than the ban on sales of house coal and wet wood in England. [HL12438]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government understands the importance of securing the long term viability of the Heritage Sector. The legislation which will come into force from May 2021 is applicable in England only and will end the sale of bituminous coal and smaller quantities of wet wood to households which will lead to significant health benefits. The legislation will not directly impact on the sale of coal to businesses such as the Heritage Sector, although we acknowledge the potential indirect impact this may have on the supply.

Defra currently has no further plans to restrict the use or sale of bituminous coal in England, however the Devolved Administrations are considering their approach to the burning of household solid fuels. On 13 January the Welsh Government published a consultation on reducing emissions from domestic burning of solid fuels to ensure only the cleanest forms of solid fuel and appliances are used in Wales, containing proposals in line with the new legislation in England.

Trade Agreements: Turkey

Asked by Baroness Hooper

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any aspects of their free trade agreement with the government of Turkey could (1) apply to, or (2) include, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. [HL12349]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Territorial Application Clause of the United Kingdom-Turkey Agreement states that it will apply to their land territory, internal waters, territorial sea and airspace; and the maritime areas over which Turkey has sovereign rights or jurisdiction for the purposes of exploration, exploitation and preservation of natural resources, pursuant to international law.

The United Kingdom does not recognise the self-declared "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus".

Uganda: Elections

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the presidential election in Uganda, and (2) whether that election was free and fair; and what representations they have made to (a)

President Museveni, and (b) the government of Uganda, about the conduct of the security forces (i) during, and (ii) in the period after, that election towards opposition candidates and parties. [HL12332]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Voting in Uganda's Presidential election concluded on 14 January and we note the re-election of President Museveni. However, significant concerns remain unaddressed including the treatment of opposition candidates in the run-up to and following the elections, the internet shutdown during the elections and subsequent restrictions on social media, and the treatment of journalists throughout this period. The UK deployed 51 Election Observers across Uganda on election day and reported back to our High Commission in Kampala. We have been consulting with international partners, civil society actors, other international observers, and the Government of Uganda to ensure we have a comprehensive and accurate picture of the elections. We have also urged the Government of Uganda to respond to the concerns raised.

Following the arrest of opposition leader, Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, and subsequent violence in November, the Minister for Africa tweeted his concerns on 20 November 2020 and called for the authorities to respect the rights of all Ugandans to express their views in a peaceful manner. He also raised these concerns with the Ugandan Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa on 26 November 2020 and sought assurances that the Ugandan security forces would show restraint. Following the Presidential election results on 16 January, the Minister for Africa set out in a statement our significant concerns about the overall political climate surrounding the elections and has urged the Government of Uganda to meet its international human rights commitments. The treatment of opposition figures post-election, including Robert Kyagulanyi, has been unacceptable and the Minister for Africa expressed his concerns about this in his tweet on 19 January. We welcome the High Court of Uganda's decision of 25 January that the detention of Robert Kyagulanyi was unconstitutional and unlawful and that these restrictions are now lifted. The British High Commission Kampala pressed the Ugandan authorities to end these unacceptable restrictions on his liberty. Our High Commissioner in Kampala continues to meet political actors from all parties and met Robert Kyagulanyi on 27 January 2021. They discussed the political situation in Uganda, the restrictions to political freedoms before and after the elections and the concerns raised over electoral processes. The High Commissioner urged Kyagulanyi and all parties to reject violence, engage in peaceful dialogue and follow due process to address any electoral irregularities. As a long-standing partner to Uganda, and a steadfast advocate for Ugandan democracy, the United Kingdom will continue to follow post-election developments closely.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Bristol

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of

Uganda about reports (1) of intimidation, (2) that that government restricted access to online services and social media, and (3) of other irregularities, during the general election in that country on 14 January. [HL12416]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has significant concerns which remain unaddressed including the treatment of opposition candidates in the run-up to and since the elections, the internet shutdown during the elections and subsequent restrictions on social media, and the treatment of journalists throughout this period. The Minister for Africa raised the importance of British officials being accredited to observe the elections with Ugandan Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa and with the Ugandan High Commission on 12 January 2021. The UK deployed 51 Election Observers across Uganda on election day, covering over 120 polling stations. They observed and evaluated the elections and reported back to the British High Commission in Kampala. We have been consulting with the diplomatic community in Kampala, civil society actors, other international observers, and the Government of Uganda to ensure we have a comprehensive and accurate picture of the elections. We have also urged the Government of Uganda to respond to the concerns raised. As the Minister for Africa and the British High Commissioner stated in their tweets on 14 January, we are concerned that the internet shutdown in Uganda impacted the transparency of the elections and broader freedom of expression. The British High Commission Kampala raised their concerns on the internet shutdown with the Government of Uganda which was eventually lifted on 18 January. Following the Presidential election results on 16 January, the Minister for Africa set out in a statement our significant concerns about the overall political climate surrounding the elections and has urged the Government of Uganda to meet its international human rights commitments.

The treatment of opposition figures post-election including Robert Kyagulanyi is unacceptable and the Minister for Africa expressed his concerns about this in his tweet on 19 January. We welcome the High Court of Uganda's decision of 25 January that the de facto house arrest of Kyagulanyi was unlawful and unconstitutional and that these restrictions have now been lifted. The British High Commission Kampala pressed the Ugandan authorities to end these unacceptable restrictions on Robert Kyagulanyi's liberty. Our High Commissioner in Kampala continues to meet political actors from all parties and met Kyagulanyi on 27 January 2021. They discussed the political situation in Uganda, the restrictions to political freedoms before and after the elections and the concerns raised over electoral processes. The High Commissioner urged all parties to reject violence, engage in peaceful dialogue and follow due process to address any electoral irregularities. As a long-standing partner to Uganda, and a steadfast advocate for Ugandan democracy, the United Kingdom will continue to follow post-election developments closely.

UK Government Union Capability Independent Review

*Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish (1) the Dunlop Review into the UK Government Union capability, and (2) the Review of Intergovernmental Relations. [[HL12348](#)]

Lord True: We will publish Lord Dunlop's review shortly. A full response will be published in due course.

We are pleased by the progress the UK Government and the devolved administrations have made in

developing the package of Intergovernmental Relations reforms. Announcements will be made in the usual way.

USA: State Visits

*Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to invite the President and Vice President of the USA for a state visit to the UK. [[HL12451](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: President Biden has been invited to the G7 meeting in Cornwall in June. We also hope that he will attend COP26 in Glasgow in November. Any other visits will be set out in due course.

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