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**Thursday
25 February 2021**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

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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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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
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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
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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, 25 February 2021

“Closed Material Procedure” Provisions in Justice and Security Act 2013: statutory Review

[HLWS798]

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:

“I am today announcing the establishment of the statutory review of the “closed material procedure” (CMP) provisions in the Justice and Security Act 2013 (the Act).

The use of CMP is set out in sections 6 to 11 of the Act, about the disclosure of sensitive material in civil proceedings. In particular, section 6 of the Act empowers senior courts (the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the High Court (including in Northern Ireland), and the Court of Session (in Scotland)) to make a declaration that the case is one in which a closed material application may be made in relation to specific pieces of material, the disclosure of which would be damaging to national security. An application for the declaration may be made by either the defendant or the claimant and a court can also make a CMP declaration of its own motion. Information on the use of CMP under the Act is already publicly available and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/use-of-closed-material-procedure-reports>

Section 13 of the Act contains a requirement to review the use of CMP under the Act, as soon as reasonably practicable, after 5 years from when the relevant section of the Act came into force. The review must therefore cover the period from 25 June 2013 to 24 June 2018.

These are the terms of the reference for the review, broadly mirroring the requirements set out in the Act and its Explanatory Notes:

“1. In accordance with s.13(1) and (2) of the Justice and Security Act 2013 (“the Act”), to review the operation of the following sections of the Act covering the period from 25 June 2013 to 24 June 2018:

- Section 6 (declaration permitting closed material applications in proceedings)
- Section 7 (review and revocation of declaration under section 6)
- Section 8 (determination by court of applications in section 6 proceedings)
- Section 9 (appointment of special advocate)
- Section 10 (saving for normal disclosure rules)
- Section 11 (general provision about section 6 proceedings)

2. In relation to the above, to review the operation of section 17(3)(e) (disclosure proceedings) of the Act, and of those procedure rules relevant to sections 6-11 of the Act.

3. To report to the Secretary of State for Justice.

In accordance with s.13(5) and (6) of the Act, the Secretary of State must lay a copy of the reviewer’s report before Parliament. Before doing so, the Secretary of State may, after consulting the reviewer, exclude from the copy any part of the report that would, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, be damaging to the interests of national security if it were included in the copy laid before Parliament.”

I am pleased to confirm that Sir Duncan Ouseley, retired High Court Judge, has accepted to conduct the review. He has been selected on the basis of his extensive judicial experience, including on national security cases, which will be an asset to complete the review promptly and effectively.

Sir Duncan Ouseley was called to the Bar (G) in 1973, took Silk in 1992, (NI) in 1997 and was elected a Bencher in 2000. He was appointed a Recorder in 1994, a Judge of the High Court (Queen’s Bench) in 2000 and Chairman of the Special Immigration Appeal Commission from 2003 to 2006. He was appointed President of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal from 2003 to 2005 and Lead Judge, Administrative Court from 2010 to 2015. The Honourable Sir Duncan Brian Walter Ouseley retired from the High Court (Queen’s Bench) with effect from 17 May 2019.”

Finance Bill 2021

[HLWS792]

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

The Finance Bill will be published on 11 March. Explanatory Notes on the Bill will be available in the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office and placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that day. Copies of the Explanatory Notes will also be available on GOV.UK.

As usual, a full copy of the Budget resolutions will be made available after the Chancellor’s Budget statement on 3 March. This includes resolutions made under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968 for those measures that are expected to come into effect ahead of Finance Bill Royal Assent.

In line with the approach to tax policy making set out in the Government’s documents ‘Tax Policy Making: a new approach’, published in 2010, and ‘The new Budget timetable and the tax policy making process’, published in 2017, the Government published draft legislation for Finance Bill 2021 on 21 July 2020 and 12 November 2020, which is available on GOV.UK. The Government remains committed to legislating those measures published in July and November 2020, subject to confirmation at Budget in the usual way.

Infrastructure: Levelling-up Fund

[HLWS793]

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

The Government will deliver the Levelling Up Fund UK-wide using the financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Act. This will extend the benefits of funding for priority local infrastructure to local areas in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The £4 billion announced at the Spending Review will now make available £4.8 billion UK-wide between 2021/22 and 2024/25.

It will be allocated competitively and be open to all local areas across the UK to boost growth and spread opportunity.

Making the Fund UK-wide ensures that UK Government can target funding more efficiently and responsibly between different parts of the country. It will enable the Government to take a strategic approach across the UK, allocating funding in all parts of the country irrespective of administrative borders.

Further details on how the Fund will operate will be published at Budget.

International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel: Code of Practice

[HLWS796]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Minister of State for Care (Helen Whately) has made the following written statement:

I am announcing today the publication of the revised Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel.

The new Code represents an important step forward in the UK's approach to ethical international recruitment. It takes account of the latest World Health Organisation advice on ethical international recruitment and promotes effective, fair and ethical international recruitment practices, which should be embedded across every part of the health and social care systems. This is an important step as the Government's Manifesto Commitment for 50,000 more nurses by 2024 will see a significant increase in the number of nurses who will come from overseas alongside the growth in UK-trained nurses.

The Code represents part of the UK's contribution to international health worker mobility that offers benefits to migrants, their country of origin and to the UK. With a projected 18 million more health workers needed to achieve universal health coverage in low and lower-middle income countries, the code sets out the UK's approach to supporting international health and social care systems, alongside safeguards on active recruitment of staff from countries with the most pressing health and social care workforce needs.

The Code clearly sets out responsibilities for recruiters, employers and the Government on how to maintain ethical recruitment on an ongoing basis.

Judicial Pensions

[HLWS799]

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:

Consultations on judicial pensions

"I am today publishing the Government response to two consultation documents on judicial pensions which my department launched, and which I presented to this House, on 16 July 2020:

(i) in *Judicial pensions: proposed response to McCloud* we outlined our proposals for addressing the unlawful age discrimination identified in the *McCloud* litigation in respect of the 2015 reforms of the judicial pension scheme; and

(ii) in *Proposals for a reformed judicial pension scheme* we set out our plans for reforming the judicial pension scheme with the aim of addressing the serious problems of judicial recruitment and retention that had been identified by the Senior Salaries Review Body.

Both consultations closed to responses on 16 October 2020, and we have taken the time to give very careful thought to the responses we received. We are currently finalising our response to a further consultation on the judicial mandatory retirement age, which we will be publishing in due course.

Addressing the discrimination identified in the McCloud litigation

In our consultation on the *McCloud* litigation, we sought views on both the scope and shape of our proposals for addressing the discrimination identified in the case, in which it was held that the 2015 judicial pension reforms unlawfully discriminated against younger judges.

In light of the responses we received, the Government response to the consultation confirms that, subject to parliamentary time and approval of the necessary legislation, the Ministry of Justice will run an options exercise in 2022 for non-claimant judges in scope of *McCloud*. This will enable eligible judges to choose, retrospectively, whether to have accrued benefits in the 2015 pension scheme or the legacy scheme from 1 April 2015. Membership of the chosen scheme will end when the reformed judicial pension scheme comes into effect, following which all judges will join the new pension scheme.

The response document is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-proposed-response-to-mccloud>.

Reforming the judicial pension scheme

The majority of responses we received to *Proposals for a reformed judicial pension scheme* were positive and acknowledged that our proposed reforms would make a significant contribution to resolving recruitment and retention issues.

In response to some concerns that were raised about our proposal to introduce a uniform member contribution rate, we have decided to give judges the temporary option of reducing their contributions to the scheme in return for a commensurate reduction in the accrual rate.

Save for the addition of this new feature, we will implement the reformed scheme in line with the proposals set out in the consultation document we published last July, subject to the necessary parliamentary approval.

The response document is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-a-reformed-judicial-pension-scheme>.

Reform of the judicial pension scheme has been a personal priority of mine as Lord Chancellor, and I am pleased that we are in a position to progress a reform package that will resolve the serious recruitment and retention problems facing the judiciary. It is vital that we continue to attract and retain high-calibre judges, thereby securing the proper functioning of our justice system and supporting the UK's wider prosperity.

The aim, subject to parliamentary time allowing the necessary legislation to be passed, is to implement the reformed scheme in April 2022.

The two consultation response documents have been placed in the Library of the House."

Myanmar

[HLWS797]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The UK condemns the coup in Myanmar in the strongest possible terms and we stand with the people of Myanmar who were clear at the elections in November that they want a democratic future.

Since 01 February the UK has led a strong, co-ordinated international response to support the Myanmar people and put pressure on the military.

We have led statements by G7 Foreign Ministers on 03 February and 23 February; convened an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council and coordinated a statement from all members condemning the coup on 04 February and co-led a special Session of the Human Rights Council on 12 February.

Last week, alongside our Canadian counterparts, we also announced sanctions on three individuals responsible for serious human rights violations committed by the military and police.

Today I am announcing further measures to increase the pressure on the Myanmar military following the coup.

Firstly, the UK will impose sanctions on six military members of Myanmar's State Administration Council for their role in overseeing human rights violations. This includes the Commander-in-Chief, General Min Aung Hlaing, Secretary of the SAC, Lt Gen Aung Lin Dwe, Joint Secretary of the SAC, Lt Gen Ye Win Oo, General Tin Aung San, General Maung Maung Kyaw, and Lt Gen Moe Myint Tun. The measures prevent these individuals travelling to the United Kingdom and freeze any assets held in this country.

Secondly, the UK will temporarily suspend all trade promotion in Myanmar and launch a strategic review of the UK's trade and investment approach. We are clear that UK businesses should not be supporting the military or their businesses. The joint FCDO-DIT review will look at identifying sectors with limited exposure to the military, opportunities for responsible development and mitigating the risk to Myanmar's poorest.

Thirdly, I can confirm that following a review of all UK aid in Myanmar, the UK has suspended all support involving the Myanmar government directly or indirectly unless there are exceptional humanitarian reasons. Support for government led reforms has been stopped and planned programmes will close. Our remaining programmes will focus on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable in Myanmar.

The international community has sent a clear message to Myanmar. The military must hand back power to the democratically elected government and release all those detained arbitrarily.

Personal Independence Payment

[HLWS790]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Justin Tomlinson MP) has made the following Written Statement:

The department has published the latest update on progress on making backdated payments to Personal Independence Payment claimants who are affected by the MH and RJ decisions of the Upper Tribunal. The release is published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/pip-administrative-exercise-progress-on-cases-cleared>

The MH decision changed how overwhelming psychological distress is considered when assessing someone's ability to plan and follow a journey. The RJ decision changed how we decide whether someone can carry out an activity safely and if they need supervision. We started the administrative exercise on 25 June 2018 and a Frequently Asked Questions document is available in the House library at:

http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP20-20-0061/FAQ_-_Implementation_of_legal_decisions_MH_and_RJ.pdf

As at 17 January 2021, we have assessed 890,000 cases against the MH decision and 990,000 cases against the RJ decision. Around 6,600 arrears payments, totalling around £32 million, have been made.

It should be noted that in supporting the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic, the exercise was paused from April to October 2020.

We will release a further update by the end of 2021.

Reconsidering a Prosecution Decision: Revised CPS Guidance

[HLWS801]

Lord Stewart of Dirlton: My Right Honourable Friend the Attorney General for England and Wales (Suella Braverman QC MP) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement: "The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has today published revised guidance to prosecutors on when they may institute or reinstitute criminal proceedings after a decision not to prosecute or to terminate proceedings has been communicated to a suspect or defendant.

The guidance sets out the framework for when this is possible as a matter of law and the governing principles that apply to the CPS decision. Victims of crime and the public have a legitimate expectation that those who commit offences will be brought to justice. Where it is legally possible to do so, and the evidential and public interest test provided for in the Code for Crown Prosecutors is met, there are two important protections for the suspect, to ensure that there is no injustice done. Firstly, the right of a defendant to revive proceedings in the magistrates' court (under section 23(7) Prosecution of Offences Act 1985). Secondly, the court's power to stay any proceedings which amount to an abuse of the court's process.

The guidance also provides a non-exhaustive list of eight examples to illustrate the types of situations where cases are discontinued and later reinstated. They include where a further review shows that the original decision was wrong, when further evidence is anticipated in the near future, where significant evidence is later discovered, when a case is reviewed further in light of the findings of an inquest and where there are outstanding lines of enquiry to be completed or relevant material to be obtained. The guidance clarifies the procedure to be adopted and establishes the level of seniority at which any decision must be made. The fundamental evidential and public interest considerations have not changed

A copy of the revised guidance has been placed in both the Library of the House of Commons and the Library of the House of Lords."

Safety of UK Plasma for Fractionation to Make Immunoglobulins: Revised Advice

[HLWS794]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Minister of State for Care (Helen Whately) has made the following statement:

I would like to inform the House that the Government has decided to allow the use of UK sourced plasma for the manufacture of immunoglobulins.

In the wake of the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic in the 1990s, a number of extra precautionary safety measures were introduced to protect patients from exposure to blood products that may increase their risk of developing Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). This included the advice in 1998 of the then Committee on Safety of Medicines, that no UK plasma should be supplied for the manufacture of fractionated plasma-derived medicinal products. This has meant that over 250,000 litres of plasma are incinerated or not used for patient care each year.

Over the last 15 years, accrued scientific evidence has indicated that the risk of vCJD through the transfusion of UK plasma is much lower than initially thought; there have been no known transfusion transmissions of vCJD from any blood components since 1999. The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) evaluated the risk of transmission of vCJD and recommended that the current risk reduction measures be withdrawn.

In 2020, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) undertook a comprehensive review of the safety of UK plasma to make immunoglobulins. The Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) considered the evidence and recommended that UK-sourced plasma can be used for the manufacture of immunoglobulins subject to several risk-mitigation measures.

The CHM's recommendation is available online at:

<https://app.box.com/s/jv487awvqzsrq10o34h9gg350c-eyed4/folder/109651850203>

Upon receiving this expert advice, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has approved these recommendations, as have the Ministers in the devolved nations. This means that for the first time in over 20 years, UK plasma can again be fractionated to increase the availability of immunoglobulin medicines for the benefit of NHS patients in the UK.

This also means that convalescent plasma could potentially be fractionated and used, as part of a clinical trial, to produce hyperimmune globulin to as potential treatment for COVID-19 patients.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has directed NHS England and Improvement, NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) and MHRA to begin preparations to appoint a fractionator(s) through a competitive process. The aim is to secure a domestic supply of immunoglobulins, starting with c250k litres of plasma that NHSBT is already collecting and not using for transfusion. We expect the first UK-sourced immunoglobulin product to be available for NHS patients in 2022.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has also directed the MHRA to introduce a condition in new and existing authorisations granted to blood

establishments, that plasma collected in the UK (including convalescent plasma) should be used for the benefit of UK patients, at least until domestic demand is met.

The Welsh and Scottish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive have also directed their respective blood services to take forward work on this.

Schools Capital Funding

[HLWS795]

Baroness Berridge: My Right Honourable Friend the Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today, I am announcing £489 million of capital funding to support local authorities to create new school places needed for September 2023. This investment will support the Government's priority to ensure that every child has the opportunity of a place at a good school, whatever their background.

The funding announced today is on top of our commitment to invest £23 billion in the school estate between 2016 and 2021, and the £750 million to create places needed by September 2022 that we announced last year. These funding allocations will allow local authorities to plan ahead with confidence, and to invest strategically to ensure they deliver good school places for every child who needs one.

Full details of this announcement, including allocations broken down by local authority, will be published on the Department for Education section on the GOV.UK website [here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations).

War Pensions Scheme Uprating 2021

[HLWS791]

Baroness Goldie: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The new rates of war pensions and allowances proposed from 12 April 2021 are set out in the tables below. The annual uprating of war pensions and allowances for 2021 will take place from the week beginning 12 April. Rates for 2021 are increasing by 0.5 per cent in line with the September 2020 Consumer Price Index.

<i>War Pensions Rates</i>		
<i>(Weekly rates unless otherwise shown)</i>	2020	2021
	£	£
WAR PENSIONS		
Disablement Pension (100% rates)		
officer (per annum)	10,071.00	10,123.00
other ranks (weekly amount)	193	194

<i>(Weekly rates unless otherwise shown)</i>	2020	2021
	£	£
Age allowances payable from age 65		
40%-50%	12.9	12.95
over 50% but not over 70%	19.9	20
over 70% but not over 90%	28.25	28.4
over 90%	39.8	40
Disablement gratuity (one-off payment)		
specified minor injury (min.)	1,230.00	1,236.00
specified minor injury (max.)	9,181.00	9,227.00
1 – 5% gratuity	3,070.00	3,085.00
6 – 14% gratuity	6,825.00	6,859.00
15 – 19% gratuity	11,937.00	11,997.00
SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCES		
Unemployability allowance		
Personal	119.3	119.9
adult dependency increase	66.3	66.65
increase for first child	15.4	15.5
increase for subsequent children	18.1	18.2
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	23.6	23.7
middle rate	15.4	15.5
lower rate	7.7	7.75
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	145.6	146.4
intermediate rate	109.2	109.8
full day rate	72.8	73.2
Part-day rate	36.4	36.6
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	31.3	31.5
lower rate	15.65	15.75
Mobility supplement	69.5	69.85
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	72.8	73.16
Therapeutic earnings limit (annual rate)	7,280.00	7,436.00
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	72.8	73.2
Severe disablement occupational allowance	36.4	36.6
Clothing allowance (per annum)	249	250
Education allowance (per annum) (maximum)	120	120

<i>(Weekly rates unless otherwise shown)</i>	2020	2021
	£	£
WIDOW(ER)S BENEFITS		
Widow(er)s' - other ranks (basic with children) (weekly amount)	146.4	147.15
Widow(er) - Officer higher rate both wars (basic with children) (per annum)	7,786.00	7,825.00
Childless widow(er)s' u-40 (other ranks) (weekly amount)	35.07	35.25
Widow(er) – Officer lower rate both wars (per annum)	2,704.00	2,718.00
Supplementary Pension	97.95	98.44
Age allowance		
(a) age 65 to 69	16.7	16.8
(b) age 70 to 79	32.1	32.25
(c) age 80 and over	47.6	47.85
Children's allowance		
Increase for first child	23	23.1
Increase for subsequent children	25.55	25.7
Orphan's pension		
Increase for first child	26.3	26.45
Increase for subsequent children	28.75	28.9
Unmarried dependant living as spouse (maximum)	144.05	144.8
Rent allowance (maximum)	55.1	55.4
Adult orphan's pension (maximum)	112.55	113.1

Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee Meeting: 24 February 2021

[HLWS800]

Lord True: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove MP), has today made the following written statement:

The European Union and the United Kingdom held the first meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee following the end of the transition period on 24 February.

The parties welcomed the progress made on citizens' rights in recent weeks in implementing the rights of UK nationals in the EU and EU citizens in the UK under the Withdrawal Agreement, and reiterated the importance of communication and support to the most vulnerable.

Further to the meeting of the Joint Committee co-chairs on 11 February 2021, the EU and the UK also took stock of the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland and of work to find pragmatic solutions. The parties acknowledged the importance of joint action to make the Protocol work for the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland. In that spirit, the EU and UK reiterated their full commitment to the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in all its dimensions, and to the proper implementation of the Protocol. Building on the recent outreach by the Joint Committee co-chairs, there would be further joint engagement with business groups and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland. The UK and the EU underlined their shared commitment to giving effect to those solutions agreed through the Joint Committee on 17 December 2020, without delay. The UK noted that it would provide a new operational plan with respect to supermarkets and their suppliers, alongside additional investment in digital solutions for traders in accordance with the Protocol.

Noting the need for ongoing engagement and the shared desire to act at pace, the UK and EU agreed that a further Joint Committee would be held to provide further steers and where appropriate approvals, and would liaise on timings.

Written Answers

Thursday, 25 February 2021

Antidepressants

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the side effects of anti-depressants; for how long on average anti-depressants are taken by patients; how many anti-depressants have been dispensed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; and at what cost. [[HL13152](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency continuously monitors the safety of all medicines on the market in the United Kingdom. Information about possible side-effects associated with treatment is provided in the product information which is available to all prescribers and patients. This is based on a thorough assessment of the available information and is updated regularly as new information emerges.

Information on the average length of time antidepressants have been taken by patients is not held centrally. Between March 2020 and November 2020, the latest data available, the number of items of antidepressant products that were dispensed in the community in England was 59,000,280 and the total cost in this period was £286,838,390.64. Information on the number of products dispensed in secondary care is not held.

Carer's Allowance: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter sent by Carers UK to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3 February, and of the proposal that a £20 supplement to the Carer's Allowance be made in the Budget to support carers during the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL13314](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: This Government continues to protect the value of benefits paid to carers whilst also spending record amounts in real terms. The level of Carer's Allowance is protected by uprating it each year in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The purpose of benefit uprating is to ensure that the value of benefits stays in line with the general level of prices. For the April 2021 increase, the Department for Work and Pensions used the September 2020 CPI, which was 0.5 per cent. Since 2010, the rate of Carer's Allowance has increased from £53.90 to £67.25 a week, meaning around an additional £700 a year for carers. Between 2020/21 and 2025/26 real terms expenditure on Carer's Allowance is forecast to increase by nearly a third (around £1 billion). By 2025/26, the Government is forecast to spend just over £4 billion a year on Carer's Allowance.

In addition, Carer's Allowance isn't the only benefit available to carers. Carers have access to the full range of social security benefits depending on their individual circumstances. Income replacement benefits help individuals and households on lower incomes, and can include a carer premium, which is currently £37.50 a week. An equivalent additional amount applies in Pension Credit. Universal Credit also includes a carer element at the rate of £162.92 per monthly assessment period. These amounts recognise the additional contribution and responsibilities associated with caring and mean that lower-income carers can receive more money than others who receive these benefits.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

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 people have been infected with COVID-19 in the UK. [[HL11372](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center published statistics on 23 February 2021 to show there have been 4,138,233 COVID-19 infections in the United Kingdom.

Asked by *Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what R rate for COVID-19 a Tier 3 area has to reach, and (2) for how long, before it is lowered to Tier 2. [[HL9666](#)]

Lord Bethell: Decisions on tier allocation did not focus specifically on the 'R' rate. These decisions are based on five key indicators; case detection rates in all age groups; case detection rates in the over 60 year olds; the rate at which cases are rising or falling; the positivity rate or the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken; and pressures on the National Health Service.

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the R rate needs to be below 1 by 2 December in order for the national COVID-19 restrictions to be lifted. [[HL9933](#)]

Lord Bethell: 'R' is just one of the many indicators the Government takes into account when making a decision on national COVID-19 restrictions. These include indicators related to National Health Service pressures and the weekly case rate.

Coronavirus: Speech and Language Therapy

Asked by *Baroness Whitaker*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans NHS England has to ensure that speech and language therapists are identified as essential members of the multi-disciplinary teams in the Designated Long COVID clinics announced on 7 October 2020. [[HL13335](#)]

Lord Bethell: As part of the five point plan for 'long' COVID-19, NHS England made £10 million available to the National Health Service to establish post COVID-19 assessment clinics. The national specification for these services asks providers ensure patients have access to a multidisciplinary team of professionals to account for the multi-system nature of post COVID-19 syndrome. Where speech and language therapy are required, patients should be able to get the treatment they need.

Customs: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the EU about carnets for goods. [HL13304]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The UK is a signatory to the Customs Convention on the ATA Carnet and the Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission. Approximately 80 countries around the world (including all EU member states) accept ATA Carnets. ATA Carnets are an option for moving goods temporarily between the UK and EU. During negotiations on the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the UK and the EU, both parties proposed text on temporary admission of goods which reflect practices set out in the ATA Carnet and Istanbul Conventions. These proposals are closely reflected in the final Trade and Cooperation Agreement text.

Economics of Biodiversity Review

Asked by Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conclusions and recommendations relating to global population growth in the report by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta Final Report - The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, published on 2 February. [HL13298]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The independent Review explores a range of actions it argues are needed to protect the environment and our prosperity.

The Government will examine the Review's findings closely, call on international partners to do the same, and will respond formally in due course.

Environment Protection: Local Government

Asked by Baroness Hayman of Ullock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the new responsibilities for local authorities set out in the Environment Bill. [HL13309]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We have committed to fully fund all new burdens on local authorities arising from the Environment Bill in order to make our ambition a reality.

We have worked closely with local authorities to develop the Bill, and are committed to engaging with local authorities as we seek to maximise effective delivery, for example as we consult further on the implementation of measures on extended producer responsibility, deposit return schemes and biodiversity net gain.

Local authorities, as local leaders, experts, place-shapers and conveners of local communities, will play a fundamental role in delivering the environmental action needed in their areas. They will be supported in delivering this change through increased powers to take effective action, reduced financial burdens from waste management and stronger abilities to improve nature, health and social outcomes for local citizens.

Fossil Fuels: Overseas Investment

Asked by Baroness Blackstone

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend any policy on banning overseas fossil fuel investment to investments made by the CDC Group, including those by third party financial institutions. [HL13294]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Prime Minister announced at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020 that the Government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, with very limited exemptions. The policies of CDC are well aligned to the delivery of the Government's policy to end fossil fuel investment overseas.

Asked by Baroness Blackstone

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the total value of planned (1) investments, (2) export credit guarantees, (3) loans, and (4) loan guarantees, in overseas fossil fuel projects by way of (a) Overseas Development Assistance, and (2) UK Export Finance, which have been committed but have not yet been finalised. [HL13295]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Prime Minister announced at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December that the Government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, with very limited exemptions.

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has set out seven core priorities for the UK's official development assistance (ODA) budget in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction, with climate and biodiversity forming one of these core priorities. No decisions have yet been made by FCDO Ministers on individual country or sectoral budget allocations for 2021/22. In addition, it is not possible to publish all planned, potential transactions, investments, export credit guarantees, loans, and loan guarantees, for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

Asked by **Baroness Sheehan**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total carbon emissions associated with fossil fuel projects funded through (1) Official Development Assistance, and (2) UK Export Finance, in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, and (c) 2020. [HL13326]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: UK Export Finance (UKEF) defines fossil fuels projects as those related to the extraction, production, transportation and refining of crude oil, natural gas or coal and fossil-fuel fired power stations.

Until 31 March 2020 UKEF's collected projected annual operational CO₂-equivalent (CO₂e) Scope 1 and Scope 2* emissions of projects only where they fell under the scope of the OECD Council Recommendation on Common Approaches for Officially Supported Export Credits and Environmental and Social Due Diligence (OECD Common Approaches) or the Equator Principles and where they were expected to exceed 25 000 tonnes CO₂e annually. The table below is compiled on that basis and uses the latest emissions data known to UKEF for the total carbon emissions associated with fossil fuel projects funded through UKEF in 2018, 2019 and 2020:

(*Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy.)

Projects currently in operations phase (operational carbon emissions)

Financial Year UKEF funding agreed (signed)	UKEF support effective (funding provided)	Estimated carbon emissions in tonnes of CO ₂ e per annum
2018	Yes	18,030,000
2020	No	26,804,725

Estimated emissions for projects supported but not yet in operation (still in construction phase, hence no actual operational carbon emissions to date)

Financial Year UKEF funding agreed (signed)	UKEF support effective (funding provided)	Estimated carbon emissions in tonnes of CO ₂ e per annum during future operations
2018	Yes	15,257,820
2019	Yes	8,178,670
2020	No	3,600,000

With regards to the period from 1 April 2020, emissions information has not yet been collated within UKEF, but UKEF will make climate-related financial disclosures in its accounts, in line with the Taskforce on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures' (TCFD's) recommendations, as soon as practicable following the close of the 2020/21 financial year. For 2020-21 this disclosure will include the type of emissions data described above and in addition will include information on UKEF's governance, strategy, risk management, and metrics and targets regarding climate change financial risks.

We do not hold data for estimated carbon emissions associated with past fossil fuel projects funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Asked by **Baroness Sheehan**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether (1) the CDC Group, and (2) the Private Infrastructure Development Group, have to follow any policies set by central Government in relation to (a) investments, (b) loans, and (c) loan guarantees, linked to fossil fuels. [HL13327]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: CDC Group Plc and Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) each have their own policy on investing in projects linked to fossil fuels. These policies are publicly available and closely aligned to the UK Government's own policy on ODA funded fossil fuel investments overseas, announced at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020.

Global Positioning System

Asked by **Lord West of Spithead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the governance arrangements for sharing Positioning, Navigation and Timing data in the UK; and what assessment they have made of the need for an organisation that would promote the benefits of the Global Navigation Satellite System in a similar way to the Civil Global Positioning Service Interface Committee in the United States. [HL13329]

Lord Callanan: The Deputy National Security Advisor is currently the Senior Responsible Officer for PNT. Future governance arrangements for the development of resilient PNT arrangements for UK users, including the promotion of GNSS and other PNT sources are the subject of a cross-Whitehall review being undertaken by the Cabinet Office.

Asked by **Lord West of Spithead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the UK Positioning, Navigation and Timing Strategy Group led by the Deputy National Security Adviser has produced a strategy; and if so, (1) when the strategy will be published, and (2) who will be responsible for the implementation of the strategy. [HL13332]

Lord Callanan: The UK PNT Strategy Group is in the process of developing a national PNT Strategy. Publication and an SRO for implementation are subject to a wider governance review being led by the current Senior Responsible Officer.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Coronavirus

Asked by **Baroness Doocey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much additional funding has been allocated to the HM Courts and Tribunals Service in response to the COVID-19

pandemic; how any such additional funding has been allocated between (1) criminal court services, (2) civil court services, and (3) tribunal services; and how much of any such funding has been spent in each such area so far. [HL13308]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: HM Courts and Tribunals Service has received an additional £150m funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic recovery funding covers the provision of additional PPE equipment and cleaning across the HMCTS estate; the provision of additional staffing and judicial resources; the provision of safety and security works; the provision of technology to enable remote hearings, and the provision of additional courtrooms, often referred to as 'Nightingale Courts'.

Where possible, HMCTS has utilised existing baseline budgets to cover COVID-19 requirements. However, the main challenge throughout the pandemic has been the ability to operate the criminal courts, especially the safe and secure operation of Jury trials in a socially distanced environment, resulting in higher levels of expenditure, as outlined within the table below.

<i>Jurisdiction – Full Year Allocation</i>	<i>£000's</i>
Criminal court services	72,365
Civil and Family court services	36,795
Tribunals	14,803
*Multi-jurisdiction & corporate Expenditure	26,037
Total	150,000

The latest reported spend to date as at 31 January 2021, by business area, is set out below.

<i>Jurisdiction – Expenditure as at 31 January 2021</i>	<i>£000's</i>
Criminal court services	32,018
Civil and Family court services	19,486
Tribunals	6,275
*Multi-Jurisdiction & Corporate expenditure	19,036
Total	76,815

Continued high levels of COVID-19 response and recovery activity remains in place to enable HMCTS to actively respond to the challenges of delivering a safe and effective service during these challenging times.

These efforts will be bolstered by the £110m being invested into a range of measures to boost court recovery and the £337m Spending Review settlement to deliver speedier justice to convict offenders, support victims, and protect the wider public.

*Multi-jurisdiction & corporate expenditure includes services delivered on a national basis covering several business areas, for which a single jurisdiction is not

identifiable within the financial system; examples include additional PPE, some IT costs and telephone conferencing expenditure.

Kosovo: Roma

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Kosovo about permitting to Kosovan Roma who were forced to leave Kosovo as a result of war the right to vote in the forthcoming elections in that country. [HL13337]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In the run up to the recent elections, we publicly and privately encouraged the electoral authorities in Kosovo to ensure all eligible overseas voters in Kosovo were able to do so, regardless of ethnicity. These snap elections had a shorter preparatory period than normal, putting pressure on the Central Election Commission and creating risks that not all ballots cast overseas would arrive on time. The process of verifying and counting the votes from overseas is now underway.

Kosovo: Serbia

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking with other European countries (1) to secure lasting stability for Kosovo and Serbia, and (2) the revival of the Kosovo–Serbia dialogue process. [HL13317]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK strongly supports EU-facilitated Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo as the best way of securing lasting stability in the region. We will continue to work with international partners to promote a comprehensive and sustainable normalisation agreement that benefits the peoples of both countries. The Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas has affirmed the UK's support for the Dialogue to EUSR Lajcak and in the last year has visited both countries where she reiterated this to Dialogue leads and senior political figures. We will continue to encourage renewed engagement from both sides following the recent Kosovan elections.

Latin America: Sanctions

Asked by Baroness Hooper

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many, and which, countries in Latin America are subject to UK sanctions; and how such sanctions and any possible infringements are monitored, in particular in any country where there is no UK Embassy. [HL13312]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Currently there are 42 individuals designated under the UK's Nicaragua and Venezuela sanctions regimes, as well as three Venezuelan nationals designated under the Global Human Rights

regime. These individuals are subject to asset freezes and travel bans. The Venezuela sanctions regime also includes trade restrictions on specified goods and technology, such as military goods (e.g. arms) or goods and technology which may be used to repress the civilian population of Venezuela or to intercept and monitor communications. Under UK autonomous regimes, travel ban measures apply solely in the UK, and financial sanctions are only binding on UK nationals, UK registered companies and their subsidiaries.

Various HMG departments and offices hold responsibility for monitoring sanctions compliance and enforcing action against non-compliance, and individuals and companies themselves can also report information on suspected breaches to the relevant enforcement bodies. The Office for Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) takes civil action for breaches of financial sanctions, and can work with the National Crime Agency (NCA) if criminal action is appropriate. The Home Office implement and enforce travel bans.

Myanmar: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the remarks by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, about the obligations under international law of the Myanmar security force to not use excessive force, and that they risk being prosecuted if they do so, and (2) whether members of the Myanmar security forces will be prosecuted. [[HL13291](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We share the UN Special Rapporteur's concerns about the worrying reports of violence against protestors in Myanmar. The Minister of State for Asia spoke to the Special Rapporteur shortly before the coup and reiterated our deep concern at human rights violations by the military. We have been clear that the state of emergency, and all restrictions on rights and freedoms, should be lifted immediately. The people's right to a peaceful protest should be respected. The coup must end. We urge the military to exercise utmost restraint and respect human rights and international law. The military must be held accountable for their actions. We will continue to explore all options for doing this.

Orchestras: Tax Allowances

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend eligibility for Orchestra Tax Relief to include work created for paying online audiences. [[HL13321](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review, and regularly receives proposals for changes to tax reliefs. When considering proposed changes, HM Treasury must ensure they provide support

to businesses across the economy in a fair way and represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

In 2019-20, the Government provided £18 million of support to 565 productions through the Orchestra Tax Relief.

Overseas Aid: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Baroness Sheehan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to offset the historic carbon emissions produced as a result of Official Development Assistance and UK Export Finance (1) investments, (2) loans, and (3) loan guarantees. [[HL13325](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Countries need reliable and sustainable supplies of energy if they are to tackle poverty effectively by growing their economies, creating jobs and delivering essential services. UK aid is focused on helping them achieve this. While we do not currently have plans to offset historic emissions, our support for energy is increasingly invested in renewables. Since 2011, the UK has provided 33 million people with improved access to clean energy, avoided 31 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and installed 2,000 MW of clean energy capacity. The Government is continuing to strengthen the UK's ambitious climate action through the doubling of our international climate finance to £11.6 billion between 2021/22 and 2025/26.

UKEF is proactively developing the breadth of its support for renewable sectors, with £2 billion allocated to UKEF's direct lending facility for clean growth and renewable energy projects. The facility recently supported a £230 million large-scale windfarm off the coast of Taiwan and £47.6 million of support to build two of the largest solar plants in Spain. UKEF is continuing to strengthen its pipeline of renewable energy projects.

The Prime Minister announced at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December that the Government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, with very limited exemptions. This includes support through Official Development Assistance and export finance.

Population

Asked by Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether issues relating to global population growth will be on the agenda for COP26; and if so, what proposals they have to address any such issues. [[HL13299](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: COP26 will seek to address the steps needed to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement. In his closing speech at the Climate Ambition Summit, the COP26 President Designate set out four strategic aims for COP26: a step-change in mitigation; a strengthening of adaptation; getting finance flowing; and enhancing international collaboration.

The UK Presidency will focus on five campaigns, in the areas of energy, transport, nature, finance, and adaptation & resilience, but population growth is not an explicit focus in our work. Each aims to enhance international collaboration and accelerate progress towards a resilient and zero emission global economy. The campaigns bring governments, business and civil society together to address these systemic challenges.

Remote Education

Asked by Lord Austin of Dudley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Sutton Trust Learning in Lockdown, published on 21 January; and what plans they have to meet the Sutton Trust to discuss the report. [HL13292]

Baroness Berridge: The data for the Sutton Trust report was collected at the start of the new term. Since then, the department has substantially increased delivery of devices to support vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils with remote learning.

The government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, over one million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers, as of Monday 15 February, with over 490,000 delivered since 4 January 2021.

The Department has also partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering over 60,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home and buying more for issues.

Where remote education is needed and pupils continue to experience barriers to digital remote education, we expect schools to work to overcome these barriers. This could include distributing school-owned laptops or supplementing digital provision with different forms of remote education such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils and students on track or answer questions about work.

The Department has introduced a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils and students. This will increase access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers.

As part of the National Tutoring Programme, schools in the most disadvantaged areas are being supported to employ in-house academic mentors to provide tuition to their pupils. During this period of national restrictions, as members of school staff, we expect mentors to continue providing tuition support to pupils in line with their school's policies.

The Department has responded to a written enquiry from the Sutton Trust and do not have any current plans to meet. We have conducted surveys with schools, pupils and parents throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and have collected data on access to technology, which will be published in due course.

Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the review of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs) has concluded that unpaid non-executive positions of the RFCAs, including chairmanships, should remain unpaid; whether any of the review's conclusions on such unpaid executive positions reflect the voluntary ethos of the RFCAs; and whether the review has considered (1) a potential role for unpaid independent advisory councils in shadowing the current regional and national arrangements of the RFCAs, and (2) the extent to which the current organisation of the RFCAs offers value for money. [HL13333]

Baroness Goldie: The 2019 Review of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs) was published on 24 March 2020 and placed in the Library of the House. The Review can be found at the following address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-reserve-forces-cadets-associations-2019>

The Review identified a clear need for fully independent non-executive directors with appropriate corporate competencies to bring a level of constructive challenge currently lacking due to the insular way business is conducted. In addition, it also recommended that some roles should be advertised on the Cabinet Office Public Appointments website and consideration should be given to remunerating RFCA Board and Regional Council members to attract applicants with a diverse mix of military and professional knowledge, skills and experience.

The Review is not explicit on the role of independent advisory councils but recommends that the wider RFCA membership should be retained in an advisory 'associate' capacity and any independent regional Chairs of any organisations/sub-committees that sit under the overarching National Board should be appointed in accordance with Government public appointments policy.

The Review also found that the RFCAs deliver a great deal on tight resources, proving strong value for money but also identified a number of areas for improvement. The Ministry of Defence has established a programme team to take forward the Review's recommendations in conjunction with the RFCAs.

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what role the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations play in delivering the Armed Forces Covenant. [HL13334]

Baroness Goldie: The Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs) create and maintain excellent links to business and the wider community through their regional engagement groups. As such, the RFCAs have an important role in delivering wider engagement with society and encouraging businesses and other institutions to sign the Armed Forces Covenant. Through their network of Employer Engagement Directors, RFCAs are well placed to discuss with businesses and other stakeholders, the tangible benefits which can accrue from demonstrating support to the Armed Forces Community, including recognition through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Award.

Sahel: Politics and Government

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the security situation in the Sahel; and when they last held discussions with the government of France about international efforts to accelerate and expand stabilisation operations in that region. [HL13319]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. Over the years conflict has spread from the north of Mali to the centre, as well as into Burkina Faso and Niger. 2020 has registered more deaths by violence than any previous year in the past decade. Through our recent deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and our support aimed at bolstering conflict resolution, the UK is committed to building long-term peace and stability.

In our engagement with G5 Sahel countries and international partners, including the French, the UK has raised concerns about escalating violence and emphasised the need for a more coordinated response based on mutual accountability between G5 governments and donors. The Foreign Secretary speaks to his French counterpart regularly. At the G5 Sahel Summit on 16 February, attended by France and other international partners, the Foreign Secretary set out the need to strengthen civil-military coordination, address impunity for human rights abuses and violations, and improve the stabilisation approach based on a shared understanding of conflict drivers.

South Sudan: Peace Negotiations

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support (1) the South Sudan peace deal, and (2) a power-sharing political system in that country. [HL13315]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Ensuring full implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement is a priority for UK engagement in South Sudan and is the best chance for a more stable and prosperous future. The Agreement

sets out how the parties to the conflict must work together to bring an end to violence. This includes the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and, in time, elections so the people of South Sudan can choose their own government.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and member of the Troika (with Norway and the US), the UK is at the forefront of international efforts to pressure South Sudan's leaders to deliver peace together. As the Minister for Africa made clear during a visit to South Sudan in October 2020, all parties must work together to ensure a lasting end to violence and address the worsening humanitarian crisis; key to this is building trust at all levels. More recently, the Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Africa discussed regional stability, including South Sudan, with President Kenyatta on 20 January during a visit to Kenya. The UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan also discusses issues of peace and unity regularly with international and regional partners including with President Kenyatta in January and with President Museveni of Uganda in December 2020. In addition the UK provides technical support to the peace process including to civil society groups and mechanisms that implement the agreement, support mediation efforts, and monitor the ceasefire and security arrangements.

Tax Avoidance

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness in deterring tax avoidance of the policies of (1) France, (2) Denmark, (3) Belgium and (4) Poland, which exclude companies (a) registered in, or (b) linked to, offshore tax havens from accessing taxpayer funded relief programmes. [HL13278]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government does not have access to information about how these other countries' policies have been applied or the impact they have had on businesses' behaviour, and cannot therefore comment on the policies' effectiveness.

The Government has introduced a substantial support package, designed to be targeted at the businesses and individuals who most need support, while ensuring measures are simple, certain and introduced in a timely manner to protect livelihoods.

The Government expects everyone to act responsibly by only claiming and using support as intended and is keeping measures under regular review.

The Government continues to be at the forefront of global action to tackle tax avoidance, with a series of robust measures in place to tackle profit shifting arrangements.

Since 2010, the Government has introduced over 100 new ways to tackle tax avoidance, protecting over £200 billion that would have otherwise gone unpaid. That has included adopting many of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Base Erosion and Profit

Shifting (BEPS) Project's recommendations including the Corporate Interest Restriction rules, effective from April 2017, which raise approximately £1 billion a year and the Hybrid mismatch rules, effective from January 2017, which are expected to raise £900 million between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

The Government has also led on implementing international standards in tax transparency, including the Common Reporting Standard and Country-by-Country Reporting ('CbCR'), which ensure tax authorities have the information they need to identify and challenge avoidance.

As part of the Finance Act 2016, large corporations and multinational enterprises are already required to publish a tax strategy document, which (amongst other things) outlines the company's attitude towards tax planning and its approach towards its dealings with HMRC.

Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking with international partners (1) to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Tigray, and (2) to deliver aid to those affected by starvation; and what discussions they have had with the UN about declaring a famine in that region. [HL13318]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. The UK continues to liaise closely with a wide range of regional and international partners in support of these objectives. As a complement to the efforts of the region to find sustainable solutions to the humanitarian crisis, we will continue to press these messages with all relevant international partners, including at the UN Security Council (UNSC) where the UK chaired a closed UNSC discussion on the humanitarian situation in the Tigray region on 3 February.

We are concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray and we note recent assessments that there are still significant restrictions to access in Tigray. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. In this context we welcome the recent visits to Ethiopia by senior UN officials and hope that they will deliver a sustained step-change in humanitarian access.

Waste Management: Environment Protection

Asked by Baroness Hayman of Ullock

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether producers will be required to pay local authorities the full net cost of the waste management at end of life of the products

and materials specified in the waste and resource efficiency proposals set out in the Environment Bill. [HL13310]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: In the 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy we set out our ambitions of doubling resource productivity and eliminating avoidable waste by 2050. To help us achieve these and other ambitions, we are taking powers in the Environment Bill to enable us through regulations, to require those who place specified products or materials on the UK market to meet, or contribute to, the cost of managing these products at end of life. These powers are in addition to the resource efficiency powers in the Environment Bill.

We are starting with reforming the packaging producer responsibility regulations and will introduce extended producer responsibility for packaging. This will see packaging producers paying for the waste management costs associated with the packaging that they place on the market. This includes those costs currently borne by local authorities for managing packaging waste disposed of by households

We consulted on our initial proposals in 2019 and will be publishing a second consultation this year.

Additionally, we have committed to review and consult on measures such as extended producer responsibility and product standards for five new waste streams, by the end of 2025. These are: textiles, bulky household items (such as mattresses and furniture), construction materials, tyres, and fishing gear. Where extended producer responsibility is identified as the preferred policy approach then businesses placing products on the market can expect to be required to meet or contribute to waste management costs including costs incurred by local authorities.

Yemen: Armed Conflict

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Foreign Secretary last spoke to the Foreign Minister of Iran about (1) the conflict in Yemen, and (2) any plans for a political solution to that conflict that reflects the wishes of the Yemeni people. [HL13316]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary speaks regularly with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif. He and his officials take every opportunity to discuss with Iran a wide range of issues, including regional stability and security.

While Iran has stated that it supports UN-led efforts to bring peace to Yemen, we urge Iran to ensure its actions are consistent with this commitment. Iran's provision of weapons to the Houthis is contrary to the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is important that Yemen is not used as a theatre in which to escalate conflict in the region.

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