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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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# Written Statements

*Friday, 16 July 2021*

## **Loss of Secret Documents: Update**

[HLWS186]

**Baroness Goldie:** On 28 June 2021, the Minister for Defence Procurement noted that an investigation had been launched into the loss of MOD classified documents; and undertook to inform the House of its conclusions. That investigation has now concluded. The investigation has independently confirmed the circumstances of the loss, including the management of the papers within the Department, the location at which the papers were lost

and the manner in which that occurred. These are consistent with the events self-reported by the individual. We are confident that we have recovered all the SECRET papers. The investigation has found no evidence of espionage; and has concluded there has been no compromise of the papers by our adversaries. The individual concerned has been removed from sensitive work and has already had their security clearance suspended pending a full review. For security reasons, the Department will be making no further comment on the nature of the loss or on the identity of the individual. The Department takes protection of its information extremely seriously and will continue to take firm action in response to such incidents.

# Written Answers

Friday, 16 July 2021

## Buildings: Insulation

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Greenhalgh on 28 June (HL1204, HL1205), what assessment they have made of reports that leaseholders, despite having an EWS1 form certifying that their building's external wall system has been assessed for safety by a suitable expert, are unable to sell their leases on account of lenders refusing to offer mortgages. [HL1732]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Department frequently engages with the industry and will continue to challenge them on the use of the EWS1 process, as well as pressing for more data so that we can get a sense of how the RICS guidance is being applied, and the impact of the process on mortgage applications.

We will continue to work with lenders to enable them to understand and accept other forms of assurance such as a comprehensive fire risk assessment which includes the external walls or post 2018 building control sign off for high rise blocks.

## Department for Transport: Electric Vehicles

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of vehicles owned or hired by the government to transport (1) ministers, and (2) senior civil servants, on official business are fully electric. [HL1788]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government Car Service (GCS) provides a departmental pool car service to most Government Departments. Cars are provided as a shared resource for Ministers and senior officials, which is managed by individual departments. The departmental pool car fleet currently consists of 96 vehicles. 28 of those vehicles are fully electric (29%) and 26 are hybrid electric (27%).

## Doctors: Vacancies

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to address the shortage of doctors in the NHS. [HL1714]

**Lord Bethell:** In England, to further increase the supply of doctors we have increased the number of medical school places by 1,500 and opened five medical schools. This expansion was completed in September 2020 and the first of these doctors will enter the workforce from 2023. We are also taking action to increase the retention of doctors. The Enhancing Junior Doctors' Working Lives programme, led by Health

Education England, is delivering a range of initiatives to improve the quality of life of doctors in training.

## Emergency Services: Sirens

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure the emergency services comply with the provisions of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 which require them to use vehicle sirens only when it is necessary and desirable to do so, and that they should therefore refrain from sounding sirens late at night when streets are empty of traffic. [HL1868]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The conditions under which sirens may be used are governed by Regulation 99 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (C & U). Emergency service vehicles are permitted to use a siren to indicate to other road users the urgency of the purposes for which the vehicle is being used, or to warn other road users of the presence of the vehicle on the road.

Subject to the regulations and any form of guidance, drivers are expected to use their professional judgement to decide when and where the use of sirens is appropriate.

The use of sirens and other attributes fitted to road vehicles used by the emergency services is a matter for the chief officers of those services in conjunction with the chief officer of police for that area. There are no current plans to intervene.

## Equal Pay and Recruitment: Ethnic Groups

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the survey research by the Trade Unions Congress, published on 19 March, which found that one in three black and minority ethnic workers say they have been unfairly turned down for a job; and what plans they have to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting. [HL1739]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government is aware of the TUC research which found that a third (33%) of ethnic minority workers say they have been unfairly turned down for a job compared to one in 5 (19%) of white workers. The Government is clear that no one should be discriminated against because of their ethnicity and the Equality Act 2010 makes such discrimination unlawful.

The Government is committed to building a fairer Britain and ensuring that equality and opportunity is available for all. That is why my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister established the independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities which published its independent report on March 31st.

The report includes a specific recommendation in relation to ethnicity pay reporting. We welcome the opportunity to consider the Commission's findings in relation to this issue, and are looking at them in light of

the work that has already taken place within government, including the consultation on ethnicity pay reporting. We will be publishing our response to the Commission's report later this summer.

### Highway Code

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what analysis, if any, they have undertaken in the last five years on the number of people who read the Highway Code; and how many rules are contained in the most recent version of the Code. [HL1843]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Department for Transport has not conducted any dedicated analysis in the last 5 years on the number of people who read the Highway Code.

Other organisations publish the Highway Code under The National Archives' open Government Licence. Each year 2.1 million people study and are tested on driving theory, which requires a thorough knowledge of the Highway Code, Know Your Traffic Signs and Driving – The Essential Skills. There are many resources to educate learners from a range of providers, but a survey by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency in 2019 found that 84% of the 16-24 years olds asked said they had read the Highway Code as part of their study.

Sales of official publications of the Highway Code as a book, app or download record 1,313,438 copy sales and downloads in the past 5 years, each of which might be read, passed on or lent out in the case of library copies a number of times.

In the same period 3,673,515 driving theory product sales and downloads were recorded, educating people in the Highway Code and the other official sources. Analytics for the Highway Code on gov.uk show 18,189,854 page views for this period.

There are currently 307 rules contained within the Highway Code.

### Males: Health Services

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 28 April (HL15156), what assessment they have made of their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, particularly section 149 (1b) of the Equality Act 2010. [HL1760]

**Lord Bethell:** As required by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, the Department's Annual Report for 2020 provides an overview on how it complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty between April 2020 and March 2021. Our compliance in relation to section 149 (1b) of the Equality Act 2010 included actions to improve COVID-19 vaccine

uptake among some ethnic minorities; provision of transparent personal protective equipment to support people who are deaf and people with hearing loss; publishing the National Suicide Prevention Strategy progress report with a commitment to address the lack of LGBT+ self-harm and suicide data; and establishing the Maternity Inequalities Oversight Forum to address the inequalities for women and babies from different ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic groups.

### Motorways: Safety

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to inform drivers who have stopped in the emergency area of a motorway of the requirement to use the emergency phones to ask permission to re-join the carriageway; and what penalties, if any, may be applied to drivers who fail to notify the appropriate body of their intention to re-join the motorway. [HL1844]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** When a driver stops in an emergency area on an All Lane Running (ALR) motorway, Highways England provide an emergency roadside telephone and information on seeking assistance. This information is provided on a sign located next to the emergency telephone in every emergency area on the ALR sections of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The updated Highway Code due to be published later this year will include reference to this sign for the first time (Rule 278).

There is no specific statutory offence linked to the content of the sign, that is, it is not mandatory for drivers to phone Highways England and ask permission before re-joining the main carriageway.

When re-joining the motorway from an emergency area, it is a driver's responsibility to do in an appropriate manner, when safe to do so. However, Highways England operators can provide advice and practical support to drivers in re-joining the main carriageway, including monitoring CCTV, setting a red X lane closure and if necessary, dispatching Traffic Officers to assist on scene.

### National Security and Investment Act 2021

*Asked by Baroness Merron*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the final communications sectoral definition under the National Security and Investment Act 2021 will be published. [HL1724]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government will publish the draft notifiable acquisition regulations as part of the implementation of the National Security and Investment Act 2021 in due course. This will include descriptions of the proposed acquisitions in the communications sector which must be notified to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

## Renewable Energy: Waste

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to require local authorities in England to take into account (1) the use of carbon capture, utilisation and storage technologies, or (2) the potential for future installation of such technology, when considering whether to grant permission for new energy from waste plants. [[HL1706](#)]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future, including by supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Local Planning Authorities should consider this when considering whether to grant permission for new energy for waste plants.

In addition to requiring planning permission to build a new energy from waste plant, an environmental permit may be required to operate it. The Environment Agency are the permitting authority in England. Environmental permits contain conditions to protect the environment and human health. Energy from waste permits can set controls a range of factors, for example, by including emissions limits. Carbon capture and utilisation and storage technologies could play a role in this.

## Telecommunications Cables: Seas and Oceans

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how many repairs to subsea cables have needed to be undertaken, and (2) what was the average time taken to complete such repairs, in each of the last five years. [[HL1621](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** The government takes the security and resilience of cables very seriously and we focus on the full range of threats and risks, including supply chain and repair arrangements. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is the lead department for the energy sector, including subsea energy cables. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is the lead department for telecommunications policy, including the security and resilience of telecommunications subsea cables.

Subsea cables are privately owned and operated. Operators have arrangements in place to ensure a prompt response to damage or disruption. These arrangements draw upon national and international cable laying and repair companies. The departments work closely with the operators, regulators and others to assess risks and ensure that the appropriate mitigation measures, including the provision of specialist capabilities (such as installation and repair), are in place to enable an effective response to actual or potentially disruptive incidents. We keep these capabilities and the regulatory framework under review and engage with industry as part of this.

Information on cable repairs is not held but departments regularly engage with industry to keep informed.

## Trade Barriers: China

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to impose (1) import, and (2) export, controls on firms linked to (a) China's Military-Civil Fusion Strategy, and (b) the surveillance and abuse of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. [[HL1785](#)]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** HM Government does not at present have any plans to place import controls on goods from China. With regards to China's Military-Civil Fusion Strategy, under our existing export controls regime exporters of specified dual-use items require a licence to export or transfer from the UK. All licence applications are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Export Licensing Criteria which require us to consider the impact of the proposed export on national security, international peace and security, and human rights.

In January, the Foreign Secretary announced a series of measures to help make sure British businesses and the public sector are not complicit in the violation of rights and responsibilities in Xinjiang, including a review of export controls. This review is ongoing and we will report its outcome to Parliament in due course.

## Travel: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Willoughby de Broke*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that the five million UK residents who have received the COVID-19 vaccine manufactured in India will be allowed to travel to the EU for business or leisure purposes. [[HL1750](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government continues to engage with the European Union on certification to ensure that travel between the United Kingdom and the EU is supported by a common approach.

The Serum Institute of India (SII) manufactures Vaxzevria and Covishield and both branded vaccines are the same as the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. All SII-made doses approved by the UK regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and administered in the UK were branded as the 'COVID-19 vaccine AstraZeneca' which is now known commercially as 'Vaxzeria'. The MHRA has not approved doses branded as 'Covishield' and none have been administered in the UK. All AstraZeneca vaccines given in the UK are the same product and appear on the NHS COVID Pass as Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency has authorised Vaxzevria vaccine and it is therefore recognised by the EU.

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