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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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

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

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# Written Statements

Wednesday, 10 March 2021

## Property: Household Guidance on Hazards

[HLWS829]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister for rough sleeping and housing (Eddie Hughes) has today made the following statement:

The Government has responded at pace since the onset of this pandemic to provide a range of guidance to support and advise households. We have kept our guidance under continual review in response to the latest available evidence.

Today, the Government has published a new page of guidance. This guidance is for people living in all types of housing, in particular for people who live in: accommodation with shared facilities, such as a block of flats; overcrowded accommodation; shared accommodation.

The guidance highlights the importance of ventilation and cleaning, and makes information available on people's rights as tenants and how to work with landlords and local authorities to address hazardous issues.

We continue to work with agencies across Government to collect evidence to inform the advice we issue so that it reflects the realities on the ground.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-shared-and-overcrowded-housing-reducing-the-risk-of-infection>.

## Union Connectivity Report and Aviation Tax Consultation

[HLWS830]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

The government is committed to the deepest possible integration of the four nations of the United Kingdom, so that businesses and individuals have the infrastructure they need to trade, travel and do business across the whole country. To that end, in June, Sir Peter Hendy CBE was tasked by the Prime Minister with exploring ways in

which transport can better connect the four nations of the United Kingdom, levelling-up all parts of the country and helping us Build Back Better from the pandemic. The Government is also announcing that the consultation on aviation tax reform, announced at Budget 2020, will be published in Spring 2021.

The consultation will include options to change the APD treatment for domestic flights, such as reintroducing a return leg exemption or creation of a new lower domestic rate. In addition to looking at the case for increasing the number of international distance bands, we will continue to decarbonise domestic aviation as part of our ambition to reach net zero, including through mandating the use of sustainable aviation fuels. All domestic aviation emissions are captured in carbon budgets.

The government welcomes the Union Connectivity Review Interim Report published today by Sir Peter. The report marks a key step in looking at whether and how connectivity across the UK can be improved in order to support this government's aim to build a stronger and fairer economy for the future. To support this, we are making £20m development funding available to begin assessing options on road and rail schemes which have been identified by the review as crucial for cross-border connectivity. To achieve the aim of better connecting the UK, the report has considered the creation of a new UK Strategic Transport Network that will allow people and commerce to move freely by road, rail, sea and air, spreading ideas and investment to all corners of this country.

This Network of improved routes, which will now form the main focus of Sir Peter's continuing investigations, would form the transport spine of the country, facilitating quicker and easier travel and trade between all corners of this country, levelling up communities and maximising national potential.

I am placing a copy of Sir Peter Hendy's report in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Improving Connectivity Update Report  
[UnionConnectivityReview Interim Report.PDF]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2021-03-10/HLWS830/>

# Written Answers

Wednesday, 10 March 2021

## Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for setting alcohol duty rates at a level where revenue from alcohol duty will match the costs of alcohol to society. [HL13751]

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for increasing alcohol duty to raise additional revenue to support the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL13752]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government keeps alcohol duties under review and the impact of changes to alcohol duty is considered carefully at each fiscal event, including its effects on society, the economy and wider needs.

## Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Office for National Statistics release Quarterly alcohol-specific deaths in England and Wales: 2001 to 2019 registrations and Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) to Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2020 provisional registrations, published on 2 February; and what assessment they have made of the case for increasing alcohol duty to save lives. [HL13753]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Alcohol duties are kept under review and the impact of a change to alcohol duty is considered at each fiscal event. This takes a variety of data sources into account, including those relating to public health as well as the financial implications of any change.

## Arms Trade: Exports

Asked by *Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to ban all arms exports to countries that are not part of NATO or in a formal alliance with the UK. [HL13977]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** HM Government takes its export responsibilities seriously and will continue to assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria, including if there is a clear risk that the items might be used in the

commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

In addition, HM Government is able to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require, and this is done in line with the Consolidated Criteria.

## Asylum: Appeals

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many asylum applications they disputed on the grounds of having little or no evidence of an asylum seeker's claimed age in (1) 1991, (2) 2010, and (3) 2018. [HL13713]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the number of asylum applications that had an age dispute raised are published in table Asy\_D05 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets. The table below is given from the published data.

*Age disputes raised for asylum applicants between 2006 and 2020*

Year	Age disputes raised
2006	2,246
2007	1,930
2008	1,515
2009	1,146
2010	531
2011	370
2012	338
2013	323
2014	318
2015	791
2016	929
2017	718
2018	875
2019	798
2020	732

Notes:

1. An age dispute case refers to an applicant who does not have credible documentary or other persuasive evidence to demonstrate their age claimed,
2. 'Age disputes raised' relates to the number of age assessment requests raised for a main asylum applicant in a year. Figures to the period when the age dispute was raised, which may differ from the period the asylum application was received.

3. Age dispute figures for years before 2010 can be found in as\_10 of the old format asylum data tables volume 3.

Data on age disputes prior to 2006 is not readily available.

Information on how to use dataset Asy\_D05 can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate up to December 2020. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

### Asylum: Finance

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they introduced the provision of £39.63 in cash support to those seeking asylum in the UK; and what are the eligibility criteria for that payment. [HL13714]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute are provided with accommodation and a weekly allowance to cover their other essential living needs.

The level of the standard allowance is reviewed each year and adjusted where necessary. As a result of this year's review the allowance has been raised from £37.75 per week to £39.63 per week. The £39.63 rate took effect from 22 February 2021, although an earlier exceptional temporary increase to £39.60 was implemented from 15 June 2020 pending the outcome of the full review.

The allowance is reduced if the asylum seeker is accommodated in full-board facilities where some of their essential living needs, for example food and toiletries, are provided in kind.

### Aviation: Non-domestic Rates

Asked by *Baroness Harris of Richmond*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce business rates for those businesses in the aviation sector affected by the COVID-19 travel ban. [HL13866]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government has renewed the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS), which provides support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England, for an additional 6 months from 1 April 2021. It will cover the equivalent of their business rates liabilities or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – for the first 6 months of the 2021/22 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £4m.

### Aviation: Redundancy

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on job losses within the UK airline sector. [HL13847]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The UK and EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) will allow UK airlines to continue to fly between the UK and the EU, and provides for other important operational flexibilities. This gives people the freedom to travel to and from the EU easily for work, holidays and to visit loved ones, Covid restrictions allowing.

We have worked closely with airlines to understand the impact of a range of scenarios on their operations and this information helped shape the UK's air transport negotiating mandate. The Department has also undertaken analytical work to help assess the implications of the TCA on UK airlines' costs and operational resilience.

We continue to work closely with the UK aviation sector to support their operations, including between the UK and the EU.

### British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 22 February (HL13107), how many COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered to (1) UK Overseas Territories, and (2) Crown Dependencies. [HL13674]

Asked by *Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 22 February (HL13107), when they expect the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to be complete in (1) UK Overseas Territories, and (2) Crown Dependencies. [HL13675]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered to the Crown Dependencies and all of the inhabited Overseas Territories with airports. Arrangements are now being made to deliver the vaccines to Tristan da Cunha and the Pitcairn Islands. The smaller Overseas Territories will complete their vaccination programmes soon and deliveries to the other Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies continue on a population proportionate basis alongside the domestic roll out in the UK. The Government only publishes data on vaccine administered in the UK, the Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies are regularly publishing data on their vaccination programmes.

## Cameroon: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to raise the issue of the conflict in Cameroon in the UN Security Council in the near future; and what plans they have to ensure that there are no further delays to the publication of the report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights following her 2019 visit to Cameroon. [HL13730]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government regularly raises our concerns about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon in multilateral fora, including the UN. Most recently, we raised the crisis at the UN Security Council on 9 December 2020, calling for an end to human rights abuses and violations by both armed separatists and the security forces. The Minister for Africa also spoke to the Prime Minister of Cameroon, Joseph Ngute, in December 2020. He reiterated the UK's commitment to supporting a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

We also encourage the Government of Cameroon to remain engaged with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and would welcome publication of the report of her 2019 visit soon.

## Climate Change

*Asked by Lord Lilley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the findings which informed the Environment Agency's "reasonable worst case scenario for climate", referred to by the Agency's Chief Executive Sir James Bevan on 23 February. [HL13678]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Sir James Bevan's speech was underpinned by published evidence from a variety of national and international reports that includes the UK Climate Projections 2018 announced by the Secretary of State for Defra in November 2018. The Environment Agency has recently published research showing an upward trend in extreme floods at two-thirds of their river level monitoring stations and that this trend is 90% certain at over a fifth of locations.

## Coastal Erosion and Flooding

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan to incorporate predictions by the International Panel on Climate Change of rapid sea level rises into their assessments of (1) coastal erosion, and (2) flooding, to enable planning authorities to request up to date Flood Risk Assessments for new nuclear power stations. [HL13669]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Nuclear new-build facilities are subject to a number of consenting

regimes. Firstly, the nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) regime under the 2008 Planning Act which considers the initial grant of consent; and secondly the nuclear safety regime under the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) which controls nuclear safety aspects on an ongoing basis throughout the facility's lifetime.

Proposals for nuclear new-build are NSIPs and are decided by the relevant Secretary of State. Proposals are judged against the relevant national policy statement(s) (NPS). The relevant NPSs make reference to the importance of facilities being resilient and adaptable to climate change. They aim to ensure new facilities are located, constructed, operated and decommissioned with the long-term impacts of climate change in mind.

The Environment Agency provides advice and guidance on this process including on how climate change should be accounted for in relevant flood risk assessments. This was last updated in July 2020 to reflect the latest sea level rise projects (UKCP18). Our advice recommends that flood risk is considered across a range of different climate scenarios, including credible but extreme scenarios (i.e. High++ emissions scenario).

The Environment Agency works closely with the ONR to manage the interaction between the NSIP regime and the nuclear safety regulatory regime. The Environment Agency has produced a number of joint guidance notes with the ONR, to outline their collective approach to flood risk and climate change. These are attached to this answer and can also be found here:

- Use of UK Climate Projections 2018 - [Use of UK Climate Projections 2018 \(UKCP18\) - Revision 1, November 2020 \(onr.org.uk\)](#) ; and
- Principles for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management - [Principles for Flood and Coastal Erosion \(onr.org.uk\)](#).

The National Coastal Erosion Map (NCERM) shows erosion projections to 2110 and informs coastal management through Shoreline Management Plans (SMP). This helps manage direct erosion and to manage sediment supplies down the coast which can be relevant for flood risk areas.

All English nuclear power stations have SMP policies of Hold the Line (maintain or upgrade the level of protection provided by defences) for the whole timescale of the hundred year plans. Recent reviews of SMP policies for these stretches of the coast have shown the strategic direction of Hold the Line is deemed fit for the future.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

PQ HL13669 - Principles for Flood and Erosion [principles-for-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management.pdf]

PQ HL13669 - UK CLIMATE PROJECTIONS 2018 [ukcp18-position-statement-rev-1.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-02-24/HL13669>

## Computacenter: Remote Education

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, as part of their provision of computers to schoolchildren during the COVID-19 pandemic, what was the value of the Direct Award to Computacenter made under Procurement Policy Note 01/20; and how many (1) computers, (2) laptops, and (3) tablets were provided. [HL13683]

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the computers provided to Computacenter, made under Procurement Policy Note 01/20 as part of their provision of computers to schoolchildren during the COVID-19 pandemic, were made on loan. [HL13684]

**Baroness Berridge:** The value of the Computacenter contract is £60 million. Details of the contract can be found on the 'Contracts Finder' on gov.uk: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e9047eb-be82-4506-8a97-448ff0d73cfe?origin=SearchResults&p=1>.

A total of 260,000 devices have been delivered under this contract. The breakdown of devices is as follows: 175,426 Windows laptops, 67,817 Google Chromebooks, 6,757 Windows tablets and 10,000 Apple iPads were delivered.

Devices have not been provided on a loan basis. Laptops and tablets are owned by the school, college, academy trust or local authority, who can lend them to children and young people who need them most during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

## Construction and Manufacturing Industries: Employment

Asked by *Lord Austin of Dudley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of jobs in the (1) manufacturing, and (2) construction, sectors which are linked to the (1) production, and (2) use, of mobile concrete batching plants. [HL13648]

**Lord Callanan:** Official data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is not detailed enough to identify jobs linked to the production of specific products, nor can they capture jobs using or related to specific products.

In 2019 (the latest year for which we have full year estimates), manufacturing as a whole accounted for 2.7m jobs, while the Construction sector accounted for 2.3m. Approximately 14,000 of the jobs in manufacturing were in the manufacture of machinery for mining and construction.

## Countryside

Asked by *Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to issue a new version of the Countryside Code; if so, when; and what plans they have to launch a publicity campaign directed at people who are likely to use the UK countryside and coast for holidays in 2021, to offer advice on appropriate activities and behaviour. [HL13697]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Natural England is working on a refresh of the Countryside Code alongside stakeholders, and a relaunch of advice to the public is planned for Easter. The launch at Easter will mark the beginning of a year-long piece of work with stakeholders and partners to promote the Code more widely and look at how we can best encourage positive behaviours. We want to make the code inclusive and welcoming, to make sure that people are aware that nature is available to all, and that they understand how they can respect and protect the countryside.

## Courier Services: Conditions of Employment

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the working conditions of courier drivers; and what steps they are taking to ensure that such drivers are not paid less than the national minimum wage. [HL13686]

**Lord Callanan:** This Government is clear that everyone deserves to be treated fairly at work and rewarded for their contribution to the economy, both in terms of fair pay and fair working conditions. An individual's entitlement to the minimum wage depends on their employment status and whether they are classed as a worker. We are clear that anyone entitled to be paid the minimum wage should receive it.

We have more than doubled the budget for minimum wage enforcement and compliance, rising to £27.5 million for 20/21, up from £13.2 million in 2015/16. In 2019/20 HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) identified £20.8 million in arrears for over 263,000 workers and issued over just under 1,000 penalties totalling £18.5 million to non-compliant employers.

We would encourage anyone who thinks they are being underpaid to report this. Workers can call the Acas helpline (0300 123 1100) for free, impartial and confidential advice about their rights and entitlements and Acas will pass cases onto HMRC where appropriate. HMRC follows up on every worker complaint it receives, even those which are anonymous.

## Cryptocurrencies

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to consider the energy use of cryptocurrencies as part of their preparations for COP26 and other international meetings on climate change during 2021; and what plans they have to investigate how cryptocurrencies affect their requirements for public and private sector organisations to meet climate change targets. [[HL13642](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government has been monitoring developments within the cryptoasset industry, including rising energy usage.

The Cryptoasset Taskforce, comprising HM Treasury, the FCA, and the Bank of England, explores the impact of cryptoassets and assesses what, if any, regulation is required in response.

The Government has already taken actions to signal a commitment to green technology, including a pledge to make Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) aligned financial disclosures mandatory across the economy by 2025, making the UK the first G20 nation to make such a commitment.

Additionally, the Government has committed to the implementation of a green taxonomy. This will allow us to accelerate our work towards a greener financial sector, by providing a common definition for environmentally sustainable economy activities.

The Government's objective for the upcoming COP26 climate change forum is to ensure that every professional financial decision takes climate change into account. The recovery from COVID-19 will determine the mitigation and adaptation pathways for decades to come. We must all do our part – we are working with the financial services sector, international financial institutions, central banks, regulators, and finance ministries to unlock rapid action at scale.

The finance campaign will provide the conditions for a future that is genuinely greener, more resilient and more sustainable than the past. Action on finance underpins all the other COP campaigns: adaptation & resilience, energy transition, nature and zero-emission vehicles. Without the right levels of finance, the rest is not possible.

The Government stands ready to respond to emerging risks or changes in the market and will continue to monitor how cryptoassets are being used in the UK.

## Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Winchester**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist developing countries to develop a working cold-chain storage system for storing COVID-19 vaccines at the required temperatures. [[HL13723](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is committed to supporting rapid and equitable access to safe and effective

vaccines. This includes strengthening country health systems, and ensuring that new vaccines are appropriate for various settings, such as rural areas. The UK's £1.65 billion commitment to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance over five years includes support to strengthen vaccine supply chains, and improve cold chain technologies. Our support to public-private partnerships such as the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) also includes developing heat-stable vaccines that can be distributed through existing immunisation cold chains, or without refrigeration.

## Driving Licences: Reciprocal Arrangements

Asked by **Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what reciprocal arrangements are in place between the UK and each EU member state with regard to driving licences. [[HL13926](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** All EU/EEA Member States, except for Italy, have confirmed reciprocal arrangements for exchanging licences, confirming that a retest will not be required for resident UK nationals. Most of our agreements are permanent arrangements and a small number require formal agreements which will be concluded before the end of this year. Where these agreements are needed, the UK has secured interim arrangements with the relevant Member States. All EU/EEA countries have confirmed that International Driving Permits will not be required by UK visitors.

Asked by **Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have for the DVLA to be able to grant an extension to UK drivers' licences that are due to expire, where there are no reciprocal arrangements regarding driving licences with EU member states. [[HL13927](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** UK legislation does not permit the DVLA to extend a UK national's driving licence, if they are not a UK resident. There are no plans to amend the regulations. All EU/EEA Member States, except for Italy, have confirmed reciprocal arrangements for exchanging licences. Most of our agreements are permanent arrangements and a small number require formal agreements which will be concluded before the end of this year. Where these agreements are needed, the UK has secured interim arrangements with the relevant Member States.

## Electronic Funds Transfer: Fraud

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for mandating the voluntary protections for victims of authorised push payment scams; whether the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) has powers to do this using Faster Payment Scheme rules; and, if not, what plans they have to legislate to provide the PSR with such powers. [[HL13638](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Payment Systems Regulator has requested additional powers to create mandatory protections for victims of authorised push payment scams. [HL13639]

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Payment Systems Regulator regarding the need to introduce mandatory protections for victims of authorised push payment scams. [HL13640]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government is committed to tackling fraud and ensuring that victims of Authorised Push Payment (APP) scams are protected.

The Government recognises the work industry has undertaken to date, including the introduction of a voluntary reimbursement Code, which has demonstrably had a beneficial impact. However, the Code, whilst improving matters, comes with limitations, including disparity in how different payment service providers are interpreting their obligations under it, as well as its lack of comprehensive cover across providers.

The Government therefore welcomed the publication of the Payment Systems Regulator's (PSR) call for views on APP scams in February 2021, which set out various measures that could improve customer outcomes. The Government is of the view that the introduction of Faster Payments Service rules setting reimbursement requirements on all scheme participants is the best possible solution to the issue of APP scams; this will ensure the rules underpinning Faster Payments are fit for purpose.

The Government looks forward to engaging with the outcomes of the PSR's call for views, including considering what further actions may be necessary to make progress on this issue.

The Government continues to engage closely with the PSR on this issue.

## **Human Trafficking**

*Asked by **Baroness Doocey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of potential human trafficking victims facing exploitation of a sexual nature. [HL13660]

*Asked by **Baroness Doocey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to amend the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (1) to reflect, and (2) to combat, increases in reports of potential human trafficking cases related to sexual exploitation. [HL13662]

*Asked by **Baroness Doocey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to amend the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (1)

to reflect, and (2) to combat, increases in reports of the number of potential human trafficking cases involving children. [HL13663]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government is committed to tackling modern slavery including cases involving child trafficking and sexual exploitation. The Modern Slavery Act 2015, gives law enforcement agencies the tools to tackle modern slavery, including maximum life sentences for perpetrators and enhanced protection for victims. In July 2018, the Government commissioned an Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to identify what can be improved in the implementation of the Act. The Government's response to this review can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-the-modern-slavery-act>.

We are committed to strengthening the law enforcement response to modern slavery and in 2020/21 we allocated over £2 million funding to the police to support the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime programme. During the pandemic we have also worked closely with law enforcement to monitor any changes in the threat of modern slavery including cases involving trafficked children and sexual exploitation.

The Home Office continues to work with First Responders to ensure they understand the indicators of different exploitation types and can refer potential victims into appropriate support. In July 2020, we released an E-Learning module available to all First Responders to improve their understanding of their responsibilities and the support available.

With this greater awareness and improved understanding of modern slavery, more potential victims are being identified and protected. The latest statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>. The Home Office is currently addressing an earlier identified error that occurred in the data processing for the Q1-Q3 of 2020 statistics where some sexual exploitation referrals were miscategorised as 'Not recorded or unknown'. Once this error is rectified, the number of sexual exploitation referrals will be higher than in the current statistical bulletins and the number of 'not recorded or unknown' referrals will be lower. The updated data will be released alongside the Quarter 4 (October to December 2020) statistics which are being prepared and will be released on 18 March 2021.

The Government continues to focus on improving identification and support for potential victims by embarking on an ambitious National Referral Mechanism Transformation Programme to build on our world leading efforts to identify vulnerable victims and provide the support that they need to rebuild their lives. This will ensure that victims are safeguarded and supported based on their individual recovery need, with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable and making good use of

existing access to mainstream services. As part of this programme, we are progressing the roll out of the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians service.

The Government is committed to tackling the drivers that can lead individuals to become potential victims of trafficking. Local authorities are responsible for the safeguarding and promotion of welfare of all children in their area, co-operating closely with police and other statutory agencies to offer child victims required protection and support. In 2020-21, local government received an additional £1 billion grant for adult and children's social care. This is on top of the continuation of the £410 million social care grant. In addition, we are investing £84 million in targeted, evidence-based interventions to improve the support provided to vulnerable children and their families and enable more children to stay at home thriving in stable family environments. The Government is also strongly committed to supporting victims of sexual exploitation and continues to provide investment in this area, including by allocating £76 million to support victims of modern slavery, sexual violence, and domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Home Office has committed to create a new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy this year and ran a nationwide Call for Evidence from 10 December to 19 February to gather the views from a wide range of stakeholders to inform this strategy. The strategy will also consider wider work, including on modern slavery and sexual exploitation.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Gov Response Independent Review Modern Slavery  
[Government\_Response\_to\_Independent\_Review\_of\_MS\_Act  
(1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-02-24/HL13660>

## Local Government: Elections

*Asked by Lord Rennard*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park on 28 January (HL Deb col 1804), and the Written Answers from Lord True on 17 February (HL12832 and HL12833), whether (1) NHS England, (2) the Department for Health and Social Care, (3) the Chief Scientific Officer, and (4) the Chief Medical Officer, provided advice that informed the distinction between (a) volunteer, and (b) paid, delivery of leaflets, as set out in the Minister for the Constitution's letter of 22 January. [HL13606]

**Lord True:** Democracy should not be cancelled because of covid. As outlined in my Written Ministerial Statement of 8 February 2021 (HLWS766), the Government has confirmed that the set of council, mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner elections scheduled for May will go ahead, and made a firm commitment that the Government will support the sector to deliver them.

The Government has published a Delivery Plan for the May elections, setting out how the Government will support local elections teams to deliver effective polls that are covid-secure for voters and staff. The Medical Officers advised Ministers in drawing up this delivery plan. The Government has committed to further engage with political parties through the Parliamentary Parties Panel and the Local Government Association; we are committed to ensuring we take into consideration the views of independent candidates as effectively as possible.

Campaigning is an essential part of democracy. Voters deserve to be well informed before going to the polls and there must be a level playing field for candidates. On 22 February the Prime Minister announced the Government's roadmap out of lockdown and we have since published guidance on campaigning reflecting the updated COVID restrictions/guidance.

The whole of England remains in a national lockdown and will do so until 29 March. The current restrictions do not support door-to-door campaigning or leafleting by individual campaigners. Leaving home to undertake leafleting increases the risk of unnecessary social interactions and viral transmission both during travel and on doorsteps. Campaigners should instead ensure leafleting is carried out through existing commercial delivery services, which are already operating and delivering during the national lockdown. Any spending on this which is incurred during a regulated period must count towards a candidate's spending limit.

From 8 March, individual activists will be able to campaign outdoors in a COVID-secure way. The rules will allow for individual campaigners to deliver leaflets and to engage with electors on their doorsteps - but they should always be socially distanced and not enter inside people's homes.

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 22 February (HL13268), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, further to the letter dated 22 January from the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution to members of the Parliamentary Parties Panel and the May 2021 polls delivery plan, published on 5 February, what evidence they have which supports the cessation of (1) doorstep campaigning, and (2) the delivery of leaflets, by individual political party activists. [HL13670]

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 22 February (HL13269), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, further to the letter dated 22 January from the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution to members of the Parliamentary Parties Panel and the May 2021 polls delivery plan, published on 5 February, what evidence they have to suggest that the delivery of

leaflets by individual political party activists carries a greater risk than paid deliveries by (1) the Royal Mail, or (2) other delivery services. [HL13671]

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 22 February (HL13270), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, further to the letter dated 22 January from the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution to members of the Parliamentary Parties Panel and the May 2021 polls delivery plan, published on 5 February, what steps they have taken to ensure that (1) independent, and (2) smaller political party, candidates are not disproportionately affected by the restrictions on (a) doorstep campaigning, and (b) the delivery of leaflets by individual political party activists. [HL13672]

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 22 February (HL13271), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what consultation, if any, they undertook with (1) independent candidates, (2) smaller political parties, and (3) the Independent Group of the Local Government Association, in the development of the letter dated 22 January from the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution to members of the Parliamentary Parties Panel and the May 2021 polls delivery plan, published on 5 February. [HL13673]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Democracy should not be cancelled because of covid. As outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement of 8 February 2021 (HLWS766), the Government has confirmed that the set of council, mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner elections scheduled for May will go ahead, and made a firm commitment that the Government will support the sector to deliver them.

On 22 February, the Prime Minister announced the Government's roadmap out of lockdown and we have since then published guidance on campaigning reflecting the updated COVID restrictions effective from 8 March. In developing this guidance, the Government consulted a number of groups, including the Parliamentary Parties Panel and the Local Government Association; we are committed to ensuring we take into consideration the views of independent candidates as effectively as possible.

From 8 March, individual activists will be able to campaign outdoors in a COVID-secure way. The rules will allow for individual campaigners to deliver leaflets and to engage with electors on their doorsteps - but they should always be socially distanced and not enter inside people's homes.

## Merchant Shipping: Radio

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 23 February (HL13331), whether there are any high frequency coast stations in the UK. [HL13689]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Maritime and Coastguard Agency operates Very High Frequency (VHF) and Medium Frequency (MF) coast stations, in line with our declared commitments for the provision of maritime safety and search and rescue services in the United Kingdom's Search & Rescue Region.

There are no declared High Frequency (HF) coast stations in the UK, other than access to specific HF frequencies via the Ministry of Defence network for aeronautical rescue.

## Migrants: Deportation

*Asked by Lord Green of Deddington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many individuals have been removed from the UK in each of the last 10 years as a result of the expiry of their leave to remain. [HL13666]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office publishes data on the number of returns from the UK in each quarter in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly release'. The latest data are published in Ret\_01 of the Returns summary tables. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to the year ending September 2020.

The Home Office seeks to return people who do not have any legal right to stay in the UK, which includes people who:

- enter, or attempt to enter, the UK illegally (including people entering clandestinely and by means of deception on entry);
- overstay their period of legal right to remain in the UK;
- breach their conditions of leave;
- are subject to deportation action; for example, due to a serious criminal conviction; and
- have been refused asylum.

The published data relate to all returns, regardless of reason for return.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Copy of Returns Summary Table [Copy of returns-summary-dec-2020-tables.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-02-24/HL13666>

## North Korea: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to raise the implementation of the recommendations in the report by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea published on 7 February 2014, at the UN Human Rights Council; and in particular, the recommendation that the situation in North Korea should be referred to the International Criminal Court. [HL13645]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is clear there must be no impunity for the most serious international crimes. We welcome and support the Human Rights Council resolution on human rights in North Korea which stresses the importance of following up recommendations from the UN Commission of Inquiry Report on Human Rights in the DPRK, and provides the basis for further work on a credible framework for accountability for human rights violations in the country. North Korea is not a State Party to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and so a referral of the situation in the DPRK could be made only by the UN Security Council in this instance. The international community has a responsibility to respond to human rights violations in North Korea and the UK continues to press annual debate on the DPRK's human rights issues in the UN Security Council.

## North Korea: UN Resolutions

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that workers in North Korea have been sent to Russia to provide overseas labour contrary to the sanctions imposed under UN Security Council Resolution 2375 (2017); what assessment they have made of how such workers are selected; and what plans they have to raise this issue at the UN Security Council. [HL13643]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK government has been very clear that international law must be upheld, and that UN sanctions put in place to combat North Korea's illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes must be fully enforced. The UN Panel of Experts have reported that North Korean overseas workers continue to be present in member states despite the passing of the repatriation deadline in December 2019. We fully agree with the panel's assessment and continue to raise our concerns with the members of the Security Council in New York, including Russia, most recently on 24 February. The UK has not made an independent assessment of how such workers are selected. The UK calls for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of North Korea.

## Overseas Investment: Fossil Fuels

*Asked by Baroness Blackstone*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total value of (1) investments, (2) export credit guarantees, (3) loans, and (4) loan guarantees, granted (a) under Official Development Assistance, and (b) by UK Export Finance, to overseas fossil fuels projects or companies which are currently active. [HL13374]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Data on the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) support to CDC and Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) provide the current best estimate of the total value of investments, loans, and loan guarantees, to overseas fossil fuels projects or companies.

CDC has published its complete portfolio of energy investments as held at 31 December 2019 on its website, which includes the start date of each investment and the total amount committed. The value of PIDG commitments to energy projects (disaggregated by renewables and non-renewables) is published in the 2019 PIDG Annual Review available on the PIDG website. Project level data on all PIDG investment commitments are also available online via its Results Monitoring Database and its annual reports.

Due to the disproportionate cost of compiling the requested data, it is not possible to provide an estimate of the total value of support provided to overseas fossil fuels projects or companies by UK Export Finance investments.

## Overseas Students: Fees and Charges

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that some universities and independent schools are allowing overseas students to pay their fees in cash. [HL13719]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government is clear that criminals should not be allowed to profit through the use of cash payments. We are cracking down hard on dirty money via our world-leading legislation and strong law enforcement response.

Money Laundering Regulations require firms to combat money laundering, check the identity of their customers and the purpose of their transactions, including the source of funds. These rules apply to businesses which might be used by criminals to facilitate the transfer of illicit funds including banks, money service businesses, lawyers and accountants.

Anyone employed in the education sector who has suspicions around the source of a student's funds should inform law enforcement through filing a Suspicious Activity Report – if they fail to do so they could risk being struck off by their professional bodies.

## Pensions: Commonwealth

*Asked by Lord Randall of Uxbridge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received any requests from Commonwealth countries to discuss reciprocal pension agreements in the last two years; and if so, which countries have made such requests. [HL13763]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Department received a request from Canada in November 2020 to conclude a reciprocal agreement to state pension up-rating.

## Pensions: Self-employed

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pension contributions of self-employed individuals. [HL13884]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme is supporting self-employed individuals whose income has been adversely affected by COVID-19. Following last week's budget announcement, this support has now been extended until September. These measures will help those who choose to continue with their existing pension savings arrangements during a challenging time.

In December 2020, Nest Insight published research on the savings and financial wellbeing of self-employed businesses. This found that only around 20 per cent of self-employed people said they had reduced the amount they were saving for retirement through the pandemic; and belief in the importance of retirement saving appears unchanged through the pandemic. We continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on retirement savings.

## Pornography: Internet

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to include protections for children from accessing commercial pornographic websites which do not allow user generated content or facilitate online user interaction in any forthcoming online harms legislation; and if they have any such plans, how. [HL13858]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they made of the impact on children and young people of not introducing age verification for accessing commercial pornographic websites before they made the announcement that they would not be introducing such verification requirements. [HL13859]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evidence they have, if any, that non-user generated pornography

is not used to depict (1) rough sex practices, and (2) sexual violence. [HL13860]

**Baroness Barran:** The government will deliver the objective of the Digital Economy Act (DEA) to protect children from online pornography through the upcoming online safety legislation.

When taking the decision not to commence the relevant provisions in the DEA, the government concluded that there should be a coherent and comprehensive approach to protecting children online. This will be best achieved through the wider online harms proposals. The online harms regime will capture both the most visited pornography sites and pornography on social media, therefore covering the vast majority of sites where children are most likely to be exposed to pornography. Taken together, we expect this to bring into scope more online pornography that children can currently access than the narrower scope of the Digital Economy Act, which did not include social media companies.

We are working at pace to develop the Online Safety Bill that will be ready this year. We are already working closely with Ofcom to ensure that the implementation period that will be necessary following passage of the legislation is as short as possible.

The reports on The Relationship Between Pornography Use and Harmful Sexual Behaviours were commissioned by a previous administration and are now available on gov.uk. The reports make it clear that there is not one single factor that leads someone to engage in harmful sexual behaviour, rather it is a combination of factors which interact with one another to differing effects on each individual. The literature review highlights that a direct causal link cannot be established between pornography and harmful sexual behaviour as this would require impractical and unethical study conditions (forced exposure to pornography).

## Prisoners: Mental Health

*Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the mental health of prisoners of being confined to their cells for 23 hours a day or more. [HL13677]

**Lord Wolfson of Tredegar:** NHS England & Improvement and NHS Wales are responsible for the assessment and treatment of the mental health needs of those in prison.

When regime restrictions were introduced in prisons to control the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, we recognised that these measures could increase the mental health needs of those in our care. Maintaining prisoners' mental health and wellbeing has therefore remained a priority throughout the pandemic.

To address anxiety and boredom, we have made available distraction packs, in cell activities and a range of self-help materials, including a Wellbeing Plan, created with input from mental health charity Mind. We have also

given staff resources for assisting prisoners who might be struggling, such as guidance for understanding and supporting someone who is self-harming and wellbeing checks for vulnerable and priority groups of prisoners. The Samaritans phone service has remained available and we are working with them to ensure their Listener scheme continues to facilitate peer support between prisoners.

We have also acted quickly to ensure that prisoners could stay in touch with their loved ones, rolling out secure mobile handsets, providing every prisoner with £5 PIN credit per week and introducing secure video calls.

The National Framework provides a roadmap for easing restrictions in prisons when it becomes appropriate, guided by public health advice, alongside an operational assessment of what can be achieved in custodial settings while keeping staff and those in our care safe.

### Public Footpaths: Closures

*Asked by Baroness Quin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have they have made of the number of permissive access footpaths that have been closed to the public since permissive access payments provided through legacy environmental stewardship schemes ceased following the introduction of the Countryside Stewardship scheme. [HL13682]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Financial support for the permissive access options within agri-environment schemes was withdrawn by Defra Ministers as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010. Existing agreements under the original Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) and Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) were allowed to run their course to expiry, with final agreements ending by 2021.

Since 2010, agreements providing about 31,000 kilometres of CSS and 27,500 kilometres of HLS permissive linear access paths (footpath, bridleway/cycle routes, reduced mobility access and upgrades to existing paths) have expired along with 5500 ha (CSS) and 4000 ha (HLS) of permissive open access. These 58,500 km of paths and 9,500 ha of open access were present on about 3600 sites. Agreement holders with permissive access options were initially encouraged to continue offering access, if practicable, without payment, but we do not have any record of the extent to which this occurred. During 2021/22 Natural England, on behalf of Defra, will be conducting research to determine what happened to access provision after the end of Stewardship agreements to help inform future public access provision within schemes.

### Railways

*Asked by Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Prime Minister on 22 February (HC Deb, col 626–8), what discussions they have had with

train operating companies about resuming a full service on the railways; and what is the timetable for such plans. [HL13699]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Train Operating Companies are preparing to meet demand as restrictions are gradually eased, as outlined by the Prime Minister on 22 February. In preparation for the return of schools on 8 March, they are working closely with local transport planning authorities and schools, to meet the demand for student travel. As demand for rail services returns, operators will plan to run the appropriate level of service for demand whilst maintaining reliability.

### Royal National Lifeboat Institution: Government Assistance

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they provide to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. [HL13715]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) is very proud of its independence from HM Government, that its lifeboat service is provided through volunteers and supported through public donations and subscriptions. The RNLI has not sought assistance from HM Government to support its lifeboat services.

During the current pandemic the RNLI have drawn on both the Furlough (UK) and Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (Ireland) allowing them to claim most of the staff costs for people whose activities have paused. In addition, the RNLI have also applied for business grant applications for their shops.

The RNLI works closely with HM Coastguard who are the tasking authority for maritime and coastal search and rescue. They have a long association of working together to provide assistance to persons in distress around the coast of the UK.

### Sanctions

*Asked by Baroness Northover*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what sanctions against (1) individuals, (2) companies, and (3) countries, the UK implemented while a member of the EU; and which sanctions have stopped being applied following the UK's departure from the EU. [HL13681]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As a member of the EU, and until the end of the Transition Period, we implemented all EU sanctions. To designate former EU designations under UK law, the UK statutory tests had to be met. This includes demonstrating that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the proposed designation meets the designation criteria set out in the relevant Regulations and that designating that person would be appropriate with regards to the regime's purposes as set out in those Regulations. In a small

number of cases - less than 10% - those legal tests were not met. Those EU designations were not transitioned.

### Single Competent Authority: Staff

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 10 December 2020 (HL10798), how many new staff have taken up their posts to work in the Home Office Single Competent Authority since 10 December 2020. [HL13664]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** Since 10 December 2020, over 260 new staff have been recruited to work in the Home Office Single Competent Authority, with 26 of these staff already in post. A recruitment exercise for a further 100 posts (which were not filled in the first recruitment round) is due to conclude this month.

### State Retirement Pensions: British Overseas Territories

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why reciprocal agreements on state pensions are in place for some but not all of the British Overseas Territories; and when they plan to have agreements in place for all. [HL13814]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The UK has reciprocal social security agreements covering state pensions with two British Overseas Territories – Bermuda and Gibraltar.

The distribution of existing agreements with British Overseas Territories were based on a number of factors considered at the time those agreements were concluded.

### State Retirement Pensions: Canada

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to respond to the request from the government of Canada for a reciprocal agreement on state pensions. [HL13812]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Department for Work and Pensions plans to respond to the request from Canada in due course.

### Termination of Employment: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Blencathra*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce legislation (1) to allow organisations (a) to dismiss, or (b) to refuse to employ, any person who has refused to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and (2) to protect any such organisation from claims of unfair dismissal. [HL13653]

**Lord Callanan:** I refer the noble Lord to the statement made by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021, [Official Report, Column 625-628](#).

### Trade Agreements: Africa

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the progress made by the African Union in delivering the African Continental Free Trade Area. [HL13708]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** The UK welcomes the commencement of trading under the terms of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement on January 1st 2021, and the potential that the AfCFTA offers to significantly boost intra-African trade once it is fully implemented.

The UK has supported the AfCFTA negotiations directly through our African Union Support Programme, providing targeted technical assistance to negotiators.

### Tradeshaw Access Programme

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what allocations have been made from the 2020/21 Tradeshaw Access Programme. [HL13584]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** The Department for International Trade (DIT) entered this financial year with a full calendar of agreed events to be supported by the Tradeshaw Access Programme with a budget of £6.5 million.

Regrettably, most of the events have since been cancelled due to the impact of COVID-19.

### Trains: North of England

*Asked by Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to phase out diesel traction passenger trains in the North of England. [HL13903]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government's ambition is to remove all diesel-only trains from the network by 2040 and replace them with low-carbon traction technologies, including electrification, hydrogen and battery trains.

The Network Rail-led Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS) provides advice about which decarbonising technologies could best suit each part of the network. TDNS will inform the Department's forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Government decisions about the scale and pace of rail decarbonisation between now and 2050.

## Travel: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to remove Mauritius from the 'red list' of countries from which entry to the UK is banned; and if they have no such plans, when they expect to review that country's position on the list. [HL13810]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The decision to place Mauritius on the red list on 9 January was in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of COVID-19 variants of concern identified in other countries. These are intended to be temporary measures and the Government keeps data for countries and territories under constant review.

The Government has made it consistently clear that it will take decisive action to contain the virus, including adding further countries to the red list, or keeping countries on the red list, if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

## Travel: Quarantine

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a hard copy passenger locator form on all (1) flights, (2) ferry journeys, and (3) Eurostar train journeys, arriving into the UK, to improve tracking of passengers and their compliance with self-isolation rules. [HL13821]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The passenger locator form is designed to track and trace those individuals who may have come into contact with another person who has, or goes on to develop, coronavirus. It is also used to monitor self-isolation of those individuals who have been abroad and returned to the UK and who are not exempt from self-isolation measures.

The PLF was introduced as an electronic form, and allows Public Health England to conduct fast and efficient contact tracing.

The vast majority of arriving passengers are complying with all the requirements of the Covid-19 related health regulations at the border.

Border Force Officers are on hand at the Border to help passengers who may struggle to submit an electronic form.

## Tree Planting

Asked by *Baroness Fookes*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to provide written guidance (1) to informal organisations, and (2) to individuals, about the suitability of trees for planting according to (a) habitat, (b)(i) carbon, and (ii) pollution, control, and (c) the

encouragement of (i) insects, and (ii) other forms of animal life. [HL13665]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS) is publicly available and is relevant to all those with an interest in UK forests and woodlands. It outlines the context for forestry and sets out the approach of the UK governments to multi-purpose sustainable forest management, which includes defining standards and requirements. Tree planting could be for amenity and recreation, to help in the fight against climate change, improve habitat including soil and water, help biodiversity, manage and enhance historic environment, or for timber production. A series of Practice Guides support the Standard and new guides on riparian woodland management and climate change adaptation are forthcoming.

Those interested in planting trees for carbon sequestration and to help battle climate change can access guidance on the need to incorporate the effects of climate change into woodland design and management. Forest Research also provide the ecological site classification which helps inform appropriate tree species choices by site.

The Forestry Commission continues to refine and improve the environmental protection measures and processes for woodland creation by assisting the planning and planting of woodlands in lower risk areas of England. Last year the Forestry Commission updated the Low Risk Map for woodland creation to better represent the distribution of best and most versatile agricultural land and introduce a buffer for all Sites of Special Scientific Interest. This map will continue to be reviewed and updated as further information becomes available.

The Forestry Commission also published priority habitat guidance. This provides an overview of priority habitats, their definitions, and includes characteristic plants and their associated national vegetation communities.

The Forestry Commission will also be publishing guidance on Woodland Creation Design and Natural Colonisation.

## UK-EU Partnership Council

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord True on 22 February (HL13057), when they expect to announce the first meetings of the committees established under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement; and what representations the UK has made to the EU to establish these meetings. [HL13659]

**Lord Frost:** The dates of the first meetings of the committees established under the UK - EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement have not yet been agreed with the EU. These bodies, including the Partnership Council, will begin their work formally once the Agreement has been ratified - unless there are essential decisions which cannot

be deferred. We look forward to a positive and constructive relationship with the EU, allowing businesses and citizens on both sides of the channel to prosper.

## Universities

*Asked by Baroness Pinnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with UK universities about the provision of university courses in countries where they have concerns about (1) governance, or (2) human rights, in those countries. [HL13832]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The UK is one of the world's major providers of trans-national education. As autonomous institutions, universities make their own decisions about education provision overseas and are responsible for ensuring their partnerships are managed appropriately with the right due diligence in place.

Relevant government departments, including the Department for International Trade, the Department for Education, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, regularly engage with the university sector to support higher education institutions when establishing trans-national education programmes, including working with the British Council to provide advice in particular contexts. If any provider has concerns, we encourage them to contact the government.

We are pleased to see that Universities UK is working on behalf of the sector, and with government support, further to inform the sector about the importance of appropriate risk management in its international endeavours. Its recent publication, 'Managing Risks in Internationalisation: Security-related issues', includes specific guidance on delivering educational programmes overseas and can be accessed here:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/managing-risks-in-internationalisation.aspx>.

## Weddings: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase COVID-19 financial support to businesses in the wedding industry. [HL13687]

**Lord Callanan:** Over the course of the pandemic, the Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to businesses, including those in the wedding industry, which we keep under regular review.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget a raft of new measures to further support businesses, including those in the wedding industry. These include:

- Extension of the Coronavirus Job Support Scheme to the end of September 2021.
- £5 billion for new Restart Grants.
- The Government is also providing all Local Authorities in England with an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding, on top of the £1.6 billion already allocated.
- Eligible businesses in hospitality sector will benefit from business rates relief worth over £6 billion in 2021 to 2022.

## Written Questions: Government Responses

*Asked by Lord Rennard*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of grouping Questions for Written Answer on the quality of the information provided in response to these questions; and in particular, further to the reply by Lord True on 22 February (HL Deb col 610), whether they will now say what representations were made by political parties supporting an increase in national party expenditure limits prior to the Government's statement made on 3 December 2020 (HLWS610) about uprating them in line with inflation since 2000. [HL13610]

**Lord True:** As outlined in the 'Guide to Parliamentary Work', all departments must make the utmost effort to give accurate and helpful answers to all written questions.

Further to my answer in the House of Lords on 22 February, last year the Government engaged with representatives of the Local Government Association, political groups, the Parliamentary Parties Panel and other political parties last year on uprating spending limits at reserved polls. A range of views were received and following that engagement, we uprated candidate spending limits at local elections in England. We have committed to review candidate and party spending limits, at reserved polls this year, with a view to uprating them in line with inflation.

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