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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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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
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Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
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Lord Greenhalgh	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
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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

Wednesday, 15 September 2021

Election Finance and Policy

[HLWS285]

Lord True: My Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith MP), has today made the following written statement:

This Government is committed to ensuring our democracy is secure, fair, modern and transparent and through the changes being brought in by the Elections Bill, we are updating our electoral systems to ensure they are kept up to date for our age.

The Elections Bill will progress this week to Committee stage in the House of Commons, and to aid hon. Members in their consideration of the Bill, I am today (15 September) publishing two documents relating to measures in the Elections Bill: specifically an illustrative Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement; and the Government's response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report into Regulating Election Finance.

Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement

As I set out in my [statement](#) to the House on 17 June, the Elections Bill provides for the introduction of a Strategy and Policy Statement, which will set out guidance and principles to which the Electoral Commission must have regard in exercising their functions. I committed to publish an illustrative example of this Statement to aid parliamentarians' understanding of this measure, and I have today placed a copy of this in the Libraries of both Houses. The Government will continue to engage with interested parties, including the Parliamentary Parties Panel, on this illustrative Statement.

It is important to note that this is an illustrative example of the Strategy and Policy Statement - the Bill does not include the text of the Statement, and instead makes provision for the Statement to be introduced in secondary legislation. Following Royal Assent, a draft Statement will be subject to a statutory consultation with the stakeholders listed in the Bill before the approval of Parliament is sought.

To further support Parliament's scrutiny of the Bill, on 7 September I also made a [statement](#) to the House on the role of the Speaker's Committee in holding the Electoral Commission to account, and placed an infographic outlining the Commission's existing accountability framework in the Libraries of Both Houses.

The Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report on Regulating Election Finance

We have today published the Government's response to the CSPL report on Regulating Election Finance. The Government welcomes the report published in July by the CSPL, and agrees with the key principles of fairness,

transparency and integrity which have guided their work. Indeed, our existing regulatory framework is already based upon these principles.

It is, of course, important that the rules around electoral finance are kept under review and updated as necessary. As I set out in my [statement](#) to the House on 15 June, the Elections Bill is making important reforms to the regulatory framework to support public confidence in the integrity of our electoral system, by strengthening and updating political finance and campaigning regulation; these include reforms that relate directly to recommendations made in the CSPL report.

Electoral law is complex and it is important that any changes are made with careful consideration. Therefore, the Government intends to look at all the recommendations in the CSPL report alongside other recommendations set out in similar reports, including the forthcoming Reports from the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee into the work of the Electoral Commission and the Elections Bill, as part of further work examining the regulatory framework for elections, beyond the Elections Bill.

We are the stewards of a fantastic democratic heritage which must be kept up to date to protect our democracy and maintain public confidence in our electoral system.

The associated documents have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Election Systems

[HLWS284]

Lord True: My Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith MP), has today made the following written statement:

On 16 March 2021, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Home Secretary, [announced](#) to the House that the Government would be introducing legislation to change the voting system for all Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC), Combined Authority Mayors, and the Mayor of London.

This legislation, due to be brought forward when Parliamentary time allowed, would see the voting systems change from the confusing and over-complicated Supplementary Vote system to the tried and tested First Past the Post system.

I am pleased to announce that the Government intends to bring forward these changes in an amendment to the Elections Bill at Committee stage. Including these changes in the Elections Bill will ensure that they are implemented ahead of the next scheduled PCC elections in May 2024. This timetable will give good notice to all future candidates and electoral administrators of the change in voting system to First Past the Post well in advance of these elections, in accordance with Electoral Commission guidance.

Additionally, I can announce that the voting system for Local Authority mayors in England, which are also currently on the Supplementary Vote system, will be changed to First Past the Post. This will ensure that all

Mayoral elections across England will have a consistent voting system.

These changes will allow us to deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment to continue supporting the First Past the Post system. Given that two thirds of voters voted in favour of retaining First Past the Post for Parliamentary elections in the 2011 nationwide referendum, these changes also reflect the view of the British people.

In this May's London Mayoral elections, the Supplementary Vote system saw hundreds of thousands void, wasted or blank votes cast, reflecting voter confusion and the complex system. In a speech to this House in 1931, Winston Churchill when describing transferable voting said "the decision is to be determined by the most worthless votes given for the most worthless candidates."

The Supplementary Vote system as used in England and Wales is found nowhere else in the world. The nearest similar system where voters rank up to three candidates – the Contingent Vote system – is used only in Sri Lanka; by contrast, First Past the Post is the world's most widely used electoral system. The Government believes that First Past the Post is a more straightforward way of electing representatives, which is transparent to both voters and administrators and results in a more accessible system.

The change to First Past the Post will provide clear local accountability in a readily understandable way, making it easier for voters to express a clear choice: the person chosen to represent a local area will be the one who directly receives the most votes.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 15 September 2021

Blue Badge Scheme

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the regulations governing the provision of Blue Badges allow for badges to be given to drivers caring for people with autism; and if not, whether they will consider amending the regulations to give badges to drivers caring for people with autism. [HL2507]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Blue Badge Scheme provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with a range of disabilities and medical conditions to enable them to park closer to the places they wish to visit.

If an individual is eligible for a badge then the carer can use it when accompanying the badge holder, carers do not need a badge in their own right. The regulations governing the Scheme do not allow carers to take advantage of the parking benefits provided under the Scheme unless the badge holder is travelling with them. The Department has no plans to amend the legislation.

Bridges: Accidents

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, with respect to vehicles colliding with railway bridges, (1) how many instances were reported in the last five years, (2) how many reported instances resulted in delays to trains of (a) up to six, (b) up to 12, and (c) over 24, hours, (3) what overall compensation was due to operators and passengers, (4) in how many instances the vehicle operator was prosecuted, (5) what was the range of penalties imposed, and (6) what plans they have to review the related liabilities and offences. [HL2403]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The total number of bridge strikes in past 5 years can be found in the table below:

Network Rail's statistics report all delay and cancellation minutes for all the services affected by a specific bridge strike; they are not divided up for delays on individual journeys. The average delay and cancellation minutes attributed to bridge strike events for 2020/21 is 42 minutes, down from 273 minutes in 2019/20, partly due to reduced network operations. The Schedule 8 compensation costs for delays and cancellations due to bridge strikes are £5.5 million for 2020/21, down from £11.5 million in 2019/20, again due in part to reduced network operations.

Information pertaining to prosecutions and the range of penalties imposed upon prosecuted drivers are not held by the Department for Transport. Any plans to review the

related liabilities and offences would be a matter for the Ministry of Justice.

Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the investigation by BBC News, published on 28 July, which found that one million masks manufactured in China and supplied to the NHS as high grade did not meet the correct level of protection, (2) how fake personal protective equipment (PPE) entered the UK supply chain, (3) the number of (a) staff, and (b) patients, that were given faulty PPE, (4) the risk of exposure to COVID-19 as a result of using such faulty PPE, (5) the amount of money that government departments have spent on faulty PPE, and (6) the options for seeking restitution and compensation from the suppliers of faulty PPE. [HL2327]

Lord Bethell: For all personal protective equipment (PPE), certification is checked through a technical assurance process before the products are released for distribution. Following information received from the National Health Service in February, we quarantined and recalled the affected products and reviewed the technical certification.

As part of our investigation, we commissioned the British Standards Institution to test the masks. While the findings stated the affected masks failed to meet to FFP3 requirements, they passed all the testing requirements for an FFP2 respirator. The World Health Organization recommends the use of N95 or FFP2 respirators for health workers performing aerosol-generating procedures, wearers should have been afforded protection. These masks are not recommended to be worn by patients. We have commissioned an independent root cause analysis investigation and we await the outcome.

As of 10 June, 1.9 billion items of stock were in the 'do not supply' category. This is equivalent to 6.2% of purchased volume with an estimated value of £2.8 billion. We are considering options to repurpose and recycle items in this category which ensures safety and value for money. Discussions with suppliers are ongoing.

Coronavirus: Protective Clothing and Screening

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 2 August (HL128), whether they will now collect information centrally about the personal protective equipment (PPE) procured centrally; and what is their estimate of (1) the "disproportionate cost" of collecting information about the companies involved in the supply chain, and (2) the total combined cost to public funds of PPE and lateral flow devices. [HL2326]

Lord Bethell: While information on personal protective equipment (PPE) is published on the Government's Contracts Finder service, there are currently no plans to collect or publish data on sub-contractors and intermediaries.

Collating the information requested would involve detailed analysis of 339 individual contracts and detailed re-validation of purchase order and invoice data. This would exceed the disproportionate cost of £850.

The total spend for PPE during the financial year 2020/21 was £14.7 billion, which included the costs of freight, logistics and warehousing. The total cost of lateral flow devices is not held in the format requested.

Devolution

Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made, or intend to make, to (1) the Scottish Ministers, (2) the Welsh Ministers, and (3) the Northern Ireland Executive, regarding their attention to reserved issues. [[HL2411](#)]

Lord True: UK Government Ministers regularly speak to Ministers in the Devolved Administrations on a wide range of areas. It is vital that engagement takes place across the UK on the challenges that we face together, such as our recovery from COVID-19, supporting the NHS and protecting jobs across the UK. The UK Government reports quarterly on our intergovernmental engagement and activity with the Devolved Administrations and will continue this practice in line with our commitments to transparency and accountability.

Driving Licences: Applications

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how long are the current delays in the supply of new and renewed driving licences, (2) what steps they plan to take to tackle these delays, and (3) what assessment they have made of the impact the delays are having on the existing shortages of drivers in key occupations. [[HL2506](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays for customers. Throughout the pandemic DVLA has been working with a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements. The current increased demand

for the DVLA's services has also contributed to delays with paper applications.

Paper driving licence applications are currently taking between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

The DVLA continues to explore opportunities to reduce turnaround times and has been developing additional new online services and recruiting additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to accommodate more staff to work predominantly on driver's medical casework and queries. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

To help address the HGV driver shortages, my department launched a consultation which ended on 7 September 2021. The proposals include streamlining the process for new drivers to gain their HGV licence and increasing lorry test appointment availability. The DVLA is also prioritising driving licence applications from HGV drivers to reduce impacts on the transport sector specifically.

The haulage industry is vital to the UK economy and the Government is committed to supporting the industry by helping to ensure that it can recruit the drivers it needs and get these drivers on the road as soon as possible.

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the average waiting time was on 1 August for those who had submitted paper applications to the DVLA for the renewal of their driving licences. [[HL2525](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's online services are the quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their driving licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application for a driving licence. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. Industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays for customers who make paper applications. The DVLA has also been working with fewer staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements.

Information on average waiting time for a paper application for a driving licence to be processed on a specific day is not recorded.

The following table shows the average time taken to issue a driving licence after receiving a paper application where no medical condition is involved.

		<i>Apr-21</i>	<i>May-21</i>	<i>Jun-21</i>	<i>Jul-21</i>	<i>Aug-21</i>	<i>YTD</i>
Ordinary licence renewal	Working days	14	20	28	37	40	30
Vocational licence renewal	Working days	12	14	16	21	21	17

The time taken is measured from date the application is received at the DVLA to the date the driving licence is sent to the customer.

The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found on GOV.UK.

Driving Licences: Medical Examinations

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a requirement that 'fitness to drive' assessments to (1) renew, or (2) obtain a new, driver's licence, are signed by a medical professional with access to the driver's full medical history. [HL2447]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency already recommends that drivers who need to submit a medical report with a licence application or renewal should obtain this from a doctor with access to their medical records. However, this is not compulsory and to make it a requirement may have impacts on drivers and the transport industry in terms of time and costs. When conducting medical investigations, the DVLA will write to the driver's GP or consultant if further medical information is required. There are no plans to change the existing arrangements.

Football: Racial Harassment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of a YouGov survey, published on 25 August, which found that 62 per cent of football fans fear that a player will be racially abused. [HL2462]

Baroness Barran: There is no place for racism in football, whether in the stands or on social media, or society more widely.

The Government therefore welcomed the Premier League's "No Room for Racism" Action plan, and the announcement of new enhanced anti-discrimination measures to be implemented in the 2021/22 season, such as league-wide bans for offenders.

The Government's pioneering Online Safety Bill will make it even tougher for offenders to abuse others, with social media firms facing huge fines if they fail to clamp down on abuse.

There is still more to do though, and we will continue to work with the football authorities to combat racism in the game.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their proposal to increase the current 10-year storage limits for eggs, sperm and embryos, whether they will immediately introduce a moratorium on the destruction of eggs that reach their 10-year limit before the legislation is passed. [HL2485]

Lord Bethell: The detailed implementation of the policy will be announced in due course.

Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are their reasons for abolishing the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise; what assessment they have made of its ability to demonstrate its worth during the COVID-19 pandemic; and, in any such assessment, whether they considered that more time may be needed for it to demonstrate its worth given the circumstances of the pandemic. [HL2553]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The independent review of the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN), commissioned by the Department, found that ICCAN's functions were essential, but that other models of delivery could be considered to deliver the functions more effectively. The review took into account the circumstances of the pandemic.

Having considered other models, the Government has decided that the majority of ICCAN's functions could be done more effectively by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). In particular, the CAA's wider environmental and airspace responsibilities make it a more natural fit to ensure that noise advice forms part of wider considerations.

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that (1) the Civil Aviation Authority, and (2) the Department for Transport, will be able to exercise independent judgement in relation to the functions they are scheduled to assume from the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise. [HL2554]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) provides a range of advice across a number of aviation subjects and domains. The CAA's Environmental Research and Consultancy Department already produces independent noise advice for many stakeholders and the creation of a new Environmental Panel will give access to greater levels of technical capability and transparency around that advice. Decisions about aviation noise policy will, as they always have, remain with the Government.

Lord Wilson of Rievaulx

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will next review retained papers relating to allegations of a security service plot against Harold Wilson to decide whether they can be released; and what criteria will be used in this review. [HL2429]

Lord True: Under the Public Records Act these papers were originally recommended for closure for at least 100 years. However, in line with current best practice, these papers will be reviewed in 2026 and every ten years thereafter.

Mathematics: Higher Education

Asked by *Baroness Garden of Frognal*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage students to take all forms of mathematics at Higher Education level. [HL2486]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Mathematics remains the most popular A level subject, with entries up 19% since 2010. There have been increases in A level entries for both maths and further maths – of 3.8% and 7.1% respectively – since 2020.

The Department for Education funds a national network of 40 Maths Hubs across England to raise the standard of mathematics education to meet the standards achieved in top-performing jurisdictions. Through a school-led model, Maths Hubs aim to harness maths leadership and expertise to develop and spread excellent practice in the teaching of mathematics for the benefit of all students.

The Department funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (AMSP) which aims to increase participation and attainment in level 3 mathematics through targeted support ensuring that students in all 16–19 state-funded schools and colleges can access AS/A level maths and AS/A level further mathematics and helping them to study these subjects to a higher level.

The government will nurture our country's top mathematical talent by delivering its commitment to have a 16–19 maths school in every region. The principal aim of maths schools is to help prepare more of our most mathematically-able students to succeed in maths disciplines at top universities and to pursue mathematically-intensive careers.

This is part of a range of initiatives to improve maths provision, including the AMSP and additional funding via the Advanced Maths Premium to support providers to increase A level maths participation; it will also complement the work of Maths Hubs.

The AMSP also provides targeted support for students preparing for study in higher education.

Effective careers guidance and advice is key to supporting young people in their education and career choices, to learn and develop skills in the areas for which employers are looking. The government's Careers

Strategy sets out a long-term plan to build a world-class careers system to achieve this ambition. We are increasing the information available to students to ensure they can make informed choices about what and where to study. The delivery of the Careers Strategy also ensures that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) encounters, such as with employers and apprenticeships, are built into school careers programmes.

NHS: Military Aid

Asked by *Baroness Masham of Ilton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have for the army to provide drivers to help deliver urgent (1) medical devices, and (2) medicines, across the country as a result of the shortage of lorry drivers. [HL2504]

Baroness Goldie: Defence has not been asked to provide logistical support to the Department for Health and Social Care or National Health Service this winter. The Armed Forces can provide support to the civil authorities at their request where a situation goes beyond the capacity and/or capability of local authorities and other agencies under the Military Aid to Civil Authorities process.

Primary Health Care: Finance

Asked by *Lord Blunkett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the Carr-Hill funding formula for primary health care is able to address the additional pressures created by the COVID-19 pandemic and, in particular, the pressures on primary care practices in areas of low vaccine take-up; and what steps they intend to take as a result. [HL2404]

Lord Bethell: The Carr-Hill funding formula adjusts the global sum payment to general practitioner (GP) contractors. The formula weights a practice's patient list against a number of factors which reflect differences in the age and sex composition of the practice demographic, additional pressures generated by differential rates of patient turnover, morbidity, and the impact of geographical location. The Carr-Hill funding formula does not reflect changes in demand unless they are a result of a change in patient demographic or unavoidable practice costs, and so does not directly address COVID-19 related pressures or areas of low vaccine take-up.

To ensure that general practices are able to meet demand generated by the pandemic, we have made available an additional ringfenced £270 million from November 2020 until September 2021, to ensure GPs and their teams are able to continue to support all patients.

Prisons: Pregnancy

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) women, and (2) trans men, were known to be pregnant

in New Hall Prison for the first two quarters of 2020. [HL2436]

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) women, and (2) trans men, were known to be pregnant in Drake Hall Prison for the first two quarters of 2020. [HL2437]

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) women, and (2) trans men, were known to be pregnant in East Sutton Park Prison for the first two quarters of 2020. [HL2438]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: We do not hold this pregnancy data for the requested time period or format. This data would need to be collected by individual prisons at a disproportionate cost.

As part of our fundamental review of policy relating to pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units and maternal separation from children up to two in prison, we committed to providing national pregnancy data in the future. The 'HMPPS Annual Digest, April 2020 to March 2021' was published on 29 July 2021 and this contains the latest published figures relating to pregnant prisoners. This data is, however, provided as a national snapshot. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmppps-annual-digest-april-2020-to-march-2021>.

Further information on the review, including our findings and resulting reforms regarding data collection, can be found in our summary report published in July 2020:

[Review of operational policy on pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units and maternal separation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Prison Sentences

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to review the cases of people with Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences with a view to recommending early release wherever possible. [HL2428]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: The Government keeps the operation of sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) under constant review. This includes continuing to ensure that IPP prisoners, who have completed their minimum term of imprisonment, have every opportunity to progress towards safe release. By law, they are entitled to a review of their detention by the Parole Board at least once every two years. At the conclusion of any parole review which has not resulted in a release direction, an indicative date will be set for the prisoner's next review, taking account of advice from the Parole Board as to the risk reduction work which a prisoner needs to complete in the intervening period. A

planned review may be brought forward where the prisoner has made exceptional progress.

HM Prison and Probation Service are focused on reducing the risk and thereby the successful rehabilitation of IPP prisoners via an action plan which is being taken forward jointly with the Parole Board. This approach is working, with published statistics confirming the high numbers of IPP prisoners achieving a release decision each year.

Our primary responsibility is to protect the public; however, HMPPS remains committed to safely reducing the number of prisoners serving IPP sentences in custody.

Public Transport: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage people back onto public transport after the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL2530]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We are continuing to ensure we maintain reliable levels of service and the Department, with operators, is supporting passenger safety through enhanced cleaning, providing hand sanitiser and supporting ventilation where possible, alongside positive communications and messaging including the rail campaign 'Getting Back on Track' and the TfL campaign 'Welcome Back London.'

The Department has also issued safer travel guidance for passengers and operators which provides advice to passengers about how to travel safely during the pandemic to support a return to the network.

Roads: Construction and Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of the funding allocated to their current roads programme is for (1) building new roads, or (2) substantial road improvement schemes. [HL2448]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government has made £27.504 billion available to National Highways (formerly Highways England) from 2020 to 2025 for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). Around half of this is for major infrastructure enhancement schemes, the majority of which are for enhancements to existing roads rather than building new ones.

Shipping: Security

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to publish the new national strategy for maritime security. [HL2464]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Following the publication of the first UK National Strategy for Maritime Security in 2014, the cross-government process to refresh the

National Strategy for Maritime Security is underway and is being led by the Department for Transport.

Social Prescribing

Asked by Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the timetable for the rollout of social prescribing plans as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. [HL2407]

Lord Bethell: Over 1,500 social prescribing link workers are now in place and we are continuing to work towards the target of at least 900,000 people referred to social prescribing by 2023/24. NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently working on plans beyond the NHS Long Term Plan metrics to ensure social prescribing is fully embedded and sustainable in primary care.

Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to instruct Train Operating Companies to restore services and facilities (1) cut, or (2) reduced, during the COVID-19 pandemic, to reflect the increasing numbers of passengers using the remaining services; and when they intend to issue any such instructions. [HL2552]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The industry continues to adjust service levels to anticipate changes in passenger demand, which is currently at around 60 per cent of pre-COVID journeys. Train operating companies are already providing approximately 85 per cent of pre-pandemic

service levels. We are working closely with operators and Network Rail to ensure that service levels remain appropriate to expected demand, whilst prioritising the good performance passengers need, and delivering good value for the taxpayer.

Veterans: Telephone Services

Asked by Lord Coaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many calls the Veterans' Gateway helpline received in (1) June, (2) July, and (3) August. [HL2483]

Lord True: Information held by the Veterans Gateway shows that in June there were 1,386, in July there were 1,362 and in August there were 1,505 calls.

Video Games: Gambling

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the results of their call for evidence on loot boxes in video games, which closed on 22 November 2020. [HL2549]

Baroness Barran: We want to ensure that all players can enjoy games safely. This is a responsibility that the Government shares jointly with the games industry.

We received over 30,000 responses to our loot box call for evidence, and continue to engage with industry to discuss issues identified from the call for evidence. We will publish our response to the call for evidence on loot boxes in the coming months.

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