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Tuesday
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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

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

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

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 8 June 2021

Benyon Review

[HLWS70]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Right Hon Friend the Secretary of State (George Eustice) has today made the following statement:

In 2019 the Government commissioned Richard Benyon to conduct a review of the potential role for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs). HPMAs are similar to the Marine Conservation Zones already established. However, there is strict protection with a presumption against any activity involving extraction, destruction or deposition being permitted in those areas and strict protections on other damaging activities. The review reported last year in June 2020.

The Benyon Review concluded that HPMAs would have an important role in helping the marine ecosystem recover. It concluded that there could be spill over benefits for marine life in adjacent areas to highly protected areas. The review recommended that the Government pilot around five HPMAs to test the proposition further and test delivery. It also recommended that some or all of the pilot sites could be co-located with existing Marine Protected Areas such as Marine Conservation Zones, in effect to upgrade the status of some of those sites.

Today is World Ocean Day when, across the globe, people are taking action to protect and recover our global ocean. This Government is committed to ocean conservation and leaving our environment in a better state than we found it, including the marine environment. I would like to thank Lord Benyon and the panel for their work on the Review, and the broad range of stakeholders who contributed to it. The Government welcomes the report and accepts the central recommendation that we should take forward some pilot sites.

Defra will begin introducing HPMAs by identifying a number of locations within English waters to pilot our approach. These may be inside or outside the existing Marine Protected Area network, and in inshore or offshore areas, recognising that HPMAs must be in the locations best able to deliver protection and recovery.

However, the Government recognises that the strict protections implied by HPMAs will cause some concerns with other sea users. In particular, the fishing industry will be concerned about further displacement from fishing grounds when they are already being excluded from some areas ear-marked for offshore wind energy development.

We recognise that there is a balance in supporting sustainable industries in the marine environment while increasing marine protection to ensure a healthy, resilient and diverse marine ecosystem. In developing our response to the Review we have engaged with a broad range of stakeholders. We will develop criteria for HPMAs

identification and create a list of potential sites this year, followed by designations of a number of sites in 2022. We will also set out how we will work with stakeholders, the governance and management of sites and how we will monitor and evaluate sites.

The Benyon Review did not cover Scottish and Welsh waters but did include Northern Ireland's offshore waters. We understand that DAERA wishes to have executive competence transferred to it in relation to certain marine functions, including designation and management of MPAs, in Northern Ireland offshore waters. Amendments to the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 made by the Fisheries Act 2020 allow DAERA to make orders to protect the marine environment from fishing activities in the offshore region. We therefore do not propose identifying any of the initial HPMAs in offshore Northern Ireland waters.

Copies of the Government Response are being placed in the Libraries of the House.

Education Recovery

[HLWS69]

Baroness Berridge: My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson) has today made the following statement:

The pandemic and its associated restrictions and disruptions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's learning, evidenced in recent research from the Education Policy Institute.

Last week I announced the details of the next step in our efforts to make sure children and young people catch up, as part of our ongoing education recovery plans.

A further £1.4bn will be made available to support education recovery for children aged 2 to 19 in schools, colleges and early years settings, focussing on two areas where the evidence is clear our investment will have significant impact: high quality tutoring and great teaching.

This further instalment is the third major recovery intervention in the past year, building on the £1.7bn already announced bringing total investment announced for education recovery over the past year to over £3bn. This forms part of the wider response to help pupils make up their learning over the course of this Parliament.

New measures include:

£1billion for tutoring

To support those most impacted by the pandemic, particularly disadvantaged students, we will radically expand tutoring to provide up to 100 million hours of tuition for 5-19 year olds by 2024. This will expand high-quality tutoring in every part of country so that small group tuition is available to those children who need help catching up – not just the most affluent.

In schools, we will provide up to 6 million tutoring courses for 5-16 year olds by 2024. Children in receipt of tutoring will receive up to 15 sessions of small group or individual tuition to support them to catch up in

subjects such as maths or science, delivered by a trained professional or member of school staff outside of their normal lessons. One course of high-quality tutoring has been proven to boost attainment by three to five months, so tutoring will be vital for young people in recovering the teaching hours lost in the last year.

For 16-19 year olds, we will extend the 16-19 tuition fund for a further two years. Over the coming three academic years, funding will be provided to support the equivalent of 2 million 15-hour courses to accelerate the progression of lower attaining students. Collectively 16-19 students will receive up to 32 million hours of small group tuition over the three years.

£400m for teaching

£253m new funding to provide 500,000 teacher training opportunities for teachers to access world-leading training appropriate for whatever point they are at in their career, from new teachers to headteachers through extending the rollout of the Early Career Framework and middle- and late-career National Professional Qualification.

£153m new funding to provide training for early years staff to support the very youngest children's learning and development. This will involve rolling out new training programmes so that early years staff are supported to help young children with their speech and language skills as well as their physical and emotional development. We will also provide additional support and expert advice for nurseries and other settings implementing our early years reforms, which will reduce teachers' workloads so they can spend more time supporting children's development.

To ensure that those with the least time left do not miss out, providers of 16-19 education will have the option of offering students in year 13 [or equivalent] the opportunity to repeat up to one more year if they have been particularly severely affected by the pandemic.

The government has committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan and the next stage will include a review of time spent in school and college and the impact this could have on helping children and young people to catch up. The findings of the review will be set later in the year to inform the spending review.

Employment Rights

[HLWS71]

Lord Callanan: My Honourable friend the Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully) has today made the following statement:

I am pleased to announce the latest steps the Government is taking today to better protect and enforce workers' rights, as we look to build back better from Covid-19.

Firstly, the Government has today published its response to our 2019 consultation on creating a single

enforcement body for employment rights. This Government has been absolutely clear that we will do whatever we can to protect and enhance workers' rights, and this new body will help the country build back better by taking a smarter approach to the enforcement of employment law.

Today's response to the consultation sets out the overarching details of the new body. Responsibility for tackling modern slavery, enforcing the minimum wage and protecting agency workers – currently spread across the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate and HMRC – will be brought under one roof, creating a comprehensive new authority.

This "one-stop-shop" approach will help improve enforcement through better co-ordination and pooling of intelligence, and providing a single, recognisable port of call for workers so they know their rights and can blow the whistle on bad behaviour. It will also make it easier for the vast majority of responsible businesses to do the right thing by their employees by providing clear guidance on their obligations.

Our consultation response also confirms that we will extend state enforcement to cover holiday pay and statutory sick pay for vulnerable workers and will regulate umbrella companies. The new body will also enforce financial penalties against organisations that do not meet requirements to publish modern slavery statements, as well as run the unpaid tribunal awards penalty scheme.

Protecting workers requires both support for business – so employers understand how to comply – as well as effective, visible enforcement action to deter irresponsible employers from undercutting the vast majority who want to do right by their workers. The body will have a spectrum of powers and responsibilities to achieve this, including compliance notices and civil penalties, as well as the power to prosecute.

The single enforcement body will be delivered through primary legislation and is the latest initiative in this Government's wider efforts to protect workers' rights. In the last year alone, the Government has boosted the minimum wage for around two million employees, protected furloughed workers' parental pay, cracked down on restrictive employment contracts, and more.

Secondly, as well as modernising our enforcement regime, the Government is today publishing its consultation responses on bringing the Certification Officer in line with other regulators; these reforms will implement technical measures passed by Parliament via the Trade Union Act 2016, providing reassurance to union members and the wider public.

Our reforms will make the Certification Officer a more effective regulator, with powers and funding more in line with similar bodies. They will give the Certification Officer the power to proactively investigate issues without having to wait for complaints from union members, the power to issue financial penalties, and put their office on a more sustainable model of levy funding.

This proper and fair regulation will ensure all trade unions and employers' associations conduct themselves to the highest standards.

Thirdly, I wanted to update you on the publication today by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service of their report into 'fire and rehire' and the Government's response to the evidence it provides. I have asked ACAS to produce better, more comprehensive guidance to help employers explore all options before considering dismissal and re-engagement.

This Government has always been clear that we do not accept fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic. Workers up and down the country have worked flat out during the pandemic, carrying out essential work to keep our economy going. It is crucial that employers take their responsibilities seriously and act appropriately when it comes to discussions about changing employment contracts.

The report shows that the practice of 'fire and rehire' includes instances where it has been threatened but not implemented, as well as companies dismissing and re-engaging employees. It is neither a new phenomenon nor is it concentrated in a particular sector or type of employer. While there is no quantitative data, there is a sense that 'fire and rehire' had become more prevalent in the years before Covid as well as during the pandemic.

This is clearly a complex issue and we understand that sometimes, regrettably, employment negotiations will fail. In these circumstances, employers may feel they need to dismiss staff, and potentially re-engage them.

However, the Government wants to send a crystal clear message to employers that all options must be exhausted before considering dismissal and reengagement of staff. It is unacceptable to use the threat of 'fire and rehire' as a negotiation tactic to force through changes to employment contracts.

The United Kingdom has one of the best records on workers' rights in the world - going further than the EU in many areas - and we are determined to build on this progress. By protecting workers more extensively, supporting business to comply with the law, and preventing them from being undercut by a minority of irresponsible employers, we can continue to be a high-wage, high-employment economy that works for everyone as we build back better.

The geographic scope of the bodies being subsumed into the single enforcement body vary; the Certification Officer's geographic coverage applies to Great Britain (there is a separate Certification Officer for Northern Ireland).

I will place copies of the Government response to Single Enforcement Body consultation, the Government response to the Certification Officer Levy consultation and Government response to the Certification Officer Enforcement Powers consultation in the Libraries of the House.

Office for Nuclear Regulation: Corporate Plan 2021-22

[HLWS67]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Today I will lay before this House the Office for Nuclear Regulation Corporate Plan 2021/2022. This document will also be published on the ONR website.

I can confirm, in accordance with Schedule 7, Section 25(3) of the Energy Act 2013, that there have been no exclusions to the published documents on the grounds of national security.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in High-rise Residential Buildings Consultation

[HLWS72]

Lord Greenhalgh: Today, the Government publishes a new consultation on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in High-rise Residential Buildings which will be open from 8 June to 19 July 2021.

This new consultation contains proposals to implement the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report recommendations on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in high-rise residential buildings. These recommendations require a change in law to place new requirements on owners or managers of multi-occupied high-rise residential buildings.

This consultation supports delivery of two of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations and is part of the government's package of reforms to improve building and fire safety in all regulated premises where people live, stay or work.

We are consulting on the following proposals:

- Proposal 1: We propose to require the Responsible Person to prepare a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan for every resident who self-identifies to them as unable to self-evacuate (subject to the resident's voluntary self-identification) and to do so in consultation with them.
- Proposal 2: We propose to provide a template to assist the Responsible Person and the residents in completing the plan, and to support consistency at a national level.
- Proposal 3: We propose to require the Responsible Person to complete and keep up to date information about residents in their building who would have difficulty self-evacuating in the event of a fire (and who have voluntarily self-identified as such), and to place it in an information box on the premises to assist effective evacuation during a rescue by the fire service.
- Proposal 4: We propose, in order to assist the Responsible Person and support consistency at a national level, to provide a template, most likely in a one-page format, to capture the key information to be provided in the information box.

Further details can be found in the consultation and its supportive documents available at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/personal-emergency-evacuation-plans. A copy of the consultation will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition

[HLWS73]

Lord True: My honourable friend, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith MP), has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce that the UK Government is today launching a civic honours competition to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. This includes competitions for city status and Lord Mayor (or Provost) status.

City status and Lord Mayor (or Provost) status are civic honours granted by The Queen acting on the advice of Her ministers under the Royal Prerogative. The granting of both city status and Lord Mayor (or Provost) status are purely honorific and come with no additional funding or powers. Since the 1970s, these awards have been granted through competitions and are usually held to coincide with Jubilee years, most recently for Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Entry guidelines and an application form have been published on GOV.UK. In their applications, local authorities are being asked to give particular reference to their area's:

- Distinct identity;
- Civic pride;
- Cultural infrastructure, interesting heritage, history and traditions;
- Vibrant and welcoming community;
- Record of innovation;
- Sound governance and administration;
- Associations with Royalty; and
- Other particularly distinctive features, age, residents or communities who have made widely recognised significant contributions to society and cultural infrastructure.

All local authorities across the United Kingdom who believe that their town or city deserves consideration for these rare honours are invited to apply. The city status competition will also be open to eligible applications from the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

The guidelines specify a standard format for entries. Local authorities are urged to use the standard format, which is intended to limit the costs of entering the competition and to introduce a fair basis for comparison between entries. The closing date is 8 December 2021.

The honours will continue to be rare marks of distinction conferred, on Ministerial advice, under the Royal prerogative, rather than rights to be earned by the meeting of specific criteria. All valid entries will receive

individual consideration on their merits and the Government looks forward to announcing the results of the competitions in 2022.

Taking Action on Climate Change

[HLWS68]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions & Financial Inclusion (Guy Opperman MP) has made the following Written Statement:

The UK was the first G7 country to legislate for net-zero and it will be the first to legislate for the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures – ensuring we tackle climate change and deliver safer, better and greener pensions.

Today I have laid the draft Occupational Pension Schemes (Climate Change Governance and Reporting) Regulations 2021. These regulations are world-leading and will embed the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures into UK law.

Climate change is an existential challenge to our environment, but not only that, it poses a systematic financial risk and threat to the long-term sustainability of UK pensions. With almost £2 trillion in assets under management, all occupational pension schemes are exposed to climate-related risks – which could have a detrimental impact on their members' future retirement income. Pushing forward our drive for greener pensions, I consulted on detailed requirements to allow more effective governance of climate risks and disclosure in line with the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures' recommendations in August last year. Further consultation on draft regulations took place earlier this year. We have worked directly with industry throughout this process, recognising widespread acceptance across the sector for the principle of more effective action on climate risk. The government laid the legislative groundwork for these regulations in the Pension Schemes Act 2021.

These regulations will deliver world-leading change to the pensions industry, ensuring trustees identify, assess and manage climate-related risks and opportunities relevant to their pension scheme. As a result of our work, the vast majority of pension schemes members' savings will be invested in schemes whose trustees have a specific legal duty to actively consider the risks and opportunities a transition to a low carbon economy brings.

I have taken the decision not to include a review clause in the regulations, invoking section 28(2)(b) of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015. I recognise the importance of monitoring and evaluating the initial impact of our regulations, that is why I have committed publicly in our consultation response to undertake a review in 2023. This will cover all the aspects normally required by a statutory review clause.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 8 June 2021

Afghanistan: Drugs and Terrorism

Asked by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan to continue to counter (1) the terrorist threat, and (2) the trafficking of narcotics, in Afghanistan, whilst also protecting the vital progress made on human rights in that country since 2001. [\[HL463\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Together with our NATO Allies, we will continue to provide assistance to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and build the capability of the Afghan state institutions to counter terrorism. The National Crime Agency develops and refines relationships with domestic and international partners, and will continue to do so in Afghanistan, as a critical function of the UK's counter-narcotics activity. We continue to make clear to all sides that any political settlement must protect the progress made in the country, including the rights of women and minorities. The UK is consulting with partner countries, including through the G7, to agree a collective approach to development and humanitarian support to Afghanistan. Support to any future Afghan government depends on progress in the Afghan peace negotiations, and respect for democracy and human rights.

Afghanistan: Foreign Relations

Asked by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had, if any, with (1) the government of the United States, and (2) other NATO allies, on how to develop an enduring partnership with Afghanistan in light of the withdrawal of UK troops this year. [\[HL462\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK, alongside our NATO Allies, is committed to our enduring partnership with Afghanistan. The UK is playing a leading role as we transition to a new phase of international support for Afghanistan. We are coordinating closely with the US and NATO Allies as we continue to collectively support Afghanistan and its people, including efforts to counter terrorism, through our diplomatic and development work and support to the security sector. The Prime Minister discussed Afghanistan with US Secretary of State Blinken on 4 May. The Foreign Secretary discussed Afghanistan with NATO Allies on 14 April, as well as with Secretary Blinken on 3 May. We continue to make clear to all sides that any political settlement must protect the progress made in the country, including the rights of women and minorities.

Agriculture and Environmental Land Management Scheme

Asked by **Lord Carrington**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will update the Impact Assessment conducted by DEFRA in 2018 now that more is known about the Agriculture Transition Plan and Environmental Land Management Schemes. [\[HL559\]](#)

Lord Benyon: The Government published two evidence and analysis papers to support the introduction of the Agriculture Bill in the last Parliament. These outlined, in detail, the case for creating a new Environmental Land Management scheme, the rationale for moving away from Direct Payments and provided evidence on the high-level costs and benefits of Government intervention in agriculture. They remain comprehensive sources of public information.

Defra has undertaken further work since then to assess the impacts of both regulatory and spending proposals.

Prior to the Agriculture Act becoming law in November 2020, a supporting Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) was published. This sets out, at a descriptive level, the anticipated impacts of the regulatory provisions within the Act.

Defra will produce more detailed full RIAs and submit to the Regulatory Policy Committee for independent scrutiny in advance of introducing any secondary legislation for all measures within the Act that are above the threshold specified in Better Regulation Framework guidance.

Defra is currently using the most recent data and evidence available to analyse and assess the impacts of its policy proposals as part of the process of it developing a Programme Business Case for its spending proposals. A summary business case will be published within four months of it receiving final approval, in line with the commitments set out in the recent HMT Green Book review.

Agriculture: Subsidies

Asked by **Lord Marlesford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether for tax purposes there is any distinction between payments made to farmers under (1) the EU Basic Payment Scheme, (2) the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and (3) the Environmental Land Management system. [\[HL670\]](#)

Lord Agnew of Oulton: There is no distinction for tax purposes between payments made under the three listed schemes. It is necessary to analyse the purpose and function of any government grant in order to form a view as to how it is likely to be treated for tax purposes. The tax treatment of a payment under any relevant scheme will depend on whether it is a trading receipt, whether it is

capital or revenue in nature, and how it is recognised in the accounts of the farmer's business.

China: Olympic Games

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 April (HL15288), what assessment they have made of the possibility of moving the 2022 Winter Olympic Games from China to another host nation with a better human rights record; and what representations have they made to governments of other nations on moving the 2022 Winter Olympics to another nation. [HL493]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: This is a matter for the International Olympic Committee, which operates independently of governments, and enshrines this political freedom in their rules and regulations.

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 April (HL15289), what assessment they have made of the risks faced by British (1) journalists, and (2) athletes, attending the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing; and what plans they have to mitigate any such risks. [HL495]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: HMG's concerns about the ongoing deterioration in China's media environment for both foreign and domestic journalists are well-documented. The UK has made public statements and proactively raised these concerns with the Chinese government, and will continue to do so. The UK will always defend media freedom and the right of journalists to do their jobs. We also expect China to respect and uphold fundamental rights and freedoms as guaranteed under international law and China's own constitution, including for all athletes and spectators participating in the Winter Olympics.

China: Press Freedom

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 April (HL15288), what assessment they have made of the risks faced by journalists reporting on human rights violations in China. [HL492]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Freedom of expression and of the media is severely curtailed in China. We continue to urge the Chinese authorities to allow journalists to practice their profession without fear or arrest, harassment or reprisal, and to end extensive censorship and control over the media and wider freedom of expression.

Choirs: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Framlingham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to allow amateur choral societies to practice and perform indoors within Covid-19 guidelines. [HL485]

Baroness Barran: Non-professional activities are permitted indoors within the legal gathering limits in a group of up to 6 people, or as a group of 2 households/bubbles. Activities can take place with multiple permitted groups, provided the groups are kept separate throughout the activity, and the event is organised in line with the organised events guidance for local authorities. However, non-professional singing indoors should only take place in a single group of up to 6 people. Activities should be organised to allow for social distancing to be maintained.

We have followed the views of public health experts on singing. We are aware that singing can increase the risk of Covid-19 transmission through the spread of aerosol droplets. We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. Further detail on step 4 will be set out as soon as possible.

COE Countries: Foreign Relations

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the competition to identify partnerships between UK and French places launched by the British Embassy in Paris in 2019, what plans they have to encourage such partnerships between places in the UK and places in the other member states of the Council of Europe. [HL480]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK places great value on the role of the Council of Europe (CoE) in advancing work on human rights, democracy and the rule of law across Europe. International partnerships provide a significant contribution towards this objective and the UK Government welcomes such activity. Examples of partnerships between the UK and France and Italy were shared in answers to PQs HL479 and HL430. There are plans to work with local authorities to promote business in Germany. In Poland, we are seeking to work with cities, regional and local authorities on a number of economic issues, including trade and investment and climate change. Additionally, the British Embassy in Dublin's "Joining the Dots" programme, launched in November 2018, promotes economic links between regions of the UK and the South West and West of Ireland.

Commonwealth: Females

Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support the commitment made in May 2021 by the

Commonwealth Women's Ministers Action Group to put women's issues at the top of the agenda for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to be held in Rwanda. [HL461]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government remains steadfast in its commitment to championing gender equality, including through the Commonwealth at the next CHOGM. Our work on promoting gender equality includes standing up for every girl's right to 12 years of quality education, promoting sexual and reproductive rights, working to end gender based violence and supporting women's economic and political empowerment. The FCDO's work is underpinned by the understanding that the Sustainable Development Goals will not be attained without concerted national and international effort to foster the equality and empowerment of women and girls everywhere.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Construction

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent cuts to the construction industry workforce once the furlough scheme ends. [HL592]

Lord Callanan: The construction sector will be a key part of the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19. Construction output has significantly increased since May 2020, with record monthly growth in June 2020, and strong growth continuing into 2021, with £23 billion of large construction contracts awarded for a range of infrastructure, housing and commercial projects. We expect this strong growth to continue during the rest of the year, meaning there is likely to be less of a need for Government support.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is designed to be a temporary measure to support businesses facing severely restricted demand. It has provided significant support to the construction sector, with payments made between 1 November 2020 and 31 March 2021 totalling £1,023m, with 83,000 firms using the CJRS, helping to protect over 200,000 jobs.

The Government continues to work closely with the industry to support its recovery, and to ensure that it can retain and develop the skilled workforce it needs. This includes through an accelerated pipeline of projects worth up to £37 billion, the introduction of a Talent Retention Scheme to help workers move into jobs, and work with the Construction Leadership Council and Construction Industry Training Board to ensure effective support to ensure the construction workforce is equipped with the skills that the industry needs.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Older Workers

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that elderly workers are not

disproportionately impacted by the ending of the furlough scheme. [HL537]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department is committed to supporting any workers who do become unemployed after the end of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, including over 50s jobseekers, who can benefit from a range of special support. As part of the 50 plus: choices agenda, we have created a network of 50 PLUS Champions (formerly Older Claimants Champions) throughout all of the 37 Jobcentre Plus districts, who work collaboratively with Work Coaches to raise the profile of over 50s claimants, highlighting the benefits of employing them and sharing best practice.

The Department is also piloting 50+ mentoring circles in England to address any confidence barriers experienced by over 50s claimants and to support them in moving into new jobs, particularly where their sectors have been adversely affected by Covid-19.

More broadly, the Department is supporting people of all ages back into work through the Plan for Jobs. This provides new funding to ensure more people of all age groups get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to find work, including through building new skills.

The Government also aims to increase Sector based Work Academy programme placements, which provide unemployed participants of all ages with training, work experience and a guaranteed interview for a real job. We are also investing £238 million into Job Entry: Targeted Support (JETS) to offer enhanced support to those who have been made unemployed for three months.

During the Covid-19, we have been working with employer organisations such as Chartered Institute of Professional Directors, British Chamber of Commerce, Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and Local Enterprise Partnerships to encourage small and medium enterprises to retain informal carers in the workforce, many of whom are 50 or over, to benefit both the business and the employee.

Council Housing

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in relation to establishing housing allocation numbers for local authorities, what is the current assumed net immigration for each of the next 15 years. [HL518]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government does not set housing allocation numbers. The Government's Local Housing Need formula, otherwise known as "the standard method" is set out in guidance and is used by local authorities to determine the starting point when planning for housing. Local planning authorities should take into account land supply considerations and environmental constraints (such as Green Belt) before determining the number of homes likely to be delivered in the area.

The standard method is based on the 2014 household projections, these projections incorporate population projections and therefore migration data. Population data

is published by the ONS, see attached: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2015-10-29>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

National Population projections [National Population Projections - Office for National Statistics - HL518.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-05-24/HL518>

Council Housing: Solar Power

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government which 10 councils have the highest number of solar panels installed on council properties. [HL515]

Lord Callanan: The Government does not hold information on the number or size of solar PV installations on council properties. This information will be held by individual councils.

Courts and Tribunals (Online Procedure) Bill (HL)

Asked by Lord Pannick

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to re-introduce to parliament the provisions of the Courts and Tribunals (Online Procedure) Bill 2017–19. [HL526]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Government will bring forward legislation to establish the provisions of the Courts and Tribunals (Online Procedure) Bill when parliamentary time allows.

Deep Sea Mining: British Overseas Territories

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have the power to issue deep sea mining licences in UK Overseas Territories' waters; and if so, whether they plan to issue any such licences. [HL501]

Lord Callanan: The Deep Sea Mining Act 1981 (as amended by the Deep Sea Mining Act 2014) sets out the Government's powers in relation to issuing deep sea mining licences, including the relationship with contracts granted by the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

The 1981 Act (as amended) extends to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but may be extended by Order in Council to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man or any British overseas territory. To date, no such Order in Council or Statutory Instrument has been taken forward, and there are no current plans to do so.

Defamation: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to assist with the extension of the Defamation Act 2013 to Northern Ireland. [HL508]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The civil law of defamation is a devolved issue in Northern Ireland. As such, the development of, or any reform to, the law in this area is a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly to consider.

I note that the Northern Ireland Minister for Finance, Conor Murphy MLA, updated the Assembly late last year and that work is underway in his department to review defamation law. An MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) has also been granted consent by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to introduce a Bill into the Northern Ireland Assembly on this issue. I understand that the proposed Bill is currently being considered by the NI Assembly Speaker as per usual processes.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Volcanoes

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano on 22 May, what assessment they have made of the impact on the (1) inhabitants, and (2) environment, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL531]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo on 22 May, assessments show that around 4500 households have been displaced, 31 people killed during subsequent panic and evacuation, and water and electricity supplies to certain areas of Goma have been damaged. On 27 May, the North Kivu Governor announced the mandatory evacuation of ten neighbourhoods in eastern Goma citing the risks of further fissures and poisonous gas release. Thousands of people have been moving to the towns of Bukavu and Sake, and across the border to Rwanda. UK-funded partners are providing emergency support and first aid to those affected by the eruption and we are working closely with the Government of Democratic Republic of the Congo, UN and humanitarian partners to monitor the situation, assess the impact, and deliver further assistance if required.

An assessment of the environmental impact will take longer as volcanic activity still continues and the full impact is yet to be realised. Release of carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and other harmful gases is a cause of concern given Goma's proximity to the source of the eruption. Volcanic eruptions are known to cause respiratory and other health hazards (from ash) and to result in degradation of water quality and soil and an increase in temperatures.

Education: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of a recent report by The Sutton Trust, 'Fairness First: Social Mobility, Covid and Education Recovery' published in May; and what plans they have to increase the funds for the early years pupil premium. [HL540]

Baroness Berridge: The government are carefully monitoring the impact of Covid-19 on children's wellbeing, learning and development, including in the early years. We note the report published by the Sutton Trust.

On 2 June 2021, we announced a £1.4 billion education recovery package, which includes a £153 million investment in evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners, including through new programmes focusing on key areas such as speech and language development for the youngest children. This brings the total investment announced for education recovery for early years, schools, and colleges to over £3 billion since June 2020. The government has committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan. We will continue to consider the effect that the Covid-19 outbreak has had on education and wellbeing, and what further action is needed to address this.

Food Banks

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Stedman-Scott on 13 February 2020 (HL1489), when they expect to publish their literature review of the factors driving the use of food banks. [HL509]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department reallocated resources to prioritise work to help the Covid-19 effort. This caused delays to some work, including this literature review. The review summarises publicly available information and does not contain any new research carried out by the Department.

The Department has recently published new data from the Family Resources Survey on household food security, giving us a better understanding of who is most at risk. This underlines how seriously we take the issue of food insecurity.

France: Foreign Relations

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government what results have so far been achieved through the seven partnerships between UK and French places launched by the British Embassy in Paris in 2019. [HL479]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The "France-United Kingdom: for strengthened cooperation between our local

authorities" competition launched in 2019, reflecting the UK's support for local cooperation with France. The relationship between our two countries goes far beyond London and Paris, spanning a wide range of issues from trade to science and culture. That is why, following the first UK France Mayors Summit in 2019, the British Embassy in Paris made available £22,000 to fund three innovative and impactful projects (four others were funded by the French government).

The UK fund supported:

A workshop between Greater Manchester and Montpellier. A delegation from Greater Manchester local authority visited and met Montpellier's local elected officials to combine their international expertise on health innovation, particularly for an ageing community. The visit led to further exchanges between the municipal teams.

A partnership between Glasgow and Marseille. The project was led by Theatrum Mundi, a London-based professional network of urbanists and artists. The project aimed to build links between Glasgow and Marseille around shared challenges in the way culture is supported by urban planning. The project led to the publication of a report collecting their findings following a two-week research project in both cities.

A partnership between Kent County Council and Pas de Calais department. This project launched a new interregional committee led by the two local authorities to support resilience and prosperity in the areas surrounding Calais and Dover. It was the first major regional cross-border cooperation event. The project led to the creation of a this new platform to discuss shared issues, challenges and areas of further cooperation.

Furans

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to make the possession of carbofuran illegal. [HL598]

Lord Benyon: Carbofuran is a pesticide and pesticides can only be advertised, sold, supplied, stored or used if they are authorised. Authorisation is only granted if the product will not harm people and poses no unacceptable risks to the environment. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet current standards.

Authorisation for carbofuran was revoked in 1999 in the UK. All products containing carbofuran were therefore effectively banned after the final expiry date for storage and use on 31 December 2001.

The advertisement, sale, supply, storage or use of any plant protection product, including carbofuran, which does not have a valid authorisation is therefore illegal. Anyone who advertises, sells, supplies, stores or uses any pesticide product containing carbofuran will be committing an offence and may be liable to an unlimited fine.

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Baroness Sheehan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of reductions in the Overseas Development Assistance Budget on donations to organisations bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza. [HL535]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Allocation decisions have been taken by Ministers in line with the objectives set out in the Integrated Review. Ministers were appraised of qualitative analysis, sectoral analysis of thematic trends, and further quantitative analysis of draft business plans to assess the impacts of ODA reductions. Ministers have also considered the impact on FCDO's supply partners, drawing on FCDO programme managers' advice on how best to manage reductions to specific programmes.

Graduates: Employment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with universities in England about the support they can provide to improve the employment prospects of graduates. [HL639]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The government understands that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on students graduating this year, and we recognise that a number of graduates face particular challenges gaining employment due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the UK labour market and economy.

The government is doing all it can to help people who are at the start of their career journey. As part of the government's Skills Recovery Package Plan for Jobs, we are investing an additional £32 million in the National Careers Service up to March 2022. This investment will support delivery of individual careers advice for over 500,000 people whose jobs or learning have been affected by the pandemic (by the end of the 2021/22 financial year). This represents an increase of 22%.

To provide additional support, we have developed the Graduate Employment and Skills Guide, which was published on 10 May on the Office for Students (OfS) website. The guide directs graduates to public, private, and voluntary sector opportunities to help them build employability skills, gain work experience, or enter the labour market, as well as providing links to further study options and resources on graduate mental health and wellbeing. The guide will also help graduates to recognise the valuable skills they have developed at university.

We have also engaged with Higher Education providers to produce a collection of Graduate Employability Case Studies. These case studies are published on the OfS website and demonstrate the breadth of innovative work

and range of new measures university and college careers services have introduced to support final-year students and recent graduates as they move from university to graduate life.

Content on the National Careers Service website to support graduates includes information on graduate schemes and internships, sector-specific work experience, virtual work experience, virtual recruitment fairs, volunteering, developing soft skills, finding job vacancies, writing a CV and application form, telephone and video interviews, psychometric testing, using LinkedIn, gap years, and considering further study. On 29 September 2020, we added additional courses to the Skills Toolkit covering digital, numeracy, and employability skills. The new content includes a range of courses to develop 'work readiness' skills that employers value in their new recruits.

Where securing work is challenging, graduates may be able to access financial support. Graduates can apply for Universal Credit immediately after finishing a degree and can check their eligibility at <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/eligibility>.

We have worked with a range of institutions across the sector to understand what more we can do to support graduates who are looking to secure employment at this challenging time and ensure students continue to leave university with qualifications that have real value and reflect their hard work.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the legal powers of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services differ in relation to Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain. [HL532]

Lord Greenhalgh: HMICFRS carries out inspections under a range of legislative powers. Police Forces in England and Wales are inspected under powers set out in the Police Act 1996. HMICFRS inspections of the Police Service of Northern Ireland are carried out under powers set out in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services: Powers

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the powers of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. [HL533]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: There are currently no plans to review the powers of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

Home Education

Asked by Baroness Cavendish of Little Venice

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the figures published by the Association of Directors of Children's Services on 23 November 2020 which show that 19,510 children have been removed from school registers since the start of the 2020/21 academic year; what steps they are taking to identify those children; and what assessment they have made of whether those children are (1) being educated from home, and (2) at risk of abuse. [HL560]

Baroness Berridge: We support the right of parents to educate their children at home – most will educate their children well, sometimes in challenging circumstances. However, we cannot overlook the rising numbers of home-educated children. For some, home education can mean that children are not provided a suitable education or that they are invisible to the services and professionals there to keep them safe and supported.

The safeguarding of children who are electively home educated sits within a local authorities' safeguarding duties set out in the Children Act 1989. A failure to provide suitable home education could constitute a safeguarding risk, because unsuitable or inadequate education can also impair a child's intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development.

The government has substantially strengthened its guidance to local authorities on exercising their powers in relation to elective home education. The revised guidance, which was published in April 2019, sets out the steps that local authorities should take to satisfy themselves that the education provided by parents at home is suitable, and the actions that they can take if they are not satisfied. This guidance will be reviewed again in due course.

We remain committed to a registration system for children who are not in school. Further details on a proposed registration system will be in the government response to the Children Not in School consultation, which we intend to publish in due course.

Homicide: Sentencing

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the average tariff length imposed for murder was in each year since 2000. [HL466]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The average length of the minimum term (sometimes known as a 'tariff') for life sentences for murder convictions since 2000 is as follows:

<i>Year of Sentence</i>	<i>Average minimum term (years)</i>
2000	13
2001	13
2002	13
2003	13

<i>Year of Sentence</i>	<i>Average minimum term (years)</i>
2004	14
2005	15
2006	17
2007	15
2008	17
2009	17
2010	19
2011	18
2012	20
2013	20
2014	20
2015	20
2016	20
2017	20
2018	21
2019	21
2020	20

Data sources and quality

Note that the minimum term is the time between date of sentence and tariff expiry date. Time on remand is taken into account when setting the tariff expiry date. The figures do not include whole-life orders.

The figures in these tables have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Source: Public Protection Unit Database.

Housing: Immigration

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the impact of their policy towards immigration from Hong Kong has been incorporated into housing allocation (1) calculations, and (2) provision. [HL519]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa route is a positive offer for British National (Overseas) status holders and their dependants. To be eligible for the Hong Kong BN(O) visa route, status holders must prove that they are able to sustain themselves and their families in the UK for six months.

Those on the BN(O) visa route will have a 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition attached to their leave, which prevents them from accessing local authority-allocated social housing allocations and homelessness assistance.

After 5 years, Hong Kong BN(O) status holders will be able to apply for settled status, and if granted settled status will then be eligible for both social housing and

homelessness assistance on the same basis as British citizens. We will keep the position in relation to social housing allocations under review.

We recognise that local authorities may be expected to provide some form of housing support, for example, in managing tenancies, assessing any eligibility for local deposit schemes and understanding rights and entitlements to housing and welfare support, where it is appropriate. That is why the Government is making over £30 million available to local authorities in England to provide targeted support to Hong Kong British National (Overseas) status holders who need additional English for Speakers of Other Languages and/or destitution support including support with housing costs. This targeted support funding factors in the potential impacts on homelessness, housing and translation services demands.

Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 April (HL15291), what are their priorities for discussion at the G7 summit regarding human rights; and what plans they have to raise the human rights situation of Uighur Muslims in China at that summit. [HL494]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We will use our Presidency of the G7 to work with counterparts drawing on our strengths and values as democratic, open economies and societies across a range of international priorities, including our approach to China. We recognise the need to cooperate with China on key global issues, and also expect China to abide by its international commitments.

Legislation: Impact Assessments

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy on the publication of impact assessments in relation to (1) primary legislation, and (2) secondary legislation. [HL490]

Lord Callanan: The Government publishes individual impact assessments in relation to both primary and secondary legislation for all measures where a significant impact on business has been identified and, where applicable, the RPC opinion, alongside either the relevant consultation document on GOV.UK or the relevant legislation on www.legislation.gov.uk.

For regulatory measures without an impact assessment, the relevant explanatory memorandum should set out the key impacts and include the rationale for not providing an impact assessment.

The current requirement for publication of impact assessments is part of the administrative process in the Better Regulation Framework as agreed across Government.

Metals: Criminal Proceedings

Asked by Lord Faulkner of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many scrap metal dealers have been (1) prosecuted, and (2) convicted, for failing to hold a (a) site, or (b) mobile collector's, licence since 2013. [HL483]

Asked by Lord Faulkner of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many scrap metal dealers have been (1) prosecuted, and (2) convicted, for paying cash for scrap metal since 2013. [HL484]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Ministry of Justice holds data on prosecutions and convictions for offences relating to scrap metal dealers up to December 2020. Information on scrap metal dealers failing to hold a licence cannot be split by site or mobile collectors as this is not specified in legislation; prosecutions and convictions for failing to hold a licence can be found in the attached table, along with prosecutions and convictions for paying for cash for scrap metal.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table [PQ HL483 & HL484 table.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-05-24/HL483>

Metals: Theft

Asked by Lord Faulkner of Worcester

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many incidents of metal theft were recorded on the Police National Database in (1) 2018, (2) 2019, and (3) 2020. [HL482]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office's preferred measure of metal theft is based on the Home Office Data Hub (HODH) which collects data relating to metal theft offences from police forces in England and Wales. This data is published annually by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) as part of their Property Crime tables. The latest published data can be found here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/focusonpropertycrimeappendixtables>.

Ministry of Justice: Interpreters

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the (1) qualifications, and (2) experience, required for interpreters to be listed on the Ministry of Justice register to the same levels as interpreters joining the National Register of Public Service Interpreters. [HL476]

*Asked by **Baroness Coussins***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many interpreters registered with the Ministry of Justice have been (1) removed from the register, or (2) otherwise sanctioned, as a result of the spot checks and in-person assessments carried out from 1 January 2019 by the quality assurance provider The Language Shop. [HL477]

*Asked by **Baroness Coussins***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 18 May (HL Deb, col 558) that interpreters "will be removed from the register if they fail to reach the required standard", what are the detailed components of "the required standard". [HL478]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Ministry of Justice is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a suite of high- quality language service contracts, that meet the needs of all those that require them.

The contracts have a clearly defined list of qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements interpreters must meet, which have been designed to meet the needs of the justice system. These are set out in our contracts, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137?p=@=UFQxbIRRP0=NjJNT08>

Our qualification and experience requirements and associated quality assurance arrangements provided by The Language Shop (TLS), have been carefully considered and have been designed so as to maintain the quality of interpretation provided under the contract, meet the demands and requirements of the Ministry and other contract users and encourage new entrants to the profession.

The Ministry of Justice will shortly be undertaking work to develop the next generation of Language Services contracts.

For the period 01/01/2019 – 21/05/2021, 169 language professionals have been removed and 40 language professionals have been sanctioned as a result of a Spot Check or In-Person Assessment.

The required standard comprises a number of different elements.

All interpreters are required to meet the qualification requirements set out in the contract between the MoJ and the language service supplier. The requirements vary depending on the complexity of the bookings and the language in question. The specific requirement in each case is set out here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137?p=@=UFQxbIRRP0=NjJNT08>

TLS review the qualifications at the point of carrying out an assessment of an interpreter and will remove the

interpreter if the supplier fails to demonstrate that they hold the correct qualifications.

All interpreters are required to comply with the MoJ code of conduct at all times. Any serious breach of the code of conduct, observed through an assessment by TLS or identified and confirmed through a complaint investigation, will result in removal from the register.

Interpreters also have to demonstrate competence in language proficiency, interpreting/professional skills, and subject matter knowledge. Interpreters are regularly assessed to ensure their interpreting meets the requirements of the assignment, being observed across each of the three competencies.

Musicians: EU Countries

*Asked by **Baroness Garden of Frognal***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have established a timetable for negotiations on reducing barriers to touring with key live music markets in the EU; and if so, what is that timetable. [HL486]

*Asked by **Baroness Garden of Frognal***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken towards establishing a transitional support fund for UK musicians seeking to tour the EU. [HL487]

Baroness Barran: The UK took an ambitious approach during the EU TCA negotiations that would have ensured that touring artists and their support staff did not need work permits to perform in the EU. Regrettably, our proposals were rejected by the EU, but our door remains open if the European Commission is willing to reconsider its position.

As the Secretary of State has said, we have moved at pace and with urgency on plans to support the creative sectors to tour in Europe. Through our bilateral discussions with EU Member States, we have established that in at least 17 out of 27 Member States some touring activities are possible without visas or work-permits. The UK has significantly more generous arrangements for touring professionals than many Member States, and should they be willing to change their rules to match ours we will have those discussions and encourage them to do so.

UK performers and artists are of course still able to tour and perform in the EU, and vice versa. However, we understand the concerns about the new arrangements and we are committed to supporting the sectors as they get to grips with the changes to systems and processes.

We are also looking closely at funding options to support individuals and businesses to resume touring with ease as soon as it is safe to do so.

National Security and Terrorism

*Asked by **Lord Shinkwin***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what policy priority they place on (1) defence of the Realm, (2)

defending UK citizens from terrorist rocket attacks, and (3) neutralising the threat of terrorist rocket attacks on UK citizens. [HL536]

Baroness Goldie: The Defence, security and resilience of the UK and its overseas territories is the primary task of the MOD. Defence works with partners across government to ensure that the UK continues to protect its citizens from terrorism within its borders and overseas.

The Home Office are the lead department for domestic terrorist threats. Should their assessment be that the risk from a particular terrorist methodology such as rockets has increased, consideration will be given to what additional policies, if any, are required to mitigate them. The UK has well-developed systems and capabilities to mitigate the threat from terrorism, including a range of response capabilities that can be deployed to mitigate the effects of the aftermath of any such attack and pursue those responsible.

The NATO ballistic missile defence system, of which the UK is a part, protects European NATO nations from ballistic missile threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

Neonicotinoids

Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the responses by Lord Benyon on 25 May (HL Deb, cols 890–3), whether the evidence they used to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in 2018 has changed; and, if so, (1) whether this has led to a change of policy, and (2) what plans they have to make any such evidence available as soon as practicable. [HL637]

Lord Benyon: The 2018 restrictions on neonicotinoids were justified by the growing weight of scientific evidence that they are harmful to bees and other pollinators. The Government supported these restrictions because we were not prepared to put our pollinator populations at risk.

Our position on these pesticides remains the same. We support the restrictions on neonicotinoids but can consider applications for emergency authorisations.

We will only grant an emergency authorisation where the relevant statutory requirements are met. They will only be granted for limited and controlled use where the product is necessary because of a danger which cannot be contained by any other reasonable means. We will carefully consider any potential risks to humans, animals and the environment, including pollinators.

Offender Assessment System: Life Imprisonment

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how many, and (2) what proportion of, people serving a life sentence

have an up-to-date Offender Assessment System assessment. [HL465]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The (1) total number and (2) proportion of life sentence prisoners currently in custody, who have an up to date Offender Assessment System (OASys) assessment, is shown in the following table:

<i>Number of life sentence prisoners currently in Custody</i>	<i>Number with an OASys record able to be matched</i>	<i>Number of those identified within OASys with an up to date assessment</i>	<i>Percentage of those identified within OASys with an up to date assessment</i>
7542	7464	6550	88%

Notes for all tables:

i) These figures have been drawn from the Public Protection Unit Database and OASys National Reporting System held by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. This data was matched on PNC and Prison NOMIS ID. As with any large scale recording systems, the figures are subject to possible errors with data migration and processing.

In order to determine whether an assessment was 'up to date', the policy and guidance under the HM Prison and Probation Service's Offender Management in Custody Model has been applied.

1) An initial OASys assessment must be completed within 16 weeks of a new life sentenced prisoner being received into custody. In the interim, where there is a Court OASys risk assessment prepared for sentencing purposes, that is deemed to be an up to date assessment.

2) Following completion of an initial assessment, a review is required as a minimum every 3 years.

Life sentence prisoners will often have reviews of their OASys assessment undertaken more frequently than once every three years due to parole hearings or other significant events.

There are significant vacancies across the Prison Estate, which has an impact on the number of completed assessments. In order to address this, there are ongoing recruitment campaigns for prisons to employ additional probation officers and qualified probation officers and prison officers.

Overseas Students: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether international students arriving in the UK for the next academic year will be eligible for Covid-19 vaccinations from the NHS; if so, whether eligibility for such vaccines will depend on availability of vaccines in their home country; and what assessment they have made of proposals for universities using appropriately trained personnel to administer such vaccines. [HL674]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: International students who live in the UK will be able to access the

Covid-19 vaccine for free. Their eligibility for a Covid-19 vaccine here is not predicated on having had one abroad.

When students arrive in the UK, they should register with a local GP surgery as soon as possible. There may be a GP surgery attached to their university. People who are registered with a GP will be contacted by their surgery to book their vaccine via an online or telephone system when they are eligible. There is no need for students proactively to contact their GP about the Covid-19 vaccine.

Covid vaccination sites are able to set up temporary vaccination clinics in a wide range of locations to ensure that patients can easily access the vaccine; this can include sites on university campuses.

Pension Credit

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase take-up of Pension Credit and reduce pensioner poverty, especially for older women. [HL551]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: There are now 200,000 fewer pensioners in absolute poverty than in 2009/10. The percentage of women aged 75 and over in absolute poverty after housing costs fell from 18 per cent in 2009/10 to 15 per cent in 2019/20.

The Government is committed to continuing to reduce pensioner poverty and Pension Credit has an important role to play, as a source of financial support for all eligible pensioners.

Department of Work and Pension Ministers recently met with stakeholders with an interest in pensioners' financial wellbeing and the Director General of the BBC to explore opportunities to work together to support the promotion of Pension Credit.

The department continues to make the best use of all our channels to reach those who might be eligible as well as their family and friends. For example, over 11 million pensioners in Great Britain recently received messaging about Pension Credit with their annual State Pension updating letter. This highlighted that an award of Pension Credit can mean being eligible for other benefits such as Housing Benefit or a free over-75 TV licence. We also make use of proactive press activity and social media posts to encourage older people to check if they are eligible.

Our online Pension Credit material on gov.uk has also recently been updated, providing helpful information on how Pension Credit can help pensioners and how easy it is to claim particularly with the online service we introduced last year which enables family, friends and organisations to help pensioners, including older women pensioners, make a claim.

Performing Arts: Coronavirus

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish guidance for (1) musicians, and (2) other live

performers, operating after the Step 4 lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. [HL565]

Baroness Barran: The Government appreciates that organisations require as much time and detail as possible to enable them to plan their reopening activities. However, proceeding to the next Steps of the government's Roadmap is subject to the review of data gained from relaxation of restrictions in previous steps, and the outcomes of the Events Research Programme and Social Distancing reviews. We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. Further detail on step 4 will be set out as soon as possible.

Performing Arts: EU Countries

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they intend to hold, if any, with the EU concerning the effect of challenges with cabotage on the ability of performing artists based in the UK to conduct tours in the EU. [HL611]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement has ensured that the vast majority of journeys will continue as they did before the end of the transition period, despite leaving the Single Market and Customs Union.

During negotiations, the UK pressed the EU hard on liberalised access for hauliers carrying equipment for cultural events, but the EU did not agree to our asks. We have, however, made it clear that our door remains open to discussing these proposals should the EU position change.

Pesticides

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards fulfilling their promise to improve the current monitoring system for pesticides beyond measuring the weight of chemicals. [HL571]

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they are taking to improve publicly available data on pesticide use, in order to reverse global wildlife diversity decline. [HL573]

Lord Benyon: The Government is developing a Pesticide Load Indicator which takes account of both the chemical properties of pesticides used and the weight applied. Additionally, further research is being conducted to improve the long-term monitoring of the environmental effects of pesticides, including work on honey and soil monitoring. Much of this research will be published later this year.

We are also working with the Health and Safety Executive to make improvements to the availability of data from the Pesticide Usage Survey.

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the 2021 study in the Netherlands which found that the impact of pesticides on insects could have knock-on effects on other animals such as birds which rely on them for food. [HL572]

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the research by Professor Ralf Schulz of the University Koblenz and Landau 'Applied pesticide toxicity shifts towards plants and invertebrates, even in GM crops', published in Science in April, which shows that as pesticides become more specific, they become more toxic to 'non-target organisms' like pollinators and aquatic invertebrates. [HL574]

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the study Capsar Hallmann et al 'Declines in insectivorous birds are associated with high neonicotinoid concentrations', published in Nature on 9 July 2014; and in particular its finding that the impact of pesticides on insects could have consequential effects on other animals which rely on them for food. [HL624]

Lord Benyon: Pesticides can only be used if they are authorised and this process addresses the issues identified in these studies. Authorisation of each pesticide product depends on the outcome of a detailed risk assessment which includes impacts on people, animals and the environment. If there are found to be unacceptable risks to, for example, pollinators and aquatic invertebrates, the product is not authorised. A specific pesticide which posed unacceptable risks to non-target organisms would not be authorised. This process considers effects on local populations of insects and so limits the risks to other animals such as birds that feed on them.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) lies at the heart of our approach to maximise the use of non-chemical control techniques and minimise the use of chemical pesticides. IPM means that pesticide users can reduce the associated risks (including indirect effects), combat pest resistance, and support agricultural productivity. This includes increasing the use of nature-based, low toxicity solutions and precision technologies, with potential to enhance biodiversity, including to benefit pollinators.

Our approach is detailed in the draft revised 'National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides' (NAP), which sets out the ambition to improve indicators of pesticide usage, risk and impacts. This was the subject of a recent public consultation, with over 1500 responses now being analysed. The summary of responses will be published by the end of summer 2021 and the revised NAP later this year.

Furthermore, our new schemes that reward the delivery of environmental benefits 'The Sustainable Farming Incentive', the 'Local Nature Recovery scheme' and the

'Landscape Recovery scheme' will encourage actions that support IPM and biodiversity, including conserving and enhancing habitats for bees and other pollinators.

Prisoners: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many prisoners have tested positive for Covid-19 in each UK prison since March 2020. [HL467]

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many prisoners have tested positive for Covid-19 in each month since March 2020. [HL468]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The safety of our staff and those under our supervision remains a top priority, and testing is an important element of our overall set of measures to limit the importation of infection into and between prisons. We have therefore been working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the NHS, and health authority colleagues in England and Wales since last summer on providing access to Covid-19 tests in both publicly and privately-run prisons.

Data on prisoners in England and Wales who tested positive broken down by establishment and month was published in the February edition of the HM Prison and Probation Service Covid-19 statistics monthly series. I have attached copy of the summary tables included in the release, with data on positive test results provided in Table 2.

Over the course of the pandemic we have expanded the use of testing based on public health recommendations, and we now offer testing routinely to all staff and those prisoners who are moving into or within the prison estate. We also conduct mass testing as part of a multi-agency response to outbreaks.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table [HL467&468 - Lord Bradley - Covid positives in prison by month and establishment - Summary Tables.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-05-24/HL467>

Roman Protasevich

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the diversion of the Ryanair flight FR4978 on 23 May which resulted in the arrest of the journalist Roman Protasevich. [HL530]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his 24 May statement to Parliament, the Belarusian authorities' forced landing of Ryanair flight FR4978 and their subsequent arrest of the journalist, Roman Protasevich, is a shocking attack on human rights, civil aviation and international law. We have seen no

evidence to support the Belarusian authorities' claims of a bomb threat to this flight. The UK Government summoned the Belarusian Ambassador to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on Monday 24 May to condemn the regime's actions and demand the release of Mr Protasevich. We have acted swiftly to suspend permits of the main airline operating flights between the UK and Belarus and have advised all UK airlines to avoid flying over Belarusian airspace. We are actively considering and coordinating with our allies on further sanctions. We welcome the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) investigation into this attack on the principles that underpin civil aviation.

Sexual Offences: Gender Recognition

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether an individual who is convicted of (1) rape, or (2) sexual assault, is recorded in crime statistics under their (a) gender identity, or (b) biological sex. [HL513]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: In the courts proceedings database we use binary sex rather than gender, because the binary classification better reflects how individuals are generally reported or managed through the CJS. Sex refers to whether someone is male or female based on their physiology, with 'gender' representing a social construct or sense of self that takes a wider range of forms. For example, prisons are either male or female institutions, with prisoners normally placed based on their legally recognised gender. However, given the range of recording practices throughout the CJS, it is likely that most recording includes a mixture of physiological and personal identity.

The recorded sex of defendants dealt with for rape and sexual assault offences can be found in our outcomes by offence tool here (search the drop down list in 'offence' and 'sex'): [DXW1].

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

Offences of aiding, abetting, or conspiracy to, rape are recorded as rape offences in our outcomes by offence tool, but are not separately identifiable.

Small Businesses: Vat Exemptions

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the proposed removal of EU VAT exemptions on small e-commerce businesses based in the UK which trade in the EU. [HL640]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government does not provide an impact assessment of policy measures that are introduced outside of the UK by jurisdictions.

The Government has carried out an impact assessment for the removal of low value consignment relief for all

imports into the UK from 1 January 2021. It published a Tax Impact and Information Note which forecasts the removal of the relief to raise approximately £300 million per year.

Taxation: Electronic Government

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase awareness of the impact of 'Making Tax Digital' on tax. [HL589]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government is committed to ensuring that businesses within scope of Making Tax Digital (MTD) understand the impact it will have on their business. All taxpayers within scope of MTD will receive direct contact from HMRC in advance of mandation outlining the changes and explaining how to comply.

HMRC engage extensively with taxpayers, agents, and representative bodies to raise awareness of MTD through stakeholder forums, public events, webinars, social media, and publishing information and guidance on GOV.UK.

MTD does not change the amount of tax a business has to pay, but rather when and how it reports tax information to HMRC. Two independent research studies commissioned by HMRC have found that small businesses that had joined MTD for VAT with fully integrated software reported spending less time on their tax and making fewer errors.

Tigray: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the assessment of the EU foreign service, reported on 17 May, that the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region "is worse than ever since the conflict began last November"; that 5.2 million people are in need of "emergency food assistance" to avoid starvation; and that "blocking humanitarian aid as a weapon of war is a grave violation of international humanitarian law". [HL459]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK shares the concerns raised by the EU. The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. Currently 5.2 million are in need of food aid. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger. We are also extremely concerned about the use of hunger and food insecurity as methods of war. We have raised these points with the Government in Addis Ababa consistently and at the highest levels, most recently during the visit of the Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs from 19-25 May.

UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. Teams from the British

Embassy in Addis Ababa visited Tigray from 4-5 March, 4-7 April and the week of 19 April and met with humanitarian agencies working in the region. To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray. We continue to call for unfettered humanitarian access.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to table a resolution at the UN Security Council on 19 June about the use of systematic rape and sexual violence against the women and girls of Tigray and demanding that those responsible are brought to justice. [HL460]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have spoken about the situation in Tigray in the five 'AOB' discussions on that subject at the UN Security Council and did so again in the 25 March debate on Protection of Civilians, where I as the Minister responsible for Human Rights, raised again continued atrocities inflicted upon the people of Tigray, including endemic sexual violence. In the Security Council Press Statement of 22 April, the members of the Security Council 'expressed their deep concern about allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including reports of sexual violence against women and girls in the Tigray region and called for investigations to find those responsible and bring them to justice'. We will continue to support discussion in the UN on this pressing matter. However, we do not plan to table a specific resolution on Tigray on 19 June.

Welfare Tax Credits: Overpayments

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much it would cost to write-off overpayment tax credit debt accrued by Universal Credit claimants (1) in total, and (2) for the time periods of (a) 12 months and under, (b) 12 months to under 36 months, (c) 36 months and above; and in each case how many claimants would have their overpayment tax credit debt written off. [HL55]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does not store information in a format entirely commensurate with the question, but I can confirm that approximately £3 billion Tax Credit debt associated to Universal Credit claimants has been transferred to DWP. This debt relates to 2.4 million claimants, some of whom could appear more than once in this total. The following table breaks this down and shows how much has been recovered to date.

Tax Credit debt transferred to date

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Customer Count</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Total Recoveries</i>
2016-17	110.8k	£147.933m	£6.261m
2017-18	155.8k	£190.472m	£37.987m

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Customer Count</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Total Recoveries</i>
2018-19	531.3k	£676.984m	£109.091m
2019-20	724.5k	£964.170m	£213.693m
2020-21	593.0k	£679.055m	£206.041m
2021-22 YTD	285.4k	£364.141m	£61.838m
Totals	2400.8k	£3,022.76m	£634.910m

During the same period, the Department wrote off £9.4 million Tax Credit debt for approximately 5,700 customers. The latest HMRC forecasts suggest that a further £2.4 billion is due to migrate to DWP Debt Management for future recovery. Therefore, based on the value of debt transferred to date and the forecast of further debt that will transfer, if all Tax Credits debt associated to UC claimants was written off it would cost in the region of £5.4 billion associated to approximately 4 million customers.

The Department has a duty to protect public funds and an obligation to ensure that overpaid benefit payments are recovered in accordance with the appropriate social security legislation.

The Department seeks to recover benefit overpayments as quickly as possible without creating any undue financial hardship to the claimant. The rate of deduction is determined by legislation and can only be calculated once other higher priority deductions have been taken into account. The maximum deduction that can be taken from someone's UC Standard Allowance was reduced to 25 per cent in April 2021.

We want to ensure that repayment of all debt owed to the Department is sustainable and takes into account the customer's ability to pay. Claimants are encouraged to contact DWP if they are unable to afford the rate of recovery. The recovery rate of Tax Credit overpayments can be reduced where a claimant is experiencing financial hardship.

Wind Power: Celtic Sea

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government how with the future development of Celtic Sea wind power they will ensure that power lines to shore are shared to prevent excess damage to the seabed and minimise costs. [HL541]

Lord Callanan: The Government has launched the Offshore Transmission Network Review to ensure that the transmission connections for offshore wind generation are delivered in the most appropriate way, considering the increased ambition for offshore wind to achieve net zero. This will be done with a view to finding the appropriate balance between environmental, social and economic costs.

Workplace Pensions: Low Pay

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate have they made of the number of (1) women, and (2) men, earning less than the personal tax threshold who were automatically enrolled in workplace pension schemes which operate on net pay basis in each tax year since 2017–18. [[HL549](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: HMRC cannot determine which individuals have been automatically enrolled in a workplace pension. However, HMRC estimates that 1.5m individuals earning below the personal allowance in 2018-19 made workplace pension contributions via Real time Information (RTI) using net pay arrangements. Around 75% of these individuals are estimated to be female and 25% are estimated to be male. The personal allowance in 2018-19 was £11,850. HMRC's Survey of Personal Income (SPI) and administrative data was used to produce the estimates. The 2018-19 SPI (published in March 2021) is the latest year available. The SPI is published annually.

Workplace Pensions: Standards

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they currently impose, or intend to impose, any penalties on (1) employers, (2) scheme trustees, (3) pension providers, or (4) employer advisers, if automatic enrolment scheme members are contributing to a pension scheme which is unsuitable for them. [[HL548](#)]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The government keeps all aspects of private pensions policy under review but there are no current plans to change the regulatory framework.

Employers have a duty to enrol their workers in a workplace pension scheme that is a qualifying scheme for automatic enrolment in accordance with the requirements set out in the Pensions Act 2008.

An automatic enrolment scheme must meet certain quality requirements. This is underpinned by the wider

regulatory framework for all occupational and group personal pension schemes which helps to safeguard members' pensions. Compliance and enforcement of these standards is the responsibility of The Pensions Regulator and the Financial Conduct Authority.

Xinjiang: Religious Buildings

*Asked by **Baroness Goudie***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 April (HL15287), what assessment they have made of reports of mosques being destroyed in Xinjiang province; and what representations have they made to the government of China on the destruction of mosques. [[HL496](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by credible reports that mosques and other religious sites have been demolished in Xinjiang, evidence of which British diplomats have seen first-hand. The UK is committed to taking robust action to hold China to account for its human rights violations. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four Chinese government officials, as well the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang. The Government has repeatedly called on China to respect the freedom of religion and belief in line with its Constitution and its international obligations. Internationally, we led the first joint statements on this issue at the UN Human Rights Council in June 2020 and the UN Third Committee in October 2019. On 6 October 2020, alongside Germany, we brought together a total of 39 countries to express grave concern at the situation in Xinjiang at the UN Third Committee. This growing caucus of international concern reflects UK diplomatic leadership, including the personal involvement of the Foreign Secretary.

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