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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<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

Monday, 21 June 2021

Myanmar

[HLWS101]

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

The UK condemns the coup in Myanmar in the strongest possible terms and we continue to stand with the people of Myanmar as they face increased levels of intimidation, violence, suppression, and arbitrary detention from the military regime.

The UK has been at the forefront of the international response, most recently securing a statement on Myanmar in the G7 Leader's communiqué on 13 June. We also secured a G7 commitment to prevent flow of arms to Myanmar, a commitment which was echoed in the UN General Assembly Resolution of 18 June.

Today we are announcing further measures to target the military and its financial interests.

Sanctions

The UK has worked in close collaboration with partners to implement effective and targeted sanctions. On 29 April we laid new Myanmar (Sanctions) Regulations 2021, to give us broader powers to target the Myanmar military and its business interests.

Today, the UK is announcing its sixth tranche of sanctions since the coup and the second under our new regulations. New designations will target Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE) and Myanmar Pearl Enterprise (MPE), two state owned entities in Myanmar's extractive sector, which generate millions of pounds in revenue for the junta. We are also designating the State Administration Council (SAC), the junta's governing body, to send a clear message to the regime that we oppose the coup and associated human rights violations.

These designations build on the UK's continued efforts to target the military's economic infrastructure and revenue streams used to finance brutal human rights violations and repression of the civilian population. On 17 May we announced the designation of Myanmar Gems Enterprise under our new regulations. We have also listed Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited and Myanmar Economic Corporation, two military conglomerates under our Global Human Rights regime.

Trade Review

Since February we have conducted an extensive series of engagements with UK businesses and trade bodies conducting business within Myanmar; and have undertaken due diligence on the operations of the Department for International Trade (DIT) and our partners in the country.

We will retain our suspension on trade promotion and are reiterating that UK businesses should not enter into relationships that benefit the military and must remain compliant with the UK sanctions regime. Further, we expect British businesses to adhere to and work with suppliers who comply with standards of responsible business conduct, including respecting human rights.

Through this review we have determined that no sector can be classified as completely free from military associations and that some, such as the extractive industries, have a particularly high level of association. Sectors in which DIT has historically offered trade support do not fall into this category of high-level exposure.

Equally, we recognise that the complete withdrawal of all international businesses from Myanmar would deepen the collapse of the economy, risk increasing regional instability, and above all negatively impact the most vulnerable in society.

The Overseas Business Risk Guidance, published today, provides further clarity on issues raised by businesses throughout the Trade Review process, recognising the complex and unique challenges organisations face in these circumstances. In particular, we have made clear that UK businesses procuring natural resources from Myanmar must do enhanced due diligence on their supply chain. DIT and Embassy staff in Yangon remain available to assist UK businesses in remaining compliant with their obligations.

Northern Ireland: New Decade, New Approach Agreement

[HLWS100]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: My Rt. Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis) has today made the following statement:

The Government is committed to the delivery of the New Decade, New Approach agreement in full. It was the basis upon which the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement institutions were restored. Full implementation of New Decade, New Approach remains important to the ongoing stability of those institutions. Recognising Northern Ireland's rich diversity of identities and languages, it is essential that the balanced cultural package the parties agreed to is implemented in full.

If the Executive has not progressed the legislation for the identity, language and culture package in the New Decade, New Approach agreement by the end of September, the UK Government will take the legislation through the UK Parliament. The New Decade, New Approach agreement was endorsed by the UK Parliament, and we will introduce the legislation that delivers on these commitments in October 2021, if necessary. This will provide for the creation of an Office for Identity and Cultural Expression, an Ulster Scots Commissioner, and an Irish language Commissioner.

Progress on Large Civil Aircraft Disputes

[HLWS99]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade (Liz Truss MP) has today made the following statement:

On Thursday 17 June I struck a historic deal with the US on the Airbus-Boeing disputes in a major win for both the aerospace sector and for industries like Scotch whisky.

After talks with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, both sides have agreed to suspend retaliatory tariffs for 5 years and cooperate more closely on tackling unfair trade practices by non-market economies.

These 17-year disputes, the longest-running in the history of the World Trade Organisation, have seen damaging retaliatory tariffs levied on products on both sides of the Atlantic due to disagreements over support for large civil aircraft.

The disagreement has hit industries such as cashmere, machinery, and single-malt Scotch whisky that employ tens of thousands of people across the UK. The Scotch Whisky Association estimates the tariffs have cost the sector hundreds of millions of pounds in lost revenue.

The UK, which was involved as a member of the EU, took the decision to deescalate these disputes by

unilaterally suspending retaliatory tariffs on the US at the start of this year, which encouraged the US to agree to a four-month suspension of tariffs while both sides negotiated a longer-term arrangement.

The UK and US will now work together to put the agreement into practice and strengthen cooperation in the large civil aircraft sector.

This deal marks our joint intention for the UK and US to:

- Not impose countermeasures for 5 years.
- Establish a working group on large civil aircraft that is led by the respective Minister responsible for trade.
- Provide financing to a large civil aircraft producer for the production or development of large civil aircraft on market terms.
- Provide research & development funding for large civil aircraft: through an open and transparent process; making the results widely available; and not providing research and development funding, or other support, to producers of large civil aircraft in a way that would cause negative effects to the other side.
- Collaborate on tackling non-market practices of third countries that may impact on their large civil aircraft industries.

Written Answers

Monday, 21 June 2021

Abortion: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Baroness Barker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many women have travelled to the British mainland to receive abortion care since the establishment of a legal framework for abortion in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2020. [HL987]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Department of Health and Social Care has now published the 2020 statistics on abortion in England and Wales. In 2020, there were 371 abortions in England and Wales for women from Northern Ireland.

I would note that over 1,100 women and girls have been able to access local abortion services since April last year - and this should not be overlooked at a time where the services have not been formally commissioned. It is, however, very distressing to hear that even throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, some women and girls have still been forced to travel, at a time where it is even more crucial for local access to healthcare to be available. We put on record our thanks to the medical professionals who have ensured that women and girls have had some access to abortion services in Northern Ireland to date, and the organisations that have supported this work.

However, progress must be made towards properly commissioning services so that safe, local abortion services are fully available as a healthcare service in Northern Ireland. The current situation is not acceptable. If there continues to be no progress, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will issue a direction using his powers under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021, to ensure that services are commissioned and delivered according to the 2018 Report of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Africa: Trade Agreements

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are giving to the African Union for the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area. [HL864]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK welcomes the creation of the AU's African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which began trading on 1 January 2021. When fully implemented, a common African market will have a combined GDP of \$2.6 trillion (approximately £1.84 trillion) and could lead to a 33% increase in intra-African trade, with opportunities for the African continent and for UK businesses and investors. The UK is supporting the AfCFTA through secondment of experts into the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra, Ghana, the provision of research support through the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and capacity-building events for national and

regional trade negotiators involved in the ongoing AfCFTA negotiations.

Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling

Asked by **Baroness Finlay of Llandaff**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the proposed timescale for the (1) publication of the consultation on mandatory calorie labelling for pre-packaged alcoholic drinks, and (2) implementation of the policy following the consultation. [HL938]

Lord Bethell: We are committed to consult shortly on our intention to make companies provide calorie labelling on all pre-packaged alcohol they sell. The consultation will include further details about the proposed timescale for implementation of the policy.

Armed Forces: Universal Credit

Asked by **Lord Coaker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been identified by the Armed Forces "identifier" on to the Universal Credit system since it was introduced. [HL724]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: This information is not currently available. We are developing the way to determine numbers of people identified by the Armed Forces "identifier" and plan to release them later in the year.

Armenia: Azerbaijan

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan regarding the release of Armenian prisoners, following recent fighting at the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. [HL759]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: During visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan in February the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas urged both parties to work with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to expedite the return of all prisoners of war. Through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and bilateral engagement in Baku and Yerevan, UK officials continue to urge the Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities to prioritise this issue, alongside other unresolved issues following hostilities last year.

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan about the clearance of mines from the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. [HL760]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: During visits to both Armenia and Azerbaijan in February the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas highlighted

UK concern over the large amount of unexploded ordnance across the region. The UK Government is deeply concerned by the ongoing loss of civilian life along the border as a result of unexploded ordnance. We continue to urge both Governments to work together to ensure that humanitarian organisations have unimpeded access to the region.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any evidence that Azerbaijani troops have been deployed in the Syunik and Gegharkunk provinces in Armenia. [HL779]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan about the movement of Azerbaijani troops at the Armenian border. [HL780]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the need for a border commission to determine the demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. [HL781]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is closely monitoring the situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border following an increase in tensions. Through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and bilateral engagement in Baku and Yerevan, UK officials continue to urge the Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities to settle all outstanding matters including the peaceful negotiation of their borders.

Asthma: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a record has been kept of the number of people with asthma who have contracted Covid-19; and what assessment they have made of whether there is any variation in outcomes for those with uncontrolled asthma compared to those on an effective treatment regime. [HL365]

Lord Bethell: There is no unified record of the number of people with asthma who have contracted Covid-19. While NHS Digital holds data identifying where a patient has both Covid-19 and asthma diagnoses, many cases of asthma will be diagnosed and managed in a primary care setting. Primary care data is not currently linked to data for hospital admissions.

No such assessment has been made.

Asylum: Finance

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much was the weekly benefit payment received by asylum seekers in each of the last 10 years. [HL802]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute can obtain support from the Home Office. The support package usually consists of free, furnished accommodation (with utility bills and council tax paid) and a weekly cash allowance to meet other essential living needs.

The standard weekly cash allowance for a single adult asylum seeker over the past 10 years is set out in the table below.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Weekly Rate</i>
From 18 April 2011	£36.62
From 6 April 2015	£36.95
From 6 February 2018	£37.75
From 15 June 2020	£39.60
From 22 February 2021	£39.63

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the failure to pay benefits to asylum seekers due to contractual changes to the ASPEN card payments system; and what steps they will take to ensure that this does not happen again. [HL803]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The PrePaid Financial Services (PFS) solution is a well-established Mastercard pre-paid card that is used by organisations across the UK as well as abroad and has undergone over 5 months of rigorous testing to integrate with Home Office systems.

Service users were notified of the transition in advance and a significant majority of service users have received their Aspen card and successfully activated it. For those who have done this the service is functioning as expected. The cards are fully working, withdrawals and purchases are being made and the automated IVR activation line is operating well.

Transitions of this nature are complex, and plans to mitigate anticipated issues were, and remain, in place. Cash payments were made available in emergencies. We will continue to work with the remainder of service users to activate their cards and ensure they are supported throughout.

As part of our management of service contracts continuous improvement assessments will be factored in throughout the contract term and implemented accordingly.

Asylum: Napier Barracks

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many immigrants have been detained at Napier Barracks in each of the past six weeks for which figures are available. [HL804]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: No-one is detained at Napier Barracks as service users accommodated there are free to come and go as they please.

Azerbaijan: Land Mines

Asked by Lord Kilclooney

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the governments of (1) Russia, and (2) Armenia, to have the location of land mines in Azerbaijan sovereign territory made available to the government of Azerbaijan. [HL869]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: During her visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan in February the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas highlighted UK concern over the large amount of unexploded ordnance across the region. We understand from Azerbaijani government reports that as of 9 June 2021, 27 Azerbaijanis have been killed and over 100 injured by explosive remnants of war. We are deeply concerned by this ongoing loss of civilian life.

The UK Government continues to urge both countries, most recently at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on 3 June, to work together to ensure that humanitarian organisations have unimpeded access to the region and that de-mining maps are urgently provided to ensure the safety of civilians.

Asked by Lord Flight

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to make representations to the government of Armenia in relation to sharing data on landmines with the government of Azerbaijan; and (2) to provide support to the government of Azerbaijan in clearing landmines from land regained by that country during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. [HL939]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On 14 June the Minister for the European Neighbourhood spoke to Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov. She welcomed the return of Armenian prisoners of war/detainees by the Azerbaijani Government and the subsequent handover of mine maps by the Armenian Government. We continue to monitor the situation and understand from Azerbaijani government reports that as of 9 June 2021, 27 Azerbaijanis have been killed and over 100 injured by explosive remnants of war. We are deeply concerned by this ongoing loss of civilian life.

The UK Government continues to urge both countries, most recently at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on 3 June, to work together to ensure that humanitarian organisations have unimpeded access to the region and that de-mining maps are urgently provided to ensure the safety of civilians. Last week the MOD sent Counter Explosives Experts to survey parts of Azerbaijan worst effected by unexplored ordnance to understand how the UK can best support Azerbaijan in this area.

BBC: Finance

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the level of government funding to the BBC in each of the last five years for (1) the BBC World Service, (2) BBC Media Action, and (3) other funding streams; and what decisions have been made, if any, to provide the BBC with funding to replace EU payments that will or have ceased. [HL1004]

Baroness Barran: Since 2016, the FCDO has funded the World2020 Programme which has established 12 new language services and provided enhancements to existing services. The FCDO provided the following funding to the World Service: £34.2m for 2016-17; £85.6m for 2017-18; £85.8m for 2018-19 and 2019-20; and £87.2m for 2020-21.

BBC Media action sets out the levels of government funding within its annual review. They are reported to be £17.8m in 2016/17, £9.3m in 2017/18, £8m in 2018/19 and £10.3m in 2019/20. The 2020/21 report is due to be published.

As part of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the UK will no longer be participating in the vast majority of EU programmes, and the Government has chosen to look at other ways of supporting the UK sectors.

The BBC sets out its full funding streams within its annual accounts.

BBC: Ofcom

Asked by Baroness Benjamin

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that Ofcom's regulation of the BBC is enhanced in the next five years. [HL988]

Baroness Barran: The government established Ofcom as the BBC regulator to ensure the BBC is robustly held to account as the nation's broadcaster. Ofcom is independent of the government and the government has no say over Ofcom's operational decisions.

However, the Mid-Term Review of the Royal Charter offers an opportunity for the government to consider whether current governance and regulatory arrangements for the BBC are working effectively, including the effectiveness of the regulation by Ofcom. We will start the preparations now, ahead of the review starting formally next year, as the Royal Charter sets out.

Bees: Imports

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of honey bee packages imported into the UK from Italy since 2014 have been inspected by bee inspectors for the presence of the small hive beetle. [HL643]

Lord Benyon: Bee health is a devolved matter: inspections data held by the National Bee Unit cover England, Wales and Scotland.

Biosecurity is a priority for this Government and we recognise that small hive beetle would present a serious threat to our honey bees if it were to arrive in the UK.

The National Bee Unit's agreed inspection target for England and Wales is 50% of consignments of honey bees from Italy. In all years from 2014 to 2020 this figure was met or exceeded in relation to packages. In 2018 there were no packages from Italy imported by beekeepers in England and Wales.

The figures for checks on consignments containing packages of honey bees are:

2014 – 100%

2015 – 52%

2016 – 50%

2017 – 82%

2018 – Zero

2019 – 56%

2020 – 78%

No imports into any part of the UK are permitted from the area of Italy affected by small hive beetle.

Burkina Faso

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the (1) economic, (2) political, and (3) security, situation in Burkina Faso. [[HL773](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation and humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso. Over 1 million people are displaced due to conflict and parts of the country are facing severe food insecurity. The attack in Solhan, Burkina Faso, on 4 June, was the deadliest attack to take place in Burkina Faso since 2015. The Minister for Africa called for a swift and transparent investigation, ensuring those responsible are held to account. On 11 June, the Minister for Africa spoke with the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso where he gave his condolences and discussed UK support to regional stability in the Sahel.

Following presidential elections in Burkina Faso in 2020, the Minister for Africa welcomed President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré's commitment to peace and development during his second term in office. The Minister for Africa has since discussed regional insecurity and its impact on Burkina Faso with him in January this year. Through our recent deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and our programmatic support for stabilisation and conflict resolution, the UK is committed to building long-term peace and stability in the Sahel. In Burkina Faso we use our humanitarian assistance to support those worst affected by conflict, as well as providing access to

education in emergencies and supporting women's sexual and reproductive health.

Business: Government Assistance

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support businesses that have lost revenue from cross-border card payments because of the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. [[HL902](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: With the UK no longer part of the EU single market, any changes in cross-border interchange fees between the UK and EU, as between the UK and third countries, are a result of commercial decisions by card schemes.

The Government has legislated to ensure that card payment interchange fees remain capped for UK domestic card transactions, where both the card issuer and acquirer are located in the UK, through the Interchange Fee (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The levels of UK interchange fee caps are at the same levels as before the end of the Transition Period.

Regarding the cost of card payments more widely, the Payment Systems Regulator is currently carrying out a market review into card acquiring services. Its review is examining how effectively competition is working in the provision of these services, including looking at the fees businesses pay for card payments and the quality of service they receive. The interim findings were published on the 15th September 2020, and the final report and remedies are due to be published later this year.

Cameroon: Sanctions

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the government of France about the co-ordination of European, USA and UK action against those undermining the peaceful resolution of the crisis in the anglophone regions of Cameroon. [[HL827](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government works with international partners, including the French Government, to raise the North-West South-West crisis in Cameroon within multilateral fora. During a visit to Cameroon in March 2021 the Minister for Africa discussed the crisis with representatives from the French, US and Swiss Embassies.

Cardiovascular System: Diseases

*Asked by **Baroness McDonagh***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many hospitalised Covid-19 patients also had cardiovascular disease; of these, what is the breakdown by (1) age, (2) sex, and (3) region; and how many of these patients had atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease. [[HL1013](#)]

Lord Bethell: The information requested is currently being validated and is due to be published in September 2021.

Care Homes: Fees and Charges

Asked by Baroness Gale

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the rationale for the rule that normally only third parties can pay top-up fees for care and not the individuals using the care homes themselves where they are financially able. [HL733]

Lord Bethell: Anyone who has assets above the upper capital limit of £23,250 is a self-funder and is expected to meet the full cost of their care. Top-up fees are generally used when someone has assets below £23,250 and falls within the means test.

Payment of top-up fees must be sustainable. Limiting the circumstances in which a first party top-up is allowed ensures those with lower wealth are protected from the negative consequences of no longer being able to afford the top-up, such as having to move to an alternative care home.

Cataracts: Surgery

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the average cost for an NHS community-based cataract operation. [HL811]

Lord Bethell: Data on the cost of cataract operations undertaken outside of National Health Service hospital trusts is not collected.

Choirs: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Howarth of Newport

To ask Her Majesty's Government what considerations will determine when they will lift the present restrictions on the number of people who are permitted to sing in an amateur choir. [HL748]

Baroness Barran: Non-professional singing indoors should only take place in a single group of up to 6 people and activities should be organised to allow for social distancing to be maintained.

We are aware that singing can increase the risk of Covid-19 transmission through the spread of aerosol droplets. Therefore, it is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions. We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. The Prime Minister has announced that easing of restrictions at Step 4 has been delayed until 19 July. Further detail on Step 4 will be set out as soon as possible, subject to the four tests for easing restrictions.

Commonhold Council

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date the Commonhold Council last met; and what is the planned frequency of its meetings in the future. [HL778]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government has established a new Commonhold Council as a partnership of industry, leaseholders and Government that will prepare homeowners and the market for the widespread take-up of commonhold. This will take time and close working with consumers and industry, and the Commonhold Council will be the critical first step of this. The Council has been convened and will continue to meet regularly over the course of this year.

Commonhold: Leasehold

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the timescale for changes to commonhold arrangements in order to attract unit holders. [HL777]

Lord Greenhalgh: In 2017 the Government asked the Law Commission to recommend reforms to reinvigorate commonhold as a workable alternative to leasehold, for both existing and new homes. The Law Commission published their report on commonhold, *Reinvigorating commonhold: the alternative to leasehold ownership*, on 21 July 2020. The Government is considering the report and will respond in due course.

The Government has established a new Commonhold Council as a partnership of industry, leaseholders and Government that will prepare homeowners and the market for the widespread take-up of commonhold. This will take time and close working with consumers and industry, and the Commonhold Council will be the critical first step of this.

Coronavirus: Inquiries

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to call for a full independent inquiry into the possibility of the Covid-19 virus leaking from a laboratory in Wuhan. [HL844]

Lord Bethell: A transparent, independent and science-led investigation is an important part of the international effort to understand the origins of Covid-19. The World Health Organization convened a group of independent experts to begin a study and phase one reported on 30 March 2021. We will work with our international partners to ensure a timely, transparent, evidence-based and expert-led phase two of this study.

Coronavirus: Quarantine

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to reintroduce shielding for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals who (1) are immunocompromised, or (2) have not been protected by two doses of the vaccine, but who are expected to return to work and normal life when the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted. [HL963]

Lord Bethell: Shielding is only introduced where absolutely necessary as the measures are restrictive and can have a negative impact on individuals mental and physical wellbeing. Prevalence levels of Covid-19 and the risk faced by those considered as clinically extremely vulnerable are currently low and as a result the reintroduction of shielding is not required. However, the Government continues to monitor the situation and would not hesitate to reintroduce shielding measures, either locally or nationally, if necessary.

Work is ongoing to better understand the effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines in the clinically extremely vulnerable population, particularly those who are immunocompromised or immunosuppressed. The results of this work, along with the epidemiological situation at the time, will inform whether any further guidance or support is required for certain groups of clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many individuals are medically unable to be vaccinated against Covid-19, either because they are (1) immunocompromised, (2) undergoing cancer treatment, or (3) undergoing any other treatment rendering them unsuitable for vaccination. [HL1031]

Lord Bethell: Public Health England does not hold this data.

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the percentage of the world's adult population which have received one or more vaccinations against the Covid-19 virus by the end of May. [HL707]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The data on global Covid-19 vaccine delivery is rapidly evolving as new vaccines are approved and distributed, and varies based on national reporting practices. As of 9 June 2021, the World Health Organization estimates that 2.09 billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide. More data on worldwide vaccination can be found at <https://covid19.who.int/>.

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors

to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), having committed £548 million, which through match-funding leveraged \$1 billion from other donors in 2020. This support to COVAX has been critical in supporting its supply of Covid-19 vaccines to over 125 countries and economies. COVAX aims to provide Covid-19 vaccine doses to at least 30% of the adult population in low and middle-income countries by the end of 2021.

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that accurate records of vaccination status are maintained where individuals receive a first Covid-19 vaccine in one part of the UK and a second vaccine in a different part of the country. [HL800]

Lord Bethell: The National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) is used as the national register for Covid-19 vaccinations. At the point a Covid-19 vaccine is given, the vaccinating team record this information onto NIMS and a patient's general practitioner (GP) record. NIMS sends daily updates to GP systems to update their local record and monitor progress for their patients.

Work is ongoing to transfer data between devolved health administrations to ensure that vaccinations which occur outside of the patient's 'home' nation are delivered to their patient record.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to raise the issue of global vaccine equity at the upcoming G7 meeting in Falmouth. [HL806]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), committing £548 million, which through match-funding leveraged \$1 billion from other donors in 2020. This support to COVAX has been critical to it supplying Covid-19 vaccines to over 125 countries and economies. The UK's investment in developing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine also represents a critical contribution to global vaccination efforts, with 450 million doses having been delivered globally at cost so far.

The UK's G7 Presidency is also championing equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to help the world fight and build back better from this pandemic. The UK has committed to sharing 100 million vaccine doses by June 2022, with the majority going to OVAX. We welcome the commitments made by our G7 partners to this shared goal, and look forward to discussing how we can work together to progress this agenda further.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the WHO Director-General's remarks on 9 April that bilateral vaccine donations exacerbated global vaccine inequality, how many vaccines they have donated (1) to individual nations, and (2) to the COVAX programme;

and what plans they have to support to the COVAX initiative further. [HL807]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains committed to equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and the Prime Minister has called on G7 leaders to vaccinate the world by the end of next year. As the multilateral mechanism set up to support international cooperation on vaccines, COVAX remains best-placed in allocating vaccines fairly and effectively.

The UK was one of the earliest and largest donors to COVAX, donating £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment. Our early funding gave COVAX the purchase power it needed to secure deals with manufacturers to supply internationally-approved vaccines for up to 92 low and middle income countries. So far, COVAX has helped deliver over 81 million doses to 129 countries and territories. The UK is also among the largest donors to the ACT-Accelerator, committing up to £813 million of UK aid to partners for the development and distribution of vaccines, treatments, and tests in developing countries, including £250 million of core funding to the Coalition for Pandemic Preparedness (CEPI) in 2020 to support its work to accelerate the development of, and access to vaccines. We will continue to discuss this issue with our G7 partners, and will issue details of the quantities and timeframe for UK sharing of vaccine doses soon.

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the antibody response in immunocompromised individuals following two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine; and if these individuals are adequately protected from Covid-19 as virus infection rates rise across areas of England. [HL961]

Lord Bethell: Public Health England (PHE) has been monitoring the proportion of the population with antibodies to natural Covid-19 infection from the start of the pandemic, including in the immunocompromised. PHE is also monitoring the effectiveness of vaccinations in clinical risk groups which will include those with immunosuppression. From the evaluation of the vaccine programme, the data shows that completion of the two dose schedule correlates well with protection from both disease and severe outcomes, including hospitalisation and death including in those who are immunocompromised.

The Virus Watch data supported by the Antibody Testing Team in NHS Test and Trace provides information regarding patients' antibodies including immunocompromised patients. This would suggest some protection against Covid-19 but it is only one measure of protection and does not look at cellular immunity which may be more important in terms of long-term immunity.

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the antibody response in

immunocompromised individuals following trials of a third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. [HL962]

Lord Bethell: The COV-BOOST study was commissioned by the Department through the National Institute for Health Research and funded by the Vaccine Taskforce, as part of the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium.

This study launched on 19 May and initial findings are expected in September. The study will provide vital data on the impact of a third dose on patients' immune responses and will help inform decisions by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on potential plans for a booster programme from autumn this year.

Courts and Tribunals: Standards

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle the backlog of cases in (1) courts, and (2) tribunals. [HL798]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: Restoring the ability of courts and tribunals to hear cases, even within the continuing operational constraints presented by the pandemic, is crucial in tackling the increase in outstanding cases. We have allocated over £250m, we have made courts Covid-secure, opened 60 Nightingale courtrooms, and enabled remote hearings in their thousands.

As a result of our actions so far, we are completing cases in the Crown Court at the same level as before the pandemic began. This progress means that increases in outstanding cases caused by Covid have stabilised, and in some areas – like the Magistrates' Court – the outstanding cases are reducing.

As restrictions ease, we will maximise the system and enable judges to safely hold as many hearings as possible. We will run each Crown Court site to its fullest, with no limit on sitting days this financial year, so more cases can be heard and waiting times can come down. There are also additional sitting days compared to the allocation last year in other jurisdictions.

To go further, we will continue to recruit more judges and staff, continue to make use of efficiencies and technology, and make legislative changes to protect court time. For example, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will allow for more virtual hearings to support the ongoing use of live links and remote hearings (using video and audio technology), underpinning open justice by allowing remote observation of proceedings. We plan to legislate to give the Crown Court new powers to send such cases back to the Magistrates' Court for trial and for sentencing, where appropriate.

Crimes of Violence: Females

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve support in the justice system for the victims of violence against women and girls. [HL794]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: Protecting women and girls from violence and abuse, and supporting victims, are key priorities for this Government. These crimes are extremely serious and have a huge impact both for those subjected to such violence and more broadly on our economy, health services, and the criminal justice system.

In 2021-22, we will provide just under £151m for victim and witness support services. This includes an extra £51m to increase support for rape and domestic abuse victims, building on the emergency funding already provided to help domestic abuse and sexual violence services meet Covid-driven demand. This compares to a total budget of £48.5m in 2010-2011.

This funding includes £27m for 700 Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Advisers and £20.7m for local sexual violence and domestic abuse services.

We continue to work closely with the Home Office on the development of the Government's forthcoming Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The new Strategy will focus on prevention, drive forward improvements in the effort to target perpetrators, respond to the changing nature of crimes against women and girls and, most importantly, will continue to put victims at the heart of our approach.

In addition, the forthcoming Victims' Bill, which we will consult on later this year, will ensure that all victims are supported, and their rights are recognised, at every stage of the criminal justice system and beyond.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase minimum sentences for perpetrators of violence against women and girls. [HL795]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The government keeps offences and penalties under review, including those in relation to violence against women and girls. Minimum sentences are rarely used; there are currently no plans to introduce minimum sentences in this area.

The government is committed to keeping people safe from all forms of sexual violence. In 2020 we legislated to end the automatic halfway release of serious violent and sexual offenders who receive a standard determinate sentence (SDS) of 7 years or more. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will extend this change further by ensuring certain serious violent and sexual offenders who receive a SDS of between 4 and 7 years will also have to spend two thirds of their sentence in custody, demonstrating how seriously the government takes this type of offending.

The government will also be publishing a new cross-government "Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy" later this year which will help further transform the response to these crimes, from prevention and raising awareness, to ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice.

Culture Recovery Fund and Cultural Renewal Taskforce: Local Government

Asked by Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many representatives from local councils are members of the (1) Cultural Renewal Taskforce, and (2) Cultural Recovery Board. [HL1107]

Baroness Barran: The Cultural Renewal Taskforce (CRT) and its Working Groups were set up to develop guidance for safe reopening of DCMS sectors following the latest coronavirus guidelines. The Culture Recovery Board was created to oversee the delivery of the Culture Recovery Fund.

The membership of the Cultural Renewal Taskforce and its Working Groups and the membership of the Culture Recovery Board can be found on the government's website. The Local Government Association is a member of several of the CRT Working Groups.

Debts: Developing Countries

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to raise the issue of relief of poorer income countries' indebtedness to banks and other private creditors (1) at the meeting of G7 finance ministers, and (2) in discussions with other international partners. [HL955]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The UK secured strong commitments on international debt from its G7 partners in the G7 Finance Ministers communique[1]. G7 Finance Ministers reiterated their commitment to implement the G20 and Paris Club Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and set out their expectation that private creditors will provide at least as favourable debt treatments in line with the Common Framework. They noted the importance of debt transparency for debt sustainability and committed to publish their own creditor portfolios on a loan-by-loan basis for future direct lending by end of 2021. They also welcomed the establishment of a G7 Private Sector Working Group.

We continue to raise the importance of these issues with other international partners including at the G20, Paris Club and the Boards of the IMF and World Bank.

[1] [FMCBGs_communique_-_5_June.pdf](#) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](#)).

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government, given the operation of vulture funds and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on poorer income countries, what consideration they have given to introducing legislation similar to the time-expired Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act 2010. [HL972]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: At this stage, the UK is not considering legislative options to force private sector creditors to participate in debt treatments. We are focused on the swift and full implementation of the G20-Paris Club Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative which will ensure fair burden sharing between all official and private sector creditors. At their 5 June 2021 meeting, G7 Finance Ministers were clear that the private sector is expected to provide at least as favourable debt treatment as official creditors and the Government will be working with international partners to seek to ensure this is the case.

Detainees: EU Nationals

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to change their practice of detaining and deporting EU citizens visiting family in the UK who do not possess the correct documentation. [HL761]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Now freedom of movement has ended, EU Citizens can continue to visit the UK, without a visa, for short trips such as holidays, job interviews and to visit family.

Individuals without the necessary immigration permission for the activities that they intend to undertake in the UK, or where Border Force staff do not believe they meet the requirements for entry as a visitor, may be refused permission to enter at the border, which makes them liable for detention.

Due to Covid-19, the removal of an individual who has been refused may be delayed by a lack of flight availability or the need for an individual to provide a negative Covid test to meet the relevant EU Member State entry requirement.

The Home Office has issued a clarification to frontline officers to favour immigration bail where the imminent removal of an individual is impacted by the above.

Domestic Abuse: Leave

Asked by Baroness Burt of Solihull

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to put in place statutory paid leave for employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. [HL722]

Lord Callanan: On 14 January 2021, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published the report from its review into how victims of domestic abuse can be supported in the workplace. This report finds that, with the right support, employers can play a key role in helping to lift the lid on domestic abuse.

Throughout this review, we heard about the value of employers having a policy in place to support victims in their workforce. We encourage all employers to do this, and wherever possible, offer victims flexibility and leave should they need it to access support.

The report sets out the next steps for government, including a consultation on making flexible working the default, further consultation on the steps which can be taken for victims of domestic abuse, for example, how to exercise existing rights more effectively, and establishing a working group to develop practical solutions and encourage good practice across all employers.

Electricity Interconnectors: Portsmouth

Asked by Lord Grantchester

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date they expect the Planning Inspectorate's report into the AQUIND Interconnector to be completed and sent to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. [HL851]

Lord Callanan: The Planning Inspectorate's Report on the proposed AQUIND Interconnector has been completed and was received by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 8 June 2021. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State now has until 8 September 2021 to take his decision on whether or not to grant development consent for the proposal.

Environment Protection: Job Creation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take in response to the report by the TUC Ranking G7 Green Recovery Plans and jobs, published on 2 June. [HL838]

Lord Callanan: Under UK leadership at the G7, we have put Green Recovery from Covid-19 at the top of the international agenda and secured historic commitments such as the first ever 'net zero G7', with all countries committed to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The G7 agreed to phase out new direct government support for fossil fuel energy projects internationally, following a leading commitment made by the UK in December, and G7 members will end all new direct government support for unabated international thermal coal power generation by the end of 2021.

In order to deliver this, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan brings together £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030; and support up to 250,000 jobs across the UK by 2030. On top of this, schemes such as the Contracts for Difference (CfD) incentivise investment. Up to £557m of annual support for future Contracts for Difference has been committed, providing renewables developers with the confidence they need to invest in bringing forward new projects.

We will build on this even further and deliver a stronger, greener, more sustainable economy after this pandemic. We have started with the Energy White Paper and Industrial Decarbonisation Plan, and we will continue to set out further measures as in the run up to COP26, including publishing our Net Zero Strategy.

Eritrea and Tigray: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure the UN Security Council supports the work of Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea; and what assessment they have made of the recommendations in his report Tigray Situation Update, published on 3 June. [HL697]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We note and welcome the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur in his report on the situation in Eritrea. We fully support all efforts to fulfil his mandate as stated by the UK's Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council.

Eritrea: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to raise the issue of access to Eritrea for the UN Special Rapporteur at the UN Human Rights Council; whether this issue has been raised by the British Ambassador to Eritrea; and if so, what response they received. [HL694]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned and disappointed that the UN Special Rapporteur continues to be denied access to Eritrea. We have raised this issue at the UN Human Rights Council and directly with the Government of Eritrea, and will continue to press for the Special Rapporteur to be given the access that they need.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UN Human Rights Council report by Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker Situation of human rights in Eritrea, published on 12 May; and what steps they will take to address the human rights situation in Eritrea. [HL696]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea, which is of continued concern. The UK Government takes every opportunity to voice these concerns, and has done so directly with the Government of Eritrea, at the Human Rights Council and publicly through our annual reporting on human rights.

Evictions: Families

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of families at risk of eviction; and what steps they are taking to support them. [HL901]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government does not publish data on the number of families who are at risk of eviction.

The Government continues to provide support for all tenants, including families. A significant package of financial support is available to tenants to help them pay their rent. Local Housing Allowance rates were increased in April 2020 to the 30th percentile of market rents. In 2020/21 rates have been frozen in cash terms meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase applied in April 2020. We have also made £140 million in Discretionary Housing Payments funding available, for local authorities to distribute to renters who require additional support. This is in addition to the wider support available through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 weekly uplift to Universal Credit, which are in place until the end of September.

Tenants continue to benefit from longer notice periods of four months in most cases, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements where needed. New arrangements have also been introduced to protect tenants where a possession claim is made to the court. These include requiring landlords to provide information about how their tenant and their dependents have been affected by the pandemic, and a review stage to enable tenants to access legal advice. A new mediation pilot integrated into the court process is supporting landlords and renters who face court procedures and potential eviction to resolve issues and to help sustain tenancies where possible.

Evictions must be scheduled with a minimum of 14 days' notice and will not be carried out if bailiffs are made aware that a member of the household has Covid-19 symptoms or is self-isolating. In certain circumstances, tenants are able to apply to suspend an eviction, for example if a tenant missed the court hearing for a good reason and there would have had a good case for the possession order not to have been granted had they attended.

Financial Services: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Baroness Hayman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the carbon emissions produced by the UK financial sector. [HL743]

Lord Callanan: The UK follows the agreed international approach for estimating and reporting greenhouse gas emissions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is for countries to report emissions produced within their territories. All UK domestic and international greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets, including our Net Zero commitment, are based on these territorial emissions.

The UK was the first major economy to commit to Net Zero by 2050, and to achieve that ambition, we want to ensure that every financial decision takes climate change into account. This will require a drastic increase in the

quantity, quality and comparability of climate-related disclosures.

That is why, in November 2020, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the UK's intention to make disclosures in line with the recommendations of the Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures mandatory in the UK across the economy, including the financial services sector, by 2025. This commitment is world-leading and significant progress towards achieving our ambition, including new requirements for premium-listed firms to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions, has already been made.

We have also committed to implementing a green taxonomy that will establish a common definition for 'sustainable economic activities' and improve understanding around the impact of firms' activities and investments on the environment. Together, these measures will ensure that firms across the whole economy are disclosing robust and comparable climate and sustainability-related information that is decision-useful for investors. This will help close the sustainability data gap, as well as preventing greenwashing and supporting the greening of the UK economy.

Asked by Baroness Hayman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made as to whether voluntary pledges by the UK financial sector will be sufficient to ensure that sector's carbon emissions are reduced in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. [HL744]

Lord Callanan: The UK was the first major economy to commit to Net Zero by 2050, and to achieve that ambition, we want to ensure that every financial decision takes climate change into account. This will require a drastic increase in the quantity, quality and comparability of climate-related disclosures. That is why, in November 2020, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the UK's intention to make disclosures in line with the recommendations of the Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures mandatory in the UK across the economy, including the financial services sector, by 2025. This commitment is world-leading and significant progress towards achieving our ambition, including new requirements for premium-listed firms to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions, has already been made.

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Finance is one of the four over-arching goals of the UK Government's COP26 Presidency. At the core of the

COP26 finance campaign is the creation of a private finance system for net zero. This entails building a virtuous cycle of innovation and investment, making sure that policies, business plans and investment decisions all align with net zero targets. As a result, we are already seeing very positive momentum within the private finance sector. For example, the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero has secured commitments from 160 firms (together responsible for assets in excess of \$70tn) across the global financial system to accelerate the transition to net zero emissions. All members must be accredited by the UN Race to Zero campaign and use science-based guidelines to reach net zero emissions, covering all emissions scopes (including a 2030 interim target). Hence, there is already a large push for voluntary setting of net zero targets by financial institutions.

Firearms

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the threat posed by repurposed previously decommissioned firearms. [HL868]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: This country has some of the toughest firearms controls in the world to safeguard against abuse by criminals and terrorists and to preserve public safety.

There were six recorded offences involving reactivated handguns in England and Wales in the year ending March 2020, a decrease from 11 compared with the previous year. In the same period, there was one offence involving a weapon recorded as an "other reactivated weapon", a decrease from two in the previous year.

The controls on deactivated firearms have been strengthened in recent years. New technical specifications for deactivated firearms were introduced in 2016. The aim was to set standards which would render deactivated weapons irreversibly inoperable. The specifications were updated again in 2018. To enforce these standards, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 created a specific new offence of selling or gifting a weapon that had not been deactivated to the new specifications. The current deactivation standards are published on GOV.UK.

The Firearms Regulations 2019 further strengthened the controls through the requirement for owners of deactivated firearms to notify the Home Office regarding the possession and transfer of permanently deactivated firearms.

Our firearms law is kept under constant review to safeguard against abuse by criminals and to preserve public safety and we will not hesitate to act whenever the need arises.

Football: Gambling

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement that the Belgium Gambling

Commission will be running a gambling awareness campaign during this summer's UEFA European Football Championship, what plans they have to advertise gambling support services during the tournament. [[HL1024](#)]

Baroness Barran: All gambling advertising, wherever it appears, is subject to strict controls on content and placement. The Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising also requires social responsibility messaging throughout the length of all broadcast gambling adverts. This includes the begambleaware.org link, which signposts to a wide range of advice and support related to gambling. Since 2019, the GambleAware-led Bet Regret campaign has encouraged awareness of risky betting behaviours and action to help regain control, as well as signposting to further support. Since June 2020, members of the Betting and Gaming Council have also committed 20% of their advertising on TV and radio to safer gambling messaging.

The government launched the Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we called for evidence on the effectiveness of safer gambling messaging, and we are considering the evidence carefully.

Gibraltar

Asked by Lord Hoyle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that Gibraltar is protected (1) politically, and (2) economically, so that it does not experience any negative consequences as a result of the UK leaving the European Union. [[HL750](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Last December the UK Government, working alongside the Government of Gibraltar, reached agreement with the Spanish Government on a political framework to form the basis of a UK-EU treaty regarding Gibraltar. We are committed to delivering a treaty which safeguards the UK's sovereignty of Gibraltar and supports the prosperity of both Gibraltar and the surrounding region. Negotiations will begin once the EU has agreed its mandate and we are confident that a treaty between the UK and the EU can be agreed. However, if this does not prove to be the case, or the deal on offer is not the right one for the UK and Gibraltar, we are fully prepared to accept the implications. The UK will stand fully behind Gibraltar, its people and its economy in any scenario.

Gibraltar: Sovereignty

Asked by Lord Hoyle

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether it is their position that Gibraltar will remain British for as long as the residents of Gibraltar wish it to be. [[HL749](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK stands by its assurances to Gibraltar that we will never enter into

arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes, nor enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar is not content.

Hedges and Ditches

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current rate of removal of hedgerows by (1) housebuilders, and (2) farmers. [[HL792](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government does not have an up to date assessment of hedgerow removal but is committed to protecting hedgerows, and other field boundaries, and the habitats they provide.

Hedgelink, a partnership supported by environmental, farming and heritage organisations, has estimated that between 1984 and 1990 the length of hedgerows in Great Britain had declined by about 23%. The Countryside Survey 2000 indicated that by 1998 this decline in the length of hedgerows had been halted.

Legal protection for hedgerows is provided by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 which prohibit the removal of countryside hedgerows without first seeking approval from the local planning authority. The authority is required to decide whether a hedgerow is "important" according to the criteria in the Regulations and should not be removed. Although there is local variation, research has indicated that, nationally, over 70% of hedgerows in England and Wales are 'important'. The Regulations therefore play a valuable role in providing statutory protection for a large proportion of hedgerows in the countryside.

When granting planning permission, a local authority has the power to impose enforceable planning conditions on a developer in order to protect hedges or trees assessed as being worthy of retention, which might otherwise be harmed by construction or the new land-use.

Hedges and Ditches: Carbon Capture and Storage

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the value of hedgerows in carbon capture. [[HL791](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: A Defra-funded review in 2014 by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology illustrated the ability of hedges to store and accumulate significant amounts of carbon both above and below ground. The value of hedgerows in carbon capture was shown to vary with hedge structure, woody species and age. Tree lines were shown to be particularly impactful.

Separate analysis by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology has looked at the existing agricultural hedges

in England and estimated a total carbon stock of 9 million tonnes.

There is potential to increase this carbon stock in England through hedgerow creation and reducing hedgerow removal. This is reflected in Defra's ongoing "Delivering Clean Growth Through Sustainable Intensification" project. The total potential carbon savings from hedgerow creation in England, based on a high ambition scenario, are estimated at 100,000 tonnes CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) over carbon budget 4 (2023–27) and 300,000 tonnes CO₂e over carbon budget 5 (2028–32). This equates to a total of 696ha and 2262ha of grassland converted to hedgerows in carbon budget 4 and in carbon budget 5 respectively.

Future work should focus on gathering more empirical data on the carbon stock of hedgerows, including below-ground carbon stocks.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Tunnels

*Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received any formal requests to undertake a cost and construction assessment of the alternative proposal to build a short-mined tunnel at Wendover on HS2 Phase One. [\[HL715\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport has received successive requests to assess the Wendover short-mined tunnel proposal. The Department considered the proposal on the basis of assessments conducted by HS2 Ltd in 2017 and by independent consultants in 2018.

*Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a decision was taken by HS2 Ltd to instruct contractors EKFB not to formally evaluate and assess alternative proposals for a short-mined tunnel at Wendover on HS2 Phase One; and if so on what date. [\[HL716\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: EKFB were not instructed, either by the Department for Transport or HS2 Ltd, to formally evaluate the Wendover short-mined tunnel proposal. This decision was made on the basis that significant design work would be required to bring the proposal up to the same design maturity as the consented scheme, and that this was not an effective use of public money. This decision was communicated to David Lidington MP in October 2018.

*Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether formal discussions were held between HS2 Ltd and EKFB before the decision was taken not to consider the alternative Wendover short-mined tunnel proposal. [\[HL717\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Wendover short-mined tunnel proposal was considered by the Department,

upon receipt of advice from HS2 Ltd and from independent consultants, in both 2017 and 2018. The proposal was not, however, adopted on the basis that it was more difficult to construct, would cost more, would take longer to construct, and would require new powers to be sought. As previously stated, there was the one formal discussion involving HS2 Ltd, EKFB and DfT in April 2019, which related to a further request to reconsider the proposal again.

*Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a decision was made to restrict EKFB's design scope to the surface scheme solely as it passed Wendover on HS2 Phase One; and if so (1) on what date the decision was taken, (2) who took the decision, and (3) whether Wendover is the only location on HS2 Phase One that EKFB were prevented from seeking cost savings and engineering efficiencies. [\[HL718\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport has made no decision or instruction, to either HS2 Ltd or to EKFB, to restrict EKFB from seeking cost savings or engineering efficiencies in relation to any part of the route, including Wendover. In accordance with Lord Ahmad's statement to the House of Lords on 24 January 2017, HS2 contractors were advised to identify efficiencies within the limits of the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017.

*Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they required HS2 Ltd to produce a rigorous assessment of costs in relation to alternative proposals for a short-mined tunnel at Wendover on HS2 Phase One. [\[HL719\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: In 2017 the Department for Transport asked HS2 Ltd to assess an alternative mined tunnel proposal produced by a third party with the support of local stakeholders. HS2 Ltd's response included a comparative assessment which highlighted where HS2 Ltd disputed the costs put forward in the proposal. HS2 Ltd's assessment concluded that the costs of the proposal were underestimated. This assessment was supplied to David Lidington MP in December 2017 and Rob Butler MP in March 2020.

*Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest estimate of the costs and construction time of the current consented scheme at Wendover on HS2 Phase One. [\[HL720\]](#)

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The cost of delivering the new railway is spread across a number of contracts that cover different geographical areas. For Wendover this includes Enabling Works (Fusion JV for Colne Valley to Long Itchington), Main Civil Works (EKFB for Chilterns Tunnel North Portal to Long Itchington Tunnel South Portal) and railway systems contracts (separate route-wide

contracts including signalling, rails, track bed, and overhead line equipment).

HS2 Ltd does not routinely apply cost apportionment on the basis of geographical sections, as cost and schedule control measures are applied to the contractors delivering specific requirements or assets which will typically sit across geographical boundaries.

However, the delivery of the new railway in the Wendover area, and across the Phase One route, remains within both the budget and schedule estimates provided at the point of Notice to Proceed in April 2020.

HIV Infection: Drugs

*Asked by **Baroness Thornton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to enable pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment for HIV to be accessed in (1) GP practices, and (2) community pharmacies. [HL1027]

Lord Bethell: Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is routinely available in specialist sexual health services throughout the country. The settings in which PrEP is made available outside of sexual health services, such as general practitioner practices and community pharmacies, will be considered as part of our ongoing work on the development of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish later this year.

HIV Infection: Health Services

*Asked by **Baroness Thornton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the HIV Action Plan will be published. [HL1026]

Lord Bethell: The HIV Action Plan is currently being developed and is planned for publication later this year.

*Asked by **Baroness Thornton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they had regarding the development of the HIV Action Plan with (1) women (2) Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, (3) traveller communities, and (4) trans, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals. [HL1028]

*Asked by **Baroness Thornton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made towards meeting the recommendation in the HIV commission report *How England Will End New Cases of HIV*, published 30 November 2020, that all late HIV diagnoses should be investigated as serious incidents by the National Institute for Health Protection. [HL1029]

*Asked by **Baroness Thornton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made towards meeting the recommendation in the HIV commission report *How England Will End New*

Cases of HIV, published 30 November 2020, that the Government must review and assess the impact of current policies and legislation that need improvement. [HL1030]

Lord Bethell: The HIV Oversight Group has been formed with key HIV stakeholders, including civil society organizations who represent women, black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, trans, non-binary and gender diverse individuals, and in addition, networks of community advocates and people living with HIV to support the development of the HIV Action Plan. Specific discussions have not yet been held with those representing traveller communities.

Through these member organisations, the HIV Oversight Group aims to ensure that the intersectional voices of people living with HIV, especially those from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, are fairly represented during the development process and in the final Action Plan. The recommendations of the HIV commission will be actively considered during the development of the HIV Action Plan.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

*Asked by **Lord Rogan***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what formal role Ministers have in scrutinising the work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. [HL805]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: HMICFRS is deliberately independent of government and the bodies they inspect. However, Home Office Ministers have a number of formal scrutiny / oversight roles in relation to its inspection work, which are laid out in legislation:

- Provisions in the Police Act 1996 require Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary in England & Wales to obtain the Home Secretary's formal approval of the Inspectorate's annual police inspection programme and framework. The Chief Inspector must also submit to her (and lay before Parliament) an annual report on these inspections, including its assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in England and Wales. The Chief Inspector may also decide to carry out inspections that have not been set out in the inspection programme, but prior to doing so must consult the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary can also direct HMICFRS to carry out additional policing inspections on issues of concern.
- Provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 require Her Majesty's Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector for England to obtain the Home Secretary's formal approval of the Inspectorate's fire & rescue inspection programme and framework. The Chief Inspector must also submit to her (and lay before Parliament) an annual report on these inspections, including its assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire & rescue services in England. The Chief Inspector may also

decide to carry out an inspection of a Fire & Rescue Authority in England not set out in the inspection programme, but prior to doing so must consult the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary can also direct HMICFRS to carry out additional fire & rescue service inspections on particular issues of concern.

For both policing and fire & rescue service inspections, Ministers can ask for HMICFRS to take account of pertinent issues. Ministers also have the opportunity to scrutinise HMICFRS inspection findings. They will often receive embargoed copies and a briefing prior to publication of reports where they can discuss and raise any concerns on any of HMICFRS' findings.

Responsibility for scrutiny of the corporate aspects of HMICFRS lies with the Permanent Secretary (as the Principal Accounting Officer). However, Ministers will have sight of pertinent issues and their approval is sought where necessary e.g. Ministers approve the annual operating budget for HMICFRS.

Home Office: Internet

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the contents of the Home Office's Diversity and Inclusion webpage on gov.uk to ensure the inclusion of the protected characteristic of sex. [HL857]

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to update the list of characteristics that the Home Office lists it will not discriminate on detailed in the contents of the Home Office's Diversity and Inclusion webpage on gov.uk to include the protected characteristic of sex. [HL858]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office web pages on gov.uk will be updated as a matter of priority to reflect our inclusion of the protected characteristic of sex.

Homelessness

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of homeless people living in England in each year since 2018. [HL944]

Lord Greenhalgh: Levels of homelessness in England can be best estimated by looking at the number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of each year. In Q4 2018 this was 83,540; in Q4 2019 this was 88,310 and Q4 2020 is provisionally 95,370.

We are putting in place an unprecedented level of support to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over 2021/22, over £750 million. This includes the £310 million Homelessness Prevention Grant, giving local authorities more control and flexibility in managing

homelessness pressures and supporting those who at risk of homelessness.

Hospitality Industry: Small Businesses

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional steps they are taking to support small businesses in filling job vacancies in the hospitality sector. [HL824]

Lord Callanan: The Department regularly meets with representatives from across the sector to discuss how it can recover and build back from the pandemic.

We are doing everything we can to support hospitality on its road to recovery. This includes offering generous incentives to employers to recruit staff, with hundreds of young people starting work every day through the Kickstart Scheme. We are providing employers with a hiring incentive for each new apprentice they hire, helping more people across a broad range of industries. We are also investing £126 million in additional support to help create 40,000 more traineeships in England, funding high-quality work placements and training for 16-24-year olds in 2021-22.

Human Rights

Asked by Lord Garnier

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to incorporate objectives on working with human rights defenders into (1) all "open societies", and (2) Human Rights Directorate, plans and strategies. [HL734]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO puts human rights and their defenders at the heart of its work. We regularly assess how the UK can enhance our ability to assist human rights defenders to carry out their work safely and without fear, including in the context of the increased risks posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In July 2019 we published a report titled 'UK Support for Human Rights Defenders', which publicly underlined the UK's commitment to protecting them. In the recent Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, we said that one of our priority actions would be to defend universal human rights, including by working with local civil society and human rights defenders. As part of a wider review of departmental strategy, we are considering a range of options for how we should advance the human rights agenda globally, including our support for human rights defenders.

Asked by Lord Garnier

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to incorporate commitments to improve support and protection for human rights defenders into G7 statements on the promotion of "open societies". [HL735]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK strongly supports human rights defenders worldwide. We know

human rights defenders form an integral part of civil society, as representatives and key enablers of civic space. The G7 Foreign and Development Communique and the G7 Leaders' Open Societies Statement acknowledges the importance of human rights defenders in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. G7 members have committed to condemn the intimidation and harassment of, and violence against, journalists, many of whom act as defenders when reporting on human rights abuses. The G7 has also committed to support initiatives such as the Global Media Defence Fund, which supports projects that bolster journalists' legal protection and/or enhance media freedom through investigative journalism or strategic litigation.

Asked by Lord Garnier

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure human rights defenders working to expose corruption will be supported both (1) within, and (2) outside, the United Kingdom. [HL736]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK strongly supports human rights defenders worldwide to enable them to carry out their work safely and without fear. When the Foreign Secretary spoke at the UN General assembly special session on corruption on 2 June, he called on other countries to deliver 'a safer environment for journalists to shine a light on corruption'. The UK is supporting investigative journalists through the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project to help expose corruption and illicit finance in both the Middle East and North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. UK funding directly contributes towards strengthening local journalists' capacity to investigate the perpetrators, professional enablers, offshore entities, and financial systems that facilitate corruption and the illicit flow of money. The project helps, helping fight for the key changes needed in developing countries held back as a result, and pushes for justice in key cases to ensure accountability, good governance and sustainable development.

Immigration Controls: EU Nationals

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increase in the number of EU citizens refused entry to the UK in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. [HL816]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many EU citizens were detained on entry to the UK in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020; and what guidance they issue to immigration staff on making decisions about detention on entry. [HL817]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: While international travel is disrupted due to the pandemic, we have updated our guidance to clarify overseas nationals, including EU citizens, who have been refused entry to the UK and are

awaiting removal should be granted immigration bail, where appropriate.

Overseas nationals seeking entry into the UK at this time must not only comply with the requirements of the Immigration Rules, but the prevailing Border Health Regulations set by the UK and Devolved Governments relating to the global pandemic. Failure to comply with the health regulations can also see entry refused.

Detention of a person may be appropriate in some cases, including to keep the public safe. Border Force treat all arrivals with respect and consider each passenger's situation on an individual basis to check everyone entering the UK has the right to do so. Most people detained under immigration powers spend only very short periods in detention.

Home Office publish transparency data figures, can be accessed via published data in the link below: Immigration Enforcement data: February 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The latest data on enforced returns (of which 'deportations' is a subset) are published in the returns summary tables (opens in a new tab). The data include the number of returns which occurred from detention. More detailed breakdowns, including nationality breakdowns, can be found in Ret_D01 of the Returns detailed dataset (opens in a new tab).

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

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

Data on the number of people entering and leaving detention are published in the Detention summary tables (opens in a new tab). Data on reason for leaving detention (including those 'Returned from the UK') are published in table Det_04a of the 'Detention summary tables (opens in a new tab)' F.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that there has been a change in attitude among Border Force officers towards EU citizens arriving in the UK since 1 January. [HL818]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: While international travel is disrupted due to the pandemic, we have updated our guidance to clarify overseas nationals, including EU citizens, who have been refused entry to the UK and are awaiting removal should be granted immigration bail, where appropriate.

It should be noted 95% of individuals with no leave to remain in the UK are managed within the community rather than detained.

Border Force treat all arrivals with respect and consider each passenger's situation on an individual basis to check everyone entering the UK has the right to do so.

Those who are considering moving here for work or study should check the requirements for entry, including the Border Health Regulations relating to the global pandemic set by the UK and Devolved Governments. We have worked closely with EU partners to make sure people are aware of these new requirements, including a multi-million awareness campaign across the EU.

Immigration: EU Nationals

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to extending the EU Settlement Scheme beyond 30 June. [HL819]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have continued to receive and process thousands of applications a day to the EU Settlement scheme throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with over 5.6 million applications received and over 5 million grants of status made by 31 May 2021. Given this success we have no plans to extend the deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme.

The Home Office has invested nearly £8 million in marketing campaigns to encourage EU citizens and their family members to apply to the scheme. We recently launched a new wave of UK advertising to ensure EU citizens and their family members are aware of the deadline and know they need to apply. We are also working closely with employers, local authorities and charities to raise awareness.

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, we have made clear where a person eligible for status under the scheme has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply. The non-exhaustive guidance on reasonable grounds for submitting a late application was published on 1 April 2021 and includes where there are compelling practical or compassionate reasons why a person may have been unaware of the requirement to apply to the scheme by the deadline or may have failed to do so.

Immigration: Hong Kong

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to help the applicants for British National (Overseas) visas in the first three months of 2021 (1) to move to, and (2) to integrate in, the UK. [HL896]

Lord Greenhalgh: On 31 January, the UK launched a new immigration route for British National (Overseas) [BN(O)] status holders and their dependents.

On 8 April, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced a new UK-wide Welcome Programme to support Hong Kong BN(O) status holders with a package worth £43.1 million. Alongside this announcement, a comprehensive Welcome Guide was published (attached) on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/welcome-a-guide-for-hong-kong-british-national-overseas-visa-holders-in-the-uk>) for Hong Kong BN(O)s settling in the UK, in both English and Cantonese. To co-ordinate support and offer practical advice to BN(O)s, MHCLG is working to establish a network of Welcome Hubs across the UK.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Welcome Guide [Hong_Kong_BN_O_welcome_pack.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-06-08/HL896>

Infant Foods: Marketing

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by UNICEF's Executive Director at the meeting marking the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes on 21 May, what steps they are taking (1) to end the marketing of such substitutes to new parents, and (2) to promote breastfeeding. [HL836]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: FCDO recognises the importance of the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes for protecting and promoting breastfeeding. Breastfeeding plays an important role in boosting children's immune systems and protecting them from malnutrition and disease. This is of particular importance in developing countries where safe use of infant formula is a challenge.

We have supported the Access to Nutrition Initiative for several years as part of our work to support safe infant feeding. This initiative holds manufacturers of breast milk substitutes to account for their marketing practices, with the objective encouraging companies to fully comply with the Code. We also support breastfeeding promotion through our health programmes. For example, in northern Nigeria and in Bangladesh we supported health workers to work with groups of mothers and fathers to discuss and solve barriers to breastfeeding to reduce illness, malnutrition and to avert preventable deaths.

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by UNICEF's Executive Director at the meeting marking the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes on 21 May, what steps they plan to take (1) with international partners, and (2) through the direction of Overseas Development Assistance, (a) to

end the marketing of such substitutes to new parents, and (b) to promote breastfeeding. [HL837]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Breastfeeding plays an important role in boosting children's immune systems, and protecting them from malnutrition and disease. This is of particular importance in developing countries, where safe use of infant formula is often not possible. As part of the government's commitment to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children, the FCDO will continue to ensure that Overseas Development Assistance contributes to improved breastfeeding and safe infant feeding through our health and humanitarian programmes. This includes working with UNICEF to ensure breastfeeding promotion and support is provided in countries with high levels of child wasting.

In addition, we are supporting the Access to Nutrition Initiative in holding manufacturers of breast milk substitutes to account for their marketing practices, encouraging companies to fully comply with the Code. We have also worked with the Government of Japan, civil society, and other donors to define Principles of Engagement for the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit. These will prohibit the involvement of companies that violate the code at the December Summit.

International Organization for Migration: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the publication by Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécoud *The International Organization for Migration*, published in 2020, and (2) the focus of the International Organization for Migration on addressing human rights in its operations. [HL762]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The book '*International Organization for Migration: The New 'UN Migration Agency' in Critical Perspective*' published in February 2020 is a collection of viewpoints and thoughts from a selection of academics on IOM and migration more generally. The UK government duly takes note of the publication and the various points of view expressed.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), is the leading intergovernmental organisation in the field of migration, committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society; by supporting migrants across the world. IOM works to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including upholding human rights for all.

Israel: Overseas Aid

Asked by Baroness Janke

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of the Overseas Development Assistance budget supports the security of Israel; and what consideration they have given to requiring the government of Israel to comply

with international law as a criteria for receiving any such aid. [HL765]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Israel is not eligible for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) as per the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines. The UK therefore provides no ODA to Israel.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Janke

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proportionality of the government of Israel's recent military actions in Gaza. [HL766]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. All countries, including Israel, have a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

Israel: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 3 June (HL275), what assessment they have made of the formation of a new unity government in Israel; and what assessment they have made of the implications of such a development for the possibility of UK recognition of Palestine as a sovereign nation. [HL771]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We look forward to maintaining excellent relations with the new Israeli government, when formed, and working closely together. The UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot end the occupation. Without a negotiated settlement the occupation and the problems that come with it will continue. We continue to work closely with international partners to strongly advocate for a two-state solution and encourage a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties.

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Janke

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to protect Palestinians living in Sheik Jarrah from acts of violence reportedly perpetrated by Israeli forces. [HL764]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On 8 May Minister Cleverly publicly expressed concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian

families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions permanently. UK Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv continue to raise the issue regularly with the Israeli Authorities.

The UK also continues to urge the Israeli Government to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of peaceful, legal protestors. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigations are transparent, swift and comprehensive. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

Jobcentres: Armed Forces

Asked by Lord Coaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been assisted by Armed Forces Champions in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, and (3) 2021. [HL723]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The information requested is not available as DWP does not keep such records.

Judicial Review

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reform judicial review. [HL793]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Independent Review of Administrative Law made recommendations for reform and the Government consulted on these and other proposals. We are considering the responses to the consultation before deciding on the measures to take forward but the Government will introduce legislation in the current session.

Kickstart Scheme

Asked by Baroness Wilcox of Newport

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the name of (1) each individual employer, and (2) each employer which is part of a Kickstart gateway, which has had applications approved through the Kickstart Scheme; and how many jobs has each named employer made available through the Scheme. [HL982]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Organisations in receipt of a Kickstart grant will have their details published on the Government website in due course, as is standard practice for all organisations in receipt of a Government grant. This information has not been published yet as organisations are still applying and being approved for Kickstart funding.

For applications approved between the start of the scheme in September 2020 through to June 2021, there have been, on average, 14 Kickstart jobs available for young people to apply to per Kickstart employer (this

includes individual employers and those that have applied through a Kickstart gateway).

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

Leasehold: Reform

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to reform the law in respect of existing leasehold arrangements. [HL776]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market.

Under the current system, too many existing leaseholders find the process for extending their lease or buying their freehold (a process known as enfranchisement) too complex, lacking transparency and prohibitively expensive.

We will reform the process of enfranchisement valuation that leaseholders must follow to calculate the cost of extending their lease or buying their freehold. The Government will abolish marriage value, cap the treatment of ground rents at 0.1% of the freehold value, and prescribe rates for the calculations at market value. The Government will also introduce an online calculator, further simplifying the process for leaseholders and ensuring standardisation and fairness for all those looking to enfranchise. These changes to the enfranchisement valuation process will result in substantial savings for some leaseholders, particularly those with less than 80 years left on their lease. Our reforms to enfranchisement valuation also ensure that sufficient compensation is paid to landlords to reflect their legitimate property interests.

Through our reforms, the length of a statutory lease extension will increase to 990 years, from 90 years (for flats) and 50 years (for houses). Leaseholders will be able to extend their lease with zero ground rent on payment of a premium. Leaseholders will also be able to voluntarily agree to a restriction on future development of their property to avoid paying 'development value'.

We will translate these measures into law as soon as possible, starting with the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rents) Bill, which was introduced into Parliament on 12 May. This Bill will make homeownership fairer and more transparent for thousands of future leaseholders, by legislating to prevent landlords under new residential long

leases from requiring a leaseholder to pay a financial ground rent. This will be the first part of major two-part legislation to implement leasehold and commonhold reforms in this Parliament.

This is a long-term reform programme; it is complex with many interdependencies and will take time to get the detail right. Once it is enacted the effect will be felt for generations and so we are determined this work considers all the implications with care.

Local Government: Meetings

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support they intend to provide to local councils to comply safely with holding council meetings in public. [HL880]

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what powers local councils have to ensure all those who attend council meetings provide a negative test result for Covid-19 before they are allowed entrance to those meetings in the period for which Covid-19 restrictions are in place. [HL881]

Lord Greenhalgh: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave on 9 June 2021 to PQ HL577 and HL578, see (attached) the links:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-25/hl577>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-25/hl578>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL577 [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament HL577.pdf]

HL578 [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament HL578.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-06-08/HL880>

Madeleine McCann

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current spending plan on Operation Grange; what date this current spending plan is due to end; when it will be reviewed and under what criteria; and what is the total amount of money spent to date on Operation Grange. [HL709]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: To date, the Metropolitan Police Service have made a Special Grant application for funding for the 2021/22 financial year which is still under consideration by the Minister for Crime and Policing.

The current total spend as of March 2021 rounds to £13.2 million.

Migrant Workers

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many immigrants are currently part of the UK labour force; what estimate they have made of the value of the labour of immigrant workers in the UK; and what assessment they have made of the level of immigration required by the UK labour market in each of the next five years. [HL801]

Lord Callanan: As the UK builds back from the pandemic, our new points-based immigration system will attract top talent from around the world while also supporting the enormous potential of our domestic workforce.

High-skilled migration can boost growth and drive the international competitiveness of the UK's high-growth innovative businesses. Bespoke immigration routes will enable more students, scientists, academics, investors and entrepreneurs to come to the UK and contribute to our economic growth.

The Government recognise and value the contribution that people from all over the world have made to our culture, society and economy. The independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) set out in detail the contribution to the economy by EEA migration in its 2018 report, which is published on the GOV.UK website.

The Office for National Statistics estimates the numbers of people not born in the UK and the number of people who are not UK nationals, within the UK labour force, from the Labour Force Survey. However recent level estimates have been temporarily suspended until they are reweighted to better account for the recent population movements.

The overall needs of the UK labour market are owned and kept under close review by the Department for Work and Pensions. Immigration policy and the Points Based System are matters for the Home Office.

Myanmar: Armed Conflict

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken in response to the recent attacks on civilians in Chin and Kayah states by the military regime in Myanmar. [HL726]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned about the impact of renewed fighting in Chin and Kayah States on civilian populations, and the increased vulnerability of internally displaced people as a result of Covid. We are closely monitoring the impact of the recent military attacks, including on supply routes, to ensure that support reaches those in most need. We are in close contact with

the UN, NGOs and other local civil society organisations in the affected areas, and we are ensuring as much flexibility as we can in their use of UK aid to enable them to operate safely and continue providing support.

The UK continues to take strong action against the Tatmadaw for human rights violations. The violent crackdown on Civilians and Human rights is completely unacceptable and requires a strong message from the international community. Since the coup we have announced targeted sanctions against 9 high-ranking military officials and imposed sanctions on Myanmar Gems Enterprise, Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC). We have today announced that we have sanctioned Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE) and Myanmar Pearl Enterprise (MPE) and have designated the State Administration Council (SAC), the juntas governing body. We continue to work in concert with our partners and allies to determine a range of additional measures.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Land Mines

Asked by Lord Kilclooney

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of civilians who have lost their lives since 1 June as a result of unidentified Armenian land mines in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. [HL870]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: During her visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan in February the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas highlighted UK concern over the large amount of unexploded ordnance across the region. We understand from Azerbaijani government reports that as of 9 June 2021, 27 Azerbaijanis have been killed and over 100 injured by explosive remnants of war. We are deeply concerned by this ongoing loss of civilian life.

The UK Government continues to urge both countries, most recently at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on 3 June, to work together to ensure that humanitarian organisations have unimpeded access to the region and that de-mining maps are urgently provided to ensure the safety of civilians.

National Economic Development Council

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information is available on the current (1) use, and (2) whereabouts, of the circular table used by the National Economic Development Council, commonly known as NEDDY, until 1992. [HL842]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: HM Treasury do not hold any information pertaining to the use or whereabouts of the circular table used by the National Economic Development Council.

NHS: Drugs

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many planned discontinuation notices for the supply of medicines they have received as of 1 June 2021; and what steps they are taking to mitigate such notices. [HL848]

Lord Bethell: We regularly receive notifications of discontinuations and possible discontinuations from suppliers, as well as information about shortages and potential shortages caused by a whole variety of reasons and numbers change daily. We are unable to provide this information as it is commercially sensitive.

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with medicines shortages and discontinuations and works with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise. Not all notifications will lead to the discontinuation of a medicine or a shortage in the market.

Nicaragua: Politics and Government

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the political situation in Nicaragua; and what representations they have made to the government of Nicaragua following the arrest of opposition politicians in June. [HL952]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is concerned by the unacceptable actions of the Nicaraguan authorities in preventing opposition candidates from taking part in November's presidential elections. The arrests represent yet another anti-democratic development in Nicaragua at the behest of President Daniel Ortega, further depriving the people of Nicaragua of the right to choose their own political leaders, and parliamentary representatives freely.

Since the Nicaraguan authorities' lethal clampdown of protests in 2018, the UK has regularly voiced its concern over the country's deteriorating human rights, and democratic situation. On 4 June, the UK issued a statement condemning the arrest and disqualification of potential presidential candidate, Cristiana Chamorro. A number of international partners have expressed the same concern. We continue to call on the Nicaraguan authorities to support the steps necessary for upholding the rights of all Nicaraguan voters to exercise their right to vote freely, safely, and without interference; to ensure that all political parties, their chosen candidates, and supporters can campaign freely, and safely in advance of this year's elections; and to ensure that journalists and the media are allowed to operate impartially, and without restriction.

Nigeria: Fulani

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) reports that Islamist Fulani

militia continue to perpetrate massacres and kidnapping in Nigeria, and (2) the designation of Nigeria as a country of particular concern by the US International Religious Freedom Act; and what steps they have taken in response. [HL728]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government condemns all incidents of intercommunal violence in Nigeria, which have had devastating effects on communities of different faiths and ethnicities. It is inaccurate to attribute sole responsibility to one ethnic group, the Fulani, and terms like militia risk fuelling tensions between communities. During the Minister for Africa's visit to Nigeria in April, he raised the importance of protecting all communities. We are working with our partners in Nigeria to promote intercommunal and interfaith dialogue, and continue to call for solutions that address the underlying causes of conflict.

We also condemn kidnaps in Nigeria, including the recent kidnaps and killings of students in Northern Nigeria. Those responsible must be held to account. We have provided mentoring and capacity building support to Nigerian Police Force units to improve their anti-kidnap capacity, to help reduce harm to victims and hold those responsible to account.

The decision by the United States to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern for Religious Freedom is a matter for the United States government. The UK is committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief around the world. We are a strong voice internationally in defence of this fundamental right and promoting respect between communities of different religions and those of no religion.

Nigeria: Twitter

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications for free speech in Nigeria following the decision of the Nigerian government to ban the use of Twitter in that country. [HL774]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned that the Nigerian Government has suspended Twitter in Nigeria. In response, the Minister for Africa publicly reiterated the importance of all Nigerians being able to enjoy their right to freedom of expression responsibly. Our High Commission in Abuja and likeminded countries issued a statement conveying disappointment over the suspension and affirming our strong support for freedom of expression. On 7 June, our Acting Head of Mission in Abuja, Gill Atkinson, along with senior representatives from likeminded diplomatic missions, met the Nigerian Foreign Minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, to discuss the suspension and statement, and to reiterate our position. We urged the Nigerian Government to continue dialogue with Twitter to resolve this issue. Freedom of expression and the media are essential elements of a democracy.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have had any discussions with the government of Nigeria about that government's decision to ban Twitter; if so, what response they have received; and if not, whether they plan to do so. [HL828]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by the Nigerian Government's suspension of Twitter in Nigeria. Our High Commission in Abuja and likeminded countries issued a statement supporting freedom of expression and representatives met the Nigerian Foreign Minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, to discuss the suspension and statement.

Offenders: Females

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will implement all of the commitments in their Female Offender Strategy (Cm 9642), published on 27 June 2018. [HL758]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Government remains committed to delivering its commitments in the Female Offender Strategy. The Strategy has three overarching aims: 1) fewer women offending and reoffending; 2) fewer women in custody, especially on short sentences, with more managed effectively in custody; and 3) better conditions for women in custody that support effective rehabilitation. Considering how we can best address the needs of female offenders and to improve outcomes for them, their families and their communities, is a complex issue that we want to get right. The Strategy's publication was the start of a new and significant programme of work to deliver better outcomes for female offenders that will take some years to deliver.

OneWeb

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 1 June (HL 257), whether OneWeb will be free to make decisions on the launchers it chooses on purely commercial grounds. [HL708]

Lord Callanan: Although OneWeb will be encouraged to make use of the UK's future launch capabilities, decisions on launches are entirely a business matter for OneWeb.

Organs: Donors

Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to work with the NHS to change perceptions around organ donation to make it an expected part of care when a potential donor dies. [HL990]

Lord Bethell: A system for deemed consent, known as ‘opt-out’, was introduced in England from May 2020, to make deceased organ donation the default position. NHS Blood and Transplant and NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked together to implement the new United Kingdom-wide organ donation and transplantation strategy. NHS Blood and Transplant has launched communication campaigns and partnerships to address barriers, such as the ‘Leave Them Certain’ campaign and the Community Investment Scheme and promotes organ donation at events such as Organ Donation Week and the Transplant Games.

In addition, NHS Blood and Transplant has introduced prompts for organ donation when applying for a driving licence or taxing a car. Teaching resources have been provided in all state-funded secondary schools for blood, organ and stem cell donation.

Overseas Aid

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported estimate by MSI Reproductive Choices that thousands of deaths could result from cuts to the UK Overseas Development Assistance budget; whether they have made their own estimate in this regard; and if so, what is their projected number. [HL772]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: MSI Reproductive Choices is a major partner in the UK's flagship multi-country Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) Programme which is on track to prevent an estimated 29,000 maternal deaths by end August 2021, through expanding access to modern methods of family planning. The UK remains committed to this programme and an extension to the timeframe will enable the implementing partners to contribute to averting up to an estimated further 1700 maternal deaths.

The FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate of Covid. Officials considered the impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities and people from other protected groups, when developing advice to Ministers. The FCDO carried out a central Equalities Impact Assessment which looked at our bilateral country spending. Standalone impact assessments were not carried out, given the multiple overlapping scenarios.

Overseas Aid: Equality

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date the equalities impact assessment on the reductions in UK aid from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent was completed; and when that assessment will be published. [HL899]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The overarching Equalities Impact Assessment on the reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income was completed and shared with Ministers in March 2021 as final ODA allocations decisions were taken.

Overseas Aid: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Sheehan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to restart the UK Partnerships for Health Systems Programme once the temporary cut to the Official Development Assistance budget is restored to 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income. [HL813]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Future commitments and budgets for 2022/23 and beyond will be determined at the Spending Review later this year.

Overseas Students

Asked by Lord Green of Deddington

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many international students are currently in higher education in the UK; and whether it remains their ambition to increase the number of international students entering higher education in the UK to 600,000 per year by 2030. [HL741]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) publishes data annually on the number of international students at UK higher education providers; they are available here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from>.

The table below shows the number of international student (non-UK domiciled) enrolments at UK higher education providers between the academic years 2015/16 and 2019/20, the latest year for which there is available data.

*HE student enrolments of non-UK domicile students
Academic years 2015/16 to 2019/20*

UK HE providers

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Non-UK domicile enrolments</i>
2015/16	443,320
2016/17	450,835
2017/18	469,205
2018/19	496,315
2019/20	556,625

The table above is available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb258/figure-9>.

The most recent update to the International Education Strategy, published in February 2021, reaffirms the government's commitment to increase the value of our

education exports to £35 billion per year, and sustainably to increase the number of international higher education students hosted in the UK to 600,000 per year, both by 2030.

Pain

Asked by Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will ensure that those seeking support for managing pain are offered a choice of options through the NHS including mindfulness-based therapies, to reduce the proportion of treatments that rely on medication and the risk of overprescribing. [HL498]

Lord Bethell: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guideline, *Chronic pain (primary and secondary) in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain*, published in April 2021, recommends a range of pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment options for pain management. NICE found there was insufficient evidence on mindfulness to recommend it as an option for pain management within this guideline. However, it made recommendations for research on mindfulness to inform future guidance. A copy of NICE's guideline is attached.

The National Health Service is also taking a holistic approach to supporting people's health and wellbeing by expanding its social prescribing services. This enables general practitioners to refer people to community groups and agencies for practical, emotional and social support, for example when managing pain.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

NICE Guideline [NICE Chronic Pain Guidance (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-05-24/HL498>

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Asked by Baroness Janke

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 2 June (HL351), what are the necessary criteria to meet their condition that they will recognise Palestine as a state when it "best serves the objective of peace" to do so. [HL763]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Any decision to recognise a Palestinian state will rest on an assessment of the prospects for peace, and what best supports progress towards a two-state solution.

Asked by Lord Stone of Blackheath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the case for recognising Palestine as a State, (2) the benefits for the peace process of the government of Israel negotiating with a Palestinian state

instead of different factions, and (3) the effectiveness of international aid for Gaza being directed to a Palestinian state rather than to factions. [HL820]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot end the occupation. Without a negotiated settlement the occupation and the problems that come with it will continue. We continue to work closely with international partners to strongly advocate for a two-state solution and encourage a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties.

Peers: Surveillance

Asked by Lord Balfe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what arrangements they intend to make for members of the House of Lords named as having MI5 files in the course of the Undercover Policing Inquiry to see those files. [HL833]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Undercover Policing Inquiry is independent of the Home Office, and its independence is crucial to its effectiveness.

Disclosure is a matter for the Inquiry. Safeguarding the independence of the Inquiry is of paramount importance and it would not generally therefore, be acceptable for the Government to comment on or intervene in the Inquiry's decision-making.

More information on the Inquiry's evidence and disclosure process can be found on the Inquiry's website at Evidence & hearings - UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY (ucpi.org.uk).

Plastics

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce (1) the production, and (2) the use, of plastic in the United Kingdom [HL949]

Lord Callanan: We have a strong manufacturing base in the UK with the rubber & plastics industry employing over 160,000 people. The UK Government continues to support UK businesses whilst tackling our priority to reduce plastic waste in line with our net zero ambitions.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042. In 2018 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) published our Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how to achieve this, move towards a circular economy and keep resources in the system for longer. Resource efficiency measures introduced by Defra have included the single-use carrier bag charge, which recently increased to 10p and extended to all retailers; and the ban of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

The Environment Bill will enable us to significantly change the way that we manage our waste and will

include powers to create Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes such as a scheme for packaging meaning that producers will pay the full costs of dealing with the waste packaging that they produce; introduce Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) such as a scheme for single use drinks containers which will include those made from glass, plastic and metal; and give us the power to set new charges for other single-use plastic items.

The Government has put together a package of £100 million for research and innovation to tackle the issues that arise from plastic waste. £38 million has been set aside through the Plastics Research and Innovation Fund and the Resource Action Fund including £10 million specifically to pioneer innovative approaches to boosting recycling and reducing litter. The Government has also announced £60 million of funding through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, alongside a £149 million investment from industry, to drive research and innovation to develop more smart, sustainable plastic packaging.

Pregnancy: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Balfre

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to increase the opportunity for pregnant women to have two doses of vaccinations by the time their pregnancy is full term by ensuring that the NHS vaccination booking system allows them to book a second dose of vaccine eight weeks after their first, and (2) to ensure that any NHS-supported applications used to enable such bookings reflect that opportunity. [HL832]

Lord Bethell: Appointments for a second dose of the vaccine have been brought forward from 12 to eight weeks for those in priority cohorts one to nine who are yet to receive their second dose. This is in line with advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which the Government has accepted.

Pregnant women in priority cohorts one to nine due to age or clinical risk factor can book their second dose eight weeks after their first. Pregnant women in priority cohorts 10 to 12 can book their second dose 12 weeks after their first in line with their overall age cohort.

The National Booking Service operates according to the JCVI's guidance on first and second doses. Local booking systems used by Primary Care Networks and general practitioner-led services have also been advised to operate according to this advice.

Prisoners' Release: Curfews

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to widen the criteria for, and (2) to increase the

use of, the Home Detention Curfew scheme for individuals released from prison. [HL757]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Home Detention Curfew is a robust scheme which allows suitable, risk-assessed, prisoners to work towards rehabilitation in the community, while remaining subject to strict monitoring and other conditions. If they breach these conditions, they can be returned to custody. There are currently no plans to change the scheme.

Prosecutions

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the rate at which perpetrators of crime are charged in the criminal justice system. [HL796]

Lord Stewart of Dirlerton: The decision to charge suspects in England and Wales with criminal offences is made either by the police or by the CPS depending on the nature of the offence involved. The CPS make the decision to charge in serious cases but over the last five years the police have made the charging decision in 61% to 63% of the cases that are prosecuted by the CPS. In cases in which the CPS make the decision to charge, the CPS had a charging rate of between 74.5% and 77.7% over the last five years.

While the police and other investigators are responsible for conducting inquiries into any alleged crime and gathering evidence to inform a charging decision, prosecutors work closely with police during the investigation stage to assist with the building of strong cases. The recently introduced Director of Public Prosecution's Guidance on Charging 6th Edition (DG6) supports this work to ensure cases are robustly prepared by police and prosecutors pre-charge.

This reflects aspects of the revised Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure; both came into effect in England and Wales on the 31 December 2020.

Railways: Finance

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their Great British Railway white paper (CP423), published on 20 May, what annual savings they expect to make in respect of (1) delay attribution, (2) franchise agreements, (3) key train requirements, (4) ticketing and settlement agreements, (5) any other benefits. [HL701]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: One of the major benefits of bringing the railways together will be to reduce fragmented decision-making. Great British Railways will be able to make substantial net savings without detriment to service or fare levels by reducing duplication, interface costs and complexity. This will include better planning of track and infrastructure works and many other operations

currently subject to negotiation between Network Rail and train operating companies.

Railways: Freight

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the announcement that DP World will operate 775-metre long freight trains between Southampton and London Gateway, whether they have asked Network Rail to make similar adjustments elsewhere in the interests of higher productivity. [HL721]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government supports increasing the productivity of the rail freight sector, including by investing in infrastructure enhancements to enable Freight Operating Companies to run longer trains, to enhance rail freight's competitiveness and in turn lead to modal shift of freight from road to rail, delivering significant environmental and economic benefits.

Between 2014-2019 the Government invested over £235 million in the Strategic Freight Network and continues to make investments, to improve its capability and capacity for freight users, including facilitating longer freight trains. In addition to the longer services operating from the Port of Southampton, as a result of the recently completed Southampton Freight Train Lengthening project, the Department has also funded several infrastructure enhancements which have enabled other longer services to operate. These include upgrading the Ipswich Railway Chords (Bacon Factory Curve) to allow 700m length freight trains to run to and from the Port of Felixstowe and the extension of the Darlington sidings, which concluded in December 2020, to allow longer intermodal freight trains to operate from Teesport to access the East Coast Mainline.

Furthermore, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Network Rail (NR) has worked alongside the rail freight industry, with the support of the Department, to allow longer and heavier trains to run on the network whilst the number of passenger services has been lower. As a result of the reduced passenger timetable, NR implemented a number of timetable alterations to allow, for example, 775m trains to run between Southampton and Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester, and between Daventry and Grangemouth. NR is actively looking at opportunities to continue scheduling such services and to further opportunities to run longer trains, to continue driving higher efficiency and productivity for the Freight Operating Companies and their customers.

Road Traffic Control: Rural Areas

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date the Motor Vehicle Stakeholder Working Group last met to discuss Traffic Protection Orders on Green Lanes; and further to the recommendation in the report by the Select Committee on the Natural Environment and

Rural Communities Act 2006 The Countryside at a crossroads, (Session 2017–19, HL Paper 99), published on 22 March 2018, what plans they have to bring proposals forward on this issue. [HL808]

Lord Benyon: The last meeting of the Motor Vehicle Stakeholder Working Group (MSWG) was on 2 May 2018. In the meeting it was agreed to use the group's feedback to inform a consultation and discussion with order-making authorities regarding their current working practices around Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), recreational vehicle management and ways to achieve the group's recommendations such as new guidance. It was further agreed that parallel processes in other departments would be considered and so input was provided to the Department of Transport's own review of TRO's in 2019 labelled the 'TRO Discovery Project', which resulted in new guidance for surfaced highways.

Order-making authorities were surveyed in 2019 but there were insufficient responses to proceed further. Natural England was to carry out a more targeted survey in 2020, which due to the competing demands of the coronavirus pandemic and other priorities was delayed, although the intention remains to re-survey the authorities in due course.

We will consider seeking feedback from the MSWG once the survey has been completed and results are available.

Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu

Asked by Lord Moylan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend an official invitation to visit the UK to Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, an opposition candidate in the January presidential election in Uganda. [HL790]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our High Commissioner to Uganda has met Robert Kyagulanyi on a number of occasions and discussed our concern over human rights and democratic reform. We will continue to meet with Robert Kyagulanyi, but Kampala is a more likely location.

Schools: Admissions

Asked by Baroness Hayman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the reduction in numbers of children on the rolls of (1) primary, and (2) secondary, schools in inner London since January 2020; and what reduction in funding for affected schools will result from these reduced numbers. [HL746]

Baroness Berridge: The department publishes pupil numbers in the annual 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics' statistical release. The most recent figures for January 2021 are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

Between January and October 2020 the number of pupils in state funded primary schools in Inner London decreased by 8,106 from 249,818 to 241,712. Over the same period the number of pupils in state funded secondary schools increased by 4,820 from 181,758 to 186,578. This gives an overall decrease across both phases of 3,286 pupils.

Core school funding increased by £2.6 billion in financial year 2020/21 and will increase by £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021/22 and 2022/23 respectively, compared to 2019/20. Schools in London will receive an additional £124.5 million this year, 2021/22, taking total funding to £6.7 billion. On average, schools in London will receive £5,914 per pupil this year, far greater than the national average of £5,228.

The schools national funding formula (NFF) continues to distribute this funding fairly, based on the needs of schools and their pupil cohorts. The vast majority of funding is distributed on the basis of pupil numbers and pupils' characteristics, which ensures that resources are delivered where they are needed most. In addition, schools in more expensive areas, like London, have higher funding per pupil than other parts of the country to reflect the higher costs they face. All schools also attract a lump sum of £117,800, irrespective of their size.

The funding system is "lagged" - this means that schools' allocations in any given year are based on pupil numbers from the previous autumn school census. The lagged funding system gives schools certainty over their budgets, as they know how many pupils they will receive funding for in the next year. This means that when pupil numbers fall, schools have time to respond before this starts to affect their budgets.

Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reassure small businesses that financial support will be made available in the case of future Covid-19 restrictions being introduced. [\[HL903\]](#)

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Throughout this pandemic, our Plan For Jobs has supported jobs and businesses with over £400 billion of economic support – one of the most generous and comprehensive packages in the world.

At Budget the Government deliberately went long and erred on the side of generosity – specifically to accommodate short delays to the roadmap. Most of the Government's Covid support schemes do not end until September or after, in order to provide continuity and certainty for businesses and families.

The Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) announced at Budget 2021 ensures lenders continue to have the confidence to lend, ensuring viable businesses, including small businesses, continue to have access to Government-backed finance needed throughout 2021. The scheme launched on 6 April 2021, following the closure of the emergency schemes to new loan applications on 31 March

2021, and will run until 31 December 2021. The scheme operates UK-wide, providing an 80% guarantee to lenders for term loans, overdrafts, and invoice and asset finance.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was introduced to help employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus to retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All businesses across the UK can access the scheme, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. At Budget the government extended the CJRS until the end of September 2021, to support businesses and employees through the next stage of the pandemic. The economy now is in a stronger position than it was last autumn, when businesses also contributed up to 20 per cent of wage costs.

In line with the extension to the CJRS, the government announced at Budget 2021 that the SEISS will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant. This provides certainty to business as the economy reopens and means the SEISS will continue to be one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

As restrictions have been lifted, it is right that we ask employers to contribute more to strike the balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work.

Social Security Benefits: Disability

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 8 June (HL Deb, col 1312), what steps they are taking to prioritise, in addition to need assessment, the provision of specialist job coaches for people with learning disabilities. [\[HL1096\]](#)

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department is committed to supporting claimants with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism move closer to the labour market or into work.

The increased number of work coaches will help the newly unemployed and also enable us to continue supporting those with complex needs, and to work with partners to ensure they get the help they need. People in particular disadvantaged groups will continue to benefit from support via the increased Flexible Support Fund and priority early access to the Work and Health Programme. In addition, claimants with learning disabilities are also able to access Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) if they are further from the labour market.

From April 2021, we have strengthened our Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) role to include delivering direct support to claimants who require additional work related support and advice above our core work coach offer. DEAs continue to support all work coaches to deliver tailored, personalised support to all claimants with

a disability or health condition. Since May, we are increasing our DEA resource from 685 nationally with the aspiration to reach 1000.

We have a number of initiatives and schemes to support claimants with health conditions such as:

- Intensive Personalised Employment Support provision provides highly personalised packages of employment support for disabled people who want to work but have complex needs or barriers and require specialist support to achieve sustained employment.
- Access to Work is a demand-led discretionary grant scheme that provides funding for the extra disability-related costs people have when starting work or maintaining employment. It can also support disabled people on an apprenticeship, Department for Education supported internship or traineeship.
- The Department delivered the Local Supported Employment Proof of Concept, run in partnership with 9 local authorities from November 2017 to May 2019. It was based on the “Place and Train” model of supported employment. This aimed to test whether the Department, in partnership with Local Authorities (LAs), could increase delivery of high-quality supported employment for people with a learning disability or autism who are known to adult social care, or those in contact with secondary mental health services. The proof of concept also aimed to help spread best practice among LAs. Following the successful proof of concept, the Department is looking to develop an area based trial with 20 LAs. The trial was paused because of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Supported Internships are aimed at young people ability/autism who have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and they usually last for 12 months. Support from a specialist job coach and other costs may be funded through Access to Work if necessary. Whilst the Department for Education lead on this the Department provides support through Access to Work funding.
- Through the Disability Confident scheme, the Department is engaging with employers and helping to promote the skills, talents and abilities of people with autism and associated conditions. Through the scheme, the Department is providing advice and support to help employers feel more confident about employing disabled people, by signposting them to appropriate advice guidance and support.
- The increased number of work coaches will help the newly unemployed and also enable us to continue supporting those with complex needs, and to work with partners to ensure they get the help they need.
- People in particular disadvantaged groups will continue to benefit from support via the increased Flexible Support Fund and priority early access to the Work and Health Programme.

Social Services: Finance

*Asked by **Baroness Gale***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the capital thresholds for social care. [[HL732](#)]

Lord Bethell: The reform of social care and its funding arrangements are complex areas and a range of options for how to deliver on this commitment are being considered. We will bring forward proposals in 2021.

Students: Finance

*Asked by **Lord Coaker***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support for (1) academic, and (2) living, costs is available to English postgraduate students studying for a Masters degree at an English university. [[HL847](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Postgraduate Master's Loan scheme was introduced in summer 2016 to help remove the financial barrier often faced by those wishing to study at master's level.

The Master's Loan scheme is part of the government's long-term commitment to enhance support for postgraduate study to make the UK more globally competitive by increasing the number of people with such high-level skills and knowledge.

Postgraduate students can borrow up to £11,570 for courses starting in the 2021/22 academic year. This loan is intended as a contribution to the cost of study, rather than specifically to cover tuition fees or living costs.

Svetlana Tikhanovskaya

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to invite Belarus opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya to the forthcoming G7 summit hosted by the United Kingdom. [[HL767](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: It was not possible to invite further national participants to the G7 summit. However G7 Leaders discussed current global issues including the Lukashenko regime's reckless and dangerous behaviour and this was reflected in the official communique. The Foreign Secretary discussed the political situation in Belarus with the opposition leader, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya on 2 June and made it clear that Mrs Tikhanovskaya was welcome to visit the UK as soon as conditions allow. Until that becomes possible, officials are in regular contact with civil society and opposition groups and most recently spoke to members of the Belarus National Anti-Crisis Management on 7 June.

Syria: Sanctions

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessments they have made of the impact of international sanctions on the people of Syria. [HL727]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Her Majesty's Government assesses that the UK's targeted Syria sanctions, alongside those of other countries, increase pressure on the Assad regime to engage with the UN-facilitated political process as the only way to resolve the conflict for all Syrians. We also understand that many Syrians welcome efforts to increase accountability for those responsible for suffering in Syria, including the regime's repression of civilians and the use of chemical weapons.

We continue seeking to minimise any negative impact of sanctions on ordinary Syrians, in line with our position as a leading humanitarian donor to the crisis, having committed over £3.7 billion in response. The UK does not sanction medicine, medical equipment or medical assistance, and items required to fight the Covid-19 pandemic are not subject to direct restrictions on export, supply, financing or use in Syria.

Television Licences: Finance

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much money in each of the past five years was raised by the BBC licensing fee; how such fees were collected; and what was the (1) total collection cost, and (2) average cost per fee of collection. [HL1003]

Baroness Barran: The BBC is responsible for the collection and administration of the television licence fee, not the government. The government is therefore not involved in TV Licensing operations.

TV licencing sets out the amounts collected within its annual review. The 2020/21 report is due to be published.

The total income raised by the TV licence fee is stated as being £3.78bn in 2016/17, £3.8bn in 2017/18, £3.6bn in 2018/19 and £3.5bn in 2019/20.

The total collection cost is stated as being £82.2m in 2016/17, £101m in 2017/18, £102.6m in 2018/19 and £119.5m in 2019/20.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport does not hold information on the average cost per fee of collection. This information may be held by the BBC.

Tigray: Genocide

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Ethiopia about (1) the alleged genocide in Tigray, and (2) reports that priests and nuns in that region have been attacked and killed. [HL725]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Minister of State responsible for human rights issues for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, I tweeted on 11 May to express my deep sadness at the reported murder of priests in Tigray. This is one of an increasing number of horrifying reports of atrocities coming out of Tigray. Civilians must be protected and the violence must stop. We have also stressed the need for Ethiopia to safeguard its incredible diversity of faith and identity in order to uphold freedom of religion and belief.

The UK's longstanding position is that determining whether a situation amounts to genocide is an issue for competent national and international courts, not governments: our focus is on seeing an end to violence and protecting civilians. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into atrocities in Tigray are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account. The Foreign Secretary, Minister for Africa and our Ambassador in Addis continue to raise human rights issues in their discussions with the Ethiopian government.

Tigray: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of allegations of (1) incommunicado detention, (2) arbitrary arrest and detention, (3) inhumane prison conditions, (4) indefinite military service, and (5) human rights violations, in the Tigray region of Ethiopia by the government of Eritrea; and what assessment they have made of the undermining of (a) freedom of expression, (b) freedom of opinion, (c) freedom of association, (d) freedom of religious belief, and (e) rule of law, in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. [HL695]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have consistently made clear our concerns about the human rights situation in Ethiopia, particularly in Tigray, both publicly and in direct discussions with the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea. We continue to call for an end to the conflict.

Train Operating Companies: Fares and Timetables

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their Great British Railway white paper (CP423), published on 20 May, what role they see for private sector open access operators in the new structure for the passenger railway; and who will decide (1) whether such operators will be permitted, (2) the timetable to which they will operate, and (3) the fares they can charge. [HL703]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Establishing Great British Railways will enable open access operators to benefit from national co-ordination and new safeguards.

The government will consult and work with partners, including open access operators, on the development and implementation of a new rules-based access system, underpinned by legislation.

The Office of Rail and Road will also act as an appeals body for operators. It will be able to direct Great British Railways to change its decision where it has not applied its track access and charging policies fairly.

New and existing open access services will be able to operate in the future. As now they will be able to apply for train paths and set their own fares.

We will make an announcement on next steps in relation to how GBR manages the infrastructure including the processes it will undertake when making access decisions in due course.

Train Operating Companies: Standards

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their Great British Railway white paper (CP423), published on 20 May, how will their plan incentivise train operators to improve their services; and what is their estimate of the costs of (1) preparing, and (2) managing, agreements with train operators. [HL702]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: New Passenger Service Contracts will be designed to cut through the complexity and cost of procuring passenger services, open up more effective competition and attract new bidders.

They will be a mix of both commuter and long-distance services with mixed incentives to reflect the different risks and commercial opportunities to reflect the regional divisions in Great British Railways.

All Passenger Service Contracts will incentivise operators to run reliable, competitive, high-quality services and grow passenger numbers.

We expect to launch initial competitions for Passenger Service Contracts by the time the emergency recovery agreements end in 2022. Further detail on how the new contracts will be managed will be announced in due course.

Travel: Quarantine

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to enable universities to use their residential accommodation as so-called "quarantine hotels" for international students arriving in UK from countries for which a period of quarantine is required during the Covid-19 pandemic. [HL627]

Lord Bethell: The Department is currently exploring the options for international students arriving in the United Kingdom from 'red list' countries. However, we

have no current plans to enable universities to use their residential accommodation as managed quarantine facilities for international students.

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what sanctions are available upon discovering that a hotel is not fulfilling its agreed role in self-isolating travellers arriving back in the UK. [HL867]

Lord Bethell: We have contracted with Corporate Travel Management (CTM) as the Department's travel services delivery partner. They are responsible for identifying and contracting with the individual hotels that support the Managed Quarantine Service.

Hotels have standard operating procedures (SOPs), testing processes and infection prevention control processes for staff and guests. These were put in place following consultation and advice from Public Health England and are in line with National Health Service guidance. Local on-site liaison officers ensure compliance with testing procedures and SOPs, raise any issues with the hotel general manager and escalate via the Department's liaison officers. We work closely with hotel managers and local authorities to ensure that staff and guests are complying with these processes. Where there is a material failure to provide the required service which is not rectified in a reasonable time, CTM would ultimately terminate the contract.

Uganda

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the (1) economic, (2) political, and (3) security, situation in Uganda. [HL775]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is a long-standing partner of Uganda which we are supporting to become more democratic and prosperous - and to continue to play a positive regional role - through our diplomacy, aid, defence co-operation, trade and investment. Uganda's GDP per capita has doubled and the proportion of the population in extreme poverty fell by a third over the past 30 years, but Covid-19 has damaged growth and livelihoods, pulling an estimated 3.1 million people below the poverty line. Population growth is increasing pressure on infrastructure, services and jobs, making it critical that Uganda supports family planning, invests in young people to promote a healthy and educated workforce and protects Uganda's environment so it can better adapt to climate change. We are concerned about the political climate in Uganda following the 2021 elections, including the treatment of opposition candidates and their supporters and restrictions on civil society and media freedom. Our High Commission in Kampala and the Minister for Africa have urged Uganda to meet its human rights commitments, particularly in relation to missing persons and those arbitrarily detained, and to increase efforts to build strong and independent institutions to strengthen democracy. The UK continues to

act as a critical friend to make the case for these advancements.

UK Centre for Professional Qualifications

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Professional Qualifications Bill, what are the objectives and responsibilities of the assistance centre. [HL1058]

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Professional Qualifications Bill, which minister is responsible for the assistance centre. [HL1059]

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Professional Qualifications Bill, how many members of staff the assistance centre has. [HL1060]

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Professional Qualifications Bill, how much annual funding the assistance centre receives. [HL1061]

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Professional Qualifications Bill, on what date the assistance centre was created. [HL1062]

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Professional Qualifications Bill, what additional powers are provided to staff of the assistance centre by placing it on a statutory footing. [HL1063]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The assistance centre supports professionals with overseas qualifications intending to work in the UK, and UK qualified professionals seeking to practise overseas. Its website and telephone advice service help professionals identify the right regulators, which may not always be clear.

Some regulators are pursuing recognition arrangements with EU counterparts, and the Government is agreeing new trade deals with provisions on the recognition of professional qualifications. The assistance centre will be useful to UK professionals as they make use of these provisions to work or provide services overseas.

Finally, the assistance centre provides support and guidance to authorities responsible for regulating professions in the UK. Many authorities use the assistance centre as a source of information on international recognition agreements.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible for making arrangements in relation to the assistance centre.

The current assistance centre, the UK Centre for Professional Qualifications, has 2.5 full time equivalent staff and is provided at a very modest cost. The exact

terms of the contract for the service are commercially sensitive.

The UK had a National Contact Point for Professional Qualifications in 2007 when the legislation implementing the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC came into force. It was initially housed within government before a contract to run the service was awarded to ECCTIS Limited in December 2008.

The Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive 2013/55/EU changed the requirement from each EU Member State having a National Contact Point to having an assistance centre. When the implementing legislation for this Directive came into force, the UK National Contact Point for Professional Qualifications changed to the UK National Assistance Centre in January 2016. The requirement for the assistance centre was preserved in retained EU law at the end of the Transition Period.

Providing a statutory basis for the continued existence of an assistance centre in the Bill includes placing a duty on competent authorities to cooperate with it. This is to ensure that the assistance centre has the necessary information to help support the delivery of its functions, rather than relying on voluntary information sharing arrangements. The information shared by regulators with the assistance centre is limited in nature, so this is not an onerous duty for regulators.

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to come forward with proposals following their Offshore Transmission Network Review. [HL905]

Lord Callanan: We aim to consult on proposals from the Offshore Transmission Network Review later this year.

Young Offender Institutions: Self-harm and Violence

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle (1) violence, and (2) self-harm, on the youth secure estate. [HL797]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: We are committed to reducing violence in youth custody. Whilst there are fewer young people in custody than ever before – those in the youth estate are a cohort with complex needs. Children and young people (including 18-year olds) serving sentences for violence against the person offences accounted for more than half (55%) of the youth custody population in 2019/20.

We are investing in staff, education, psychology services and mental health support, alongside a package of interventions within the Behaviour Management Strategy that address the needs of children and young

people through early intervention and multi-agency work. This is underpinned by 'SECURE STAIRS' - the framework of integrated care jointly led by the NHS and Youth Custody Service (YCS), which provides the foundations as to how the YCS works with children – which has adapted its approach during the Covid-19 pandemic to take into account the vulnerabilities of children at this time. In addition, the YCS has been progressing work with a focus on some of the most vulnerable and challenging young people in custody alongside NHS colleagues through the Critical Case Pathway. This provides a greater level of oversight and support to professionals working with children who self-harm, and those with the most complex needs to ensure effective assessment, planning and co-ordination. Additionally the 'Covid-19 Support Plan', a less intensive and physically distanced version of the Custody Support Plan (which provides children with a named officer to work with on a weekly basis) is also being delivered, to maintain key relationships between staff and children.

The roll out of the youth justice specialist roles has continued with funding provided for every prison officer to take up a degree level qualification in youth justice. As of March, there were 201 youth justice specialist officers already in post. A further 319 staff are currently signed up or undertaking the learning, with the last cohort due to start in October 2022 with up to 110 more frontline staff participating.

We are continuing to look to further open up regime opportunities in a manner that is safe and sustainable, to provide further support to children. Given the uncertainty this period has presented, it has been encouraging to see that levels of self-harm have fallen during the pandemic with - the annualised rate of self-harming per 100 children falling by 56% in the three months to December 2020. We are also carrying out work to ensure that lessons learned from the Covid-19 period are taken into account going forwards, and the YCS has commissioned a programme of research, in collaboration with academics,

to evaluate these lessons with the results used to further inform recovery planning.

Zimbabwe

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the (1) economic, (2) political, and (3) security, situation in Zimbabwe. [\[HL863\]](#)

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Zimbabwean economy faces severe challenges largely due to corruption, poor fiscal policies and economic mismanagement by the Government. Our Embassy in Harare continues to monitor developments closely, encouraging the Government of Zimbabwe to focus on taking urgent coordinated measures to stabilise the economy while protecting the poorest.

The UK remains concerned about the current political situation in Zimbabwe, particularly human rights violations and the pattern of arrests of prominent opposition, civil society figures and journalists. We remain clear that the Government of Zimbabwe must meet its international and domestic obligations by: respecting the rule of law and the freedoms and rights enshrined in the Zimbabwean Constitution; safeguarding human rights; and committing to genuine political and economic reform for the benefit of all Zimbabweans.

On 9 June, the Minister for Africa spoke to Foreign Minister Shava. The Minister for Africa emphasised our human rights concerns and the need for reform. He also discussed potential opportunities for the UK and Zimbabwe, including in relation to trade and climate change (COP 26).

While the human rights situation is worrying, the security situation remains stable. We will continue to speak out, both privately and in public, where we have concerns, and, work alongside the international community to support a better future for all Zimbabweans.

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