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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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Written Statements

Monday, 24 May 2021

Affordable Homes

[HLWS48]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Housing (Christopher Pincher) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On 1 April 2021 the Government published responses to two consultations: delivering First Homes and the new model for Shared Ownership. This statement sets out the Government's plans for the delivery of First Homes and our new model for Shared Ownership through the planning system.

This statement issues substantial changes to planning policy which will come into effect on 28 June 2021.

The issues covered in this statement include:

- The definition of a First Home
- Eligibility criteria for First Homes
- Setting developer contributions for First Homes
- The remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions
- Plans, development management and transitional arrangements
- Level of discount
- Exception sites
- Delivering Shared Ownership homes

Introduction

The Government is committed to supporting people to own their home and make home ownership a reality for households and families. Since spring 2010 almost 709,000 households have been helped by Government schemes, including Help to Buy and Right to Buy, and we are taking steps to increase the supply of new housing. The Government is undertaking the most ambitious reforms to our planning system since the Second World War, making it easier to build homes where they are most needed, and the stamp duty holiday (applying to the first £500,000 of property sales) has given a much-needed boost to the economy. Ensuring access to home ownership remains a key priority and challenge for this Government. However, rising prices, high deposits and difficulty accessing mortgage finance still mean that far too many people are denied the opportunity to own a home of their own. Polling shows that 87% of people would prefer to own their home given a free choice. Therefore, the Government is determined to ensure that there is an adequate supply and variety of options to help hard-working people onto the housing ladder across England.

First Homes

The Government first consulted on First Homes, the new scheme to provide homes for first-time buyers at a discount of a minimum of 30%, in February 2020. This

consultation made proposals around both the design of First Homes and changes to the planning system to support their delivery.

We received nearly 800 responses to this first consultation. There was considerable support for our proposals for a minimum discount of 30% and strong support for proposals to develop a national standard model with discretion for local areas to set their own criteria. Many local authorities, housing developers and business organisations gave very helpful comments about how our proposed changes to planning policy could be introduced and we are very grateful for this. The Government published its consultation response on 6 August 2020, which is available [online](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-first-homes-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system). On the same day, the Government published a consultation, *Changes to the current planning system*, which included proposals on the detail of changes to planning policy to deliver First Homes. We received nearly 2,400 responses to this second consultation. The Government published its response to the First Homes part of that consultation on 1 April 2021, and a copy of that response will be placed in the Library of the House. It is also available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-first-homes-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system>.

After careful consideration of all the responses to both these consultations, the Government is today setting out its plans for the delivery of First Homes, defining the product and changes to planning policy as set out below.

First Homes Criteria

From 28 June 2021, a home meeting the criteria of a First Home will also be considered to meet the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. The First Homes Criteria means:

- A First Home must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value; and,
- after the discount has been applied, the first sale of the home must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London).

Local authorities will be able to set a deeper minimum discount at either 40% or 50% and impose lower price caps, if they can demonstrate a need for this through evidence. However, the same level of discount as a percentage below market value must apply to the home each time it is sold in perpetuity (subject to certain specific exclusions), so that communities continue to benefit from the homes for years to come. The discount in perpetuity should be secured through a planning obligation. First Homes should, as a matter of course, comply with any other applicable planning policies and / or building regulations, for example those relating to space, accessibility, energy efficiency or carbon emissions. This includes avoiding the sale of homes as leasehold where this is not necessary.

In order to ensure that suitable mortgages are available for First Homes, local authorities should provide for a mortgage lender enforcing its security over a First Homes

to be able to realise the full market value of the property, returning any surplus up to the value of the First Homes discount to the local authority.

First Homes Eligibility Criteria

First Homes must be prioritised for first-time buyers (as defined in paragraph 6 of schedule 6ZA of the Finance Act 2003 for the purposes of Stamp Duty Relief for first-time buyers) and not be sold to any household with a combined annual income in excess of £80,000 (or £90,000 in Greater London). Local authorities will be able to apply additional criteria at a local level. For example, they may wish to set a lower income cap, prioritise key workers (who also meet the first time buyer definition) and / or specify a particular local connection requirement based on work or current residency. Neighbourhood plans will also be able to apply these additional criteria at neighbourhood level. We do not intend to set out a national definition for key workers or local connections for the purposes of First Homes, but instead empower local authorities to take these decisions in the best interests of their areas and residents.

In recognition of the unique nature of their circumstances, members of the Armed Forces, the divorced or separated spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces, the spouse or civil partner of a deceased member of the Armed Forces (if their death was caused wholly or partly by their service) or veterans within five years of leaving the Armed Forces should be exempt from any local connection testing restrictions.

A person who can afford to purchase a First Home without a mortgage should not be eligible to purchase a First Home. As a deterrent against the use of First Homes for investment, all purchasers of First Homes must use a mortgage or home purchase plan (if required to comply with Islamic law) for at least 50% of the discounted purchase value.

If local authorities or neighbourhood planning groups choose to introduce their own eligibility restrictions, these will be time-limited to the first three months from the start date of marketing of the property. Upon expiry of the three-month period, any homes which have not been sold or reserved will revert to the national standard criteria set out above. This is to ensure that homes do not remain unsold if suitable buyers in the local area cannot be found.

To support developers and local authorities in using First Homes we are currently developing model section 106 obligations that can be used to secure First Homes at the planning stage. These will make it easier for developers to meet national requirements, for local authorities to consider imposing their own time-limited restrictions and will protect the interest of mortgage lenders by ensuring they can realise the full market value of the property in defined exceptional circumstances. These model obligations will also contain wording for a model title restriction, which will be recognised by HM Land Registry and will ensure the homes retain their discount in perpetuity.

We are clear that First Homes are intended to be used as a person's sole or primary residence and should not be used for investment or commercial gain. However, we also recognise that there are occasions when it may be necessary for owners of First Homes to let out their property for short periods of time, especially in response to unexpected life events. Therefore, a First Homes owner can only rent out their home for a maximum period of two years, as long as the relevant local authority is notified. Recognising that certain circumstances require a unique response, local authorities should be willing to grant permissions to rent out for longer periods under the following circumstances: deployment elsewhere (for members of the Armed Forces); primary caring responsibilities for relative/friend; short job posting elsewhere; redundancy; domestic abuse; and relationship breakdown. This will not affect restrictions on letting a property prescribed by a mortgage lender and permission from them would likely also be required.

Changes to planning policy

In order to support the future development of First Homes, the Government is today also setting out changes to planning policy as set out above and below. These changes will come into effect from 28 June 2021.

Setting developer contributions for First Homes

A minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes. This is a national threshold which should be applied for England.

In accordance with paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework, affordable housing is expected to be delivered on-site unless off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified; and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.

Where cash contributions for affordable housing are secured instead of on-site units, a minimum of 25% of these contributions should be used to secure First Homes. Where a mixture of cash contributions towards affordable housing and on-site units are secured, 25% of the overall value of affordable housing contributions should be applied to First Homes.

Local authorities should already have affordable housing policies set out in their development plan, which will include the amounts of affordable housing to be sought, and the tenure mix of this housing. Paragraph 57 of the National Planning Policy Framework currently states that where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. Under the approach set out in this Written Ministerial Statement, therefore, it is necessary to define the criteria for policy compliance, under which a development is assumed to be viable.

Under the new system, a policy compliant planning application should seek to capture the same amount of

value as would be captured under the local authority's up-to-date published policy. In addition to capturing the same amount of value towards affordable housing as the existing policy, where on-site affordable housing is required, a policy compliant application will have a minimum of 25% of affordable housing units on-site as First Homes.

The remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions

The Government recognises the importance of social rent as part of the affordable housing tenure mix. A local authority should prioritise securing their policy requirements on social rent, once they have secured the 25% First Homes requirement. Where other affordable housing units can be secured, these tenure-types should be secured in the relative proportions set out in the development plan.

If an application aligns with a local authority's up-to-date policy on cash contributions in lieu of on-site provision, then it will be a policy compliant application in that regard.

Local planning authorities should use the most appropriate method available to them to set out how these requirements impact on their current affordable housing tenure mix policies.

Exemptions from requirements to deliver affordable home ownership products

Paragraph 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that for major development involving the provision of housing, 10% of all homes on site should be affordable home ownership products, unless one of the exceptions applies. First Homes are an affordable home ownership product. Where specific developments are exempt from delivering affordable home ownership products under paragraph 64 of the Framework, they shall also be exempt from the requirement to deliver First Homes.

Plans, Development Management and Transitional Arrangements

Local plans and neighbourhood plans should take into account the new First Homes requirements from 28 June 2021. Local authorities may therefore need to review the tenure mix for the remainder of the affordable housing that they are seeking to secure. However, we also recognise that there will be a number of local plans and neighbourhood plans that have been prepared based on the existing National Planning Policy Framework and that have reached more advanced stages of the plan-making process. We do not intend that the evidence base for these should be re-opened, thus delaying the plan-making process. The following transitional arrangements will therefore apply.

Local plans and neighbourhood plans that have been submitted for Examination[1] before 28 June 2021 are not required to reflect the First Homes policy requirements. Additionally, local plans and neighbourhood plans that have reached publication stage[2] by 28 June 2021 will also not be required to reflect the First Homes policy

requirement as long as they are submitted for Examination before 28 December 2021. However, reflecting our desire to introduce First Homes requirements at the earliest possible opportunity, Planning Inspectors should consider through the Examination whether a requirement for an early update of the local plan might be appropriate.

Where local and neighbourhood plans are adopted under the aforementioned transitional arrangements, the First Homes requirements will also not need to be applied when considering planning applications in the plan area until such time as the requirements are introduced through a subsequent update.

Where local and neighbourhood plans do not benefit from the aforementioned transitional arrangements, the local planning authority should make clear how existing policies should be interpreted in the light of First Homes requirements using the most appropriate tool available to them.

We also recognise that many developers will have been preparing planning applications under different assumptions. Across all local authorities, the new requirement for 25% First Homes will not apply to sites with full or outline planning permissions already in place or determined (or where a right to appeal against non-determination has arisen) before 28 December 2021 (or 28 March 2022 if there has been significant pre-application engagement), although local authorities should allow developers to introduce First Homes to the tenure mix if they wish to do so. This transitional allowance will also apply to permissions and applications for entry-level exception sites.

The Government will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these transitional arrangements in light of emerging economic circumstances.

Level of discount

The minimum discount for First Homes should be 30% from market value, which will be set by an independent registered valuer. The valuation should assume the home is sold as an open market dwelling without restrictions. Where evidence justifies it (either in the local or neighbourhood plan, an emerging policy or, where appropriate, a Supplementary Planning Document), the minimum discount in an area can be increased to 40% or 50%.

Where discounts of more than 30% are applied to First Homes, the requirement for a minimum of 25% of the affordable housing units secured through developer contributions to be First Homes will remain in place. The approach to delivering the remaining 75% of affordable housing is set out above.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Government has introduced new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations which allow the developers of First Homes to obtain an exemption from the requirement to pay CIL, in line with other affordable housing products. These regulations came into force on 16 November 2020.

Exception Sites

A key priority of this Government is to enable as many people as possible to enjoy the benefits of home ownership, and First Homes are a crucial way in which this will be achieved. In order to maximise the number of First Homes made available to those keen to get on the housing ladder, the Government is also seeking to deliver First Homes via exception sites. Exception sites are small sites brought forward outside of development plans in order to deliver affordable housing, and currently consist of rural exception sites and entry-level exception sites.

While the Government supports the mechanism of allowing land to come forward outside of the development plan to deliver much-needed homes via exception sites, the entry-level exception site policy has not delivered affordable housing to the extent originally envisaged. Following the consultation, the Government is replacing this policy with a 'First Homes exception sites' policy, in order to encourage First Homes-led developments on land that is not currently allocated for housing. Local authorities should support the development of these First Homes exception sites, suitable for first-time buyers, unless the need for such homes is already being met within the local authority's area. Local connection criteria may be set where these can be supported by evidence of necessity and will not compromise site viability. First Homes exception sites should be on land which is not already allocated for housing and should:

- a) comprise First Homes (as defined in this Written Ministerial Statement); and
- b) be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance in the National Planning Policy Framework[3], and comply with any local design policies and standards.

A small proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of First Homes without grant funding. Also, a small proportion of other affordable homes may be allowed on the sites where there is significant identified local need.

While the Government wants to ensure that home ownership is available to as many people as possible, we recognise that certain rural areas face particular challenges in terms of affordability, and that rural exception sites can be very effective in addressing the lack of affordable housing in these areas. As such, the Government has decided that in designated rural areas[4], which includes some of the more constrained and expensive regions of the country such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, rural exception sites will remain as the sole exception site which can come forward. Elsewhere, First Homes exception sites and rural exception sites can both come forward.

Delivering Shared Ownership homes

This Government believes Shared Ownership has a vital role to play in supporting people from all backgrounds to

become homeowners. By purchasing a share of a property, aspiring homeowners can overcome the income and deposit barriers that can stand in their way. This is why the Government is making Shared Ownership work better by introducing a new model for Shared Ownership which will be delivered through grant funding and through the planning system.

On 28 August 2019, we ran a discussion paper to consult on several proposed changes to the Shared Ownership model. In the Government's response to the consultation, published in September 2020, we confirmed the outline of the new model of Shared Ownership and committed to set an expectation for Shared Ownership homes secured through the planning system to be based on the new model.

The [new model for Shared Ownership: technical consultation](#), which ran from 19 November to 17 December 2020, set out further details of the new model of Shared Ownership, including the proposal that we will expect all Shared Ownership homes delivered through obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to be based on the new model. We consulted on potential transitional arrangements.

We are today confirming that this expectation will come into effect from 28 June 2021. The principal changes to the Shared Ownership model are summarised as follows:

i) Minimum share to be purchased

The minimum share for initial Shared Ownership purchases will be lowered to 10% from the current 25%. The maximum share at initial purchase will remain unchanged at 75%.

ii) The purchase of further shares ('staircasing')

New shared owners will be able to staircase in 1% increments for 15 years enabling shared owners to purchase up to 15% through this route. This option will be accompanied by reduced fees. It will still be possible to staircase in larger increments with the minimum additional share purchase reduced from 10% to 5%. Shared owners wishing to staircase in 5% increments or more will have to pay the range of fees as currently, such as a valuation fee, legal and mortgage costs as appropriate.

iii) Shared ownership resales

The new Shared Ownership model will end the provider's resale nomination period at the four week point if they wish to pursue a sale on the open market.

iv) Responsibility for repairs and maintenance

The new shared ownership model introduces a new 10-year period during which the Shared Ownership Leaseholder will receive support from their landlord with the cost of repairs and maintenance in new build homes. Only after 10 years will the shared owner take on full responsibility for any repairs and maintenance costs. This 10-year period is in addition to any repairs or maintenance covered by the new build warranty to cover any works required that the warranty does not cover.

v) Shared Ownership lease term

All new leases must be issued with a minimum lease length term of 990 years. These longer leases will provide long term security for shared owners and save them from paying for multiple lease extensions.

We believe these reforms will make the scheme more consumer friendly, easier to access and fairer, leading to a better experience for a future generation of shared owners.

The Government response to the new model for Shared Ownership: technical consultation, that we published in April 2021, sets out further details on these changes. You can also consult the Homes England Capital Funding Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/capital-funding-guide/1-help-to-buy-shared-ownership>), or the GLA Capital Funding Guide for homes in London, for further guidance on how to implement Shared Ownership.

Later this month, Homes England will publish a model lease which can be used as a basis for leases under the new model of Shared Ownership.

We recognise that many developers will have been preparing planning applications under different assumptions. The new requirement for the new Shared Ownership model will not apply to sites with full or outline planning permissions already in place or determined (or where a right to appeal against non-determination has arisen) before 28 December 2021 (or 28 March 2022 if there has been significant pre-application engagement), although local authorities should allow developers to introduce the new Shared Ownership model if they wish to do so.

The local and neighbourhood plan transitional arrangements set out above for First Homes also apply to the new requirement for the new Shared Ownership model.

[1] Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 for Neighbourhood Plans, and Regulation 22 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for Local Plans.

[2] Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 for Neighbourhood Plans, and Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for Local Plans.

[3] i.e. the areas referred to in footnote 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework. First Homes exception sites should not be permitted in National Parks (or within the Broads Authority), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, land designated as Green Belt, or areas designated as rural under s. 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

[4] As set out in Annexe 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Fan-led Review of Football Governance

[HLWS49]

Baroness Barran: My Honourable Friend the Minister for Sport and Tourism, Nigel Huddleston MP, has made the following Statement:

This statement sets out the full membership of the advisory panel to support the work of the Honourable Member for Chatham and Aylesford, as she commences the fan-led review of football.

The panel features fan representation at its heart and includes former players, managers, current administrators, non-league, independent members and representatives of the women's game. The Chair and panel will now begin a series of roundtable meetings that will reach out to fans and governing bodies across the football pyramid to hear their views on the future of football.

Fans are at the heart of our national game and the Government is ensuring their safe return to stadia across the country. Fans will be at the centre of the review, with extensive engagement with the Premier League, Championship, women's football, League One and Two and Non-league, as well as community and diversity fan networks.

The Chair and panel will canvass fans' views on ownership, governance and financial flows within the game. In addition, they will assess the need for an independent football regulator charged with implementing regulation and compliance, and how that might work within the existing framework provided by the Football Association, Premier League and English Football League.

The panel announced reflects all parts of the game, and the review of football governance wants to hear that diversity reflected in the views it receives on how our national game can be changed for the better for all fans.

A copy of the membership of the panel will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Fan-Led Review of Football Governance Advisory Panel

The full panel is as follows:

1. Fans' representative - Kevin Miles (CEO, The Football Supporters' Association).
2. Former footballer - Clarke Carlisle.
3. Commercial expertise - Dan Jones (Deloitte).
4. Football administration - Prof Denise Barrett-Baxendale (CEO, Everton FC).
5. Independent - Danny Finkelstein, independent member.
6. Independent / regulation - David Mahoney (COO, England and Wales Cricket Board, formerly Ofcom).
7. Independent - Godric Smith, Director, Cambridge United.

8. Women's Game - Dawn Airy, Chair WSL.
9. Non-league Representation - James Tedford, formerly Secretary, Southport FC.
10. Former manager - Roy Hodgson.

Intellectual Property Office: Performance Targets 2021-22

[HLWS43]

Lord Callanan: My Honourable friend the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation (Amanda Solloway) has today made the following statement:

Unleashing innovation and creativity will be at the heart of the post-pandemic recovery and support British businesses to build back better. The Government's Research and Development Roadmap sets clear objectives for increasing investment in research and becoming world-class at securing economic and social benefits; inspiring creators, entrepreneurs and start-ups; increasing the flow of capital into firms that are committed to research and development; attracting and retaining talented, diverse teams; making long term commitments to people, places and institutions and collaborating nationally and internationally to deliver world-leading innovation and creativity that achieves world-beating results.

Last year, communities and economies across the world faced unprecedented disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At a time of such devastation, we saw the best in British ingenuity. From our leading research institutions to schools and colleges, and from distilleries to Formula One teams, British innovators developed and manufactured life-saving sanitisers, vaccinations and ventilators. These technologies now offer a route out of the current pandemic. By enabling collaboration and incentivising investment, IP will play an important part in beating Covid-19 once and for all. We are already reaping the benefits of the IP framework through its impact in mobilising research and development of game-changing vaccines at record speed. Funding by the UK Government has been vital in the rapid development, approval and deployment of vaccines and licensing of IP will be critical in reaching global communities. We can also credit this success to the decades of investment in science and innovation and sharing of knowledge underpinned by the IP system.

The Intellectual Property Office's ambition is to be the best IP office in the world, by providing excellent IP services, a legislative and policy framework that is world leading and a brilliant place to work. They are transforming their ways of working, their services and the way they engage customers. Thanks to the resilience, creative thinking and team-work of their staff, the IPO stayed open for business throughout the pandemic and switched to digital delivery for many services. Now they need to build on that to help businesses recover and grow.

This year, they expect intellectual property rights applications to increase by around 25%. To respond to this demand they will grow the work force, and

importantly build their culture to match their bold ambitions. They will invest in their service delivery to ensure they can uphold excellent customer satisfaction for the long term.

IP underpins economic growth by incentivising investment, safe-guarding assets and enabling the sharing of know-how in technologies like life sciences and artificial intelligence. IP will help enable Britain to forge an unbeatable competitive advantage, accelerate the transition to Net Zero energy, beat the pandemic, and drive up innovation and creativity to build back better.

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) Corporate Plan 2021-22 explains how through their stewardship of the IP system, the IPO will help the UK to become the most innovative and creative country in the world as an independent nation. They will do this through delivering excellent IP services, creating a world leading IP environment and attracting and retaining the best people by making the IPO a brilliant place to work.

As an Executive Agency and Trading Fund of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the IPO have set targets which are agreed by Ministers and laid before Parliament. I am glad that today I can inform the House that for 2020-21 the IPO's targets are:

- Customer: Average overall customer satisfaction with the IPO of 85% or more in Q4 2021-22.
- Future proofing the IP Framework: Consult on changes to patent and copyright law to meet the future challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence, and present recommendations to ministers by Q4.
- Efficiency: Delivering our services efficiently through continuously improving our systems, processes and way of working to make things better for our customers and our people. Our target is to achieve efficiencies worth at least 3.5% of our core operating costs.

The plan includes actions to help businesses recover and grow after the Covid-19 pandemic. The IPO's priorities reflect this and they will review them as the consequences of efforts to control the virus become clearer. They have the ability to adapt their finance and resource models according to emerging trends and they will do so through robust quarterly reforecasting. They will also work with BEIS and their other partner organisations to review their priorities regularly, ensuring they support wider government responses to the economic impact of the virus and seek to focus their efforts and resources where they will have the most significant impact driving the UK innovation and creative economy.

Law Enforcement Records

[HLWS47]

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

Further to my statement to the House on the 18 January ([here](#)) and a further written statement on 8 February

(HCWS774), this is an update on recovery of the No Further Action records deleted from the Police National Computer (PNC) in error.

Today, I am confirming that the data that was wrongly deleted from the PNC, fingerprint and DNA databases has now been fully recovered. 100% of the deleted records has been recovered and returned to the affected databases.

Over 99% of the data deleted from the PNC was recovered within the previously announced timeline. The remaining records required manual insertion into the PNC which is a more time-consuming process. Intensive work has been undertaken with our colleagues at the Criminal Records Office (ACRO) over recent weeks and I can confirm that this work is now also complete.

I want to thank the National Police Chief's Council, ACRO and the engineers and members of staff across the Home Office who have worked around the clock to make this possible.

I know that members across this House have rightly been eager to understand the operational impact that this data deletion has had while the recovery effort has progressed.

To date, we are not aware of any law enforcement operations that were significantly adversely affected by this incident. However, further work is ongoing to help us understand the full impact now that the data has been fully restored, which is being led by the National Police Chief's Council.

It is important to reaffirm that no records of convictions were deleted as a result of this incident, and deletions only related to records in cases that occurred prior to 2015.

As set out previously, mitigations were put into place to minimise the impact of the deletion of the data - those mitigations have been effective.

Key amongst those was the ability of the police to continue to conduct simultaneous searches on other unaffected law enforcement systems such as the Police National Database. Alongside this, the Home Office and our suppliers worked to make the incorrectly deleted DNA profiles available to policing and to reinstate fingerprint records whilst the full capability was being restored.

As well as the data recovery exercise, we have also taken steps to provide additional assurances on the PNC system since the incident occurred. This includes bringing in extra personnel for quality control and ensuring extra checks are in place on all work being undertaken. The Home Office has engaged intensively with policing to strengthen checks on any future updates to law enforcement systems - this includes the development and introduction of new processes and operating models to bolster the checks to ensure an error like this one does not happen again.

The Home Secretary and I commissioned an independent review, led by an external panel chaired by

Lord Hogan-Howe, to investigate how this happened and to ensure the necessary lessons are learned to avoid similar incidents in the future. We are extremely grateful to Lord Hogan-Howe and his team for their work.

In line with the commitment made when this review was commissioned, a summary of this review will today be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The report confirms the minimal impact that the incident has had on police investigations as well as the criminal justice system more widely and will enable us to address the operational and technical failures that led to this error.

The review sets out a wide range of recommendations for both the Home Office as well as the Police to address the underlying factors that led to this unacceptable incident. We have considered these recommendations very carefully and I can confirm both the Home Office and the Police have accepted all their recommendations in full and work is already underway to take the necessary steps to respond to the recommendations.

Work will now commence on phase 4 of the recovery effort, which will aim to delete data which should have been deleted but erroneously has remained on the PNC as a result of this incident. I will provide a further update to the House on this work in due course.

New Fleet Solid Support Competition

[HLWS44]

Baroness Goldie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am pleased to be able to provide an update on our plans to take forward procurement of the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) Ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. The MOD's FSS programme is delivering three warships essential to the UK's Carrier-led Maritime Strike Group, while assuring value for money for the taxpayer.

Last year I said the new competition would be launched in Spring 2021, and today I'm pleased to announce that a Contract Notice has now been issued, inviting companies to register interest in participating in the tender for the design and build of FSS ships.

I am determined that all these ships will be integrated in the UK as well as keen to see British build playing a full or part role in the competition. The competition therefore seeks to maximise UK social value, balanced with the need to deliver value for money, while encouraging investment in domestic shipyards.

This is also an opportunity for British firms to work alongside international partners.

The competition consists of a two-phase process. Phase 1 is focused on the initial design maturity, with Phase 2 focused on the manufacture contract negotiation. Contract award is expected to be within two years, following approvals.

New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Control

[HLWS45]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On 31 December 2020, freedom of movement between the United Kingdom and the European Union ended. The UK's new points-based immigration system is now in place and receiving applications. This was a significant milestone which delivered on a key HM Government commitment to the British people to take back control of our borders and put in place an immigration system which works in the interests of our whole United Kingdom.

However, this only marked the beginning of a wider programme of change to radically transform the operation of our border and immigration system.

In March I set out our plans to fix our broken asylum system and build a fair, but also firm, system for dealing with humanitarian protection claims and illegal migration through this Government's New Plan for Immigration.

Today I am laying before the House a command paper (CP 441) setting out our New Plan for Immigration for legal migration and border control. Together both papers provide a complete picture of the Government's plan to take back control of our borders and immigration system.

Building on the success of the EU Settlement Scheme and the points-based system, over the next four years we will implement further reforms to bring more radical changes and benefits to the way all individuals cross the border and come to the UK. This will support the Plan for Growth and two strands of the Government's Build Back Better agenda; to Build Back Safer by securing the UK border and ensuring compliance with a new system of controlled immigration, and to Build Back Stronger by supporting the UK's domestic labour market and attracting the brightest and best global talent to the UK to live, work and study.

The strategy statement I have published today sets out our programme for 2021 and 2022. This includes: further reform to the points-based system, a new graduate visa, new routes to attract top talent to the UK, and a new international sportsperson route alongside further simplification of our Immigration Rules to streamline our systems and reduce complexity. We will also be improving the user experience by implementing digital solutions, removing paper from the process and reducing the need to attend application centres. This will lay the groundwork for the full transformation of the border and immigration system in the coming years.

It also outlines our vision for the border and immigration system beyond 2022, with this next phase of our programme being truly transformational for everyone using our systems and crossing the UK border, implementing major elements of HM Government's published 2025 UK Border Strategy.

We are moving away from a complex system reliant on people proving their rights through physical documents, sometimes decades old, to a streamlined system which is digital by default. Our goal is to achieve this by the end of 2024. This will make the system quicker, easier and in some cases safer for people applying to come to the UK and proving their rights when in the UK.

Through upstream transformation to our border and immigration system we will also improve our ability to know more about people before they reach the UK border. We will introduce an Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme as part of a wider universal permission to travel requirement for everyone wishing to travel to the UK (except British and Irish citizens). This will support us in our ambition to be global leaders in providing a streamlined and seamless customer experience.

This is an ambitious programme to deliver a world leading border and immigration system. The plans set out in the strategy statement are essential if we are to have a border and immigration system which will attract highly skilled people, whilst also strengthening the security of our United Kingdom.

Policing of the Clapham Common Vigil for Sarah Everard

[HLWS46]

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

On 13 March at Clapham Common, an unofficial vigil took place to mark the tragic death of Sarah Everard. Following the coverage of the policing of the vigil, the Home Secretary (and subsequently Mayor of London) asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Constabulary, Sir Tom Winsor, to conduct a bespoke inspection into the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) handling of the vigil. This was set in the context of the 'stay at home' Covid regulations in place at the time, which put in place temporary restrictions on gatherings of more than two people save for specific exemptions; to protect the NHS and prevent the spread of Covid-19. This included temporarily and proportionately reducing the opportunities for people to exercise their freedom of assembly as part of an organised protest.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published its report on 30 March. I am grateful to Sir Thomas Winsor and his team for conducting this review at speed.

The report sets out the context for the events of 13 March. Following the death of Sarah Everard, members of Reclaim These Streets proposed to organise a vigil close to where she was last seen. However, after a High Court judgment on 12 March refused an application by Reclaim These Streets, it was announced by the organisers that the vigil would not take place. Members of the public however still attended.

The report's main findings were that: the Inspectorate is satisfied that, on balance, the MPS' desire for consistency in policing mass gatherings justified its stance towards the vigil; there were three principles why MPS supporting a "Covid-friendly" event was not a realistic option; and the police's actions at the event were proportionate. While the vast majority of attendees were peaceful and respectful throughout the vigil, after 6pm the report found that the event changed and became far more like a rally with dense crowds and little or no social distancing.

The report concluded that the police's response to the events of the evening was proportionate, even in the face of severe provocations in the later stages of the event by a minority of those present. It also provided operational feedback for the Metropolitan Police Service to consider

in relation to improving the communications between commanding officers and those on the ground.

The Government welcomes the findings from this report. Officers were policing the vigil in extremely difficult circumstances and the violence and abuse directed towards them by a minority of attendees was unacceptable. The police have a challenging job to do, regularly putting themselves at risk to ensure that the rules are followed, and that people are kept safe. The Government will continue to support the police in carrying out their important work and learning the lessons from the policing of this event.

Finally, I would like to once more offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Sarah Everard.

Written Answers

Monday, 24 May 2021

Apprentices: Taxation

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the amount of unspent apprenticeship levy funds. [HL200]

Baroness Berridge: The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our reforms to apprenticeships, which are vital for our economic recovery. As well as funding new apprenticeships for levy-paying employers, income from the levy is used to fund new apprenticeships for employers that do not pay the levy, as well as existing apprentices that started in previous years. Levy-paying employers have 24 months in which to spend the funds available to them before they begin to expire on a rolling, month-by-month basis. Expired apprenticeship levy funds are not lost but are used to support apprenticeships in smaller employers and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training.

We continue to improve apprenticeships and to make it easier for employers to make full use of their levy funds. Levy-paying employers can transfer up to 25% of their annual funds to help support apprenticeship starts in their supply chain or to meet local skills needs. As announced at the Spending Review by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we are improving the apprenticeship levy transfer process so that, from August 2021, employers who pay the levy will be able to pledge funds for transfer to other employers, including small-medium enterprises (SMEs), supported by a new online service to match levy payers with SMEs.

In addition, we are making apprenticeships more flexible so that they better meet the needs of employers from all sectors. We continue to support employers by encouraging greater use of innovative apprenticeship training models, such as the front-loading of off-the-job training. We are also developing accelerated apprenticeships so that apprentices with substantial prior learning (e.g. T Level graduates) can complete an apprenticeship more quickly.

We are also introducing a £7 million fund from July 2021 to help employers in England set up and expand flexi-job apprenticeship schemes, enabling people to work across multiple projects with different employers and benefit from the high-quality long-term training that an apprenticeship provides. We are consulting with employers to seek views on our vision and on how flexi-job apprenticeship schemes can support the growth of apprenticeships in certain sectors and professions.

Armenia: Azerbaijan

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Azerbaijan about the continuing detention of Armenian prisoners, particularly in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement. [HL21]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: During recent visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Minister for the Americas and European Neighbourhood urged both parties to work with the ICRC to expedite the returns of all prisoners of war. Our Embassies in Baku and Yerevan continue to raise this with the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The UK Government will continue to support both sides in abiding by the November peace deal and to settle all outstanding matters through talks under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report that the Azerbaijani military blocked Russian peacekeepers accompanying Armenian pilgrims to the Dadivank Monastery in Nagorno-Karabakh, what representations they have made to the governments of (1) Azerbaijan, and (2) Russia, to ensure the continued rights of Armenians to practise their religion in sites located in the territory ceded to Azerbaijan. [HL91]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas has emphasised to both the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments the importance of protecting all cultural heritage sites. The UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan has also raised this issue with representatives of the Azerbaijani Government. While we have not discussed this specific issue with the government of Russia, we continue to underline our support for the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in reaching a lasting settlement to the conflict and for the important work of international organisations addressing the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan following evidence that the Armenian Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shusha is being deliberately desecrated. [HL94]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas has emphasised the importance of protecting all cultural heritage sites to both the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments, most recently during her visits to the region in February. We continue to underline our support for the efforts of UNESCO in this regard.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan following reports that 19 Armenian prisoners of war, including civilians, were tortured and killed in detention centres. [HL95]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are deeply concerned by accusations from both sides that war crimes were committed during the conflict and afterwards. During her visit to the region in February the Minister for the European Neighbourhood met with representatives of both Governments and highlighted UK concerns over reports of war crimes and the need for allegations to be thoroughly investigated by the appropriate authorities.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they had made of the extent of systematic racism towards Armenians in Azerbaijan following the opening of Azerbaijan's War Park and its de-humanising mannequins depicting Armenians. [HL96]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has made no such assessment. We are aware of the opening of a museum in Azerbaijan following the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During her February visit to the region, the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas urged all sides to refrain from rhetoric or actions that may delay dialogue or reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenia: Genocide

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to President Biden's formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide on behalf of the US government, what plans they have to review their position towards the Armenian Genocide. [HL92]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The events of 1915-1916 were a tragic episode in the history of the Armenian people and they must never be forgotten. The UK Government of the day condemned the massacres and this Government fully endorses that view. The longstanding policy of the UK Government is that any judgement on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for competent courts, rather than for governments.

Askham Bryan College: Closures

Asked by Lord Inglewood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of education provision in Cumbria, following the closure of Askham Bryan College's Newton Rigg campus; whether they have made any legal assessment of the implications of the closure of that institution; and what discussions they have had

with the Further Education Commissioner regarding its closure. [HL159]

Baroness Berridge: A comprehensive analysis of local provision needs for Newton Rigg and the surrounding area was undertaken in 2020 by the Further Education Commissioner and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The core objective of this analysis was to establish if there was a need for college provision within the general vicinity of Newton Rigg campus. It considered the location of neighbouring further education colleges in relation to travel to learn options and identified that the majority of enrolments could be accommodated at other statutory further education institutions. Where gaps in provision were identified, alternative arrangements for the next academic year have been introduced to ensure continuity of delivery after Newton Rigg closes.

If further evidence of gaps in provision are highlighted as a result of the closure of Newton Rigg in support of local authorities' statutory duty to secure provision in an area, the Education and Skills Funding Agency will consider requests to fill a gap in provision. Where this cannot be met through negotiation with good existing providers the requirements are put out to tender through open competition.

We routinely consider the legal implications of decisions that are made.

Officials from the Education and Skills Funding Agency continue to work closely with the Further Education Commissioner's team with regard to the closure of Newton Rigg.

Asylum: Penally Camp

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to publish the most recent report on the use of the Napier Barracks as accommodation for asylum seekers. [HL304]

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have for the future use of the Penally Camp; and what consultations are taking place with the Welsh Government about that site. [HL305]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The use of Penally Training Camp as contingency asylum accommodation ceased on 19 March 2021, with all asylum seekers relocated to alternative accommodation. The site is was handed back to the Ministry of Defence on 13 May 2021.

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration inspection is ongoing, and the timing of a final inspection report on Contingency Asylum Accommodation is a matter for the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.

Azerbaijan: Parks

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the opening of the Spoils of War park in Baku, Azerbaijan. [HL26]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is aware of the opening of a museum in Azerbaijan following the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During her February visit to the region, the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas urged all sides to refrain from rhetoric or actions that may delay dialogue or reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan: Racial Discrimination

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of a rise in anti-Armenian xenophobia in Azerbaijan among (1) the government, and (2) the media, of that country. [HL25]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has made no such assessment. During her February visit to the region, the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas urged all sides to refrain from rhetoric or actions that may delay dialogue or reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We continue to urge engagement with the OSCE Minsk Group and Minsk Group Co-Chairs to settle all outstanding matters following last year's conflict.

Bernard Matthews

Asked by *Lord Sikka*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Pension Protection Fund's rescue of the employee pension schemes operated by Bernard Matthews Limited has resulted in loss of any pension rights of the members of those schemes. [HL191]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Pension Protection Fund (PPF) is a scheme, set up by the Labour government and continued by all successive governments, that pays compensation to members of eligible Defined Benefit pension schemes, whose sponsoring employer has become insolvent and where there are insufficient funds in the scheme to secure benefits at or above the level of PPF compensation. It was never intended to replicate in full the pension rights of schemes that, as a result of their employer's insolvency, do not have sufficient assets to secure the pension benefits initially promised to their members. The usage of the PPF, when the Bernard Matthews Pension Fund transferred to the PPF did not result in any capping of members benefits.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by *Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to allow immunocompromised patients to have their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine sooner than 12 weeks. [HL289]

Lord Bethell: On 14 May 2021, the Government accepted new advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and announced that appointments for a second dose of a vaccine would be brought forward from 12 to eight weeks for the remaining people in the top nine priority groups who have yet to receive their second dose. This is to ensure the strongest possible protection from the virus at an earlier opportunity in response to the B.1.617.2 variant of concern, first identified in India. As a result of this, immunosuppressed patients who are waiting to have their second dose may therefore be invited for to book an appointment within this revised timeframe.

There are currently no plans to further reduce the length of time between the provision of first and second COVID-19 doses for people deemed to be clinically immunocompromised as a group. However, for some immunocompromised patients, the second vaccine dose can be given on different timescales. Patients undergoing immunosuppressive therapies, where clinically appropriate, should receive their vaccine doses at least two weeks prior to commencing therapy when their immune system is better able to respond. To maximise vaccine efficacy this may entail offering the second dose between the recommended minimum for that vaccine - three or four weeks after first dose - and the recommended maximum of twelve weeks.

Asked by *Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect that UK production of vaccines will be sufficient to send doses to developing countries, beyond those doses already arranged through the COVAX framework. [HL71]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government recognises that the fight against COVID-19 is a global effort requiring international collaboration, but our first priority is to protect the British public.

We are committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and have committed to sharing the majority of any excess doses from the UK supply with COVAX. As the multilateral mechanism set up to support international cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines, COVAX is best placed in allocating any surplus vaccines, and the UK has already committed £548 million to COVAX.

Cyprus: Birds

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Cyprus about the killing of migrant birds. [HL42]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government opposes the illegal trapping of birds, which is a widespread issue across the whole of Cyprus. Whilst songbirds are a protected species under Cypriot law, trapping and eating song birds unfortunately remains a practice in some Cypriot communities, and substantial profits can still be made by those who organise and control this activity. The Government has conveyed the strength of UK public concern to the Government of Cyprus, including during a May 2019 visit by the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey. The UK and the Republic of Cyprus will continue to work together on the issue.

Developing Countries: Research

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what has been the total amount of funding disbursed via (1) the Newton Fund, (2) the Ross Fund, and (3) Product Development Partnerships, in each of the last three years; and what such funding has been allocated for the next three years. [HL140]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Newton Fund budget in each of the last three years was: £115m (2018/19), £125m (2019/20) and £106m (2020/21).

Spend on Ross Fund portfolio related activities over the last two years was: £101.4m (2018/19); £107.3m (2019/20).

Spend on Product Development Partnerships over the last two years was: £91m (2018/19); £95.9m (2019/20).

We do not yet have final audited spend figures for the Ross Fund or Product Development Partnerships for financial year 2020/21.

Budgets have not yet been allocated to these portfolios for future years.

Ethiopia: Dams

Asked by *Lord Stone of Blackheath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications of the Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1902 for the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam; whether they received any representations from the government of Ethiopia before construction work on that Dam began; and if not, what steps they intend to take. [HL104]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK continues to urge all parties involved in the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam - Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan - to come to an agreement on the filling and operation of the dam. We support the efforts by the African Union (AU) to help find agreement, and ensure that water resources are managed in a way that ensures their long-term sustainable use for all parties.

Ethiopia: Overseas Aid and Overseas Trade

Asked by *Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports of atrocities being committed in Tigray, what assessment they have made of (1) UK trade links with Ethiopia, and (2) UK aid funding to the government of Ethiopia. [HL155]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has broad and deep relationship with Ethiopia, including on trade and we remain committed to the development of Ethiopia and its people. We are therefore deeply concerned by the potential for the conflict in Tigray to impact the trade relationship and investor confidence in Ethiopia. The UK has been consistent in calling for an end to violence, the protection of civilians, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. In FY 2020-2021, the UK provided £22 million of much needed support to people in Tigray, in addition to over £100 million of humanitarian support to Ethiopia as a whole.

European Council and European Parliament: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government in which areas (1) the European Parliament, or (2) the European Council, are co-legislators for Northern Ireland. [HL146]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government do not recognise the concept of a co-legislator. The legislatures for Northern Ireland are the Assembly and the Houses of Parliament. The Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol gives effect to a limited group of technical EU legal rules considered necessary to facilitate trade and the movement of agrifoods.

The Protocol provides for forums in which forthcoming legislation can be discussed, including whether new areas of law should be applied. New pieces of EU legislation that amend or replace acts referred to in the Protocol are notified to the Joint Consultative Working Group. New EU legislation that is within the scope of the Protocol but does not amend or replace acts listed in the Annexes of the Protocol, does not apply unless there is a Joint Committee decision to add the new act.

Free Zones: Trade Agreements

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of each of the continuity trade agreements that they have signed since leaving the EU on their plans for freeports and, in particular, the tariffs paid by companies based in freeports. [HL84]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: There is ongoing analysis on the benefits arising from freeports; the outcomes of this will shape how British businesses, including those utilising preferences as a result of the United Kingdom's signed continuity agreements, can best make use of the opportunities that freeports create.

Galileo System: Expenditure

Asked by *Lord Vinson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the total cost to the UK of its participation in the Galileo satellite navigation system; and how much of this was recovered as an offset to the settlement cost of the UK leaving the European Union. [HL115]

Lord Callanan: As an EU Member State and under the Transition Period, the UK did not contribute to individual programmes. The UK contributed to the EU Budget in entirety, as such it is not possible to attribute a financing share to any specific programme. For the EU Budget between the 2014 and 2019, the UK's average financing share to the entire EU Budget was 12.3%. Further details of the UK contribution to the EU Budget are available in HM Treasury's publication, European Union Finances Statement.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

European Union Finances Statement
[European_Union_Finances_2019_web.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-05-11/HL115>

General Practitioners

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards their 2019 target to increase GP numbers by 6,000 by 2024–25; and whether they expect to meet this target. [HL223]

Lord Bethell: NHS England and Health Education England are working with the profession to increase the general practice workforce in England. This includes measures to boost recruitment, address the reasons why doctors are leaving the profession, and encourage them to return to practice. As of March 2021, there were 536 more full time equivalent (FTE) doctors and 2,237 more FTE primary care professionals, such as physiotherapists, social prescribers and pharmacists, working in general

practice compared to March 2019. The highest ever number of doctors accepted a place in general practitioner specialty training in 2020/21 and from 2021, the Government has committed to increasing the number of training places to 4,000 a year.

General Practitioners: Foreign Companies

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect GP medical practices in England from being purchased by US-based companies. [HL302]

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many GP medical practices in England are owned by US-based insurance and investment companies. [HL303]

Lord Bethell: Information on general practitioner (GP) practice ownership is not held centrally. It is for local commissioners to arrange the provision of appropriate services, by contracting with providers, in order to best serve the needs of their patient population.

Legislation sets out which individuals and companies are eligible to hold contracts to provide primary medical services. Eligibility varies slightly between contract type but there is no distinction in the eligibility criteria between companies registered in the United Kingdom and those registered overseas.

All contract holders and providers of National Health Service core primary medical services are subject to the same requirements, regulation, and standards. Patients should receive high-quality NHS care when they need it, that is free at the point of use.

Global Navigation Satellite Systems: Research

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what research and development support they are giving to further phases of the MarRinav project. [HL118]

Lord Callanan: The MarRinav project was funded through the European Space Agency NAVISP scheme, which the UK contributes to. The industrial consortia are proposing additional activity to follow on from MarRinav but this has not been submitted for approval and evaluation at the time of this response.

Greece: Refugees

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Greece has (1) sentenced a Syrian man to 52 years in prison for driving a refugee boat, and (2) charged an Afghan man and an Afghan woman with various offences at sea; and what representations they have

made to the government of Greece (1) about such reports, and (2) the treatment of refugees. [HL157]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK recognises the challenges faced by Greece in dealing with the difficulties presented by irregular migration. We have not made specific representations with regard to the cases you refer, however we regularly engage Greek ministers and senior officials on these issues. The Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts met the Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum on 26 March to discuss respective priorities on irregular migration and asylum, and we will continue to work with Greek and international partners to identify opportunities to further support improved conditions for migrants in Greece.

Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evidence they used in the decision to open a new immigration detention centre in Country Durham. [HL307]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The immigration removal estate is kept under ongoing review to ensure that the Home Office has sufficient resilience, geographical footprint and capacity for the men and women it proves necessary to detain for the purposes of removal, while providing value for money.

As part of our plans to manage the closure and return of the Morton Hall immigration removal centre (IRC) to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the Home Office considered a number of options to maintain necessary capacity in the estate, including the opening of a new IRC.

Given the timescales and value for money considerations, acquiring the vacant Hassockfield site to open as an IRC for women was considered the most cost-effective option for maintaining immigration detention capacity.

Hospices

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to announce improvements in funding for hospices; and if so, when. [HL160]

Lord Bethell: The Government recognises the importance of palliative and end of life care services, including hospices. The sector has played a vital role in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is reflected by the provision of up to £280 million of additional funding from March 2020 to March 2021 to secure capacity and free up acute care as part of the National Health Service's response. Additionally, the Government has either funded directly or committed to reimburse all known personal protective equipment requirements since the start of the pandemic until March 2022.

As independent, charitable organisations, hospices receive some statutory funding mainly from clinical commissioning groups for providing services in their local area. However, alongside NHS England and NHS Improvement, we proactively engage with the whole sector on an ongoing basis to understand the issues they face and their views of upcoming needs and challenges.

House of Lords: European Parliament

Asked by Lord Balfie

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what assessment he has made of the value to the House of Lords of the office space in the European Parliament building set aside for House staff; whether he is aware that the UK and Norway are the only two countries that are not members of the EU that are afforded such accommodation; what plans there are to post a member of House staff to Brussels on a permanent basis; and if there are no such plans, whether he intends to inform the European Parliament that the office is no longer required. [HL204]

Asked by Lord Balfie

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker on how many occasions this year the office allocated to the House of Lords in the European Parliament building in Brussels has been visited by a member of House staff; and what plans there are for using that office in the near future. [HL205]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: On 31 January 2020, the date the United Kingdom ceased to be a Member State of the European Union, the UK Parliament ceased to be an EU 'national Parliament', except for certain limited purposes set out in Article 128(2) of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement.

Up until this point designated staff of the House of Lords and House of Commons, as representatives of an EU 'national Parliament', were granted access to the European Parliament, along with office accommodation and other benefits. As the noble Lord points out, Norway has since 2012 been the only non-EU Member State to be granted comparable access thus far.

Despite the UK's changed status after 31 January 2020, the European Parliament continued to afford access to House staff for the duration of the transition period, and on 22 December 2020 the Secretary General of the European Parliament offered "continued hosting" for the two Houses' representatives after the end of the transition period, subject to "appropriate practical arrangements in the light of the evolving relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom".

To date, no such practical arrangements have been required, given the guidance agreed by the House of Lords Commission in March 2020, which strongly discouraged overseas travel. Since that date there has been no committee or staff travel to Brussels, and the House's representative has therefore undertaken the role remotely, using digital tools.

The House of Lords Commission continues to review the guidance on overseas travel, taking account of Government advice and the wider public health situation, and decisions on staff travel to Brussels will be taken as and when the guidance is updated.

Immigration: Glasgow

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of inability of immigration officials to detain two individuals in Glasgow on 14 May; and what further steps they will take enforce immigration law as a result of that incident. [HL261]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: As is established practice following events such as these the Home Office is conducting a review of the routine and lawful operation in Glasgow on 13 May 2021. This is being done in conjunction with Police Scotland who had responsibility for public order during this incident.

Home Office operations including visits, crime reduction and street operations play a critical role in detecting and deterring immigration abuse and reducing the harm caused by illegal immigration, such as modern slavery, people trafficking and smuggling. The Home Office will continue to conduct such operations throughout the UK.

Iran: Weapons

Asked by *Baroness Deech*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure any new agreement with the government of Iran permanently impedes that country's ability to develop and proliferate (1) nuclear, and (2) non-nuclear weapons. [HL29]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has been clear that Iran must never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon, and we are committed to working with our international partners to find a solution to Iranian proliferation in the region. The Government believes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action represents the best - and currently the only - way of constraining Iran's nuclear programme, and we are working hard to find a diplomatic way forward which brings Iran back into compliance with its commitments and restores the non-proliferation benefits of the deal.

We have always been clear that any sustainable solution will need to address a range of issues, including Iran's ballistic missile programme and destabilising activity in the region. The UK continues to enforce the EU arms embargo through domestic legislation; UN ballistic missile restrictions on Iran will also remain in place until 2023. There are also other sanctions regimes which restrict Iranian ability to proliferate weapons in the region, including those established by UN Security Council Resolutions 1540, 1701 and 2216.

Iran: Weapons of Mass Destruction

Asked by *Baroness Deech*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of a (1) chemical, (2) biological, (3) radiological, or (4) nuclear attack from a group supported by the government of Iran by 2030. [HL28]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has long been clear about its concerns over Iran's continued destabilising activity, including its political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups. The Government continues to take every possible measure, in coordination with our international partners, to counter such threats in order to keep the British people safe and support regional and international security.

Kickstart Scheme: Job Creation

Asked by *Baroness Sherlock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many new jobs have been created by the Kickstart Scheme, broken down by the region of England in which the job is located. [HL102]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: As of the 6th May 2021, over 108,000 jobs have been made available for young people to apply for through the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Kickstart Scheme. This includes over 20,000 jobs started by young people.

There have been over 200,000 jobs approved by the scheme.

We are unable at present to provide data on the number of approved jobs by region, as at that stage in the process we do not hold information about the exact location of a job, only the head office of the employer. We do hold regional information on jobs made available for young people to apply for and for placements started, which is provided below.

The tables below show these figures split by location, the data presented has been rounded according to DWP statistical rounding convention. Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

Location	Jobs Advertised	Total Jobs Started
East Midlands	7,270	1,120
East of England	8,240	1,320
London	22,740	4,500
North East	4,560	960

<i>Location</i>	<i>Jobs Advertised</i>	<i>Total Jobs Started</i>
North West	13,560	2,840
South East	12,320	2,350
South West	7,670	1,440
West Midlands	10,030	1,850
Yorkshire and The Humber	8,310	1,580

Figures may not add up to provided totals due to rounding. 1,000 non-grant funded jobs are included in Jobs Advertised but not included under Jobs Started. Total jobs started includes those which have been completed or ended early.

Lung Diseases

Asked by *Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what role charities have played in collecting data for asthma and lung conditions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and what role they plan for charities who could collect such data to have in any future pandemics. [HL174]

Lord Bethell: During the COVID-19 pandemic charities such as the British Lung Foundation and Asthma UK partnership and those working under the umbrella of the Lung Health Taskforce have collected data by conducting patient surveys and producing several reports.

The patient surveys and research have provided the NHS England and NHS Improvement with useful insight into the experience of patients with lung disease during the pandemic, particularly their priorities and level of confidence in accessing services and how remote care can be best used. No assessment has yet been made of what role charities will have during future pandemics in collecting data for asthma and lung conditions.

Lung Diseases: Health Services

Asked by *Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to restore respiratory care to its pre-pandemic level. [HL369]

Lord Bethell: In 2020/21, the National Health Service Cardiovascular Disease and Respiratory programme has focussed its work on the response to COVID-19. This included bringing forward the implementation of Respiratory Clinical Networks. The networks are vital in promoting an integrated approach to respiratory care during the pandemic and are in parallel supporting delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan priorities.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working in close partnership with patients and partners, including the British Lung Foundation, to develop and implement policy on provisions of respiratory services in England.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Baroness Cox, Continuing Impunity - Azerbaijani-Turkish offensives against Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh, published on 24 April. [HL24]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is aware of the report by Baroness Cox. During her February visit to the region, the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas urged all sides to refrain from rhetoric or actions that may delay dialogue or reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We continue to urge engagement with the OSCE Minsk Group and Minsk Group Co-Chairs to settle all outstanding matters following last year's conflict to ensure a secure and stable future.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Cultural Heritage

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Azerbaijan about UNESCO's proposal to send a mission to Nagorno-Karabakh. [HL22]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas has emphasised the importance of protecting all cultural heritage sites to both the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments. The UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan has also raised this issue with representatives of the Azerbaijani Government. We continue to underline our support for the efforts of UNESCO.

Nepal: Forests

Asked by *The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will continue to support community forest enterprises in Nepal in order to create employment and eradicate poverty. [HL98]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government does not currently have a dedicated forestry programme in Nepal. We are however a significant contributor to World Bank programmes in forestry in Nepal, including the recently agreed \$24 million 'Forests for Prosperity' programme.

We also support forestry in the climate vulnerable west of Nepal through our £50 million Climate Smart Development programme. This programme includes work to increase afforestation, protect slopes and remove CO₂, often working with local community forestry groups.

Nigeria: Christianity

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the murder and abduction of Christians in Nigeria; and what discussions they have had with the government of Nigeria about these reports. [HL3]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government condemns violence against civilians of all religions in Nigeria. In the North East, terrorist groups including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, have abducted and killed individuals from Christian and Muslim communities. These groups target all those who do not subscribe to their extremist views. We are deeply concerned for the welfare of those still held in captivity by these groups. The UK Government is providing a comprehensive package of humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to support communities affected by the conflict. We are also concerned by recent criminal attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria, which have targeted students of all religions. We continue to raise these cases with the Nigerian Government.

Intercommunal violence also has a devastating impact on affected communities. The underlying drivers of violence are complex, and frequently relate to competition over resources and increasing criminality. The Minister for Africa visited Nigeria in April and discussed increasing insecurity across the country with the President's Chief of Staff, Foreign Minister and community leaders. We continue to encourage the Nigerian Government to take urgent action to implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of violence.

North Korea: Human Rights

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they undertook, if any, in response to the report by Hogan Lovells Crimes against humanity: An independent legal opinion on the findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, published on 18 June 2014; and what assessment they have made of whether their response to that report met their duties under the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. [HL131]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We noted the Hogan Lovells report of 18 June 2014. The UK is fully committed to honouring its legal obligations under the Genocide Convention. The Government's longstanding policy is that any judgment on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for competent courts. These include international courts, such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, and national criminal courts that meet international standards of due process. Our approach is to seek an end to all violations of

international law, and to prevent their further escalation, irrespective of whether these violations fit the definition of specific international crimes.

Northern Ireland Office: Equality

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are under investigation by the Equality Commission over alleged breaches of equality duties related to the Northern Ireland legacy proposals published in March 2020. [HL301]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: It would not be appropriate to comment on any ongoing investigations being carried out by the Equality Commission. However, I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office is fully committed to fulfilling its equality duties.

Occupational Pensions

Asked by *Baroness Altmann*

To ask Her Majesty's Government where responsibility lies for the monitoring of pension scheme charges in automatic enrolment workplace schemes. [HL124]

Asked by *Baroness Altmann*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps members of workplace pension schemes can take if they consider their employer scheme charges are excessively high. [HL125]

Asked by *Baroness Altmann*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to protect members of workplace pension schemes whose employers have not selected a suitable scheme. [HL126]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: As part of the introduction of automatic enrolment, requirements were put in place, under the Pensions Act 2008, to ensure that workplace pension schemes selected by an employer to meet their obligations satisfy certain quality and governance standards. The Pensions Regulator enforces employer compliance with the Automatic Enrolment duties.

The Government regularly undertakes public consultations on private pensions policy and encourages all interested parties, including scheme members to submit their views.

In 2020, the department undertook a review of the charge cap and accompanying Pensions Charges Survey. The review concluded that the current level of the charge cap remained appropriate at 0.75 per cent of funds under management within the default arrangement, or an equivalent combination charge.

On 24th May, the department launched a public consultation looking at Permitted Charges within DC Pensions. The consultation seeks views on a proposal to move to a universal charging structure within the charge

cap to improve member comprehension of charges, and in turn better enable members to compare pension products if they wish. This consultation also confirms our intention to set a de Minimis on the charging of flats fees within the cap. This will help limit the erosion of small pots of £100 or less, where a flat fee is charged.

Overseas Trade: Small Businesses

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support small businesses to digitalise their overseas trade operations. [HL109]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Department for International Trade's E-Exporting Programme helps UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) increase exports through digital channels. The Programme's Selling Online Overseas tool lists 50 international marketplaces (backed by our webinar programme) to help, educate and onboard UK companies to sell overseas. We also have a network of E-Commerce and International Trade Advisers in the regions to help SMEs wishing to sell directly to consumers through their own websites.

Additionally, my Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Minister for Exports, announced a new package of measures on 8 September 2020 to support the retail and consumer sectors. This bounce back package aimed to support companies affected by the pandemic and included a programme of e-commerce training and support for SMEs.

Schools: Crown Dependencies

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to give schools in the Crown Dependencies access to the Department for Education's Barred List Checking Service Sign-in portal. [HL53]

Baroness Berridge: The regulations that are used to determine the eligibility for access to the Department for Education's Barred List Checking Service apply to England only.

The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 are for maintained schools and can be accessed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2009/2680/regulation/24/made>.

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 are for academies, free schools and alternative provision academies, and can be accessed here:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283/pdfs/ukxi_20143283_en.pdf.

The Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015 and The Further Education (Providers of Education) (England) Regulations 2006 can be accessed here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/728/contents/made> and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/3199/contents/made>.

The Department has no plans to give schools in the Crown Dependencies access to the replacement service for Teacher's Pension Online, the Children's Barred List Status Check. Teacher's Pensions Online hosted the standalone barred list check service until 31 March 2021. The replacement service transferred to the Teaching Regulation Agency on 1 April 2021. Schools in the Crown Dependencies should contact the Disclosure and Barring Service directly to obtain an Enhanced plus Barred List information check for those employed in regulated activity.

Social Security Benefits: EEA Nationals

Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether EEA nationals over state pension age who have not applied to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June will continue to be eligible to receive (1) Pension Credit, (2) Housing Benefit, and (3) other benefits. [HL271]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: From 1 July 2021, EEA and Swiss citizens will be required to have immigration status to carry on living and working in the UK and to access non-contributory benefits in the UK.

EEA and Swiss citizens who were living in the UK by 31 December 2020, and their family members, need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021.

DWP are working closely with the Home Office and other government departments to ensure we are using all available resources to engage with groups who need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

Support for applicants who need it remains available, including from the network of 72 organisations across the UK grant-funded by the Home Office to help vulnerable people apply to the EUSS.

Those who have made an application to the EU Settlement Scheme, but have yet to receive an immigration status before the deadline, will continue to receive benefits as long as they satisfy the entitlement conditions for that benefit.

Where an EEA or Swiss citizen, who was resident here before the end of the transition period, has reasonable grounds for missing the EU Settlement Scheme application deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

Special Educational Needs

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that people with a learning disability can access educational provision as adults. [HL170]

Baroness Berridge: Education is a devolved matter, and as such, this response outlines our support for adults with learning disabilities in England.

Adult skills are key in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage, and so we are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), worth £1.34 billion in the 2020/21 financial year. The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning and training up to level 2 for unemployed people aged 19 and over.

The AEB funds colleges and providers to help adult learners to overcome barriers which prevent them from taking part in learning. This includes Learner Support to support learners with a specific financial hardship and learning support to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Learning support funding helps colleges and training providers to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities and to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Learning support can cover a range of needs, including an assessment for dyslexia, funding to pay for specialist equipment or helpers and arranging signers or note-takers.

Tigray: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) reports of soldiers systematically killing men in Ethiopia, as reported in *The Times* on 8 May, and (2) whether such soldiers are operating on behalf of the Eritrean military. [HL129]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are deeply concerned at human rights abuses and violations in Ethiopia's Tigray region, including of Eritrea's significant role in them. We condemn violations as consistent with an apparent policy of collective punishment of Tigrayans. There are numerous shocking reports of atrocities committed by Eritrean forces in Tigray, and their continued presence is fuelling insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately. The Minister for Africa made this clear to the Eritrean Ambassador on 16 March, and we set this out in our joint statement with the G7 on 2 April and a G7 Communiqué on 5 May. Our Ambassador in Addis Ababa met with the Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian National Defence Force in the week of 26 April and pressed this point.

We are closely monitoring the situation and are clear that their withdrawal must be swift, unconditional and verifiable. However, despite Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy's commitment that Eritrean troops would withdraw from Tigray we are yet to see any evidence that this is happening. We continue to press hard for this commitment to be delivered.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to deploy members of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative Team of Experts to Ethiopia and Sudan in response to reports of sexual violence in Tigray; and if so, when any such deployment will commence. [HL153]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are working to promote justice for survivors of sexual violence, to provide support to survivors and children born of conflict related sexual violence and to prevent sexual violence from occurring. Preparations are underway to deploy expertise from the UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to the region. British Embassy staff conducted a specific protection mission in Shire in Tigray on 4-7 April. It included the assessment of the current Gender-Based Violence response, specific emergency services provided in camps and the gaps that need to be filled. They interviewed staff and volunteers supporting survivors of sexual violence to identify essential activities required to address the immediate needs of the survivors as well as the accountability needs to ensure well-informed and effective assistance.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Ethiopia about reports of sexual violence and other atrocities in Tigray. [HL154]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is appalled by reports of atrocities including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by different armed groups in Tigray. This is unacceptable.

The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a communique on 5 May which condemned rape and sexual exploitation, and other forms of gender-based violence and called for all parties to cease hostilities immediately, ensure respect human rights and international law and hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, accountable. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by Patriarch Abuna Mathias in April (1) that the government of Ethiopia and its allies are committing genocide in Tigray, and (2) that rape is being used as a weapon of war in that region. [HL194]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We note the statement by Patriarch Abuna Mathias recently released on 8 May and his comments on genocide. As the Minister of State responsible for human rights issues for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, I tweeted on 11

May to express my deep sadness at the reported murder of priests in Tigray. This is one of a deluge of reports of atrocities coming out of Tigray. Civilians must be protected and the violence must stop.

The UK's longstanding position is that determining whether a situation amounts to genocide is an issue for competent national and international courts, not governments: our focus is on seeing an end to violence and protecting civilians. The UK is appalled by reports of widespread gender-based violence, including rape, in the Tigray region. The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a communique on 5 May which condemned rape and sexual exploitation, and other forms of gender-based violence, and called for all parties to cease hostilities immediately, ensure respect human rights and international law and hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, accountable. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of targeted killings of Ethiopian Orthodox priests in Tigray; and what action they are taking as a result. [HL2]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Minister of State responsible for human rights issues for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, I tweeted on 11 May to express my deep sadness at the reported murder of priests in Tigray. This is one of a deluge of horrifying reports of atrocities coming out of Tigray. Civilians must be protected and the violence must stop.

The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a statement on 2 April and a Communiqué on 5 May condemning human rights violations and abuses. The UK also condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians via a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council. We support the UN's call for a "zero tolerance" policy and welcome the UN Security Council's 22 April Press Statement expressing their deep concern about allegations of human rights violations and abuses in the Tigray region. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into atrocities in Tigray are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account. The Foreign Secretary, Minister for Africa and our Ambassador in Addis continue to raise human rights issues in their discussions with the Ethiopian government.

Travel: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to place (1) Mauritius, (2) Turks and Caicos Islands, and (3) Bermuda, onto the 'green list' for tourists using direct flights from the United Kingdom, given the low local infection rates from COVID-19 in these destinations. [HL49]

Lord Bethell: Decisions to place countries, including Mauritius, Turks and Caicos Islands and Bermuda on the 'green list' are taken by Ministers informed by evidence including the Joint Biosecurity Centre's analysis, as well as other relevant information about the risk of the spread of variant. The advice, evidence and methodology which informs these decisions relates to on-going development of Government policy and therefore cannot be published at this time.

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Cayman Islands are not on the list of 'green' countries for entering England. [HL74]

Lord Bethell: Decisions to place countries, including Cayman Islands, on the 'green list' are taken by Ministers informed by evidence including the Joint Biosecurity Centre's analysis as well as other relevant information about the risk of the spread of variant. The advice, evidence and methodology which informs these decisions relates to on-going development of Government policy and therefore cannot be published at this time.

Travel: Quarantine

Asked by Baroness Bull

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people (1) are currently in the COVID-19 hotel quarantine system, and (2) have been through that system since its introduction. [HL17]

Lord Bethell: As of 5 May, 7,647 people were quarantined in a managed quarantine hotel. Since the beginning of the service on 15 February, approximately 35,605 have quarantined in a managed hotel.

Asked by Baroness Bull

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how many applications for medical exemptions from the COVID-19 hotel quarantine system they have received for which supporting medical evidence was provided, and (2) how many of these applications for exemptions supported by medical evidence were (a) approved, and (b) rejected. [HL18]

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

Turkey: Freedom of Expression and Religious Freedom

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the conviction of Sefer (Aho) Bileçen of the Mor Yahqub d-Qarne Monastery on terrorism charges in April, what assessment they have made of the government of Turkey's policies towards freedom of (1) religion, and (2) cultural expression. [HL195]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government closely monitors issues around freedom of religion and cultural expression in Turkey. In addition, we regularly remind Turkey that we expect the Government to undertake any legal processes or actions against religious minorities fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law.

We strongly support all religious and cultural minority groups in Turkey, including Christians, and continue to encourage the Turkish authorities to safeguard their welfare and respect their human rights in line with provisions in the Turkish constitution that protect the rights of religious minorities. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas did so most recently with her Turkish counterpart on 21 April.

Turkey: Trials

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to send observers to the trial in Turkey of 108 politicians for involvement in protests that occurred in 2014; and if not, why not. [HL158]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is closely monitoring this trial, and consistently reminds Turkey that we expect its government to undertake any legal processes or actions against members of opposition groups fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law.

Whilst the British Embassy in Ankara regularly sends representatives to attend high-profile trials in Turkey, joining representatives from like-minded countries, we are not planning to do so on this occasion because of restrictions due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. We will continue to raise our human rights concerns with the Turkish government. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas did so most recently with her Turkish counterpart on 21 April.

Uganda: Sexual Offences

Asked by *Lord Cashman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Uganda about the passing of the Sexual Offences Bill, and in particular Clause 11(i) of that Bill. [HL141]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We note that the Parliament of Uganda passed the Sexual Offences Bill on 3 May. We are very concerned about the retention of dated language in Clause 11(i) which continues to criminalise homosexuality. We recognise the impact this has on the LGBT+ community.

We make regular representations to the Government of Uganda on this issue through our High Commission in Kampala. We also work through international organisations, including the UN, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth, to address discriminatory laws and end discrimination against LGBT+ people.

The UK plays an active role across the world in support of LGBT+ rights. There needs to be an end to violence and discrimination against LGBT+ people. The Minister for Africa made this clear when he spoke at the launch of the Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives in December 2020. We will continue to challenge governments that criminalise homosexuality directly and at the highest political levels.

UNAIDS: Finance

Asked by *Lord Collins of Highbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultation they have had with (1) community and civil society organisations, (2) UNAIDS Programme Committee Members, and (3) other donors, about the proposal to reduce their funding to UNAIDS. [HL143]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: HMG has communicated with UNAIDS as well as the Programme Coordinating Board on which other donors are represented, regarding UNAIDS's provisional funding allocation for 21/22. The UK regularly consults with civil society organisations, and shares their determination in advocating for the rights and needs of the most marginalised groups affected by HIV. The UK remains committed to addressing HIV and AIDS through our commitments to the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and malaria, and our work in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). We remain committed to a strong UNAIDS, and are fully engaged in the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.

UNAIDS: Human Rights

Asked by *Lord Collins of Highbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ability for UNAIDS to influence policy reforms that strengthen the rights of marginalised people, including (1) the decriminalisation, and (2) destigmatisation, of LGBTIQ communities. [HL142]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK provides funding to UNAIDS to support its leadership role in the HIV response. Through our programme partnership

agreement, the UK assesses the work of UNAIDS against agreed indicators, including those relating to its work on | strengthening the rights of marginalised people.

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