

**Daily Report****Monday, 19 April 2021**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 April 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:14 P.M., 19 April 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.



## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Additional Restrictions Grant

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[181064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether local authorities are permitted to award Additional Restrictions Grant funding to companies that began trading after 5 January 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

Yes, Local Authorities are permitted to do this.

All businesses that are trading and meet other eligibility criteria may apply to receive funding under this scheme. There is no starting date from which businesses must have been trading in order to qualify for Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding.

#### ■ Additional Restrictions Grant and Local Restrictions Support Grant

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[174881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the Government's timeframe is for local authorities to issue final payments for the Local Restrictions Grant and the Additional Restriction Grant; and if he will consider extending the final payment date for those schemes.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government continues to provide financial support via Local Authorities for businesses that are required to close, or which are severely affected by the restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives.

At the Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer further extended the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme, providing top-up funding for Local Authorities to distribute to businesses. Final payments of the ARG must be made by 31 March 2022.

Local Authorities were expected to pay eligible businesses the full allocation of the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) (Closed) as soon as possible after receipt of the funding. They must issue payments for the second round of the 2021 LRSG (Closed) by 30 June 2021. The first round of LRSG (Closed) payments, from 5 January, must be paid out by 30 April 2021.

There are currently no plans to extend these deadlines.

**■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency**

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[180486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 173015, what factors a programme manager will consider when setting ARIA ambitions.

**Amanda Solloway:**

ARIA's leadership will have the autonomy to choose which programmes they fund and how they fund them to best deliver long-term, transformational advances in science and technology. As detailed in the ARIA Bill, in exercising its functions ARIA will have regard to the desirability of:

1. contributing to economic growth, or an economic benefit, in the United Kingdom,
2. promoting scientific innovation and invention in the United Kingdom,
3. improving the quality of life in the United Kingdom (or in the United Kingdom and elsewhere).

BEIS will not set specific criteria for strategic funding decisions or for the goals of Programme Managers.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[180488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the timescale between passing the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) Bill and ARIA's first investment in high risk research.

**Amanda Solloway:**

We expect ARIA to be operational from Spring 2022.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[180489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure there is no duplication of work between ARIA and existing publicly funded R&D.

**Amanda Solloway:**

ARIA is an addition to the public funding landscape and will exclusively focus on projects with potential to produce transformative technological change, or a paradigm-shift in an area of science.

ARIA will have an open remit, with maximum autonomy over what it chooses to fund. The additional funding stream will complement existing publicly or privately funded research for cutting edge science and technology. However, ARIA's streamlined structure, minimal bureaucracy and financial flexibility will mean ARIA can fund this research in new and creative ways, delivering to researchers in the way that best supports their work.

## ■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Engineering

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[180975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Advanced Research and Invention Agency will fund engineering projects.

**Amanda Solloway:**

ARIA will have an open remit, with maximum autonomy over what it chooses to fund. Its focus will be on finding and funding transformational science and technology, wherever it exists.

## ■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Finance

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[180974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the science budget that will be allocated to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency in each remaining year of the 2019 Parliament.

**Amanda Solloway:**

ARIA's budget commitment of £800m up to 2024/25 is expected to represent less than 2% of the Government's current total annual R&D investment over the same period.

## ■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Public Appointments

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[180493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made in the recruitment process to fill the roles of (a) Chair and (b) Chief Executive for ARIA; and whether he plans to appoint an interim chief executive to that agency.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The open recruitment campaigns for ARIA's first Chair and CEO will launch this spring and there is no intention to make any interim appointments.

## ■ British Business Bank

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[174734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the British Business Bank has accelerated accreditation for some existing lenders; and what steps his Department is taking to prevent fraudulent applications for such accreditation.

**Paul Scully:**

The Recovery Loan Scheme ensures businesses of any size can continue to access finance they need once the existing Covid-19 loan schemes close.

All lenders will be subject to an assessment of their proposals, and subject to usual British Business Bank governance around approvals. Existing accredited Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme lenders have been invited to apply for accreditation. An accelerated process, for some of these lenders, will ensure that a broad range of lenders is in place to offer facilities as soon as possible.

## ■ Carbon Emissions

**Yvonne Fovargue:**

[\[180965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help vulnerable consumers make the transition to net zero.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has extended the Energy Company Obligation to 2026 and expanded the Warm Home Discount to £475 million per year from 2022 to 2025/2026. This will see targeted support continue to be provided to low-income and vulnerable households to install energy saving measures and heat their homes over the winter months, while making savings on their energy bills through having better insulated homes. The future Home Upgrade Grant scheme, due to commence in 2022, will support low-income households with upgrades to the worst-performing homes off the gas grid in England. These upgrades will create warmer homes at lower cost and support low-income families with the switch to low-carbon heating. This increased energy efficiency is complemented by the Government's rollout of over 26 million smart meters, which help consumers see how much energy they are using in near real-time and make sure they are ready to take advantage of the next wave of flexible, low-carbon technologies and energy tariffs.

This Government is committed to getting the transition to net zero right for all consumers, including those in vulnerable circumstances, and will shortly publish a call for evidence to begin an ongoing strategic dialogue between consumers, industry and the Government on affordability in the energy system.

## ■ Companies: West Yorkshire

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[175008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many companies are registered in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

**Paul Scully:**

As of 1 April 2021, the number of companies registered in (a) Wakefield was 14,380 and the number of companies registered in (b) West Yorkshire was 135,136.

## ■ Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[180406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2021 to Question 174728, on GFG Alliance: Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, when he plans to publish details of the Coronavirus

Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme where required by the European Commission's Transparency Aid Module.

**Paul Scully:**

Details of facilities made available under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be published where required by the European Commission's Transparency Aid Module in due course.

Our priority is to ensure borrowers are given notice before information about their loans is shared with the European Commission; we are working with lenders and the British Business Bank to facilitate this. A rolling programme of reporting will then publish details of aid granted within the preceding 12 months.

More information is available at <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-schemes/data-reporting/>.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Cities and Local Growth Unit**

**Steve Reed:**

[175860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many full-time equivalent staff from his Department were employed in the Cities and Local Growth Unit in each of the last five years.

**Paul Scully:**

The Cities and Local Growth Unit is the Government's local growth team, working across two Departments and reporting jointly into the MHCLG and BEIS Secretaries of State. In each of the last five years, BEIS FTE employed in the Cities and Local Growth Unit (CLGU) is detailed in following chart.

**BEIS FTE EMPLOYED IN THE CLGU FROM 2017 TO \*2021**

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
91.1	102.4	125.8	133.1	153.4

*\*153.4 reflects data up to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021*

■ **Disclosure of Information**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[175940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent improvements he has made to the whistleblowing regime; when he plans to begin his review of whistleblowing legislation; and what plans he has for a public consultation once that review has been completed.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government remains committed to reviewing the UK whistleblowing framework and will carry this out once sufficient time has passed for there to be the necessary evidence available to assess the impact of the most recent reforms. The scope and timing of such a review will be confirmed in due course.

The most recent change introduced in 2017 was a new legislative requirement for most prescribed persons to produce an annual report on whistleblowing disclosures made to them by workers.

**Electricity Generation**

**Martyn Day:** [\[174908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential risk to UK net zero targets of not reforming the Transmission Network Use of System (TNUoS) charging system, which places a premium on wind farms based upon postcode rather than project viability.

**Martyn Day:** [\[174909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make a comparative assessment of the equity of the connection costs for wind projects in (a) Scotland and (b) elsewhere in Great Britain through the transmission network charging regime.

**Martyn Day:** [\[174910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with Ofgem on potential reform of the the Transmission Network Use of System charging system.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The transmission network charging regime is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator. Transmission charges are set to reflect the costs which generators and demand customers in different locations impose on the transmission network. For Scotland, it means that generators generally pay higher charges than elsewhere, as they are further from demand centres, whilst Scottish consumers benefit from lower transmission charges than elsewhere. This 'user pays' approach helps to ensure efficient network use and keeps costs down for all end-consumers.

Ofgem is undertaking a package of reforms which, amongst other things, are intended to enable decarbonisation at lowest cost to consumers. An important element of this reform package is the Access and Forward-Looking Charges Review, which includes consideration of some aspects of transmission charging arrangements. Ofgem plans to consult on proposals in 2021, and the Department is in close touch with Ofgem to understand the implications for helping to achieve net zero targets, as well as minimising consumer costs.

## ■ Energy: Coronavirus

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[175889]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of working from home during the covid-19 outbreak on the average cost of household energy bills in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; what assessment he has made of the number of households in those areas that have fallen into arrears with their energy supplier during the outbreak; and what steps his Department is taking to protect vulnerable households in energy arrears.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Provisional data for 2020<sup>1</sup> shows an increase in average UK gas and electricity consumption of 5% and 4% respectively, relative to 2019, once temperature effects have been removed. The price falls in both fuels, however, mean that the average dual fuel bill decreased in real terms by 5%.

Data is not available by city or constituency, but provisional 2020<sup>2</sup> data shows that the West Midlands was in the lower half of UK regions for both gas and electricity bills.

The Department does not hold figures on the number of customers newly in arrears due to COVID. This data will be reported in Ofgem's Supplier Obligations Reporting later this year.

In order to support vulnerable customer in arrears, the Government secured an industry-wide agreement to a set of principles to support consumers impacted by Covid-19 including to identify and prioritise customers at risk, support customers who are impacted financially, and support prepayment meter customers to stay on supply.

Additionally, the Government is extending the Warm Home Discount Scheme with over 2 million households provided with a £140 rebate off their energy bill each winter. The Energy Company Obligation has supported low income and vulnerable households with upgrading 2.2 million homes and delivering over 2.7 million energy efficiency measures.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/annual-domestic-energy-price-statistics>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/annual-domestic-energy-price-statistics>

## ■ Energy: Meters

**Dave Doogan:**

**[174966]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the installation of smart meters is mandatory in private residences.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Smart meters are replacing traditional gas and electricity meters in Great Britain as part of an essential infrastructure upgrade to make the energy system more efficient and flexible, enabling the cost-effective delivery of net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Smart meters also provide households with accurate, near-real time information about energy consumption in pounds and pence via an In-Home Display, so consumers can easily understand how to use less and save money on their bills.

Energy suppliers are required by licence conditions to take all reasonable steps to install smart meters in homes and small businesses. This obligation expires at the end of June 2021 and will be replaced with a new four-year policy framework from 1 July 2021 with fixed annual installation targets for energy suppliers to drive the consistent, long-term investment needed to ensure that everyone can benefit from smart meters.

Smart meters are not mandatory for energy consumers, but the Government wants all homes and small businesses to be able to benefit from the financial savings and greater convenience of digital energy services, and as such smart meters will become the default metering technology used in Great Britain.

**Environment Protection****Yvonne Fovargue:**[\[180964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure consumers and businesses have access to redress and other consumer protections in emerging low-carbon markets.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As a Competent Authority, the energy regulator Ofgem, has an obligation to ensure Alternative Dispute Resolution is provided in the energy sector under the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015.

Ofgem has appointed Ombudsman Services: Energy as the redress provider in the energy sector and has set out the types of dispute that Ombudsman Services: Energy can resolve, including issues relating to billing, sales, switching, supply, micro-generation and Feed in Tariffs.

Consumer protection continues to be a central part of policy considerations in relation to new energy markets, for example we have recently consulted on extending access to redress to heat network customers.

**Future Fund: British Business Bank****Apsana Begum:**[\[174975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of applications to the Future Fund scheme have been processed by



the British Business Bank as at 24 March 2021; and how many and what proportion of those applicants have been notified of the decision taken by the British Business Bank on their applications as at that date.

**Paul Scully:**

As of 24 March 2021, 1,851 applications to the Future Fund had been received of which 100% had been processed. On that same date, 1,766 applicants (96% of the total) had been notified. 'Processed' in this context means that an application has been completed by a lead investor and the proposed investee company and has entered the next stage of checks.

■ **Greensill: Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[174733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department made of the suitability of Greensill Capital to become an accredited lender under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

Greensill Capital were approved by the British Business Bank (Bank) in June last year to provide finance through the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), based on criteria set out in the CLBILS "Request for Proposals".

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy had no role in the Bank's decision to accredit Greensill Capital. All decisions taken by the Bank were made independently and in accordance with the Bank's usual procedures.

All accredited lenders are subject to audit by the Bank to ensure their compliance with scheme rules. If serious non-compliance is identified, the Bank is entitled to take remedial action. Such action might include termination of the guarantee agreement or withdrawal of the guarantee.

While the Bank looks into Greensill's position it is not able to originate new lending that benefits from a Government guarantee.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[180407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he had any discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Treasury Ministers or officials on the British Business Bank's decision to grant Greensill Capital access to the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

The British Business Bank (Bank) accredited Greensill Capital to offer finance via the Coronavirus Large Business Interruptions Loan Scheme.

All decisions taken by the Bank were made independently and in accordance with the Bank's usual procedures. The then Secretary of State had no discussions with either a) the Chancellor of the Exchequer, b) Treasury Ministers or c) Treasury officials about the Bank's decision.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

**[180410]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) his Department and (b) officials at the British Business Bank had discussions with the Bank of England on the decision to give Greensill Capital accredited lender status for the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Bank of England had no role in the British Business Bank's decision to accredit Greensill Capital.

All decisions taken by the British Business Bank were made independently and in accordance with the Bank's usual procedures.

## ■ Help to Grow Programme

**Esther McVey:**

**[174824]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the credentials of the providers of the Help to grow programme announced on 3 March 2020.

**Paul Scully:**

The Help to Grow: Management Programme will be delivered by Business Schools who have obtained the Small Business Charter (SBC) accreditation.

A list of the SBC schools can be found here: <https://smallbusinesscharter.org/find-business-school/>.

We are currently in the process of determining the criteria for eligible providers for the Help to Grow Digital scheme. These will be published in due course.

**Esther McVey:**

**[174825]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the types of businesses that the 'help to grow' scheme announced 3 March 2021 is seeking to support.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government's new 'Help to Grow' scheme will help small businesses across the UK learn new skills, reach new customers, and boost profits. We have consulted with key stakeholders from industry when designing this scheme including those who represent the breadth of UK SMEs.

Businesses across all sectors are welcome to apply for the Help to Grow Scheme so long as they meet the eligibility criteria as follows:

- Size of 5 to 249 employees
- More than a year old
- Attendee should be a decision-maker within the business e.g. CEO, Finance Director

- Must have at least one line of management in business employment structure

Those interested in participating can find further details about the Help to Grow Scheme by visiting: <https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/>.

**Esther McVey:**

**[174826]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department plans to provide to businesses following the completion of the new Help to Grow programme.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to improving the provision of support to SMEs across the country. Following the completion of the programme, the Help to Grow: Management Programme will provide participants with further direct business-to-business support, through the alumni network.

Participants will also be signposted to other leadership programmes on the market if they wish to progress with further learning. This programme is one of range of opportunities that the Government provides to businesses to support their growth.

**Esther McVey:**

**[174827]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there will be an application process for business mentors to get involved in the Help to Grow programme.

**Paul Scully:**

We are currently developing the mentoring element for the Help to Grow Management programme. We are looking at how mentors are onboarded and matched to participants. Our aim is to develop a high quality mentoring offer, which will support SMEs to boost their business performance, resilience and long term growth.

## ■ National Security and Investment Bill

**Stephen Kinnock:**

**[180513]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's decision to amend the National Security and Investment Bill on the Government's ability to protect the UK's (a) economy and (b) critical national infrastructure from hostile actors.

**Paul Scully:**

On the basis of the available data, which is limited to evidence from: Capital IQ on mergers and acquisitions with a value of £1 million and above; Pitchbook on transactions with a value below £1 million, and; Orbis on the number of indirect mergers and acquisitions, the proposed amendment, which would remove the 15% mandatory notification threshold from the National Security and Investment Bill is assessed as de minimis. Nonetheless, we do expect this to reduce the number of acquisitions subject to mandatory notification.

Irrespective of this change, the Bill continues to include the power for the Secretary of State to call in acquisitions at or below 25% of shares or votes in qualifying entities across the economy where they reasonably suspect that it has resulted in, or may result in, the acquisition of material influence over the policy of the entity and they reasonably suspect that this that this has given, or may give rise to, a risk to national security.

Therefore, we do not expect there to be any impact on the Government's ability to protect the UK's economy and critical national infrastructure from hostile actors.

## ■ New Businesses: West Yorkshire

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

**[175007]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department are taking to encourage new businesses in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government aims to make the United Kingdom the best place to start, grow and run a business. Government provides support and information for small businesses, including on starting and running a business, through our online services on GOV.UK; via the Business Support Helpline on FREEPHONE 0800 998 1098; and through the network of 38 local Growth Hubs in England.

A wide range of support and funding is available in Wakefield and across West Yorkshire for businesses at all stages, from start-ups and early-stage companies, to established businesses that are ready to expand and grow. With BEIS Growth Hub funding support, the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership's Business Support Service provides a single point of access to a wide range of national and local support and funding.

Local programmes which encourage and support start-ups and young businesses include:

The Ad:Venture programme provides a full business start-up programme, with young West Yorkshire businesses benefitting from a tailored mix of practical advice, coaching, academic support, incubation work space, finance brokerage and low rate loans. Grant funding of between £1,000 and £25,000 is available to support capital growth costs. As of February 2021, 40 Wakefield businesses have benefitted from the programme, with £2.3m grant awarded to 427 businesses across the City Region.

The Business Growth Programme 2021/22 includes support for new start enterprises and assistance to established businesses to help them recover and adapt following the Covid-19 pandemic. Grants of between £5,000 and £500,000 will be available across West Yorkshire. The programme is supported by £7m from Government's Getting Building Fund, extending services provided to March 2021 through the Local Growth Fund.

Entrepreneurship Support Package 2021 will encourage people from all communities across West Yorkshire to set up new businesses and help them tap into the wider sources of support that are available. The package will use at least £6m of investment funds provided by Government through the West Yorkshire Deal.

The British Business Bank's Start Up Loans programme provides loans of up to £25,000 for those starting a new business, or for businesses which have been trading for up to 24 months. In addition to finance, loan recipients are offered a dedicated mentoring service and access to a free expert business mentor for 12 months to help them with every aspect of setting up a business. The Start Up Loans programme has delivered over 81,000 loans totalling more than £707m (as at end-Feb 2021). 92 loans have been issued in Wakefield, totalling over £727,000. 9% of loans have been issued in Yorkshire and the Humber region, totalling over £62m. The British Business Bank's online Finance Hub also offers independent and impartial information on different finance options for businesses. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the Finance Hub has been updated to clearly signpost the financial support options available for businesses during this period of uncertainty.

The Government's new 'Help to Grow' scheme will help small businesses across the UK learn new skills, reach new customers, and boost profits. Help to Grow: Management will provide intensive management skills support to 30,000 small businesses whilst Help to Grow: Digital could support 100,000 small businesses with online advice and a voucher for software costs. BEIS will be engaging with stakeholders shortly but businesses can register their interest now at <https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/>.

## ■ Parental Leave

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[176141]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's consultation, Good Work Plan: proposals to support families, which closed on 29 November 2019, if he will take steps to respond to that consultation in respect of shared parental leave.

**Paul Scully:**

We are currently assessing the responses from the consultation on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay. We are also conducting a formal evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme, including large-scale, representative surveys of employers and parents. We are currently processing and analysing the data that we have collected.

Together, the consultation and the evaluation will give us a fuller picture of how well the current system of parental leave and pay is working for parents and employers. We intend to publish the Government Response to the consultation and the findings of the evaluation later this year.

## ■ Parents: Bereavement Leave

**Zarah Sultana:** [\[180625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to extend parental bereavement leave to include pregnancy losses before 24 weeks.

**Paul Scully:**

We recognise that a miscarriage can be deeply upsetting. We encourage employers to provide appropriate support to women who have suffered a miscarriage and respond sensitively to each individuals specific needs.

The current entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay applies to employed parents of children under the age of 18 and those who suffer a stillbirth.

Because the death of a child is particularly tragic, in April 2020, we legislated to give parents who lose a child under the age of 18, including cases where a baby is stillborn after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy, a right to take up to 2 weeks off work in the 56 weeks following the death of their child. The policy is mapped against the clinical definition of a 'stillbirth': 24 weeks is a legally and medically important point in a pregnancy as it is the clinical age of viability.

Individuals who do not feel able to return to work following a miscarriage may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay while off work. All employees are also entitled to 5.6 weeks of Annual Leave a year and many employers also offer 'Compassionate Leave'.

## ■ Renewable Energy

**Anna McMorris:** [\[175987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department spent on the Consultation, Aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition, which closed on 8 February 2021.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The consultation was produced at no additional cost to the Government.

**Anna McMorris:** [\[175988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he had with the board of CDC Group and UK Export Finance ahead of the announcement of the Aligning UK International Support for Energy Transition consultation on 12 December 2020.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has been in consistent contact with government departments and arms length bodies throughout the development of the consultation, the associated announcement, and pursuant Government response and implementation.

**Anna McMorris:**

**[175989]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish his Department's definition of clean energy products and services included in the new overseas fossil fuel policy outlined in the UK Government's response to the Aligning UK International Support for Energy Transition consultation.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government published detailed guidance accompanying the implementation of the policy shift on 31<sup>st</sup> March. This is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-the-government-will-implement-its-policy-on-support-for-the-fossil-fuel-energy-sector-overseas>.

## ■ **Scotland: UK Research and Innovation**

**Ian Murray:**

**[180949]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in Official Development Assistance funding to UK Research and Innovation on members of the Global Challenges Research Fund Strategy Advisory Group in Scotland.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is overseen by the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), which acts in an advisory capacity to the strategic direction of the GCRF. Its membership consists of experts in the fields of science and research, and international development. They represent academia, government, business and other stakeholders, covering a broad range of disciplines and have an international or global perspective.

Of the SAG's 14 current members, three represent Scottish institutions. A full list of members, including their affiliate institutions, is available on the UKRI SAG webpage. I am not aware of any imminent planned changes the makeup of the SAG. A periodic refresh of SAG membership has only recently been completed, in line with Cabinet Office guidelines on good governance.

**Ian Murray:**

**[180950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) UK and (b) Scottish-led projects in Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries that will be terminated as a result of the recent reduction in ODA funding to UK Research and Innovation.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

The Government recognises the importance of supporting international research partnerships, and supporting the UK research sector. Our commitment to research



and innovation has been clearly demonstrated by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget announcement of increasing investment in R&D across government to £14.6bn in 2021/22; and as has been set out in our Integrated Review ambitions, international collaboration is central to a healthy and productive R&D sector.

On 1st April, the Department set out an additional £250m of funding for the R&D sector. As a result, UK scientists will have access to more public funding than ever before. This takes total Government investment in R&D to £14.9 billion in 2021/22 and follows four years of significant growth in R&D funding, including a boost of more than £1.5 billion in 2020/21.

We are currently working with UKRI, and all our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners, to manage the financial year 2021/22 ODA allocations, including determining which projects will be going ahead. Our Delivery Partners have communicated with award holders setting out the next stage of the review of ODA funding next year, and to explore options for individual programmes. Full details have been published on the UKRI website. Due to the ongoing nature of this process, until it is complete, we cannot share project-level details.

#### ■ Social Rented Housing: Energy

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[180562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will confirm (a) when the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will open for applications, (b) for how long the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will remain open to applicants and (c) the period during which works can be completed.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The bid window for the first wave of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will open in Autumn 2021. The competition guidance is still being designed, but it is thought that the bid window will be open for around 6 weeks. Project delivery will run until March 2023. Further details on the application process will be announced later in the year.

#### ■ Space Debris

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[174804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what investment the UK Space Agency plans to make to mitigate the effect of atmospheric events and space weather on space debris.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Department will publish a new space weather strategy later this year, which will set out a five-year road map for how we intend to boost resilience and build on existing UK strengths and capacity in preparing for and mitigating space weather impacts.



This Government understands that good management of risk is essential for contingency planning, increasing the likelihood that the services we rely on day-to-day remain available for citizens.

In November 2019, the UK Government committed £80m to the European Space Agency Space Safety programme, of which £10m was targeted towards Space weather and debris mitigation development activities, including improving the modelling of how routine and extreme variations in space weather affect space debris.

In addition, this year the UK Space Agency invested a further £1m into projects related to space debris detection and tracking.

Future investment in this area within our National and European Space Agency programmes is subject to the spending review settlement.

The UK is a world leader in space weather forecasting and the Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre provides forecasts and warnings of space weather on a 24/7 basis. The UK Space Agency works with the Met Office to ensure the continuity of space weather observational data.

## ■ UK Research and Innovation: Finance

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[174803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when UK Research and Innovation plans to publish its updated thematic areas for its Strategic Priorities Fund.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) provides a mechanism for research and innovation communities to identify and propose priorities for funding. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) ensures that proposals align with the aims of the SPF, including by consulting with departments on Areas of Research Interest. All research themes and currently funded programmes are published on the UKRI website.

There are no current plans to update the research themes.

**Gill Furniss:**

[\[180571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK Research and Innovation budget.

**Amanda Solloway:**

This year's overall settlement for BEIS follows four years of significant growth in R&D funding, including a boost of more than £1.5 billion in 2020/21 and will mean UK Government R&D spending is now at its highest level in four decades. The Government is committed to increasing public expenditure on R&D to £22 billion.

Despite current fiscal challenges, the November 2020 Spending Review set out the Government's plan to cement the UK's status as a global leader in science and innovation by investing £14.9 billion in R&D, with £11.3 billion for BEIS.

Specific funding breakdowns for 2021/22, including UKRI's funding, is subject to our Departmental allocations process, which is progressing at pace. As set out in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes advice from UKRI's Board to ensure strategic priorities are met within BEIS' overall R&D settlement.

## ■ UK Research and Innovation: Freedom of Information

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[180490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many FOI requests UKRI (a) received and (b) complete in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and on average how much it costs UKRI to fulfil an FOI request.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The numbers of Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests received and completed since UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) was established in April 2018 are:

	2018	2019	2020	2021 (JANUARY TO MARCH)
<b>FOI requests Received</b>	240	358	362	101
<b>FOI responses Completed</b>	225	336	371*	98

*\*cases received at the end of 2019 were closed in the beginning of 2020.*

UKRI does not record the costs of responding to individual FOI requests.

## ■ UK Research and Innovation: Overseas Aid

**Ian Murray:**

[\[180951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will undertake an impact assessment of the reduction in Official Development Assistance funding to UK Research and Innovation on the UK's ability to assist in addressing societal issues in Lower and Middle Income countries.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December last year, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wrote to the Chair of the International Development Committee setting out the Strategic Framework for UK ODA, which details the UK's foreign aid spending priorities. This is in addition to tackling poverty, as all UK ODA does. In line with these priorities, he confirmed each Department's total ODA settlement on 26<sup>th</sup> January.

We are currently working with UKRI, and all our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners, to manage the financial year 2021/22 ODA allocations. Once this process is complete, BEIS officials will review the impact of these spending decisions, in line with relevant public sector duties.

■ **Universities: Research**

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[174848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of a reduction in Official Development Assistance funding to the UKRI on (a) UK universities and (b) their partner universities overseas where (i) funding for research has already been confirmed and (b) research using that funding is already underway.

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[174851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of reducing funds to the Official Development Assistance programme on the ability of universities in (a) the UK and (b) their partner universities overseas to tackle (i) climate change, (ii) global health and (iii) poverty.

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[174852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in funding to the Official Development Assistance programme on levels of employment at UK universities.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December last year, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wrote to the Chair of the International Development Committee setting out the Strategic Framework for UK ODA, which details the UK's foreign aid spending priorities. Specifically, these priorities include climate change and biodiversity, and tackling covid and global health issues, as you have outlined. This is in addition to tackling poverty, as all UK ODA does. In line with these priorities, he confirmed each Department's total ODA settlement on 26<sup>th</sup> January.

The Government recognises the importance of supporting international research partnerships, and supporting the UK research sector. Our commitment to research and innovation has been clearly demonstrated by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget announcement of increasing investment in R&D across government to £14.6bn in 2021/22; and as has been set out in our Integrated Review ambitions, international collaboration is central to a healthy and productive R&D sector.

We are currently working with UKRI, and all our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners, to manage the financial year 2021/22 ODA allocations. UKRI have written to many award holders setting out the next stage of the review of ODA funding next year, and to explore options for individual programmes. Full details have been published on the UKRI website.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[174849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason his Department committed to allocating research grants to universities through the Official Development Assistance programme before the budget was reduced.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Effective research and development programmes are frequently long-term and involve considerable planning and application stages in order to ensure value for money. It is standard therefore for some commitment to be made in advance of a project's initiation. This commitment is always made on the understanding that there is no guaranteed funding past the point of the current Government spending review period.

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means having to make unexpected and difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[174850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Department will take to address the £120 million gap between allocations of research grants to universities and the commitments made by the Official Development Assistance programme.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December last year, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wrote to the Chair of the International Development Committee setting out the Strategic Framework for UK ODA, which details the UK's foreign aid spending priorities. In line with these priorities, he confirmed each Department's total ODA settlement on 26<sup>th</sup> January.

The Government recognises the importance of supporting international research partnerships and supporting the UK research sector. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer committed to increasing UK investment in R&D to £14.6bn in 2021/22 in this recent Budget.

We are currently working with UKRI, and all our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners, to manage the Financial Year 2021/22 ODA

allocations. UKRI have written to their award holders to set out the process for reviewing ODA funding next year, and to explore options for individual programmes. Full details have been published on the UKRI website.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ **British Nationals Abroad: Greece**

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[180657\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to negotiate with the Greek Government the granting of special permits to allow the up to 180 days that are permitted per year under Schengen rules to be used in a single block of any length up to 180 days by travellers from the UK.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The 90 days in a rolling 180-day period is the standard length of stay that the EU offers to the nationals of eligible third countries that reciprocate visa-free travel access for EU citizens. There is no precedent for the EU offering a longer length of visa-free stay than 90 / 180 days to the nationals of any third country and the Government does not typically enter into bilateral agreements on visa-free travel. Both the UK and the EU provide visa-free arrangements for tourists and short-term business visitors.

### ■ **Cabinet Office: Long Service Awards**

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[180658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing civil servants in his Department to receive their Imperial Service Medal whilst still serving, as is the case with his Department's service personnel.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Imperial Service Medal (ISM) is awarded to recognise long and faithful service in the Civil Service by an individual in an eligible grade. The ISM is awarded on the recommendation of the employing department on the retirement, redundancy, resignation, or transfer to the private sector of an individual with at least 25 years of meritorious service. Eligibility for the ISM is set in Statute and there are currently no plans to change the qualifying criteria.

### ■ **Cancer: Drugs**

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[180997\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform is able to promote innovation in the development of cancer medicines.

**Imran Hussain:**

[\[181006\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is in the scope of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform to consider or recommend changes to the Employment Tribunal system.

**Julia Lopez:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ174869](#) on 13 April 2021.

## ■ Lobbying: Registration

**Dan Carden:**

[\[179429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to expand the scope of the lobbying register; and if he will make a statement.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[181101\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the scope of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 to include (a) in-house lobbyists and (b) interactions with special advisers and senior civil servants.

**Julia Lopez:**

As is best practice, the Government is currently conducting post-legislative scrutiny of Part 1 of the Transparency of Lobbying Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014. Earlier this year, Ministers met stakeholders, including industry and civil society representatives, and sought their views on the legislation, including the scope and effectiveness of the Register of Consultant Lobbyists. The work is ongoing and publication of the memorandum will likely now be after the conclusion of the Boardman review so that any findings can be taken into account.

## ■ Off-payroll Working

**Carol Monaghan:**

[\[181048\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Government departments have announced they are no longer engaging self-employed contractors as a result of the roll-out of the IR35 off-payroll rules.

**Julia Lopez:**

This information is not held centrally.

## ■ UK Trade with EU: Exports

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[175723\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the current export arrangements between the UK and the EU on the ability of hauliers to transport small quantities of goods directly from SMEs in the UK to consumers in the EU.

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[175724\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to reduce export (a) costs and (b) delays for hauliers transporting small quantities of goods directly from SMEs in the UK to consumers in the EU.

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[175729\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to encourage hauliers to transport goods from SMEs in the UK to consumers in the EU.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The Government has regular dialogue with representatives of the haulage sector and general business representative organisations through the Brexit Business Taskforce.

The Government is offering various avenues of support to hauliers, including over 20 helplines to provide advice to specific sectors. We have also published a Haulier Handbook - translated into 13 different languages - to provide information and advice to hauliers on how they can get ready for changes at the GB-EU border. This is in addition to the 46 Information and Advice sites across the UK.

The Government continues to provide support for businesses, as outlined in the statement made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on Thursday 11 February in which he announced the launch of the £20m SME Brexit Support Fund, which has been met with support from SMEs and provides them with access to grants and practical support.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[181060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) safety and (b) delivery of the covid-19 vaccination programme for members of 3 Scots that are deployed and deploying to Afghanistan in relation to (i) the use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, (ii) information on delivery of second doses for service personnel still to be deployed and (iii) deployment without vaccination of some personnel who may miss their age group scheduled vaccination within the UK.

**James Heappey:**

Members of 3 Scots will be offered either the Oxford/Astra Zeneca or Moderna vaccine, with both doses administered before deploying if possible. If necessary, second doses may be administered in theatre.

The department is aware of inaccurate information circulating within the wider 3 Scots community relating to vaccinations and their forthcoming deployment. The Commanding Officer has briefed his battalion and their families to ensure that all are



reassured that they will receive their vaccinations in a safe and timely manner. The Commanding Officer and his team will continue to offer these briefings for as long as this misinformation continues to circulate.

### ■ Armed Forces: Housing

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[179453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Government's response to the Selous Report, Living in our Shoes – understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families, published on 29 March 2021, if he will publish the feedback that Amey's Customer Service Centre for Defence has received in the last 12 months.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Following the recommendation in the Selous report reference the performance of the Amey call centre, as of April 2021, of the 6209 Stage 1 Complaints raised since March 2020, 55 (0.89%) were related to the level of service provided by the Customer Service Centre (CSC). Over the same period, 116 contacts were made complimenting the quality of service provided by the CSC.

### ■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

**John Healey:** [\[180391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces recruits have enlisted from each parliamentary constituency since 2010.

**James Heappey:**

Not all the information requested is available but that which is can be found in the attached tables.

**Attachments:**

1. 180391 - AF Recruitment - Parliamentary Constituents [180391 - AF Recruitment - Parliamentary Constituency.xlsx]

**John Healey:** [\[180392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces recruits have been enlisted from each region of the UK since 2010.

**James Heappey:**

Not all the information requested is available but that which is can be found in the attached tables.

**Attachments:**

1. 180392 - AF Recruitment in each Region of the UK [180392 - AF Recruitment - Each Region in the UK.xlsx]

### ■ Army: Recruitment

**John Healey:** [\[180394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British Army recruits have been enlisted from each parliamentary constituency since 2010.



**James Heappey:**

The attached spreadsheet contains information detailing intake to the UK Regulars by Constituency for the British Army between 2013-14 and 2019-20 inclusive.

Information to cover the period prior to that is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

**Attachments:**

1. British Army [Copy of 20210416-PQ Intake by Parli Constit 2013-14 to 2018-20 FINAL.xlsx]

**■ Army: Vehicles****John Spellar:**[\[178792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Enhanced Pallet Load System trucks the British Army has; and where those vehicles were manufactured.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The British Army's UK fleet consists of 559 Enhanced Pallet Load System (EPLS) vehicles, all originally manufactured in Austria with the majority acquired between 2008 and 2013.

In November 2018 work began to upgrade 382 of the EPLS 15-tonne Support Vehicle platforms. The conversions took place in Manchester, with all upgraded vehicles now in service.

**■ Brunei: Defence****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[178855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse has been of upgrades to the UK's defence footprint in Brunei over the last five years.

**James Heappey:**

There has been nil cost to the public purse from upgrades to the UK's defence footprint in Brunei over the last five years.

**■ Cyprus: Military Bases****Bambos Charalambous:**[\[178678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the non-military development agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Government that applies to the sovereign base areas, what steps he plans to take to ensure that development (a) is linked to the housing needs of the local population, (b) protects sites designated under EU Birds and Habitats Directives and (c) is sustainable and eco-tourism based.

**James Heappey:**

The Non-Military Development (NMD) planning and development zoning process has been undertaken in partnership with the Republic of Cyprus Department of Town Planning and Housing. The local communities within and overlapping the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA), were consulted during the committee stages, when they

submitted development requests for their communities, including requests for residential development. Environmentally protected sites that exist in the SBA, designated under SBA Law, have been taken into consideration when developing the proposed zoning. However, there are no protected sites, designated under EU Birds and Habitats Directives, within the SBA.

Development, under the NMD Policy, in relation to tourism and recreation, is discouraged and in some areas prohibited, outside of designated areas/zones, with the purpose of protecting the environment. A Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment and an Environmental Appropriate Assessment were conducted and are currently being considered by the Environment Department of the Republic of Cyprus. The Sovereign Base Areas Administration is now awaiting a written opinion on these environmental matters, before moving to the next stage of the NMD programme.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

**[178682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the non-military development agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Government that applies to the sovereign base areas, what discussions his Department has had with local stakeholders in the Akrotiri Peninsula in respect of the (a) development and (b) delivery of that agreement.

**James Heappey:**

Prior to and during the Public Consultation on the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken to assess the impacts of the proposed Non-Military Development (NMD) zoning, Sovereign Base Area Administration (SBAA) officials had regular engagement with Non-Governmental Organisations, the community and the elected community leader of Akrotiri on SBAA proposals and community requests in respect of the environmental impact, zoning and related matters affecting the Akrotiri community. The Administration has also co-operated extensively with departments of the Republic of Cyprus in the production of the revised NMD planning and zoning policy.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

**[179355]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the non-military development agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Government that applies to the sovereign base areas, what environmental assessment was undertaken when that agreement was signed in 2014.

**James Heappey:**

An environmental assessment was not conducted, when the high-level Non-Military Development (NMD) agreement was signed in 2014. Following the development of the Planning Policy Statement and the Proposed Zoning, a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment and an Environmental Appropriate Assessment has since been conducted. The Environment Department of the Republic of Cyprus is currently considering both of these assessments. The Sovereign Base Areas Administration is

now awaiting a written opinion on these environmental matters, before moving to the next stage of the NMD programme.

## ■ Defence: Carbon Emissions

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[179458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how his Department plans to incorporate commitments to reduce defence emissions in declarations resulting from COP26.

**Jeremy Quin:**

On 30 March, MOD has launched the Defence Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach. The document sets out the ambition, the principles and the methods needed for UK Defence to meet the challenge of climate change. We anticipate that the actions set out in the strategic approach will enable the Department to respond to any declarations resulting from COP26.

## ■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

**Layla Moran:**

[\[181105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has investigated whether UK-supplied military support vehicles were used in the recent military operation in Tigray.

**James Heappey:**

This Government is concerned by the recent conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and from the start has called for de-escalation and a long-term political solution.

The Ministry of Defence does not have a contract to sell vehicles to the Government of Ethiopia. We are not aware of any UK Defence-related sales or gifts of military support vehicles to Ethiopia.

## ■ HMS Trenchant

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[179532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of when HMS Trenchant will be fully recycled.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[179533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the Submarine Dismantling Project was not included in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy documentation.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy was a wide-ranging Government assessment and not intended to address every single project the Ministry of Defence is responsible for delivering. As set out in the United Kingdom's future nuclear deterrent: the 2020 update to Parliament, we continue to develop the submarine dismantling techniques necessary to meet all safety and sustainability standards and establish the long-term solution that provides best value

for the taxpayer. Our commitment to the safe, secure, environmentally sound and cost-effective defueling and dismantling of all our decommissioned nuclear submarines as soon as practicably possible remains undiminished. HMS Trenchant will now be prepared for laying up, stored, and readied for defueling and disposal in due course.

## ■ Military Aircraft: Decommissioning

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[180655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the out of service date is for the RAF T1 Black Fleet; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the cessation of that fleet on employment on Ynys Môn.

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[180656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase the allocation of Red Arrows depth work to RAF Valley to mitigate the effect of any T1 Black Fleet reductions; and what effect that increase in allocation will have on employment levels in Ynys Môn.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ministry of Defence is committed to RAF Valley which delivers world leading aircrew fast jet training, and the advanced Hawk T2 aircraft, used for lead-in fighter training, together with Texan T1 aircraft in the basic fast jet training role will continue to be operated, maintained and upgraded at the station, thereby sustaining high quality engineering employment on Ynys Môn.

The retirement of Royal Air Force (RAF) Hawk T1 aircraft from combat support roles was announced in the recent Defence Command Paper but the out of service date is yet to be determined, as are any potential implications of the withdrawal of these aircraft on employment on Ynys Môn. No decision has yet been taken on the location of the future maintenance for the RAF Aerobatic Team (Red Arrows), within the framework of the Future Hawk Support Contract.

## ■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[180421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of procuring Blackhawk helicopters from the US.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Blackhawk is a medium lift helicopter.

The Defence Command Paper announced an investment in a new medium lift helicopter in the mid-2020s that will enable a consolidation of Defence's fleet of medium lift helicopters from four platform types to one.

The programme is in the early stages, with requirements currently being refined and no decisions have yet been made on the procurement strategy.

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[180440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list all the types of helicopters in use in (a) the Royal Navy, (b) the British Army and (c) the RAF.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Pilot operated helicopters in service with each of the Armed Forces are provided in the following table:

ROYAL NAVY	ARMY	RAF
Wildcat Mk1	Wildcat Mk1	Chinook Mk5
Wildcat HMA Mk2	Apache Mk1	Chinook Mk6
Merlin HM2	Gazelle Mk1	Chinook Mk6a
Merlin Mk3/3a/iMk3		Puma Mk2
Merlin Mk4/4a		Juno HT1
		Jupiter HT1

In addition, the Ministry of Defence has access to civilian owned helicopters provided through commercial arrangements with industry.

#### ■ Ranger Regiment

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[180441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the new Ranger Brigade will be formed; and what its manned strength will be.

**James Heappey:**

The newly announced Ranger Regiment will initially form up in August 2021 and is to be seeded from the current Specialised Infantry Battalions with a strength of around 1,000 soldiers. This regiment will form the heart of the new Army Special Operations Brigade, receiving a share of a £120 million investment over the next four years, and will be supported by a variety of enablers. The Army will use the spring and early summer 2021 to refine and test its designs, capabilities and structures before more detailed announcements can be made.

#### ■ Royal Regiment of Scotland: Officers

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[180612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many officers of Paid Rank Colonel and above there are in the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

**James Heappey:**

As at 1 January 2021 there were no officers of Paid Rank Colonel and above in the Royal Regiment of Scotland, as those serving in the General Staff are no longer

counted towards their previous Regiments. However, those whose previous Regiment was the Royal Regiment of Scotland total 30.

Notes/Caveats:

- Figures provided by Defence Statistics (Army).
- Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes.
- Figures are for Trade Trained Regulars only.
- Those serving in the General Staff are no longer counted towards their previous Regiments, however, data shows those personnel in the General Staff whose previous Regiment was the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

## ■ Shipbuilding

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[178863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has plans to reaffirm the National Shipbuilding Strategy in 2021.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

On 16 March 2021, I announced that we are currently conducting a refresh of the National Shipbuilding Strategy which will be published this summer. This will set out this Government's commitment to the entire UK shipbuilding enterprise and the supply chain that underpins it.

## ■ South East Asia: HMS Queen Elizabeth

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[180443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the types of munitions held on board the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier for its planned tasking to south east Asia.

**James Heapey:**

We do not disclose the types of munitions carried on board individual ships for operational security reasons as this would likely prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ BBC

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[178871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the BBC on ensuring that licence fee payers receive value for money during the covid-19 outbreak with new content being broadcast.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

As the national broadcaster, the BBC has a vital role to play in supplying information to the public throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, and it has introduced a wide-

ranging package of measures to help keep the nation informed, educated, and entertained through these unprecedented times.

However, the BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government and the government cannot intervene in the BBC's editorial decisions. The Government is clear it expects the BBC to be held to the highest standards, and ensure value for money taking into account the wider public interest, but it is the BBC Board who is ultimately responsible for the appropriate use of licence fee revenue. The Comptroller and Auditor General of the NAO is the BBC's independent external auditor. The NAO is responsible for auditing the BBC accounts and ensuring value for money in the way the BBC uses its funds.

## ■ Broadband

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[180575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department plans to use satellite technology to complete the UK high capacity broadband network.

**Matt Warman:**

The government is investing £5 billion to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to the hardest to reach 20% of premises in the UK. Our approach is technologically neutral but, at present, satellite broadband does not meet the technical specification for funding under the £5 billion programme.

Satellites are already providing commercial broadband services in the UK, and these services include the provision of backhaul.

The government recognises that the UK has some very remote places that may be too expensive to build a gigabit-capable broadband networks to, even with substantial public subsidy. Less than 0.3% of the country or less than 100,000 premises are likely to fall into this category. On 19 March, the government launched a call for evidence to explore the barriers to improving the broadband of these premises and how innovative new technologies (such as Low Earth Orbit satellites, high altitude platforms and new terrestrial wireless solutions) could help.

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[180576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential upload speeds to be attained using satellite enabled broadband in the UK.

**Matt Warman:**

The government is exploring new technologies that can provide improved broadband services in the UK. This includes the use of satellites, as well as innovative terrestrial wireless technologies. On 19 March, the government launched a call for evidence to explore the barriers to improving the broadband of very hard to reach premises and how innovative new technologies (including Low Earth Orbit satellites) could help.

**■ Busking: Coronavirus**

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[179451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if his Department will publish guidance on when busking and street performances can begin safely as covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Indoor and outdoor performance events with a socially distanced audience are permitted from Step 3 of the Government's Roadmap (not before 17 May). Busking is permitted from Step 3.

Busking may involve attendees converging on and congregating in a site for a specific performance or activity, and may risk audiences gathering in an uncontrolled environment.

We will continue to work with stakeholders on reopening the live music sector, in line with the timetable set out in the Roadmap.

**■ Cricket: Coronavirus**

**Sam Tarry:** [\[181156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to support small cricket clubs that are experiencing financial difficulties due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. The £300m Sports Survival Package also aims to protect the immediate futures of major spectator sports in England.

Sport England has also provided £220million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, via a range of funds including their £35million Community Emergency Fund. This includes £6,599,437 investment in cricket to 1,362 projects.

On 26 January Sport England also published their strategy 'Uniting the Movement' and as part of this have committed an extra £50million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them.



## ■ Cricket: Facilities

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[181157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support the Government plans to provide to (a) the English Cricket Board and (b) local authorities to increase cricket facilities in (i) Ilford South constituency and (ii) other areas.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. Sport England has also provided £270 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic. This includes £6,599,437 investment in cricket to 1,362 projects.

Furthermore, in the last 10 years (since 2011), Sport England has invested more than £85 million of National Lottery and Exchequer funding in community sports organisations and facilities for participation in cricket. For the period 2017/22 Sport England has invested £11,202,500 in the England and Wales Cricket Board.

In Ilford South, Sport England's recent funding for cricket has included £9,445 to Ilford Cricket Club and £3,366 to Redbridge Cricket Club through their COVID-19 Community Emergency Fund.

## ■ Culture Recovery Fund

**Jeff Smith:**

[\[179224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many businesses received funding through the first round but not the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Of the almost 2800 individual organisations that received funding through the Culture Recovery Fund recovery grant funding in round 1, we estimate over 1300 applied for and received funding as part of the second round.

## ■ Culture Recovery Fund: Entertainments

**Jeff Smith:**

[\[179223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many (a) nightclubs, (b) live music venues, (c) festivals and (d) businesses that supply those entertainment businesses have received support from the Government under the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The most up-to-date data available on the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund shows:

(a) 32 successful nightclub applicants

(b) 214 successful live music venue applicants

(c) 100 successful festivals applicants

(d) 230 supply chain applicants

A number of live music venues also offer club nights, but are only counted in the live music venue statistics. In addition, the data for successful supply chain applicants includes those working across the whole of the arts and creative sectors.

## ■ Dormant Assets Scheme

**Danny Kruger:**

[\[179698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to page 25 of the Government's response to the consultation on expanding the Dormant Asset Scheme, if he will publish the methodology used to calculate that 54 per cent of dormant assets in the (a) insurance and pensions, (b) investment and wealth management and (c) securities sectors could be reclaimed by their owners as a result of enhanced tracing, verification and reunification efforts.

**Danny Kruger:**

[\[179699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish a timetable for (a) implementing the expanded dormant assets scheme and (b) funding for good causes derived from the new classes of dormant assets becoming available.

**Matt Warman:**

The Dormant Assets Scheme is led by industry and backed by the government with the aim of reuniting people with their financial assets. Where this is not possible, this money supports important social and environmental initiatives across the UK.

As a voluntary Scheme, industry stakeholders have been at the forefront of efforts to bring assets from the insurance and pensions, investment and wealth management, and securities sectors into scope. This includes leading work to estimate the value of dormancy currently in each sector and using their experience and understanding of reunification processes to inform their estimates of how much could be reunited with their owners successfully. The following table sets out these estimates, broken down by sector:

SECTOR	DORMANT ASSETS	COULD BE REUNITED WITH OWNERS
Insurance and pensions	£2.1bn	£1.17bn
Investment and wealth management	£1.4bn	£781m
Securities	£158m	£48m
TOTAL	£3.7bn	£2bn

Scheme expansion requires primary legislation, which will be introduced when parliamentary time allows. Once legislation has achieved Royal Assent, the speed at which it can be implemented and new funds will become available is dependent on regulator and industry readiness, as well as their voluntary participation in the Scheme. We anticipate that the estimated £880 million to be unlocked through the expansion of the Scheme will take several years to be released, based on the rate that industry participants transfer new assets.

## ■ Electronic Cigarettes: Disinformation

**Mary Glendon:**

**[179116]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to tackle online misinformation on the vaping industry.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

The Department of Health and Social Care and PHE meet with the Independent British Vape Trade Association to discuss industry concerns and wider regulatory matters, including misinformation.

E-cigarettes in the UK are tightly regulated by the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (TRPR) and the Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing) Regulations 2015 (NIP). These regulations aim to reduce the risk of harm to children; to protect against any risk of renormalisation of tobacco use; and to provide assurance on relative safety for users. The regulations include restrictions on mainstream TV and radio advertising; prevent sale to under 18s; and limit both tank sizes and nicotine content.

DCMS works closely with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) who facilitate the self-regulation of the UK advertising sector through the UK Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code) and The UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing (CAP Code) - which applies to online advertising. The ASA has a clear framework for advertisers to follow in relation to what is and is not allowed when making health claims about vapes or e-cigarettes.

The Better Health national marketing campaign on smoking cessation, delivered by Public Health England, has been effective at helping challenge misinformation surrounding e-cigarettes. The campaign is supported by public health professionals at a local level, helping smokers switch to e-cigarette products.

The key consideration for advertisers is whether their marketing communications do anything further than provide basic, factual information about the products. Any content that appears to make the product seem more attractive is likely to be regarded as promotional and therefore likely to be ruled against by the ASA and removed.

More information about the ASA's approach can be viewed here:

<https://www.asa.org.uk/asset/97E623E4-3A64-4215-81A5C4BD6D82D1E0.A1727AC1-C340-4B08>

**■ Entertainers: EU Countries**

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[180445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the membership is of the cultural and creative touring working group.

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[180446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many meetings there have been of the cultural and creative touring working group to date.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

The Government recognises the importance of touring to the creative and cultural sectors, and is committed to helping them navigate the new rules under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The DCMS-led working group on creative and cultural touring, which involves sector representatives and other key government departments, is looking at the issues and options to help the sectors resume touring with ease as soon as it is safe to do so.

Membership of the Working Group includes a range of sector representative bodies, including: Association of Independent Music, the Music Managers' Forum, Musicians' Union, UK Music, BPI, LIVE, the Association of British Orchestras, UK Theatre, One Dance UK, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, the Creative Industries Federation, the Featured Artists Coalition, National Museum Directors' Council, ACE, the British Fashion Council, the Production Services Association, Creative Scotland, Arts Councils for each of the nations, Logistics UK, the Road Haulage Association, #WeMakeEvents and the Council of Music Makers.

Sector representatives are encouraged to reach out to others to ensure the working group hears and understands the views and concerns of organisations and individuals right across the cultural and creative sectors.

Following the Secretary of State-chaired roundtable with the sector on 20 January, the Working Group has met four times. There have been a number of additional meetings across government and with the sectors affected to discuss in more detail the issues that have been raised during those meetings.

**■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[175796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the scientific basis for his Department's policy on the use of single-use beverage containers in its draft guidance for Covid-19 safety at UK events; and if he will make it his policy that reusable containers should be used in those contexts.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department has supported a number of stakeholders to produce guidance for specific sectors to allow them to reopen at the appropriate time and ensure that their activities are Covid secure. The guidance for Covid-19 safety at outdoor events in the

UK was published by the Events Industry Forum and is stakeholder-led guidance. Therefore, we are unable to publish the scientific basis on single use containers for events.

The Government has now published new guidance for local authorities on organised events which has been designed to assist local authorities in ensuring that events are able to go ahead safely and in accordance with what is permitted at each step of the Roadmap. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-organised-events-guidance-for-local-authorities/coronavirus-covid-19-organised-events-guidance-for-local-authorities>.

## ■ OneWeb

**Sarah Olney:**

**[180574]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the date by which OneWeb will be able to provide rural broadband for the whole of the UK.

**Matt Warman:**

The government is investing £5 billion to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to the hardest to reach 20% of premises in the UK. Our approach is technologically neutral but, at present, satellite broadband does not meet the technical specification for funding under the £5 billion programme.

OneWeb was acquired by a consortium led by the UK Government and the Bharti Group in October 2020: both investing \$500 million for 42%, creating a \$1 billion equity investment. This is not part of the government's £5 billion investment to deliver gigabit-capable broadband. OneWeb's LEO satellite constellation will deliver high-speed, low latency internet both in the UK and internationally. This is an opportunity for the UK to promote its interests globally - with access to a global fleet of satellites that have the potential to connect people across the globe, providing broadband from the Shetlands to the Sahara and from Pole to Pole. OneWeb has launched a total fleet of 110 satellites in orbit and is currently scheduled to commence commercial services by the end of 2021, with global coverage planned for 2022.

## ■ Theatres: Coronavirus

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[179723]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government has taken to support theatres during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinanage:**

Theatres have been eligible to access Government COVID-19 support throughout the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes various government-backed loans, business grants, reduction in VAT and the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes. Theatres were also able to access the discretionary Local Restrictions Support Grant and Additional Restrictions Grant which provided Local Authorities with funds to support businesses who met the eligibility criteria. And,

earlier this year the Chancellor announced one-off top up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the Spring.

Theatres have also benefited from the Cultural Recovery Fund. To date, over £1.2 billion has been allocated from this fund, reaching over 5000 individual organisations and sites. Of this funding, awards with a value of over £183m were made to applicants whose main artform is 'theatre' in Round 1 recovery grant funding, and in Round 2 almost £60 million was awarded to help theatres plan for reopening in every corner of the country from the West End's Criterion Theatre to the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre.

In the 2021 Budget, the Chancellor announced an additional £300 million to support theatres, museums and other cultural organisations in England through the Culture Recovery Fund. This extra funding, together with other cultural support such as funding for our national museums, means that our total support package for culture during the pandemic is now approaching £2bn. These are unprecedented sums.

#### ■ Video Games: Investment

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[179483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the proposal by The Independent Game Developers' Association to introduce a video games investment fund.

**Caroline Dinanage:**

DCMS' Creative Industries Economic Estimates show that the UK video games industry contributed an estimated £2.9 billion to the UK economy in 2019, up from £0.4 billion in 2010, and its headcount has grown to 27,000, a 47% increase since 2013.

I am pleased that in 2021/22 my Department will be continuing to fund the UK Games Fund, which provides valuable support to early stage games development businesses and talented graduates throughout the UK. We continue to consider what further actions we can take to underpin the games sector's vital contribution to the UK's future economic success.

We are looking closely at industry's most recent proposals, including The Independent Game Developers Association's (TIGA) updated proposal for the creation of a new, large scale video games investment fund. My officials have met with TIGA to discuss this in more detail and are willing to continue talking with TIGA, Ukie and their industry colleagues as they develop their proposals further.

#### ■ Video on Demand: Age Ratings

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[179321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the level of expectation among parents that

VOD platforms should ensure that their film and TV content is age-rated in line with the BBFC's standards for content released in cinemas and on DVD.

**Chris Elmore:** [\[179322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if his Department will take steps to support the adoption of BBFC age-rating standards for content on video on demand platforms.

**Chris Elmore:** [\[179323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the barriers to (a) Disney+ and (b) other platforms to prevent them from using BBFC's best practice guidelines.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

As the designated body for age classification of film content, the Government has great trust in the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) best practice age ratings and continues to support the adoption of BBFC ratings for content on video on demand platforms.

While adoption of the BBFC's age ratings by such platforms is currently voluntary, we welcome their usage and were particularly pleased to see Netflix announce on 1 December 2020 that they have become the first platform to achieve complete coverage of their content under the BBFC's ratings.

The Government has not made any specific assessment regarding parents' expectations of video-on-demand platforms' content being classified in line with the BBFC's standards, or the barriers that platforms face to adopting the ratings. We note, however, that the BBFC regularly consults with the public and publishes its [research online](#). The Government continues to engage with platforms to adopt the BBFC's ratings across all of their content, and will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review.

## ■ Voluntary Work: Young People

**Cat Smith:** [\[180549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much and what proportion of the budget of the National Citizen Service was spent on advertising and marketing in 2019-20.

**Matt Warman:**

As detailed in the National Citizen Service Trust's Annual Report 2019/20, 'Communication, Marketing and Media Costs' totalled £7,099,000. This accounts for circa 4.5% of the total expenditure of the National Citizen Service Trust for 2019/20, which was £156,384,000.

**Cat Smith:** [\[180550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many people completed the National Citizens Service programme in (a) 2018-19 and (b) 2019-20.



**Matt Warman:**

The total number of core NCS participants in 2018/19 was 99,674 (NCST Annual Report, 2018/19). The total number of core NCS participants in 2019/20 was 92,041 (NCST Annual Report, 2019/20).

■ **Youth Services****Gareth Thomas:**[\[178777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department made of the effectiveness of the (a) National Citizen Service, (b) Scout Association and (c) cadets prior to deciding on funding allocations for those organisations; and if he will make a statement.

**Matt Warman:**

NCS has been subject to multiple independent evaluations that have consistently demonstrated the positive impacts that NCS delivers to both its participants and the communities where they live. In the most recent evaluation, conducted by Kantar, analysis showed for every £1 spent on NCS there was a return on investment of £3.49. Including increased leadership skills, volunteering levels and wellbeing.

The last funding provided directly from DCMS to uniformed youth groups (including the Scouts) came in the £5m, 2018/19 Uniformed Youth Fund (UYF), administered by the Youth United Foundation (YUF) and resulted in the creation of 10,892 new places for young people in disadvantaged areas and 1,643 new adult volunteers.

The Ministry of Defence is responsible for any funding allocations made to cadet groups, therefore DCMS has made no such assessment.

**EDUCATION**■ **Abortion: Health Education****Nick Fletcher:**[\[179678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 169074 and the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 169981, on Abortion: Health Education, and with reference to the endorsement by Public Health England of the Abortion and Abortion Care Fact Sheet for use in schools, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on ensuring that the school curriculum (a) equally respects the views of people opposed to abortion and (b) educates pupils on alternatives to abortion.

**Nick Gibb:**

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, meets regularly with Cabinet colleagues to discuss the Department's agenda.

The statutory guidance on the new curriculum for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, which came into force in September 2020, makes clear that by the end of secondary education young people should know the facts relating

to pregnancy. It states that there should be medically and legally impartial information. Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when particular topics are being taught, including abortion. It is for schools to decide how best to comply with this in order to meet the needs of their pupils. To support teachers to deliver these topics safely and with confidence, the Department has produced RSHE Teacher Training Modules which are available for all schools on GOV.UK. The 'Intimate and sexual relationships including sexual health' teacher training module covers pregnancy specifically. Each training module covers safeguarding to make sure teachers, pastoral staff and the designated safeguarding lead are equipped to deal with sensitive discussions and potential disclosures.

### ■ Adoption Support Fund

**Munira Wilson:** [\[179584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the budget for the Adoption Support Fund has been in each of the last five financial years.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[179585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the budget has been of the Adoption Support Fund in each of the last five financial years.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[179586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to change the eligibility criteria for applicants to the Adoption Support Fund.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[179587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will commit funding to the Adoption Support Fund beyond the financial year of 2021-22.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Adoption Support Fund budget for the last five financial years is set out below:

2016-17: £23,925,000

2017-18: £29,000,000

2018-19: £37,000,000

2019-20: £42,000,000

2020-21: £45,000,000

There are currently no plans to change the Fund's eligibility criteria. The next Spending Review for government departmental spend beyond the financial year of 2021-22 will consider the Adoption Support Fund and its budget, scope and eligibility criteria. We have put in place transitional arrangements in advance of the Spending Review outcome to allow funded support to continue beyond March 2022 for those families who commence therapy in the 2021-22 financial year.

## ■ Children: Literacy

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

**[176098]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase literacy rates for children from low-income households.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is committed to continuing to raise literacy standards, ensuring all children can read fluently and with understanding. The first five years of a child's life provide a critical opportunity to close development gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers, particularly in Reception year.

Through the Early Years Professional Development Programme, the Department is investing £20 million to provide practitioners in pre-Reception settings with access to high-quality training to raise practitioners' skills in supporting young children's development in early language, literacy and mathematics. Improving these skills will drive up quality in the pre-school years, so that more children arrive at Reception year with the foundations in place to make the most of primary school. We have also invested £9 million of National Tutoring Programme funding in improving the language skills of Reception age children who need it most this academic year, through the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI).

In 2018, we launched a £26.3 million English Hubs Programme dedicated to improving the teaching of reading, with a focus on supporting children making the slowest progress in reading, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The 34 English Hubs in the programme are primary schools which are outstanding at teaching early reading. We have since invested a further £17 million in this school to school improvement programme, which focuses on systematic synthetic phonics, early language, and reading for pleasure. Since its launch, the English Hubs Programme has provided appropriate and targeted support to several thousands of schools across England. In this academic year, the programme is providing intensive support to over 875 partner schools.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, English Hubs have continued to offer support and training to schools across the country by bringing much of their offer online. This has involved opening up virtual training and professional development events to a wider pool of schools and distributing materials targeted specifically at remote education and recovery. English Hubs have adapted well to providing intensive support remotely and have delivered more than 1,400 days of specialist phonics training to over 875 partner schools so far this academic year. Furthermore, we have worked closely with our English Hubs Programme to support them in guiding their networks of schools through the challenges of school disruption, particularly in promoting the importance of reading among head teachers.

As part of recognising the importance of reading during the disruption to education caused by COVID-19, the Department held a Reading Together Day on 16 July 2020 to celebrate the benefits of reading:

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/media/reading-together-day-announced-for-16->

[july-2020.html](#). As part of this, we have published 10 top tips to help parents support their children to read: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-top-tips-to-encourage-children-to-read>.

Additionally, the £1 billion catch up package announced in June 2020 included a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme (NTP) which provides additional, targeted support for those children and young people who have been hardest hit from disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The NTP is an ambitious scheme that will increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged children and young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap. The programme is intended to support disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. We recognise there are different indicators for disadvantage and teachers and head teachers should exercise professional judgement when identifying which pupils would benefit most from this additional support. The NTP for this academic year comprises of three elements:

- A tuition programme for 5-16 year olds; schools can access tuition support from approved Tuition Partners and the most disadvantaged schools are supported to employ an 'in-house' Academic Mentor to support tuition for their pupils: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/>.
- A 16-19 Tuition Fund; we are providing funding to support small group tuition for 16-19 year olds, in English, mathematics, and other courses where learning has been disrupted as a result of COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-16-to-19-tuition-fund>. We are asking colleges to prioritise their disadvantaged students who have not achieved a grade 4 in English and/or mathematics.
- The evidence-based NELI. We have invested £9 million on NELI this academic year to improve the language skills of Reception age children who need it most, providing training and resources free of charge to schools that would particularly benefit. 40% of primary schools signed up for the programme. Priority was given to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage (% pupils eligible for free school meals). In February 2021, we announced plans for the next academic year - a further £8 million for Nuffield Foundation to deliver Reception year early language provision in academic year 2021-2022, enabling the NELI to be offered to many more schools in the next academic year.

Furthermore, to support the hard work of schools in delivering remote education, Oak National Academy was very quickly brought together by over 40 teachers, their schools and other education organisations. The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects, including English, for Reception up to Year 11. Specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is also available.

**■ Department for Education: Data Protection****Daisy Cooper:****[179576]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish in full (a) the audit by the Information Commissioner's Office on his Department and (b) his Department's plans to implement the recommended improvements of that audit.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has been working closely with the Information Commissioner's Office since the audit was undertaken in February 2020 to address all the recommendations and published its formal response in January 2021 in the House Library, paper reference DEP2021-0072.

The Department has undertaken to publish an update to the audit in June 2021 and further details regarding the release mechanism of the full audit report will be contained in this update.

**■ Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme: Schools****Rachael Maskell:****[179248]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will support extending the provision of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme in schools so that every child has the opportunity to participate in that scheme.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government wants as many pupils as possible to benefit from the life-changing activities offered by the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award scheme. The award provides extraordinary opportunities for personal development for both pupils and staff. It improves young people's life chances and prepares them for the challenges and responsibilities of employment and adult life by improving attendance, behaviour, aspirations and attainment.

Most schools are committed to developing these skills in their pupils by providing a rich extra-curricular offer, including after-school clubs and programmes such as the DofE scheme, the National Citizen Service (NCS), or the cadets. The Department published non-statutory guidance for schools in November 2019 to help schools improve their character education and the personal development of their pupils. The guidance is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/845905/Character\\_Education\\_Framework\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/845905/Character_Education_Framework_Guidance.pdf).

We are working closely with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to help ensure that all children and young people can have the opportunity to take part in high quality programmes such as the DofE Award and the NCS.

The DofE programme is one of the #iwill Fund's match funders. The #iwill Fund is a £50 million joint investment between the DCMS (£25 million) and the National Lottery Community Fund (£25 million). The fund supports the creation of new opportunities to

engage young people in England in volunteering and community engagement in their local areas, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Through #iwill, DofE works with established DofE centres in schools, clubs, and other organisations to support more disadvantaged young people. In 2019, to mark the DofE's Diamond Anniversary, DofE created a £3 million fund, supported by £1 million from #iwill, to support young people to transform their lives and develop vital skills and attributes that employers look for.

## ■ Education: Finance

**Jason McCartney:**

[\[175810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an estimate of the cost of increasing the national funding rate for all full time 16, 17 and 18 year old students to £4,760 per year.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The information requested is not held centrally as the department does not routinely make estimates of this kind. Modelling such costs would require consideration of various factors, such as the forecast of expected student numbers across age ranges, the characteristics of those students, the courses undertaken, the effect of lagged funding and the impact of the policy change required.

## ■ English Language: Higher Education

**Christian Matheson:**

[\[174875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for each of the last five years for which figures are available, what was the total number of (a) applicants and (b) graduates for English degree courses at universities in England.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) does not publish data on the number of applicants to each course.

However, UCAS does publish data on applications to full-time undergraduate courses at UK higher education (HE) providers in their End of Cycle Data Resources pages. Each applicant can make up to 5 applications.

The table below shows the numbers of main scheme applications to undergraduate English studies courses at English HE providers for application cycles 2016 to 2020.

**Applications <sup>1</sup> to undergraduate English studies courses at English HE providers - application cycles 2016 to 2020**

<b>CYCLE YEAR <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TO ENGLISH STUDIES COURSE (JACS) <sup>3</sup></b>
<b>2016</b>	41,805
<b>2017</b>	39,930
<b>2018</b>	36,245
<b>2019</b>	33,440
<b>2020</b>	29,830

Source: UCAS End of Cycle data resources <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2020>.

[1] Does not refer to individual applicants. Each unique applicant can make up to 5 main scheme applications. This does not cover applicants who applied Direct to Clearing or applicants who applied directly to the provider. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Refers to application cycle year. The 2020 cycle covers applicants typically entering higher education in the 2020/2021 academic year.

[3] English studies defined as principal category Q3 of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS). This code excludes those studying Imaginative Writing (I8). More information on JACS codes can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/jacs>.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on qualifications obtained at UK HE providers. The latest data refers to academic year 2019/20.

The table below shows the numbers of first-degree qualifiers in English studies at English HE providers between academic years 2015/16 and 2019/20.

Information for the academic year 2019/20 is provided in a separate column due to the introduction of a new subject classification system, the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH).

Figures for the academic year 2019/20 are not directly comparable with previous years, because “Studies of specific authors” and “Creative writing” are now included in the ‘English Studies’ category. Excluding those categories gives a count of 8,110 qualifiers in the academic year 2019/20, although this is still not directly comparable with earlier years due to the new coding methodology.



**First-degree qualifiers <sup>4</sup> in English studies courses at English HE providers <sup>5</sup> - academic years 2015/16 to 2019/20**

ACADEMIC YEAR	NUMBER OF QUALIFIERS IN ENGLISH STUDIES COURSES (JACS) <sup>6</sup>	NUMBER OF QUALIFIERS IN ENGLISH STUDIES COURSES (CAH) <sup>7</sup>
2015/16	10,475	-
2016/17	10,355	-
2017/18	9,665	-
2018/19	9,165	-
2019/20	-	9,405

Source: HESA Student open data pages, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-19> and <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-51>.

[4] Counts are based on full-person-equivalents. Where a student is studying more than one subject, they are apportioned between the subjects that make up their course. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in line with HESA rounding conventions: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/students#rounding-and-suppression-strategy>.

[5] Data between the academic years 2015/16 and 2018/19 excludes a small minority of qualifiers from alternative providers.

[6] English studies is defined as principal category Q3 of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS). More information on JACS codes can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/jacs>.

[7] English studies is defined as Common Aggregate Hierarchy level 2 (CAH2), which is the sum of codes "19-01-01 English studies (non-specific)", "19-01-02 English language", "19-01-03 Literature in English", "19-01-04 Studies of specific authors", "19-01-05 Creative writing" and "19-01-06 Others in English studies". More information on CAH codes can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos/cah-about>.

## ■ Free School Meals: Ethnic Groups

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[179524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department collects data on free school meals by ethnicity.

**Vicky Ford:**

Data on free school meals is collected in each term of the school census. Breakdowns by ethnicity are collected in the spring school census.

The most recent figures for number of pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals by ethnicity were published in the response to parliamentary question UIN 63494, tabled on 23 June 2020. This is available here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-06-23/63494>.

## ■ Further Education and Higher Education: Children in Care

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[180504]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he is providing to help looked after children secure a place in (a) higher and (b) further education.

**Vicky Ford:**

Improving the academic attainment of looked after children in school is vital to increasing their subsequent participation in further and higher education. Every local authority in England must appoint a Virtual School Head, who has a statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of all children in their care up to the age of 18. Virtual School Heads have made a significant impact since they were introduced by statute in 2014, bringing expert leadership to the system that has seen a very significant reduction in permanent expulsions and absenteeism and improved educational progress. All looked after children, up to age 18, must also have a personal education plan. This should include careers advice and financial information about further and higher education, training, and employment.

Children in care and care leavers are a priority group for receipt of the 16 to 19 bursary, which provides up to £1,200 a year to help meet the financial costs of participating in further education.

If care leavers attend university, local authorities are required to provide a minimum £2,000 bursary and provide, or meet the costs of, accommodation during non-term times. As with other students, care leavers can request a maintenance loan to cover their living costs and a student loan to cover their course fees. In addition, many universities provide additional support for care leavers. In 2019, the department published the care leaver higher education principles for higher education institutions, which identify the areas where care leavers need extra support to access and succeed in higher education, with examples of best practice from across the sector. Further information on these is available here: <https://mycovenant.org.uk/offers/educational/>.

We have also launched the Care Leaver Covenant, which provides a way for organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to show their commitment to care leavers through providing concrete offers of support. In total, 67 further education colleges and higher education institutions have signed the Care Leaver Covenant and published their offer to care leavers.

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, wrote to universities and other providers of higher education to highlight the vulnerability of care leavers and estranged students and asked them to prioritise these groups for additional support. We have also prioritised care leavers for the

receipt of laptops and data packages, distributed to local authorities in summer 2020 to allocate to vulnerable children and young people in their local areas, to help them to access education online and keep in touch with their support networks.

## ■ Further Education and Vocational Education: Assessments

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[179013]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to integrate increased levels of modular assessment in Further and Technical Education at (a) Level 3 and (b) lower levels.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department is reviewing post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below to ensure that every qualification approved for public funding has a distinct purpose, is high quality, and supports progression to positive outcomes.

Our second stage consultation on level 3 advanced technical qualifications ( <https://consult.education.gov.uk/post-16-qualifications-review-team/review-of-post-16-qualifications-at-level-3/> ) closed on 31 January 2021, and our call for evidence ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/post-16-study-at-level-2-and-below-call-for-evidence> ) on level 2 and below qualifications closed on 14 February 2021.

In the level 3 consultation, we proposed that assessing a student's competence at the end of a course (summative assessment) becomes a key feature of technical education.

Summative assessment allows modular delivery of content but gives greater assurance that competence is achieved by assessing knowledge, skills, and behaviours once all learning has been completed. We are considering the circumstances under which it would appropriate for qualifications to diverge from this model.

We are carefully reviewing the responses to the level 3 consultation and plan to publish the government response later in the spring. We are developing proposals for consultation on level 2 and below and are considering which design principles might best meet students' needs.

## ■ GCE A-level: Assessments

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[178809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that private candidates taking A-levels are not disadvantaged by the use of centre assessed grades.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department and Ofqual have ensured there is a clear and accessible route for private candidates to receive a grade this year, at the same time as other candidates. On 31 March, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) issued guidance to support centres assessing candidates this year, including specific guidance for private candidates.

Private candidates will work with a centre to be assessed on a range of evidence, as other candidates will be. This evidence could include the use of board-provided assessment materials or evidence created with another established education provider. They will have the same opportunity as other students to be assessed on what they were taught, and centres can conduct assessments remotely if needed. In all cases, the Head of Centre will make sure they have collected sufficient evidence to ensure that they are able to confirm that the grades are a true representation of student performance.

The Department is working with the sector to ensure there are enough centres available to support private candidates. The JCQ have published a list of available centres, giving private candidates the opportunity to find a centre at a similar cost to a normal year.

### ■ Higher Education: West Yorkshire

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

**[176114]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to encourage students from (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire to enter into higher education.

**Michelle Donelan:**

It is more crucial than ever before that we tap into the brilliant talent that our country has to offer, and make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.

All higher education (HE) providers wishing to charge higher levels fees must have an access and participation plan agreed by the Office for Students (OfS). These plans set out how they will support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups, to access, participate and succeed in HE and progress from it. This includes setting targets where the provider identifies the inequalities that it intends to address.

Prior attainment is a key determinant of participation in HE. Universities must do more to reach out to those from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds to raise aspirations and support the raising of attainment in schools. That is why in our latest strategic guidance to the OfS, we asked them to encourage providers to do much more to work with schools in a way which meaningfully raises the attainment of disadvantaged children.

In addition, the OfS were also asked to urge providers to do more to ensure that all students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, are recruited to HE courses that will deliver good outcomes. Too many students are being let down by HE courses with low completion rates and courses which have no real labour market demand and therefore do not lead them into skilled employment. True social mobility is when we put students and their needs and career ambitions first, be that HE, further education or apprenticeships.

We want to help disadvantaged students by driving up standards, and providing equality of opportunity so that students have access to new skills and better paid jobs. This is fundamental to this government's ambition of enabling every person to fulfil their potential.

## ■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[175737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the proportion of children entitled to free school meals that will receive support from the Holiday Activities and Food Programme over the Easter 2021 holiday.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[175738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of local authorities are offering the Holiday Activities and Food Programme over the Easter 2021 holidays.

**Vicky Ford:**

Backed by an investment of £220 million, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme ran throughout this Easter holiday period and will run during the summer and Christmas holidays in 2021, supporting disadvantaged pupils with enriching activities, providing them with healthy food, helping them to learn new things and improving socialisation.

Building on the success of the pilot programmes that have run since 2018, our programme is targeted primarily at those who are eligible for free school meals and has launched in every local authority across the country this Easter. In line with remaining national restrictions, every local authority is running a HAF programme – some local authorities may be doing this remotely or online, whilst some local authorities have chosen to do a mixture of remote and face-to-face sessions. Attendance is voluntary and some children attended the programme every day it was offered; many others chose to attend part time or for certain weeks.

Last summer, our programme supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities, and this year's significant expansion of the programme builds on this support.

We will shortly announce our HAF programme support contractor who will help local authorities to scale up plans for the summer, building on the foundations laid by local authorities, sporting organisations, charities, and the voluntary sector this Easter.

The government has extended the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support more families during the Easter holiday period, ensuring all families can continue to access support for food and other essentials should they need it. All local authorities have been informed of their additional allocations, taking the total amount of funding to £229 million for the scheme.

## ■ Home Education: Registration

**Kate Green:**

**[179106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish its response to the 2019 Children not in school consultation; and whether he plans to introduce the register of children educated otherwise than at mainstream schools outlined in that consultation.

**Nick Gibb:**

Parents have a right to educate their children at home, and the Government wants the many parents who do it well to be supported. Most parents who take up the weighty responsibility of home education do a very good job, and many children benefit from being educated at home.

However, there are examples in which pupils are home educated but such education provided is inappropriate, ineffective or through unsuitable settings, such as unregistered independent schools.

In response to this, a consultation was held in the spring of 2019 on proposals for: a mandatory register of children not attending state or registered independent schools to help local authorities carry out their responsibilities in relation to children not in school; a duty on parents to register their child with the local authority if not registered at specified types of schools; a duty on proprietors of certain education settings to respond to enquiries from local authorities; and a duty on local authorities to provide support to parents who educate children at home.

The consultation closed on 24 June 2019 with nearly 5000 responses. We remain committed to a registration system for children not in school. Further details on this will be published in the government response to the consultation which we intend to publish in due course.

## ■ Primary Education: School Libraries

**Gill Furniss:**

**[180572]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to improve primary school library facilities.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department believes that all pupils deserve to be taught a knowledge-rich curriculum that promotes the extensive reading of books and other kinds of texts, both in and out of school. School libraries complement public libraries in allowing pupils to do this.

It is for individual schools to decide how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils, including whether to employ a qualified librarian. Many head teachers recognise the important role school libraries play in improving literacy and encouraging pupils to read for pleasure and ensure that suitable library facilities are provided.

The National Curriculum requires teachers to encourage pupils to develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information. It also emphasises the importance of listening to, discussing, and reading for themselves a wide range of stories, poems, plays and non-fiction books.

The Department is investing £14 billion more in schools over the three financial years to 2022-23, allowing schools to provide more resources like library provision, to make sure all pupils get the top quality education they deserve.

## ■ Schools: Discipline

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[180614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his article entitled There is nothing Dickensian about a well-ordered, disciplined classroom published in the Telegraph newspaper on 6 April 2021, what (a) assessment his department made and (b) research his Department commissioned on the effect of lack of regular structure and discipline while schools were closed during the covid-19 outbreak on classroom behaviour.

**Nick Gibb:**

All schools should be calm and orderly environments. The Government is pursuing an ambitious programme of work to improve behaviour in schools. Earlier this month we commenced the Behaviour Hubs programme, investing £10 million to help schools develop and sustain a culture where good behaviour is the norm. We are reforming training as part of the Early Career Framework, so that all new teachers will be shown how to effectively manage behaviour in their first two years in the profession from September 2021. We will be consulting on how we can help head teachers remove phones from the school day and other revisions to the Department's behaviour and discipline and expulsions guidance later in the year.

The Department's programme of work to improve behaviour is in response to Ofsted judgements, Department for Education teacher surveys and wider research conducted prior to the COVID-19 outbreak which consistently show that managing pupil behaviour has been a longstanding and serious challenge for some schools, and particularly so in a secondary context.

## ■ Schools: Hate Crime

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[179339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer of 31 March 2021 to Question 174230, on Hate Crime: Young People, when his Department last undertook an assessment of the efficacy of its policies on the prevention and reporting of hate crimes in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government, alongside schools and teachers, is committed to supporting children and young people to thrive and reach their potential in a safe and respectful environment. Schools continue to play an important role in preparing children and



young people for life in modern Britain, supporting them to understand the society in which they are growing up and teaching about respect for other people and tolerance.

We continue to work with colleagues across Government, as well as those in the school sector and communities to better understand issues around discrimination, hatred, and prejudice on an ongoing basis. For example, the Department has provided funding to anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying, including projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying. These grants ended in March 2021, and grant holders are currently working to finalise independent evaluations of their programmes, which will be published in due course. The Department has considered next steps for anti-bullying support in schools, working closely with external stakeholders, and will shortly be running a procurement exercise to fund activity in 2021-22.

Having supported the creation and delivery of the Government's hate crime action plan (2016-2020), officials from the Department continue to work with Home Office officials on the development of the Government's next strategic response to hate crime. We are also currently considering recommendations from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities on education in detail.

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Tribunals**

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[179091]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness of the steps it has taken to ensure that parents are aware of the (a) existence and (b) role of the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability); and what steps his Department is taking to improve parental awareness of that body.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice sets out the issues about which parents and young people can appeal to the SEND Tribunal and the timescales within which they are required to register an appeal. The Code is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>. In addition, the department has also published guidance on the SEND system for parents and carers, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>.

When a local authority makes certain decisions in relation to Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans that can be appealed to the SEND First-tier Tribunal, they must notify the child's parents or the young person of their right to appeal to the Tribunal and the time limit for doing so, of the requirement for them to consider mediation should they wish to appeal and the availability of information, advice and support and disagreement resolution services. This requirement on local authorities is set out in the SEND Code of Practice.

We are also providing £3.7 million in the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that parents and young people are able to access high-quality, impartial information, advice and

support on matters relating to SEND, including the SEND Tribunal where appropriate. This includes funding for the continued provision of a national helpline and online support service for parents whose children have SEND, and training, development and support for local SEND Information, Advice and Support Services.

## ■ Teachers: Training

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[179610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he will include an open consultation as part of the initial teacher training market review.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review is focused on how the sector can provide consistently high-quality training, in line with the Core Content Framework, in a more efficient and effective market. An expert advisory group has been appointed to advise the Government on this matter.

Ian Bauckham, the Review Chair, has held early discussions with ITT network Chairs and others, and he and officials will be undertaking wider sector engagement in late Spring. The Department also plans to conduct an open consultation on final proposals.

## ■ Universities: Coronavirus

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[180567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Higher Education Update statement made on 13 April 2021, if he will publish the scientific advice for the decision to postpone in-person teaching for university students in England until at least 17 May 2021.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We are committed to taking a cautious approach to easing restrictions, guided by data instead of dates. Much of the data that has been used to inform decision making has already been published.

It is important that we continue to take a cautious – but irreversible – approach to re-opening. Moving too fast, too soon, risks a resurgence in infections, hospitalisations and deaths. Whilst we are aware that there is limited evidence of transmission in in-person teaching environments, we must not lose sight of the risks the virus poses and must stay vigilant throughout to ensure this roadmap provides a one-way passage to returning to a more normal life.

We have worked extremely closely with scientists and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) to understand and model various scenarios to inform our plan that seeks to enable us to re-open the country without putting unsustainable pressure on the NHS. We have also examined economic and social data to get a balanced understanding of the impacts of carefully easing restrictions. The government has also carefully considered data on the impact of COVID-19 and

lockdown on ethnic minority communities, the vulnerable, the young and low-income groups.

The government has taken into account all the scientific advice and models that suggest that allowing additional indoor mixing at an earlier stage when prevalence is higher, and fewer people have been vaccinated, would result in significantly higher numbers of infections. This is why restrictions outdoors have been eased first and restrictions on most indoor activity will remain in place. As the number of people vaccinated increases, we anticipate being able to take steps to ease further as more people are protected.

A wealth of data, papers and evidence is being published at the same time as the roadmap, to ensure transparency on the information that the government has had available to it in reaching its decisions. This includes information from Public Health England:

- Information on vaccine effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccination.
- A surveillance report with a more detailed summary of the findings so far from the SARS-CoV-2 Immunity & REinfection Evaluation (SIREN) study and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections Watch.
- A technical paper on the SIREN analysis being published (as a pre-print) by the Lancet.

The papers from SAGE include:

- Minutes from the last 4 SAGE meetings.
- Children's Task and Finish Group paper: 'COVID-19 in higher education settings, 10 February 2021'
- 3 papers from the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M), with a summary of modelling on scenarios for easing restrictions, together with the supporting papers from modellers at Warwick and Imperial universities.
- A collection of papers from SPI-M on "relaxation of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) and the re-opening of schools", Independent Pandemic Scientific Insights Group on Behaviours (the behavioural experts' sub-group of SAGE) on return to campus for the spring term and the risk of increased transmission from student migration.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

**[180906]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will issue guidance to those universities that have not permitted their students to return to campus as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased to now encourage those universities to permit their students to return to campus.

**Justin Madders:**

[181047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the Government plans to publish guidance to universities on the return of the remaining students who do not satisfy the eligibility criteria for face-to-face teaching during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Michelle Donelan:**

On 13 April, the government announced that remaining students should return to in-person teaching alongside Step 3 of the roadmap, which is not earlier than 17 May.

Students and providers will be given at least a week's notice of any further return in accordance with the timing of Step 3 of the roadmap. We have also updated our guidance on the return of students during the spring and summer terms:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

## ■ Video Games: Qualifications

**Alex Sobel:**

[179482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of removing funding for Applied General Qualifications on people that hope to study degrees in gaming.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department has consulted widely on proposals for reforming post-16 qualifications at level 3. The second stage of consultation closed on 31 January 2021 and set out proposals for a range of qualifications that will sit alongside A levels and T Levels in future. These include academic qualifications designed to support progression to specialist higher education. No final decisions have been made about individual subjects or the future of existing qualifications.

The impact assessment published alongside the consultation looks at the potential impact of the review on students, providers, employers, and the economy but did not look specifically at student progression to degrees in gaming. We are analysing responses to the consultation and will publish a final impact assessment as part of the response to the consultation later this year.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agricultural Products: UK Trade with EU

**Navendu Mishra:**

[176084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of consignments of animal and plant products are rejected at the EU Border Control Post.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are aware of 17 consignments that were rejected at EU Border Control Posts between January and March 2021. There may be more not known to Defra or the

Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). In the same period APHA issued 40,300 certificates for exports to the EU, although some of these may be for consignments not yet exported.

## ■ Agriculture: Subsidies

**Tim Farron:** [\[174791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that landlords cannot take a disproportionate share of their tenant's delinked farm payments.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Eligibility for delinked payments will be based on a reference period. For example, it may be necessary to have claimed, and been eligible under the Basic Payment Scheme, in a particular scheme year or years. Where land is let to a tenant, it is the tenant and not the landlord who is eligible to use it to claim under Basic Payment Scheme. Similarly, we expect that tenants who received a Basic Payment Scheme payment during the reference period will usually be eligible to receive a delinked payment. We are consulting with the industry on the detail of how delinked payments will work.

## ■ Customs: Ashford (Kent)

**Luke Pollard:** [\[181113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the Environment Agency's impact assessment of the Sevington Inland Border Facility in Ashford, Kent.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We do not intend to publish the impact assessment. The Environment Agency has consulted the Department for Transport (DfT) and concluded that disclosure of information relating to the construction, design, layout and operation of the Sevington Inland Border Facility is confidential and would adversely affect both public safety and commercial confidentiality.

The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee for this DfT project and has provided advice relating to the environmental sensitivities, such as flood risk and risk of pollution to surface and groundwater. The Environment Agency's advice to the DfT was taken into consideration during the development process and the Environment Agency is confident that the site has been designed and is being operated in line with it.

## ■ Floods: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Laurence Robertson:** [\[180916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department provides grants to help towards the recovery of a person's home following flooding; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Following severe weather with significant impacts across multiple local authorities the Government can deploy the Flood Recovery Framework (Framework). Run by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), there are several Government schemes available for people whose properties have been flooded.

The Framework includes:

- o **Community Recovery Grant:** Eligible local authorities will receive funding equivalent to £500 per flooded household.

- o **Business Recovery Grant:** Eligible local authorities will receive £2,500 per eligible small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) which have suffered severe impacts from the floods that cannot be recovered from insurance.

- o **Council Tax Discount:** The Government will reimburse eligible local authorities for the cost of providing residents with 100% council tax relief for a minimum of three months.

- o **Business Rates Relief:** The Government will reimburse eligible local authorities for the cost of providing a minimum of three months of 100% relief from business rates, or longer if the business is unable to resume trading.

In addition, Defra may implement the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Repair Scheme in exceptional circumstances. This provides flood-hit homes and businesses in eligible district and unitary authorities, to receive a contribution of up to £5,000 towards making properties more resilient against future flooding.

Both the Framework and PFR Repair Scheme were activated following severe flooding in November 2019 and February 2020. Tewkesbury is eligible for both the Framework and PFR Repair Scheme for both events.

With localised flooding incidents local authorities are expected to have contingency arrangements in place to respond and support the recovery from within their existing budgets. They have discretionary powers to fund grants, loans or other payments for home improvements. This can include funding for PFR measures.

The Government has doubled the amount it invests in the flood and coastal defence programme in England to £5.2 billion over six years. This will better protect a further 336,000 properties including homes and non-residential properties such as schools and hospitals. On 1 February 2021, Defra published a Call for Evidence which included looking at potential changes to the funding formula to provide further benefit to frequently flooded communities. It also explored ways to increase the uptake of PFR measures to enable householders and businesses to better prepare for flooding. The Call for Evidence closed in March and the Government is currently considering the responses received.

■ **Furs: Sales****Jim Shannon:**[\[174832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ban the sale of fur in the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000 and since 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are restrictions on some skin and fur products which may never be legally imported into the UK. These include fur and products from cats and dogs, and seal skins and products from commercial hunts.

The Government is considering any further steps it could take in relation to fur.

■ **Game: Birds****Virginia Crosbie:**[\[180659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to ban the use of cages in the breeding of game birds; how many animal welfare inspections of game bird farms in England and Wales were undertaken in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020; how many of those visits resulted in action being taken against the person responsible for a welfare breach; and whether follow up inspections were carried out in those circumstances.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are committed to improving our already high standards of animal welfare and are examining the evidence around the use of cages in farming, including their use for breeding pheasants and partridges.

The welfare of gamebirds is protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal. The Statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes offers additional protection and provides keepers with guidance on how to meet the welfare needs of their gamebirds as required by the 2006 Act. It recommends that barren cages for breeding pheasants and small barren cages for breeding partridges should not be used and that any system should be appropriately enriched.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carries out targeted inspections on gamebird farms. Advice on compliance is a key component of all APHA inspections.

APHA game bird inspections conducted and action taken:

	INSPECTIONS	DISTRICT HOLDINGS INSPECTED	ADVISORY LETTER	FOLLOW UP VISIT
2019	10	7	3	0
2020	14	3	6	4



## ■ Genetically Modified Organisms

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[176083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to introduce genetically modified foods into the UK.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[176096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on employment of the proposal to authorise the use of gene-editing technologies in agriculture and food and drink manufacturing in England.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[176097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of potentially introducing gene editing into the UK's food and agriculture supply chain on the Northern Ireland Protocol.

**Victoria Prentis:**

More than 70 genetically modified (GM) products are authorised for use as food and feed in the UK. Most GM products are used for animal feed. All these products have been authorised after a rigorous risk assessment. There are very few GM food products on the UK market, some as imports. Where GM ingredients have been added to food, existing legislation requires labelling to indicate this.

In addition to possible human health and environmental impacts, Defra's recent genetic technologies consultation sought views on non-safety issues arising if organisms produced by genetic editing or other genetic technologies, which could have been produced naturally or through traditional breeding methods, were not regulated as GMOs. The consultation ended on 17 March and we are currently analysing the responses. A full Government response will be published within three months.

Owing to the application of Union law to Northern Ireland by virtue of the Northern Ireland Protocol, gene edited organisms will in Northern Ireland continue to be considered as GMOs and regulated as such.

## ■ Horse Racing: Animal Welfare

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[181161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the British Horseracing Association on when they plan to undertake a consultation on the use of the whip, as recommended in the Horse Welfare Board's five-year Horse Welfare Strategy; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning the use of the whip in horseracing.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Horse Welfare Board's five-year Horse Welfare Strategy (HWS) *A life well-lived* was published on 20 February 2020. The HWS contains 20 recommendations for improving the welfare of horses bred for racing. The HWS recommends that, as a minimum, the penalties for misuse of the whip need to increase and that the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) should conduct a consultation on the use of the whip. The Strategy also recommends that this consultation should gather views on future restrictions on whip use and on a possible ban. Defra has been informed by the British Horse Racing Authority that the delayed opening of the consultation due to COVID-19 disruption will take place later in 2021.

Defra officials will remain engaged with the BHA on the progress being made with the consultation. I would encourage anyone with evidence that a racehorse has suffered unnecessarily from being whipped to get in touch with the BHA and share their concerns. In the most severe cases of misuse, an individual may be investigated under the 2006 Animal Welfare Act, as well as receiving significant sanctions from the sport.

**Housing: Air Pollution****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[174742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce air pollution in homes.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Clean Air Strategy includes measures to reduce key sources which contribute to indoor air pollution, including measures to reduce emissions of particulate matter from domestic solid fuel burning. Last year the Government legislated to phase out the sale of the most polluting solid fuels (wet wood, bituminous house coal and high sulphur manufactured solid fuels) and this will come into force from 1 May. In addition, new emission standards for solid fuel appliances will also come into force from 2022, ensuring only the cleanest new stoves are available for sale.

The Government recognises the importance of national leadership on the issue of indoor air quality and is taking action in this space, for example improving ventilation standards in buildings.

**Litter: Coronavirus****Sir Greg Knight:**[\[180413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to discourage littering in (a) tourist and (b) other areas as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased and outdoor socialising increases; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We know that people's health, wellbeing and resilience can be improved by spending time in the natural environment and there has been an encouraging increase in the number of visitors accessing the countryside. We are clear, however, that everyone

should follow the recently updated Countryside Code, which is available on gov.uk. A key part of the Government's strategy is to get clear and consistent messages to the media, which promote better behaviour in the countryside and encourage a partnership response.

We continue to campaign to raise awareness of the impacts of littering.

In response to Covid-19, Defra developed a 'Respect the Outdoors' campaign to encourage people to follow the Countryside Code and to highlight the impacts of littering. This has been promoted both online and in locations across the country near to urban parks, beaches and national parks. We also supported, and provided funding for, Keep Britain Tidy's Love Parks campaign, which encouraged people to treat our parks with respect.

I recently spoke at the launch of Keep Britain Tidy's 2021 Great British Spring Clean, encouraging everyone to get involved. By doing so, we are setting the tone for the summer ahead, by showing that litter is not acceptable, and that people care deeply about protecting their local environment.

It is an offence to drop litter, and councils have legal powers to take enforcement action against offenders. Anyone caught littering may be prosecuted in a magistrates' court, which can lead to a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500 on conviction. Instead of prosecuting, councils may decide to issue a fixed penalty (on-the-spot fine) of between £65 and £150.

To support councils to meet their duties in keeping land clear of litter and refuse and maintaining public bins, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has recently published guidance on the provision of litter bins, available at <https://wrap.org.uk/content/bininfrastructure-right-bin-right-place>.

In support of this guidance, WRAP has recently run a grant competition, funded by Defra, for local authorities in England to apply for grants of between £10,000 and £25,000 to purchase new litter bins. In total, 44 applications were approved, worth almost a million pounds.

## ■ Livestock: Animal Welfare

**Ben Lake:**

**[175981]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce instances of livestock worrying and (b) implement the recommendations made by the National Police Chiefs' Council in February 2018 on addressing the challenges of enforcing the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

**Victoria Prentis:**

My Department takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications.

All reported crimes should be taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences. The Dogs (Protection of

Livestock) Act 1953 provides a specific offence of allowing a dog to worry livestock with a maximum fine of £1,000.

The report published by the National Chiefs' Police Council, as well as other recent reports on livestock worrying, have recommended reforming the 1953 Act to address current enforcement challenges and ensure it remains fit for purpose. We are currently engaging closely with key stakeholders to improve our understanding of the scale of the issue and the views of both livestock keepers and dog owners. That includes considering the effectiveness of this law and opportunities to reduce the occurrence of livestock worrying.

In addition to the 1953 Act, the police can and do take action under the Dogs Act 1871 where there are dogs that are out of control and dangerous to other animals. Section 2 of the 1871 Act allows a complaint to be made to a Magistrate's court by any individual, the police or local authorities, where a dog is "dangerous and not kept under proper control". The court may make any Order it considers appropriate to require the owner to keep the dog under proper control, or if necessary, that it be destroyed. The court may specify measures to be taken for keeping the dog under proper control, such as muzzling and remaining on a lead when in public.

Guidance is available to educate owners about handling their dogs responsibly in the vicinity of livestock, in order to prevent the occurrence of attacks or chasing.

The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs provides owners with information on how to provide for their dog's natural needs as required by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The Code of Practice explains how to handle dogs responsibly in the vicinity of other animals, including livestock, in order to prevent the occurrence of attacks or chasing. It also clearly sets out that all dogs need to be trained to behave well, ideally from a very young age and should be introduced gradually and positively to different environments, people and animals. If owners become aware of changes in behaviour, or their dog is fearful of, or aggressive, towards other dogs and people, they should avoid the situations which lead to this and seek veterinary advice. The Code asks owners to ensure that they prevent their dogs from chasing or attacking any other animals, including livestock and horses; for example, through use of a lead or avoidance of such situations.

Natural England has recently published a refreshed version of the Countryside Code: advice for countryside visitors ( [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors) ). Both the short and long versions of the Countryside Code make specific reference to keeping dogs under control and in sight to make sure they stay away from wildlife, livestock, horses and other people unless invited. The Code helpfully sets out certain legal requirements, encouraging visitors to always check local signs as there are situations when you must keep your dog on a lead for all or part of the year. An associated campaign will run throughout 2021, which will include a broader conversation with stakeholders about what a 'post Covid' Code for the 21st century would look like and how to promote more awareness and positive behaviour.

## ■ Pigeon Racing

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[180468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the proposed date is to reinstate the General Licence for Gatherings to permit the return of pigeon racing.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The ban on gatherings for birds remains in place. No date for lifting the ban has yet been set.

The general licence for bird gatherings was suspended on 11 November 2020. This followed the first case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in England in 2020 and the risk assessment which concluded that the likelihood of the presence of infection in wild waterfowl had increased to high and the likelihood that poultry would be exposed to disease to be medium.

The risk assessment also found that the likelihood of disease introduction through gatherings was increased because of the cumulative risk relating to multiple places of origin of the birds attending and that the impact of an introduction of infection to poultry because of gatherings could be very severe. The ban is regularly reviewed, including whether gatherings of bird species of lower risk, such as pigeons, might be permitted before allowing gatherings of higher risk species such as ducks and geese.

## ■ Pigs: Agriculture

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[181162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support he is giving to pig farmers who have lost trade as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and African swine fever.

**Victoria Prentis:**

This pandemic has had a huge impact on businesses up and down the country

We are continuing to monitor the pig sector recognising the challenges it has faced as a result of both Covid-19 outbreaks in processing plants and the end of the Transition period. The Secretary of State and I held a roundtable with the pig industry on 9 February to discuss these issues.

A further roundtable with the retail sector is planned for this week. Approving and maintaining the approvals of UK Food Business Operators (FBOs) for pork exports to China is a decision for the Chinese Authorities but Defra will continue to work closely with UK industry and the British Embassy in Beijing with the aim of securing China's agreement to reinstate the approval of pork exports from de-listed UK FBOs. The Government has already made available considerable support for businesses impacted by the pandemic. Where appropriate, we would encourage pig farmers to access these funds.

African swine fever remains one of our key priorities in terms of exotic notifiable diseases. Whilst we have never had an outbreak in the UK, we continue to prepare for this eventuality.

### ■ **Sea Bass: Inshore Fishing**

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[180411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward proposals on UK bass fishing management measures and moving incidental bass catches caught in locally regulated shore-based nets out of the scope of the existing prohibition; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

As an independent coastal state the UK is able to make its own regulatory changes to bass management measures. We will update on those changes on the conclusion of annual negotiations with the EU.

### ■ **Sewage: Pollution Control**

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[181165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent untreated sewage from entering rivers and seas in the UK; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the penalties for water companies that breach the regulations on discharge.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Tackling the harm caused by sewer overflows is a top priority for this Department.

During periods of significant rainfall untreated sewage diluted by rainwater will discharge through storm overflows to avoid streets, premises and sewage treatment plants from being flooded. Water companies are committed in the five-year business planning period (2020-2025) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.1 billion. This investment includes undertaking 800 investigations and 798 improvement schemes to provide environmental improvements by reducing spills from frequently spilling overflows.

I recognise that there is more to do to manage sewage pollution. I met water company CEOs and made clear that the volume of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced.

To achieve this, the new Storm Overflows Taskforce - bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - has agreed to set a long term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. The Taskforce is now working on plans to start making progress towards that goal, and they have commissioned research to gather evidence on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options.

We are introducing new duties requiring the Government to publish a plan by September 2022 to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows and to report

progress to Parliament on implementing that plan. We are also introducing duties requiring water companies and the Environment Agency to publish data on storm overflow operations on an annual basis. These legally-binding obligations on water companies and government will reduce pollution in rivers – protecting wildlife and public health.

Water companies are currently producing for the first time comprehensive Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans to assess the capacity of their wastewater networks. We are also taking key steps through the Environment Bill to require water companies to produce such Plans on a statutory basis. These plans will be another tool to help address the risks that storm overflows pose to the environment.

The Environment Agency uses a range of enforcement options ranging from warning letters to prosecutions. The Environment Agency has brought 44 prosecutions against water companies in the last five years, securing fines of £34 million. £7.9 million has also been donated to environmental and wildlife trusts organisations in the same period through enforcement undertakings. The Environment Agency will continue to prosecute water companies which fail to uphold the law or cause serious environmental harm.

## ■ Trapping

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[180968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of glue traps on (a) bats, (b) other endangered species and (c) animal welfare.

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[181163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a ban on the sale of glue traps.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We are aware of the concerns around the use of glue traps, which can cause immense suffering to both target and non-target animals.

It is an issue we are looking at very closely as part of our continued drive to maintain the highest animal welfare standards in the world.

Anyone using glue traps has a responsibility under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to act within the law to ensure their activities do not cause any unnecessary suffering.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

## ■ Africa: Economic Situation

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[176116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in African countries ranked in the bottom



quartile of the Economic Freedom Rankings by the Fraser institution on liberalising their economies.

**James Duddridge:**

I regularly engage with our counterparts in African countries on economic policies, including those ranked in the bottom quartile of the Economic Freedom Rankings. As set out in the Integrated Review, the UK Government is committed to the promotion of free and fair trade around the world and has already concluded trade agreements with 15 African countries. The UK Government supports economic development of African countries through a variety of channels, and UK investors have continued to invest throughout 2020 and 2021, meaning the £15.4 billion of deals made around the 2020 Africa Investment Summit are on track.

Looking specifically at countries in the bottom quartile of the Economic Freedom Rankings, in the past 6 months FCDO Ministers have visited Ethiopia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Malawi. These visits included discussions on improving economic development and trade policies. Such discussions have also taken place with other countries in the bottom quartile of the rankings. There are many examples of how our economic development support in these countries has delivered impact including:

In DRC the UK has helped to reduce multiple corruption opportunities, encourage increased formalisation, and has reduced the time taken to register a business by 22 days.

The UK's £6.8 million of support to the 'Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund' has leveraged over \$9.8 million in private capital into medium and small enterprises which created over 3,400 permanent jobs, almost half of these for women.

In Sudan the UK has supported the reforms process we have seen progress on exchange rate, subsidies, and the early improvements to the enabling environment for trade and investment.

■ **Algeria: Religious Freedom**

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[176127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the level of freedom of religion or belief in Algeria.

**James Cleverly:**

Freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in Algeria's 2020 Constitution. All associations, including religious organisations, operate subject to a permit obtained from the Algerian authorities. However, we are aware that some minority religious groups, including the Protestant Church of Algeria and the Ahmaddiya Muslim community, have faced difficulties in obtaining these permits. Our Embassy in Algiers has raised this issue with the Algerian authorities and is in regular contact with religious groups in Algeria to understand their concerns and how best to support freedom of religion or belief.

## ■ Bahrain: Politics and Government

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[181126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions Ministers in his Department have had with (a) Ali Mushaima, son of Bahraini political opposition leader, Hassan Mushaima, and (b) other UK-based members of the Bahraini Freedom Movement.

**James Cleverly:**

Ministers have not had discussions with Ali Mushaima and other UK based members of the Bahrain Freedom Movement.

## ■ British Nationals Abroad: Travel Restrictions

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[180628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is providing assistance to UK citizens affected by covid-19 related international travel restrictions to return to the UK.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[180630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is providing support to British citizens who have been unable to return to the UK as a result of international covid-19 restrictions.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[180631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what guidance he has issued to British High Commissions, Consulates and Embassies on supporting UK citizens abroad who wish to return to the UK during ongoing international covid-19 restrictions and limited international flights.

**Nigel Adams:**

Our advice to British nationals abroad is that they should follow the public health advice of the country which they are in, including current COVID-19 restrictions, and consider whether they should take additional precautions due to underlying health conditions. Our consular staff endeavour to give appropriate and tailored support to British nationals overseas and their families in the UK, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. This support includes providing assistance to return to the UK where it is appropriate. The assistance the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) can provide to British nationals abroad is set out in the publication: Support for British nationals abroad: A Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>). British nationals who wish to return to the UK should check current COVID-19 related restrictions and follow the advice on gov.uk (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>).

**■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Food Supply and Malnutrition**

**Mrs Pauline Latham:** [\[180962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle food security and malnutrition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**James Duddridge:**

Tackling severe food insecurity and malnutrition is one of the UK's top priorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 2017, UK aid has provided 1.97 million people with food aid, cash and vouchers to reduce food insecurity and treated over 300,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition.

The UK is also leading a global call to action on the risk of famine and appointed Nick Dyer as the UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs. DRC is a priority country for food insecurity and the UK's Call to Action. During my visit to DRC in November 2020 and a subsequent call with President Tshisekedi in March 2021, I discussed with the Government the need to address insecurity and conflict in the East, one of the key drivers of the humanitarian crisis.

**Mrs Pauline Latham:** [\[180963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how the G7 will co-ordinate international action to tackle rising food insecurity and malnutrition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**James Duddridge:**

Famine prevention is a priority theme of the UK's G7 Presidency. As part of this, the UK Special Envoy, Nick Dyer, is chairing a Panel on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crisis to agree a Compact to prevent famine in 2021 and slow the growth in humanitarian need through stronger approaches to early action. The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the priority countries for the UK's Call to Action on famine and food insecurity.

**■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Overseas Aid**

**Mrs Pauline Latham:** [\[180961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction to Official Development Assistance on tackling child stunting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**James Duddridge:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take tough but necessary decisions, including temporarily reducing the overall amount we spend on aid to 0.5% of GNI. We will remain a world-leading ODA donor and still spend more than £10 billion this year to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health. We are working through what this means for individual programmes. Decisions will be announced in due course.

The UK remains a committed development partner to the Democratic Republic of Congo, including on reducing child stunting. In the last year, we have supported 4 million children with community-based nutrition including counselling on exclusive breastfeeding, Vitamin A supplementation, and growing nutritious crops.

## ■ Developing Countries: Corruption

**Harriett Baldwin:**

[\[180973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what programmes he has put in place to support the Government's Anti Corruption Strategy using Official Development Assistance in financial year (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22; and how much funding has been allocated to those programmes.

**Nigel Adams:**

The last published Statistics on International Development report that the UK spent £57,084,711 of Official Development Assistance on Anti-Corruption in 2019, across a wide range of programmes in support of the UK's Anti-Corruption Strategy. In addition, some ODA programmes focussing on other areas contributed to reducing corruption, including programmes to improve public sector financial management systems and scrutiny by audit and civil society bodies. Equivalent statistics for 2020 are expected to be published in September 2021.

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to reduce temporarily how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). The UK will remain a world-leading donor, spending over £10 billion in 21/22. No decisions on sectoral budgets have been made yet. The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities for the UK's aid budget this year, including defending open societies. The recently published Integrated Review sets out the UK Government's commitment to fight corruption and illicit finance as significant threats to democratic values and open societies around the world.

## ■ Developing Countries: Hygiene

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[181128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take in 2021 to improve the global provision of facilities for handwashing, particularly in healthcare facilities, as part of global efforts to help prevent the spread of (a) covid-19 and (b) future pandemics.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government recognises the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in health care facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and bolster preparedness for future pandemics. In January 2021, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office joined a variety of civil society, multilateral and governmental partners to form an international taskforce, to accelerate the provision of WASH services in global healthcare facilities over the next two years.

Similarly, we continue to support the Sanitation and Water for All partnership, bringing together donors, the private sector and NGOs to help governments increase access to WASH services in healthcare facilities, as part of our wider global leadership on WASH.

Additionally, through our COVID-19 hygiene partnership with Unilever, we have jointly provided 2.6 million WASH products and services to over 10,000 health care facilities to strengthen their hygiene and infection prevention and control practices. This has included installing 2,400 handwashing stations, of which the majority are accessible for those with disabilities and older persons, and distributing nearly 1.5 million bars of soap in facilities. Partners have also trained over 10,000 healthcare workers, using innovative tools and technology in light of COVID restrictions. This partnership will continue in 2021.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[181129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure that COP26 increases the (a) quality and (b) quantity of finance for climate adaptation; and what assessment he has made of how that finance can be used to support access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities globally.

**Wendy Morton:**

As COP26 Presidency, we are clear that we must deliver for people at the front line of climate change. We continue to call on donors to demonstrate the required action now, including meeting and surpassing the goal of mobilising \$100 billion of climate finance a year for developing countries. The UK is leading by example - we have committed to double our International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion over the next five years - and we are calling on others to be equally ambitious. We are also committed to addressing concerns about the quantity, quality and composition of climate finance, and the recent UK-hosted Climate and Development Ministerial was an important moment to listen and respond to the concerns of developing countries on these issues.

The impacts of climate change can be felt most acutely in the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). At the same time investing in WASH is an important measure for strengthening adaptation and resilience, and this is why the UK is prioritising a range of water-related resilience initiatives, including the Water Resilience Accelerator and the Adaptation Action Coalition Water initiative.

## ■ Eritrea: Ethiopia

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[176124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the (a) Eritrean and (b) Ethiopian authorities on attacks in the town of Axum.

**James Duddridge:**

We are deeply concerned at the mounting evidence of human rights abuses and violations in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Since the conflict started, the UK has

consistently called for an end to fighting, and for all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians. On 26 February I [Minister Duddridge] stated that we are deeply saddened and concerned by the reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on the human rights violations of civilians in Axum, Ethiopia. These require a serious and urgent response from the Government of Ethiopia.

Eritrea's role in the conflict is particularly concerning; there are numerous reports of atrocities involving Eritrean forces, and the presence of Eritrean forces is fuelling insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately, in line with the commitment made by Prime Minister Abiy. We also note his statement on 23 March that the perpetrators of human rights atrocities should face justice - whoever they are. We need to see action now to stop further atrocities and to allow for the independent investigation of those that have occurred. In a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), we condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians.

#### ■ **Ethiopia: Armed Forces and Police**

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[176081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the UK is providing to the Ethiopian (a) military and (b) police security services.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK provides mentorship and training to a variety of Ethiopian organisations, including those involved in national security and policing. These are limited in scope and go through a rigorous Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessment.

The UK provides training for Ethiopian peacekeeping forces involved in AMISOM, the peacekeeping mission in Somalia operated by the African Union (AU), with approval from the UN. The UK works with the AU to provide non-operational leadership training to Ethiopian forces on key elements of peacekeeping work such as: training on compliance with international law and the law of armed conflict, managing and utilising funds for peacekeeping work and media operations. The UK also provides training for a small number individuals on leadership, management of Defence and human rights. The UK provides no operational training to the Ethiopian Military.

#### ■ **Ethiopia: Arms Trade**

**Layla Moran:**

**[181106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has conducted a review of existing arms export licences and arms export licensing policy in relation to Ethiopia since the outbreak of conflict in that country in November 2020.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK Government takes its export control responsibilities seriously and continues to monitor developments in Ethiopia very closely. We examine every licence

application on a case-by-case basis against strict criteria, drawing on a range of sources in making assessments, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations, in addition to our diplomatic posts. All licences are kept under careful and continual review.

## ■ Ethiopia: Visits Abroad

**Layla Moran:** [\[181103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many visits (a) he, (b) Ministers and (c) officials from his Department have made to Ethiopia since 3 November 2020 to date.

**Layla Moran:** [\[181104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times (a) he, (b) Ministers and (c) officials in his Department have held discussions with (i) Ministers and (ii) representatives of the Ethiopian Government since 3 November 2020 to date.

**James Duddridge:**

The Foreign Secretary visited Ethiopia on 22 January. He visited a humanitarian logistics hub in Gondar run by the World Food Programme, and heard first hand from our agency partners about the difficulties faced delivering life-saving assistance. The Foreign Secretary also met with Prime Minister Abiy, the President and Deputy Prime Minister. In these discussions, he underlined the UK's serious concern about the situation in Tigray. Alok Sharma, the President for COP26, visited Ethiopia on 28 January 2021 to build support for climate action. The UK's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs and Famine Prevention, Nick Dyer, visited Ethiopia in December 2020 to discuss Tigray and other issues with UN and Ethiopian counterparts.

Ministers and senior officials have also had regular discussions with the Ethiopian Government since the conflict in Tigray began. I [Minister Duddridge] most recently spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK on 24 February, and our Ambassador in Addis Ababa spoke with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs on 15 April.

## ■ Gambia: Myanmar

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[181072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will join the Netherlands and Canada in formally supporting the Gambia in its International Court of Justice (ICJ) case against Myanmar; and whether his Department plans to seek Myanmar's first report to the ICJ to be made public so that the international community can scrutinise the contents of that report.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK supports the International Court of Justice (ICJ) process which is putting pressure on Myanmar to protect the Rohingya. We are clear that Myanmar should comply with the provisional measures ruling. We have reiterated our support to the



ICJ process in Parliament, at the UN Security Council, and through public statements. We provided funding to enable Rohingya refugees to attend the ICJ hearing in December 2019. The case will develop significantly in the coming months. We are monitoring developments closely and will consider the legal arguments once they are made available to establish whether a UK intervention would add value.

We understand that Myanmar's report will only be provided to the Court and the parties. We believe it is in the interests of transparency that Myanmar publishes its response to the ICJ.

## ■ HIV Infection

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[181154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will ensure Ministerial attendance at the upcoming UN High-Level Meeting on ending AIDS.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government is already engaged with preparations for the upcoming UN High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS. We are awaiting final decisions on the format of the High Level Meeting before agreeing the level of UK participation.

The UK government recognises and values the vital role civil society organisations play in the global fight against HIV and AIDS. We will work with the Robert Carr Fund and others to amplify the voices of marginalised populations to help make the High Level Meeting successful.

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[181155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will consult with representatives of (a) civil society and (b) affected communities ahead of its engagement at the UN High-Level Meeting on ending AIDS.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government is already engaged with preparations for the upcoming UN High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS. We are awaiting final decisions on the format of the High Level Meeting before agreeing the level of UK participation.

The UK government recognises and values the vital role civil society organisations play in the global fight against HIV and AIDS. We will work with the Robert Carr Fund and others to amplify the voices of marginalised populations to help make the High Level Meeting successful.

## ■ Iran: Detainees

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[180592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Iranian Government on the cases of (a) Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and (b) Anoosheh Ashoori.

**James Cleverly:**

We remain committed to securing the immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori, so that they can be returned to the UK.

The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the UK's serious concerns about Iran's practice of detaining foreign and dual nationals directly with Foreign Minister Zarif, most recently on 3rd April, and the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Rouhani, most recently on 10 March. The ambassador in Tehran consistently raises the dual national detainees with the Iran authorities.

**Israel: Embassies****Jack Lopresti:**[\[174812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the validity of reports that an Iranian-affiliated group detonated an explosive device outside Israel's embassy in New Delhi in January 2021.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK Government works closely with international counterparts on security issues. This particular incident has not been raised by partners - but we work closely with both India and Israel on security issues.

**Italy: Biometric Residence Permits****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[180551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Italian counterpart on expediting applications for the carta di soggiorno elettronica biometric residency card for UK nationals living in Italy.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Government is engaging closely with the Italian government on citizens' rights, including the delays issuing new residence documents (carta di soggiorno elettronica) evidencing the rights of UK nationals in Italy under the Withdrawal Agreement. These delays have now been addressed by the Italian government. We continue to monitor the situation closely and will raise concerns if significant delays or wider implementation issues arise in Italy, including at the Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights.

Italy has adopted a declaratory system under the Withdrawal Agreement. This means that UK nationals and their family members who were lawfully resident before the end of the transition period do not need to apply for a new residence status to be protected by the Withdrawal Agreement. This is because the rights under the Withdrawal Agreement are conferred automatically by operation of the law. While it is not a prerequisite to having status under the Withdrawal Agreement, UK nationals are encouraged to obtain the new residence document to evidence their rights. Pending

the issuance of a new residence document, existing residence documents or other forms of proof can be used to evidence status under the Withdrawal Agreement.

■ **Myanmar: Rohingya**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[175792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) political situation in Myanmar following the recent coup and (b) effect of that coup on the Rohingya population.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are monitoring political and security developments in Myanmar daily. The UK condemns the coup and the appalling violence which has left over 700 dead. We call for a return to democracy and the release of all those in arbitrary detention, including democratically elected politicians, journalists, civil society and foreign nationals.

The UK remains strongly committed to helping those most in need in Myanmar. We will continue to provide humanitarian support to the Rohingya and other vulnerable and conflict-affected populations. We are in close contact with networks on the ground in Rakhine to monitor risks of atrocities, human rights violations and deterioration in the humanitarian and health situation in camps and villages. We continue to raise the plight of the Rohingya on the international stage, most recently in the UN Security Council Presidential Statement agreed on 10 March.

The UK has also imposed sanctions on two key military linked conglomerates that fund the military's campaign of serious human rights violations, and on nine senior military figures, including the Commander in Chief. We are clear that targeted sanctions send a clear message to the military that we react robustly to serious human rights violations

■ **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[175954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will make it its policy to publicly acknowledge Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe to be a victim of torture by the Iranian authorities, in response to the medical report from Redress on her treatment in Iran.

**James Cleverly:**

We take all allegations of torture and mistreatment very seriously. The Iranian government has deliberately put Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe through a terrible ordeal. We welcomed the removal of Nazanin's ankle tag, but Iran's continued treatment of her is intolerable. The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the UK's serious concerns about Iran's practice of arbitrarily detaining foreign and dual nationals with Foreign Minister Zarif, and the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Rouhani. She must be allowed to return to the UK as soon as possible to be reunited with her family.

**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[175955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the findings of the Redress report on the treatment of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, what steps the Government has taken since the publication of that report to strengthen its protections from torture for British citizens and British permanent residents held in Iranian custody; and what representations his Department has made to the Iranian authorities on the torture of British citizens.

**James Cleverly:**

We take all allegations of torture and mistreatment very seriously. Iran continues to put Nazanin through an intolerable ordeal. She must be allowed to return permanently to her family in the UK and we will continue to do all we can to achieve this. The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the UK's serious concerns about Iran's practice of arbitrarily detaining foreign and dual nationals with Foreign Minister Zarif, and the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Rouhani.

We also call for the treatment of detained dual British nationals to be in line with international standards. Their welfare remains our top priority. We regularly lobby on health concerns and allegations of mistreatment.

## ■ Overseas Aid

**Layla Moran:**[\[180588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 170728 on Official Development Assistance contracts, what timeframe in days his Department considers to be reasonable notice of termination for contractors regarding the use of Official Development Assistance funding.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are reviewing each contract on a case by case basis.

Once final decisions are made we will work collaboratively with our supply partners to amend or terminate programmes in accordance with the relevant contractual terms and conditions.

**Layla Moran:**[\[180589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 170728 on Official Development Assistance contracts, whether decisions have now been taken regarding programmes; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Adams:**

Ministers are currently working with department officials to finalise ODA budget allocations for 2021/22. No final decisions have been made. When decisions are taken, we intend to work closely with our supply chain to implement any changes in accordance with the applicable contract.

**Ian Murray:**

[\[180952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish his Department's long-term financial plan for Official Development Assistance funding.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary laid a WMS on 26 January setting out the conclusion of the cross-government review of Overseas Development Assistance. The total FCDO ODA settlement for 2021 is £8.115 billion, funding beyond 2021/22 will be determined by a future government spending review, expected later this year.

## ■ Overseas Aid: Fossil Fuels

**Anna McMorris:**

[\[175992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the CDC Group's expected investment in fossil fuel projects in the next five financial years beginning in 2021/22.

**James Duddridge:**

CDC has published its complete portfolio of energy investments as held at 31 December 2019 on its website, with details including the start date of each investment and the total amount committed.

For future investments, CDC has published its fossil fuel policy to align with the Government's new approach. The policy excludes the vast majority of fossil fuel sub-sectors including coal, oil and upstream gas exploration and production. Limited exceptions, such as selective gas power investments, are required to demonstrate alignment with a country's pathway to net zero emissions by 2050, amongst other criteria. The stringent criteria applied to such investments is also available on CDC's website.

CDC has invested over \$1 billion of climate finance in the past three years, and has set a target for 30% of all new commitments in 2021 to be to climate finance. CDC does not set sector specific investment targets for its future investments. Specific pipeline information is not disclosed as this is commercially sensitive.

## ■ Palestinians: Housing

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[180577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support Palestinians forcibly transferred from their homes.

**James Cleverly:**

We regularly make clear our concerns about the evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity.

The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February 2021. I raised the issue of evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October 2020, and the British Embassy in Tel Aviv raises this issue regularly with the Israeli authorities. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities.

## ■ Papua New Guinea: EU External Relations

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[174833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with EU representatives to increase support for Papua New Guinea and other resource-constrained nations.

**James Duddridge:**

As set out in the Integrated Review the UK is deepening its engagement in the Indo-Pacific, establishing a more integrated and more persistent cross-Government presence than any other European country. We are already helping Papua New Guinea to develop capacity to build a better future for all, especially in the areas of health, climate change and trade. The UK Fleming Fund (£8m), for example, is assisting Papua New Guinea to tackle drug resistant diseases (anti-microbial resistance) and we have provided support worth approximately £900,000 to help the country to tackle COVID-19.

UK assistance for Papua New Guinea and other resource-constrained nations is primarily delivered through multilateral organisations. For example, according to OECD data we provided an estimated £33.1m in support to Papua New Guinea in 2018 through core contributions to multilaterals, including the World Bank's International Development Association, the EU, UN agencies and the Global Fund.

We will continue to use the full range of development, diplomatic and other tools available to support Papua New Guinea. This includes working with the EU delegation and other international partners in Port Moresby including Australia, France, Japan, New Zealand and the USA.

## ■ St Vincent and the Grenadines: Volcanoes

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[180481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to UK nationals in St Vincent that have been affected by recent eruptions of the La Soufrière volcano.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are monitoring the situation in St Vincent and the Grenadines closely and our thoughts are with those affected by the eruptions. This is a distressing time for British Nationals there and we have provided support to those who have contacted us. We have supported 7 British Nationals who took up an offer of a transfer from St Vincent

to St Maarten on a Royal Caribbean ship which left St Vincent on 16 April and arrived in St Maarten on 17 April. To meet the ship, and assist these British Nationals on arrival in St Maarten, a 5 person UK Rapid Deployment Team arrived on St Maarten in the afternoon of 16 April. We encourage British Nationals to consult our Travel Advice. Those in need of assistance should contact Consular officials at the British High Commission in Bridgetown.

**Lisa Nandy:**

**[180482]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help facilitate the evacuation of UK nationals from St Vincent following the La Soufrière volcano eruption.

**Nigel Adams:**

There are a small number of British nationals currently in St Vincent and the Grenadines. We supported 7 British Nationals who took up the offer of a transfer from St Vincent to St Maarten on a Royal Caribbean ship. To meet the ship and assist these British Nationals on arrival in St Maarten on 17 April a UK Rapid Deployment Team travelled to St Maarten on 16 April. British Nationals in the area should continue to follow the advice of local authorities and are encouraged to contact the FCDO if they need consular assistance. British Nationals can contact the FCDO via phone and should sign up online for updates on FCDO Travel Advice for St Vincent and the Grenadines and for Barbados. Those in need of assistance can also contact Consular officials at the British High Commission in Bridgetown.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

**[R] [180939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the UK is providing to St Vincent since the recent volcanic eruption on that island.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are monitoring the situation in St Vincent and the Grenadines closely and our thoughts are with those affected by the eruptions. An estimated 16-20,000 people are directly affected, with just over 4,000 currently in shelters. Infrastructure and agriculture have also been badly hit and ash fall is significant and causing problems with the movement of people, as well as impacting electricity and water supplies.

To address immediate needs, on 12 April we pledged an initial £200,000 to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to help address the humanitarian impact of the eruptions. This will be used for emergency supplies and other requirements. Urgently needed technical experts will support relief efforts on the ground, support emergency telecommunications, and restore critical lifeline facilities. We have provided technical advice from the UK Government Office of Science (GO Science) and the British Geological Survey on how to deal with the significant ash fall (including on its impact on livestock). Finally the UK is also a contributor to the International Federation of the Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) which has allocated funding of some £209,000 to the St Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross response.



We will continue to work with CDEMA and other appropriate agencies to provide further support.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

**[180940]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of (a) writing off and (b) postponing debt repayments from St Vincent to the UK due to the effect of the recent volcanic eruptions on that island.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK will suspend the debt repayment due in June from St Vincent and the Grenadines under the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which allows the poorest and most vulnerable countries to suspend debt repayments to their official bilateral creditors. The Chancellor and G20 Finance Ministers recently agreed a further, final, extension to the DSSI which will allow the suspension of all other debt repayments due from St Vincent and the Grenadines to the UK this year.

To address immediate needs, on 12 April we pledged an initial £200,000 to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to help address the humanitarian impact of the eruptions. This will be used for emergency supplies and other requirements. Urgently needed technical experts will support relief efforts on the ground, support emergency telecommunications, and restore critical lifeline facilities

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

**[181153]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) financial, (b) logistical and (c) military support the Government is providing to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in response to the recent volcanic eruptions in that nation.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are monitoring the situation in St Vincent and the Grenadines closely and our thoughts are with those affected by the eruptions. Infrastructure and agriculture have been badly hit and ash fall is significant and causing problems with the movement of people, as well as impacting electricity and water supplies.

- To address immediate needs, on 12 April we pledged an initial £200,000 to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to help address the humanitarian impact of the eruptions. This will be used for emergency supplies and other requirements. The UK is also a contributor to the International Federation of the Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) which has allocated funding of some £209,000 to the St Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross response.
- Prior to the latest explosive eruptions we had deployed a volcanologist to the islands to monitor La Soufrière during its earlier effusive eruption. In addition the UK provided £51,000 to pay for aerial helicopter surveillance and equipment installations to help analyse changes in the volcano and boost early warning to allow for a timely evacuation. Our support to CDEMA will also allow urgently

needed technical experts to support relief efforts on the ground, support emergency telecommunications, and restore critical lifeline facilities. In addition, we have provided technical advice from the UK Government Office of Science (GO Science) and the British Geological Survey on how to deal with the significant ash fall (including on its impact on livestock).

- The Ministry of Defence have not yet received any requests to provide military assistance.

We will continue to work with CDEMA and other appropriate agencies to provide further support.

### ■ **Switzerland: Clothing**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[180565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last held formal discussions with his Swiss counterpart; and whether he raised the vote in Switzerland on 7 March 2021 to ban face coverings in public in those discussions.

**Wendy Morton:**

We note the outcome of the vote in Switzerland on 7 March in a referendum to ban face coverings in public. Ministers regularly speak to their Swiss counterparts on a broad range of issues. We know that human rights protection in Switzerland is strong, and that its domestic legal and administrative systems are fully capable of dealing with any human rights-related issues on this or any other matter, should they arise.

### ■ **Terrorism: British Nationality**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[175700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many British citizens have been taken hostage by terrorist organisations in each of the last 10 years.

**James Cleverly:**

The FCDO does not share information on individual hostage cases. The safety of British nationals overseas is a priority for the Government.

### ■ **Tigray: Armed Conflict**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[181068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

As we have made clear in Ministerial engagements with Eritrea and the international community, Eritrea's role in the Ethiopian conflict is particularly concerning. There are numerous reports of atrocities involving Eritrean forces, and the presence of Eritrean

forces is fuelling insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately, in line with the commitment made by Prime Minister Abiy in his announcement on 26 March. We are closely monitoring the situation and are clear that their withdrawal must be swift, unconditional and verifiable. We have yet to see any evidence that Eritrean forces are leaving Tigray.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[181070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the use of rape as a weapon of war in Tigray.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK is appalled by reports of gender-based violence that includes widespread rape in the Tigray region. The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a statement on 2 April condemning human rights violations and abuses and sexual and gender based violence. The UK also condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and acts of sexual violence via a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council. We support the UN's call for a "zero tolerance" policy for such crimes and we continue to call for independent, international investigations into allegations of human right abuses.

British Embassy staff conducted a specific protection mission in Shire in Tigray on 4-7 April. It included the assessment of the current Gender-Based Violence response, specific emergency services provided in camps and the remaining gaps. They interviewed staff and volunteers supporting survivors of sexual violence to identify essential activities required to address the immediate needs of the survivors as well as the accountability needs.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[181071]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department is having with its Ethiopian counterparts on finding a political resolution to the conflict in Tigray.

**James Duddridge:**

Since the conflict started, the UK has consistently called for an end to fighting, and for all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians. We have, and will continue to advocate that a political process is essential to bring a full end to fighting and a sustainable settlement for Tigray. The Foreign Secretary raised these points when he met with Prime Minister Abiy on 22 January and pressed for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray. He also discussed the importance of credible elections in maintaining peace and stability. Ensuring security, freedom of the media and allowing political parties to organise and campaign are critical to credible elections. I [Minister Duddridge] also pressed for political dialogue to end the conflict when I [Minister Duddridge] spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK on 24 February. I [Minister Duddridge] have also spoken with partners in the region and Gulf partners on this issue.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[181073]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) arms exports from the UK are not used for attacks on civilian settlements in Tigray and (b) people responsible for human rights abuses are held to account.

**James Duddridge:**

We are deeply concerned at the mounting evidence of human rights abuses and violations in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Since the conflict started, the UK alongside international partners, have consistently called for an end to fighting, and for all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians. We will hold Prime Minister Abiy to his statement on 23 March that the perpetrators of human rights atrocities should face justice - whoever they are. Further atrocities including sexual and gender-based violence must stop and an independent investigation of those that have occurred must take place. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights' planned investigations.

In a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), we condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians. Eritrea's role in the conflict is particularly concerning; there are numerous reports of atrocities involving Eritrean forces, and the presence of Eritrean forces is fuelling insecurity. We welcome the announcement, on 26 March by Prime Minister Abiy that Eritrean forces will withdraw and call for this to be swift, unconditional and verifiable. We have yet to see any evidence that Eritrean forces are leaving Tigray.

The UK Government takes its export control responsibilities seriously and continues to monitor developments in Ethiopia very closely. We examine every licence application on a case-by-case basis against strict criteria, drawing on a range of sources in making assessments, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations in addition to our diplomatic posts. All licences are kept under careful and continual review.

■ **Tigray: Internet**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[181074]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage his Ethiopian counterpart to restore internet access in the Tigray region of that nation.

**James Duddridge:**

The humanitarian situation in Tigray is concerning, with 4.5 million people in desperate need. Both publicly and in our engagements with our Ethiopian counterparts, the Foreign Secretary and I [Minister Duddridge] have consistently called for greater humanitarian access, as has the UK Ambassador in Addis Ababa. The lack of telephone and internet services is yet another challenge for humanitarian efforts and it should be restored. We also need to see improvements to security for

humanitarian workers, the restoration of communications and banking services in Tigray, and the departure of Eritrean troops in line with PM Abiy's commitment of 26 March.

■ **Turkey: Council of Europe Convention On Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence**

**Feryal Clark:** [\[180633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 173113 on Turkey: Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, whether the UK Government plans to take further steps to urge Turkey to (a) reconsider its decision to withdraw from and (b) commit to ratifying the Istanbul Convention on Women's Rights.

**Wendy Morton:**

In addition to the actions set out in my answer to PQ 173113, I also raised our concerns with the Turkish Ambassador on 30 March. We will continue to engage with Turkey on this important issue and to encourage Turkey to reconsider its decision. I reiterate that the UK is committed to ending violence against women and girls and also remains committed to ratifying the Convention.

■ **Voluntary Service Overseas**

**Lisa Nandy:** [\[180483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 13 April 2021 to Question 174111, on Voluntary Service Overseas: Finance, what the value is of the short-term funding extension for the Volunteering for Development programme offered to VSO; and when that extension is due to come to an end.

**Wendy Morton:**

We have agreed an extension, from 31 March to 31 May 2021, with Voluntary Service Overseas for the Volunteering for Development Grant. This provides short term support whilst funding decisions are being made.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Rehabilitation**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[151651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to statistics on alcohol and drug treatment in secure settings 2019 to 2020, published on 28 January 2021, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the decrease since 2015-16 in the number of adults in secure settings (a) starting substance misuse treatment and (b) in substance misuse treatment.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[151653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to statistics on alcohol and drug treatment in secure settings 2019 to 2020, published on 28 January 2021, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the (a) fall in the proportion of young people in treatment in secure settings reporting problems with NPS since 2015-16 and (b) increase in the proportion of young people in treatment in secure settings reporting problems with opiates since 2015-16.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

No such assessment has been made.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are responsible for the commissioning of substance misuse services within secure and detained settings. In addition to structured treatment, unstructured treatment is also provided which can include harm reduction advice, brief interventions, mutual aid groups and signposting and information. This is not reported in National Drug Treatment Monitoring System data.

#### ■ **Cannabis: Medical Treatments**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[181076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that medicinal cannabis is made available on the NHS as swiftly as possible.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 April 2021]:* In November 2018, the law changed to allow doctors on the General Medical Council's Specialist Register to prescribe cannabis-based product for medicinal use (CBPMs). Since then, two CBPMs - Sativex and Epidyolex have been made available for prescribing on the National Health Service, where clinically appropriate. This follows clear demonstrated evidence of their safety and clinical and cost effectiveness.

There remain concerns over the clinical and cost effectiveness of unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use. To help further the evidence base, significant progress has been made to support two randomised controlled trials into early onset and genetic generalised epilepsy and to establish a national patient registry. We are also considering what further action the Government might take to widen access to unlicensed cannabis-based products.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Hospitality Industry**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[130250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits and (b) implications of permitting Christmas household bubbles to attend hospitality settings in areas with Tier 2 covid-19 restrictions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Government is committed to publishing data that has informed its decision making, including the tiers framework and allocations.

We have also published supporting information to accompany the laying of the most recent regulations are laid before Parliament on 30 November, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-economic-and-social-effects-of-covid-19-and-the-tiered-approach> Epidemiological data and projection models on local restriction tiers, including commentary on individual tier allocation decisions, is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938964/Coronavirus\\_England\\_briefing\\_26\\_November.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938964/Coronavirus_England_briefing_26_November.pdf).

This provides further information and context beyond the headline metrics as to why areas are in particular tiers currently.

## ■ Coronavirus: Screening

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[160829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) machines and (b) tests have been purchased through the Government's contract with Optigene to date; and how many tests have been carried out using those machines.

**Helen Whately:**

A total of 600 machines and 39 million tests have been purchased through the contract with Optigene. As of 26 March 2021, 276,941 tests have been carried out using these machines.

**Hilary Benn:** [\[174727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to reduce the cost of covid-19 home test kits for travellers entering the UK.

**Helen Whately:**

For those in quarantining at home, the testing package of two COVID-19 tests is £210 if purchased from NHS Test and Trace. We recently introduced private sector testing of travellers to offer a wider choice of providers for those who need to purchase private tests. The prices and service offered by these approved providers may vary. These costs will be kept under constant review.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:** [\[178985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has secured the supply of rapid lateral flow tests necessary to meet projected demand.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 15 April 2021]:* NHS Test and Trace forecasts and monitors demand for testing on a weekly basis. The volume of rapid tests required to meet the anticipated demand was extensively modelled and sufficient supply and fulfilment capacity established.



**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[178986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of introducing less invasive lateral flow covid-19 tests for individuals seeking to take regular tests.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 15 April 2021]:* Test and Trace are aware that some existing methods can be uncomfortable for some user groups and will negatively affect test uptake and engagement. To address this, we are currently working with suppliers to provide lateral flow tests which use alternate methods of sample collection.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[179196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 mobile testing units are operating in England.

**Helen Whately:**

There are 328 mobile testing units operating throughout England, while a further 60 are kept as strategic reserves. The strategic reserve fleet of vehicles are used across the United Kingdom to support in outbreaks.

**Darren Jones:**

[\[179371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure equal access to covid-19 rapid testing for (a) people who are visually impaired and (b) other people who are unable to administer the tests themselves.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS Test and Trace has worked with a number of charities, including RNIB, the Macular Society, Thomas Pocklington Trust and Visionary.

NHS Test and Trace has undertaken trials with RNIB and volunteers with differing levels of vision quality. New tools are being introduced for those ordering home test kits who are visually impaired, including improved boxes which are easier to assemble for the returning of tests; instructions in braille, audio and large print; and an RNIB information line hear a recorded version of the instructions.

On 1 April, we launched the 'Be My Eyes' app which offers live video assistance from trained NHS Test and Trace staff. To support those who are unable to administer a test themselves, there are now more than 50 static regional test sites across the United Kingdom which offer assisted testing.

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[131486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccine doses purchased by the Government have (a) exceeded their recommended shelf life and (b) been spoiled.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 11 January 2021]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

All vaccination sites are maximising the use of all vaccines and preventing wastage, mitigating the possibility of doses exceeding their recommended shelf life or being spoiled.

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[140770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the prioritisation of people with learning disabilities for vaccination against covid-19 and (b) stakeholders expert in the care of support of people with learning disabilities on how best to communicate information about vaccination for covid19; and if he will make a statement.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level.

While the JCVI's clinical view remains that those at greatest risk are people with severe and profound learning disabilities, the Committee supports the practical operational approach of inviting everyone on the general practice Learning Disability Register to be vaccinated as part of cohort six in phase one. Adults with Down's syndrome are considered clinically extremely vulnerable and are included in priority group four. Individuals with severe and profound learning disability are in priority group six.

The Department engages regularly with stakeholders on the care and support of people with learning disabilities. NHS England and NHS Improvement's learning disability and autism programme has worked collaboratively across the National Health Service and other partners to support the delivery of reasonable adjustments in the vaccination programme and help people with learning disabilities and their carers familiarise themselves with the vaccine process. This has included producing a range of easy-read leaflets, a COVID-19 vaccine film and training materials for vaccinators and volunteers.

**John Redwood:**

[\[142747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current ratio is of AstraZeneca to Pfizer vaccines being administered in the UK.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

This information is not currently available.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[151776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to remove barriers to people with a learning disability accessing the covid-19 vaccination.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 22 February 2021]:* NHS England and NHS Improvement have published easy-read documentation that can be accessed by people with learning disabilities and their carers to help people with learning disabilities get familiarised

with the vaccine process. NHS England and NHS Improvement's learning disability and autism programme has also worked collaboratively across the National Health Service and other partners to support the delivery of reasonable adjustments in the vaccination programme.

Clinicians have been encouraged to use a range of resources to help improve the accessibility of vaccination appointments, including a COVID-19 vaccine film, an easy read vaccination leaflet and easy read adult consent form. NHS England has also created training materials for COVID-19 vaccinators and volunteers which provide tips for communicating with people with a learning disability or autism and outline reasonable adjustments.

**Sarah Owen:**

**[151870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) NHS England on prioritisation of workers at managed quarantine facilities for the covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 22 February 2021]:* To date, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not held discussions with Cabinet colleagues or NHS England and NHS Improvement about prioritising workers at managed quarantine facilities for vaccination.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI identified that the vaccination of frontline healthcare workers should be a priority for the COVID-19 vaccination programme during phase one because these staff are at high risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection and also of transmitting that infection to multiple persons who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as to other staff in a healthcare environment.

For phase two of the vaccination programme, the JCVI published its final advice on 13 April, setting out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, rather than by occupation. This is because age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations, and because the speed of delivery is crucial as we provide more people with protection from COVID-19. The Government is on track to offer all adults eligible in phase one and phase two their first dose of authorised vaccines by the end of July. Therefore, workers at managed quarantine facilities who are eligible for a vaccine, because of their age or other clinical factors, such as underlying health conditions, will have access to a vaccine by the end of July.

**Rosie Cooper:**

**[153169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how young people aged 16-18 in priority groups 4 or 6 are being supported to take-up the covid-19 vaccine; and what proportion of young people in those groups have been offered the vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 22 February 2021]:* The Government is committed to supporting all those offered the COVID-19 vaccine to take up this offer. Phase one of the vaccination programme includes those considered clinically extremely vulnerable in priority group four and those have underlying conditions which increase their risks from COVID-19 in priority group six. Both groups include all those who meet the clinical criteria and who are aged 16 years old and over.

The vaccine offer was communicated directly to all those in priority groups four and six by the National Health Service. Communications for those aged 18 years old or over are directly to the individual. For those aged 16-17 years old the communication is made by agreement by either with the individual or their parents or carers. General practitioners and other clinicians involved in a young person care are available to discuss any concerns they or their parents or carers may have.

Data is not held centrally on the number of people in priority groups four and six who have been offered the vaccine. Data is held on the number of people who have been vaccinated from these groups but is not held in the format requested.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[155154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of vaccine recipients have (a) stated an ethnicity on their vaccination form, (b) explicitly refused to do so and (c) have not responded.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently publishing weekly vaccinations by ethnicity. This includes a 'Not stated/Unknown' category. We do not collect data on those who refuse to state their ethnicity.

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[160696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will enable (a) the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE), (b) local authorities and (c) GPs to recommend people with complex disabilities and their family carers to the covid-19 vaccine prioritisation list.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

There are no plans to do so.

Based on current evidence, complex disabilities are not considered by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to mean an automatically increased risk for serious outcomes from COVID-19. However, many people with complex disabilities will have other conditions which mean they do meet the criteria for either priority group four for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or priority group six for those who have underlying conditions which create a heightened risk. Anyone in either of those groups or who are aged 50 years old or over have now been offered vaccination.

Adult carers, defined as those aged 16 years old or over, are being prioritised for vaccination alongside priority group six. This includes unpaid and family carers.

Criteria include eligibility for a carer's allowance, being the sole or primary carer for an elderly person or person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[178583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on the prioritisation of covid-19 vaccines of the Joint Statement on prioritisation of COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers and aircrew by the International Civil Aviation Organization, International Labour Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Organization for Migration and World Health Organization, published on 25 March 2021, that calls on Governments to prioritise seafarers and aircrew in their national covid-19 vaccination programmes.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Phase two of the vaccination programme will cover all adults under 50 years old not already included in phase one. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has concluded that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, as this is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations and because the speed of delivery is crucial to provide more people with protection from COVID-19. Seafarers and aircrew, in line with the JCVI's advice, will therefore be prioritised for vaccination according to their age and clinical risk along with the rest of the population. They will not be prioritised based on their occupation.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[178595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to guarantee that people without NHS numbers have access to a covid-19 vaccination.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

A National Health Service number is not a pre-requisite to be offered the vaccine. The provision of the COVID-19 vaccine is a primary medical service and will be offered to all individuals living in the United Kingdom. If individuals are registered with a general practitioner (GP), their practice will contact them in due course. If they are not registered with a GP, NHS regional teams, working with various appropriate local systems, will contact unregistered people to ensure they are offered the vaccine.

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[178706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the long-term effectiveness of covid-19 vaccination.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Public Health England is monitoring the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines and has published early evidence on both the Pfizer/BioNTech and University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines. This evidence suggests that a single dose of either vaccine is approximately 60 to 70% effective at preventing symptomatic disease in older adults and around 80% effective at preventing hospitalisations. There is also

evidence that a single dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is around 85% effective at preventing deaths.

As the COVID-19 vaccination programme continues in younger age groups, vaccine effectiveness estimates in these age groups will be published in due course. Vaccine effectiveness will continue to be monitored long-term in order to understand the need for booster doses.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[178873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who are not registered to a GP surgery and receive private medical treatment are able to receive a covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Private patients are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Any patient with a National Health Service number can book a vaccination appointment through the National Booking Service, when they become eligible. Any patient without an NHS number, including private patients, can register with a NHS general practitioner (GP) if they choose. However, not having an NHS number and not being registered with a GP should not be a barrier to vaccination. The terms under which NHS GPs are commissioned to deliver COVID-19 vaccination services enable practices to vaccinate unregistered patients. Private practices can also contact their local clinical commissioning group, who should identify local providers able to vaccinate their patients.

**Janet Daby:**

[\[179540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise police officers for the covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has concluded that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, as this is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations and the speed of delivery is crucial to provide more people with protection from COVID-19. Police officers, in line with the JCVI's advice, will therefore be prioritised for vaccination according to their age and clinical risk along with the rest of the population. They will not be prioritised based on their occupation.

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[179721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the efficacy of the (a) Pfizer and (b) Moderna vaccine after 12 weeks; and if he will publish those assessments.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

There is no data on the efficacy of the Moderna or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine 12 weeks after the first dose. Given the high effectiveness and durability of responses to the

first dose seen in United Kingdom data, it is not expected that protection will reduce rapidly after 12 weeks.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Wakefield**

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

**[175011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 169989, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase covid-19 vaccine uptake in Wakefield constituency.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

NHS Wakefield Clinical Commissioning Group and Wakefield Council have recently prepared a local vaccination engagement and patient experience update for the general public.

This includes commissioning voluntary and community organisations to further engage with communities and making sure messages and vaccinations are accessible to all.

A roving vaccination team has been developed to access local venues such as homeless/asylum seeker accommodation, Gypsy and Traveller sites and mosques to deliver vaccinations, including single gender sessions particularly suitable for Muslims. Outreach work continues, including planned engagement with Eastern European communities.

### ■ **Dental Services**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

**[179343]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of NHS dental patients who have had to secure (a) services and (b) treatments from private providers because it was unavailable from their NHS provider in the most recent period for which figures are available.

**Jo Churchill:**

We have made no such estimate as data is not collected on private dental provision.

In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a National Health Service dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance.

### ■ **Dental Services: Waiting Lists**

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[180480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce dental appointment waiting lists created by cancellations and postponements due to the covid-19 outbreak; what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of waiting lists for NHS dental appointments on the cost of treatment where practices offer private appointments at higher rates.



**Jo Churchill:**

National Health Service dentists have been asked to maximise safe care, focussing on urgent care and vulnerable groups followed by overdue appointments. This has been underpinned by the setting of activity thresholds for full payment of NHS contractual value. In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement have provided a flexible commissioning toolkit to local commissioners to help focus the available capacity on those that need it most and to reduce oral health inequalities.

**Dentistry: Coronavirus****Judith Cummins:**[\[129024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for (a) public health and (b) patients' ability to access dental services of prioritising (i) dentists and (ii) other staff providing dental services for vaccination against covid-19.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommended that frontline healthcare staff including dentists and other staff providing dental services be vaccinated in priority group two. This advice was based on their increased personal risk of exposure to infection with COVID-19 and of transmitting that infection to vulnerable patients.

Vaccinating dental staff also protects public health and enables access to services for patients. Staff were invited for their first vaccine dose before 15 February 2021 and will be offered their second dose within 12 weeks of their first.

**Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions****Stella Creasy:**[\[175843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the written answers he provided to the Hon Member for Walthamstow in the past 12 months were written by consultants as opposed to civil servants; and which Minister approved those answers.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 13 April 2021]:* All written answers provided to the hon. Member in the past twelve months were written by civil servants. Answers are approved by the Minister responding.

**Diagnosis****Lee Rowley:**[\[178686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of whether pink sputum should be part of the critical illness assessment in the NHS pathway review.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Pathways includes specific questions designed to determine if any blood has been coughed up by a patient. These questions are continually reviewed in order to enhance and refine the product. The NHS Pathways team is currently reviewing whether asking a caller about 'pink frothy sputum (or phlegm)' in the relevant symptomatic pathways is required in the context of the wider critical illness assessment.

■ **Dysphagia****Jim Shannon:**[\[170641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with dysphagia in each of the last three years.

**Helen Whately:**

The data is not collected in the format requested.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes****Mary Glendon:**[\[179115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to challenge misinformation preventing long-term smokers from making the switch to less harmful alternatives as part of Vaping Awareness Month in April 2021.

**Mary Glendon:**[\[179118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of e-cigarettes in helping adult smokers switch to less harmful alternatives; and if his Department will promote campaigns to encourage long-term smokers to switch to vaping.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department encourages all smokers to quit or move to less harmful products, such as e-cigarettes, if they are unable to quit. In England, an estimated 2.5 million people use e-cigarettes, the majority of whom no longer smoke. In addition, around 50,000 people a year quit smoking through switching to e-cigarettes, who would not have quit through other means.

The Better Health mass media smoking cessation campaign, delivered by Public Health England and as part of a package of tobacco control measures, has been effective at helping challenge misinformation surrounding e-cigarettes. Alongside this, local stop smoking services advise smokers of the benefits of switching to less harmful products, with some offering free vaping starter kits.

■ **Epilepsy: Mental Health Services****Emma Hardy:**[\[173155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure children with epilepsy have mental health support integrated into their care.

**Helen Whately:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith MP) on 16 March 2021 to Question [161800](#).

■ **Exercise****Stuart Anderson:**[\[178565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Public Health England's, Health Matters: Prevention - A Life Course Approach, published in May 2019, what steps his Department is taking to promote regular (a) physical and (b) mental exercise.

**Jo Churchill:**

In summer 2020, Public Health England launched the 'Better Health' programme with a high-profile television, radio and digital campaign to support the nation to take simple steps to look after their physical and mental health. The Better Health programme directs people to evidence-based apps and tools to support them make and sustain changes to improve their health. This includes the NHS 12-week Weight Loss app, Couch to 5K, Mind Plan and Active 10.

In 2019, the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers issued guidelines on the amount and type of physical activity we should aim to do at each stage of our lives. The guidelines reinforce the importance of muscle strength and cardiovascular activities across all age groups for better physical as well as mental health and wellbeing.

■ **General Practitioners: Waiting Lists****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[180522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on average waiting times for GP appointments in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Jo Churchill:**

No such assessment has been made. Data on waiting times in general practice is not collected.

■ **Gum Diseases****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[179344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of treatments for severe periodontitis, including x-rays and other auxiliary support on the NHS.

**Jo Churchill:**

No assessment has been made. National Health Service dental practices are expected to deliver the full range of clinically necessary dental care during the pandemic, including treatments for periodontitis.

## ■ Health and Care Professions Council: Fees and Charges

**Dan Carden:**

[\[179424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on staffing levels of the changes to the registration fees for the Health and Care Professions Council from July 2021.

**Helen Whately:**

No such assessment has been made.

## ■ Healthy Start Scheme

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[179026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason data on the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers is no longer publicly available; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making that data available online prior to the value of that scheme increasing in April 2021 so that local teams may assess their progress in promoting that scheme and increasing uptake.

**Jo Churchill:**

The NHS Business Services Authority launched a new Healthy Start website on 18 March 2021 in compliance with current accessibility standards and regulations. The previous uptake reports could not be made compliant with these accessibility standards and have been temporarily removed from the new website. The NHS Business Services Authority is prioritising work to re-publish the uptake data on the Healthy Start website.

## ■ Hearing Impairment: Coronavirus

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[178598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have suffered from hearing loss or tinnitus as a result of being infected with covid-19.

**Helen Whately:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

## ■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[162575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 141964 on Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis, if he will take steps to collect and hold centrally information on the cost to the NHS of late diagnosis of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis as a result of covid-19 related delays over the last 12 months.

**Helen Whately:**

There are no current plans to do so.

**■ Irritable Bowel Syndrome****Jim Shannon:**[\[170638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome in each of the last three years.

**Helen Whately:**

The data is not collected in the format requested.

**■ Joint Biosecurity Centre****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[178716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Joint Biosecurity Centre will be subject to oversight by the Intelligence and Security Committee.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) is not subject to oversight by the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC). The Justice and Security Act 2013 states that the ISC has the remit to oversee 'the work of the Agencies and of those parts of Departments whose work is directly concerned with intelligence and security matters'. The JBC's purpose is to collate data science, assessment and public health expertise and provide analysis and insight on the status of the COVID-19 epidemic in the United Kingdom.

**■ Local Government: Elections****Cat Smith:**[\[178696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which age groups will have received a covid-19 vaccination ahead of the elections on 6 May 2021.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Phase two of the vaccination programme, which will cover those aged 18 to 49 years old not already included in phase one, commenced on 13 April with the vaccine being offered first to those aged 45 to 49 years old. It is not possible to say how many of the remaining age cohorts will have been offered a first dose vaccination by 6 May as operational factors influence decisions on the exact date when each cohort is opened. However, the programme is on track to offer a first dose of the vaccine to all those aged 18 years old or over in England by 31 July.

**■ Medical Records: Disclosure of Information****Mr Steve Baker:**[\[R\] \[153231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people's health data can be shared with non-health authorities without consent during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 22 February 2021]:* Data law provides a number of gateways that enable sharing of personal data, including personal health data, with a range of

organisations without the individual's consent. These include where sharing is legally required or where it is in the public interest.

We have used existing powers to publish Control of Patient Information (COPI) notices to require organisations working for the health service, local authorities and the Department's arm's length bodies to share data to support the response to COVID-19. An individual's confidential patient information can only be shared under the COPI notices where it is allowed under data protection legislation such as the Data Protection Act and United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulations. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 also enable the disclosure of confidential patient information to a non-health authority during the management of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## ■ Medical Treatments: Innovation

**Liz Twist:**

[\[179363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients with (a) severe asthma and (b) other conditions that place them at higher risk from covid-19 are able to access new medicines; and whether his Department has plans to prioritise appraisals for those medicines for review.

**Jo Churchill:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for providing evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service in England on whether medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. Wherever possible, NICE aims to publish final guidance for new medicines, including those used to treat patients with severe asthma and other high risk conditions, within 90 days of licensing. NHS commissioners are legally required to make funding available for treatments recommended by NICE, normally within three months of the publication of NICE's final guidance.

## ■ Migrants: Coronavirus

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[178597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure access to covid-19 vaccination for people on temporary visas.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Anyone living in the United Kingdom, including those on temporary visas, can receive the vaccine free of charge in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's prioritisation groups.

If individuals are registered with a general practitioner (GP), their GP will contact them in due course. If they are not registered with a GP, the GP COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21 Enhanced Service Specification enables practices working within their Primary Care Network groupings from shared vaccination sites to vaccinate unregistered patients provided they are eligible.

**■ NHS: Conditions of Employment****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[178804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the same working conditions for NHS workers and primary care providers contracted by the NHS.

**Jo Churchill:**

As self-employed contractors to the National Health Service to provide primary medical services, it is largely for general practitioner (GP) practices how they distribute pay and benefits to their staff. General practice contractual arrangements do not place any specific obligations on GP practices regarding their employees' terms and conditions and employers have the flexibility to set these for their staff, for example to aid recruitment and retention.

In January 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the General Practitioners Committee England confirmed they are committed to reviewing and agreeing changes to the terms and conditions of practice staff within existing resources, through development of good practice guidance on employment terms and conditions.

Community pharmacies and high-street dental surgeries are private businesses that provide NHS services. Therefore, it is for employers in these sectors to determine staff salaries.

Terms and conditions for NHS staff on national contracts are agreed in partnership with the NHS trade unions.

**■ Smoking: Diseases****Mary Glendon:**[\[179114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of treating smoking-related illnesses in each of the past five years.

**Jo Churchill:**

We have made no such estimate.

However, we are committed to reducing smoking prevalence and the associated costs to the National Health Service. A new Tobacco Control Plan will be published later this year.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Asylum: Gibraltar****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[174743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on using Gibraltar to host a UK asylum processing centre.



**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[174744]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on using the Isle of Man to host a UK asylum processing centre.

**Chris Philp:**

We must consider every possible option to prevent people from putting their lives at risk to make perilous journeys – deterring abuse of the asylum system and criminality associated with it. As part of that work, we have looked at what a whole host of other countries do in order to inform a plan for the UK.

Specific discussions in respect of identifying a particular place for asylum processing would always be done in close partnership with that country jurisdiction.

## ■ **Asylum: Housing**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[175849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the risk of transmission of covid-19 as a result of moving families of asylum seekers under his Department's programme entitled Operation Oak.

**Kevin Foster:**

The movement of service users as part of Operation Oak will be undertaken in accordance with all relevant national or local health restrictions.

The Home Office has robust contingency plans in place and continues to follow national guidance issued by Public Health England (PHE), Health Protection Scotland and the National Health Service (NHS).

House moves are not prohibited under the PHE guidance and the avoidance of destitution is considered to be a critical service. The relevant PHE guidance can be found here:

[Government advice on home moving during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/advice/home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak)

## ■ **Au Pairs: Visas**

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[180624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing au pairs to travel to the UK under short term study visas.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Short-term Student (English Language) route is provided for the purpose of studying English at an accredited provider. The route is based on the principle a student's sole intention for making an application is to undertake an English language course at an accredited institution and this intention is considered by caseworkers during the application process.

Travelling to the UK to act as an Au Pair would not meet this requirement of the route, nor would it serve the policy purpose the route is provided for.

Short-term Students are not allowed to work in the UK, so permitting employment as an AU Pair under it would not be appropriate.

## ■ British Citizenship

**Simon Hoare:**

**[181065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) Great Britain have been (i) granted and (ii) refused renunciation of their British citizenship in each of the last 10 years.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office publishes UK data on renunciations of British Nationality in the [‘Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release’](#).

Data on grants and refusals for renunciations of British Nationality are published in table Cit\_05 of the [Citizenship summary tables, year ending December 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) dataset. The latest data relates to year ending December 2020.

The Home Office does not hold data on renunciations of British Nationality by location or country of residence, and so a breakdown of the data is not available for separate nations of the UK.

## ■ Catalytic Converters: Theft

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[175896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the number of catalytic converter thefts in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what steps her Department is taking with the (i) motor industry and (ii) police to reduce the number of those thefts in those areas.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Figures are not held on the number of catalytic converter thefts in England or by local area. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) collects data on incidents regarding theft from a vehicle, including details of the items stolen, such as car parts. From April 2019 to March 2020, an estimate of recorded household incidents from the CSEW shows that in 1.6% of incidents of theft from vehicles, a catalytic converter was stolen. The figures are published here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/adhocs/12496catalyticconvertersstoleninincidentsoftheftfromvehiclesyearendingmarch2015toyearendingmarch2020crimesurveyforenglandandwales>

We continue to work closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, established by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime and overseen by the Government's Crime and Justice

Taskforce, to understand what more can be done to tackle the theft of catalytic converters. The National Police Chiefs' Council hosted a problem-solving workshop in November to bring together representatives from the motor industry, policing and Government to discuss the theft of catalytic converters.

The Government has provided funding to set up the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership, ensuring national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle metal theft, including the theft of catalytic converters. Through this, the partnership has already provided training to police forces and started sharing intelligence to target offenders and implement crime prevention measures.

### ■ Criminal Records: HIV Infection

**Elliot Colburn:**

[\[176053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to support police forces to ensure HIV status is not recorded on the Police National Computer so that the confidentiality of medical information is ensured.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office continues to work with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) to ensure that the data on the Police National Computer (PNC) is necessary, proportionate and accurate, including medical status data. The Home Office has no plans for specific guidance or support to forces at present regarding HIV status beyond that already published in the PNC Manual.

### ■ Crossbows

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[180412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of criminal acts committed in the last five years in which crossbows have been used; what representations she has received over a similar period in favour of tighter restrictions being imposed on the sale and use of those weapons; and if she will make a statement.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office does not collect information on whether an offence recorded by the police involved a crossbow.

We periodically engage with the police to assess if they see crossbows as an emerging threat in crime. While tragic when they do occur, the misuse of crossbows is rare and the vast majority of those using crossbows, do so safely and responsibly. Misuse of these articles could be an offence, and legislation is already in place to deal with those who use crossbows as a weapon. We keep the legislation on bladed articles and offensive weapons, including crossbows, under review.

**Fraud: Internet**

**Karin Smyth:** [175912]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of online fraud during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Karin Smyth:** [175913]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources she plans to allocate to law enforcement agencies to ensure effective action against people perpetrating online fraud.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government is aware fraudsters are exploiting the pandemic to commit opportunistic crimes such as fraud. We are regularly monitoring the number of cases being reported to the police and these – at present- remain very low.

Despite a difficult fiscal backdrop, as part of the 2020 Spending Review, the Government committed a further £63m to the Home Office to tackle economic crime, including fraud. This is in addition to funding the Home Office commits each year to the National Crime Agency, National Economic Crime Centre and police forces, including the City of London Police as the national lead force for fraud and the operator of the Action Fraud and National Fraud Intelligence Bureau services.

Our efforts to tackle online scams have been ramping up, including working with the National Cyber Security Centre to establish a new Suspicious Email Reporting Service which was launched in April 2020. This service allows the public to report potential scams safely and effectively. As of 28 February 2021, the number of reports received stand at more than 5,000,000 with the removal of more than 36,000 scams and 71,000 URLs.

The best way to deal with these scams is for the public to be well-informed on how to protect themselves. We have launched a gov.uk page containing easy-to-follow steps for people to spot potential frauds and the steps they can take to avoid them. It also signposts advice and support to those who may unfortunately have fallen victim. This page can currently be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime>.

We continue to encourage anyone who has been a targeted by a scam to report it. Action Fraud is the central police reporting point for all victims of fraud and can be contacted by phone on 0300 123 2040 or through their website:

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>

**Frontier Workers**

**Stephen Farry:** [176121]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for Frontier Workers Permits her Department has (a) received and (b) issued.

**Stephen Farry:**

[176122]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Frontier Workers Permits have been issued to persons normally resident in the Republic of Ireland.

**Stephen Farry:**

[176123]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Frontier Worker Permits have been issued, by nationality.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office publishes data on Frontier Worker Permits in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on applications for Frontier Worker Permits are published in table Vis\_D01 of the [entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset. Data on the number of Frontier Worker Permits issued are included in table Vis\_D02. These data may be selected using the 'Frontier worker' visa type subgroup.

Data on Frontier Worker Permits issued by nationality can be found in table Vis\_D02.

Information on how to use the [entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to year ending December 2020.

The Home Office does not publish data on Frontier Worker Permits by country of residence, and so data is not available on Frontier Worker Permits issued to persons normally resident in the Republic of Ireland.

## ■ Home Office: Dudley North

**Marco Longhi:**

[176058]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to deliver civil service jobs in her Department to Dudley North constituency.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office employs Civil Servants across the UK and is already a major employer in many communities outside of London.

The Home Office intends to go beyond the conventional Government footprint and size to identify appropriate locations where we could locate future job opportunities. This will further enhance representation within the Home Office of the communities we serve and support economic growth across the UK.

Our long-term plans are being developed and we will share them in due course.

## ■ Islamic State

**Sir John Hayes:**

[175697]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government has taken to help tackle the threat of the Islamic State group internationally.

**Kevin Foster:**

As outlined in the Government's 2018 CONTEST (CT Strategy), We continue to use the full range of our diplomatic, development, economic, defence and intelligence networks to the address upstream threat and terrorist risk posed by Daesh to the UK homeland and our interests overseas.

I also refer the Rt Hon gentleman to the update provided to the House by the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on Thursday 4 March 2021 which outlines Her Majesty's Government's response to the threat posed by Daesh. [Counter-Daesh Update - Thursday 4 March 2021 - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

**■ Migrant Workers: Domestic Service****Jess Phillips:****[174858]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will take steps to tackle serious exploitation and abuse of migrant domestic workers by restoring the visa that was in place between 1998 to 2012 under which migrant domestic workers were workers in their own right and therefore able to (a) renew their visa and (b) change employer without restrictions.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government does not intend to reinstate the visa category for Domestic Workers in a Private Household, which closed to new arrivals in April 2012.

The Overseas Domestic Worker (ODW) visa provides for domestic workers in a private household to accompany their employer, where their employer is visiting the UK. The ODW visa is valid for a maximum of 6 months and ODWs are expected to leave the UK at the end of their stay, in line with the purpose of the route.

ODWs are permitted to change employer at any time, for any reason, during the validity of their visa. A dedicated process exists for victims of modern slavery who entered the UK as a domestic worker. In addition to support provided by the Single Competent Authority, via the National Referral Mechanism, migrant domestic worker victims of modern slavery can apply for permission to stay for up to two additional years.

**■ Modern Slavery Act 2015****Anthony Mangnall:****[176048]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to bring forward proposals to update the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government is committed to continuously strengthening our approach to modern slavery and building on the world-leading legislation introduced in 2015. In 2018, the Home Office commissioned an Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act to look at where the Act has worked well and where it could be more effective. The Government published a detailed response to the Review and accepted the majority

of the recommendations (see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-the-modern-slavery-act>).

As part of its response to the Independent Review, the Home Office conducted a public consultation on potential changes to the Modern Slavery Act's transparency legislation (section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act). As a result, the government committed to introducing an ambitious package of measures to strengthen and future-proof the legislation. In particular, the Government has committed to extending the reporting requirement to public bodies with a budget of £36 million or more; mandating the specific reporting topics that statements must cover; requiring statements to be published on the new Government-run registry for modern slavery statements; setting a single reporting deadline; and introducing financial penalties for organisations that fail to meet their obligations under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act. These measures require primary legislation and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

The Home Secretary announced a New Plan for Immigration on 24 March, which is available at the gov.uk website. This included a range of proposals on modern slavery. The New Plan for Immigration consultation is now open, after which the Government will look to introduce relevant legislation.

The proposals included a commitment to review the 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy. A revised strategy will allow us to build on the considerable progress we have made to date, adapt our approach to the evolving nature of these terrible crimes, and continue our international leadership in tackling modern slavery.

## ■ **Motor Vehicles: Insurance**

**Nicola Richards:**

**[179717]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the recent upsurge in catalytic converter thefts, if her Department will take steps to ensure that insurance companies do not impose higher excesses or premiums on future policies as a result of those crimes.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government recognises the negative impact these thefts cause to victims. That is why we continue to work closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, established by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime and overseen by the Government's Crime and Justice Taskforce, to understand what more can be done to tackle the theft of catalytic converters. Representatives from the insurance industry continue to collaborate with us through the Working Group and are aware of the challenges faced by vehicle owners.



**■ North Wales Police: Finance****Mark Tami:****[175722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 170550 on North Wales Police: Finance, if he will publish the same information for each year in the period 2008-09 to 2016-17.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The information requested is available online, on the Government website, at the link listed below. Here there are links to the Police Grant allocations for each year from 2010-11 and the Police Grant Report which is published annually and sets out details of Central Government to police forces in England and Wales. These reports contain information on funding to North Wales Police.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-finance>

Police funding prior to 2010-11 can be found on Parliament.uk at the following link.

[House of Commons Hansard Ministerial Statements for 06 Dec 2007 \(pt 0003\) \(parliament.uk\)](#)

It is important to note that it is difficult to make direct comparisons between current police funding figures and police funding in the years before 2015-16 due to a number of significant changes in the structure of police funding and the structure of policing over the period.

**■ Pets: Theft****Dr Luke Evans:****[176056]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of establishing a national (a) task force and (b) strategy to tackle pet theft.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Further to the reply I provided to my Hon. Friend's question on 22 March, I can assure him the Government is working with the police and others and will consider the evidence and what more could be done to prevent pet theft.

**■ Police: Training****Elliot Colburn:****[176052]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to support police forces to implement HIV awareness training to help reduce HIV related stigma and discrimination in the police; and if she will provide funding for that matter.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Individual police forces are responsible for setting standards and improving police training within the national Competence and Values Framework set by the College of Policing.

It is critical that the police have access to the most accurate and up to date information on HIV transmission, so that they can accurately assess any risks posed to their own safety in the course of their work and respond appropriately. This will also enable them to help reduce stigma and discrimination in the communities in which they work.

On the 4th February 2021, the Government published a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £636 million compared to 2020/21. Overall police funding available to PCCs will increase by up to £703 million (5.4% in cash terms) next year.

Decisions about the allocation of police resources are for Chief Constables and democratically accountable PCCs.

## ■ Proscribed Organisations: British Nationals Abroad

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[175698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many British citizens have left the UK to join a proscribed Islamic terrorist organisation in each of the last five years.

**Kevin Foster:**

We do not publish figures on the number of individuals who have left the UK to join proscribed terrorist groups for reasons of national security. Membership and support for a proscribed terrorist organisation is an offence under sections 11 and 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

Everyone who returns to the UK after engaging in terrorism-related activity overseas must expect to be investigated by the police and, where there is evidence that a crime has been committed, prosecuted.

## ■ Radicalism

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[175699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has considered commissioning a new review into the activities of (a) the Muslim Brotherhood and (b) extremist Islamist organisations in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government keeps under review the activities of those associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK in accordance with the five commitments included in the former Prime Minister's statement to Parliament.

The Government continues to assess the Muslim Brotherhood's activities when appropriate, this is to ensure our position is based on the latest information available. We will consider action against the review's commitments if and where legal thresholds are met.

We will not tolerate any individuals or groups who spread hate by demonising those of other faiths or ethnicities or who deliberately raise community fears and tensions by bringing disorder and violence to our towns and cities.

## ■ Slavery

**Anthony Mangnall:**

**[176047]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Preventing modern slavery and human trafficking - An agenda for action across the financial services sector, published on 18 January 2021, what steps the Government is taking to support businesses to undertake due diligence on modern slavery as part of their investment decisions.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The UK was the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery. The landmark provision in section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires businesses, with a turnover of £36m or more, to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The Government expects businesses to determine the most appropriate methods to assess and tackle modern slavery based on the nature of their operations and supply chains. We encourage businesses to be transparent about the instances or indicators of modern slavery and prioritise their due diligence activity based on risk, and on where they can have most impact. To support businesses in reporting on their modern slavery risks, the Government has produced guidance on the Transparency in Supply Chains legislation, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transparency-in-supply-chains-a-practical-guide>.

On 11 March 2021, the Home Office launched the Government-run registry for modern slavery statements. The new registry will enhance transparency by making modern slavery statements available in one place for the first time. It will provide greater visibility of the steps businesses are taking to prevent modern slavery in supply chains and will empower investors, consumers and civil society to scrutinise the action businesses are taking.

To improve the quality and detail of reporting and accelerate action to prevent modern slavery, the Government has committed to introduce a range of measures to strengthen the reporting requirements on businesses. These measures require legislative change and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows. Following legislative change, organisations in scope of the Act will be required to report against specific areas, including due diligence. The Government will publish updated guidance to support businesses in meeting the new reporting requirements, in line with the timing of these measures coming into force.

The UK Government also supports ShareAction's Workforce Disclosure Initiative (WDI), providing £200,000 of funding to support this in 2020/21. The initiative has mobilised investors with \$6.5 trillion of assets under management to call for transparency from multinational companies on how they manage workers.

## ■ Windrush Generation: Compensation

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[179274]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many claims to the Windrush Compensation Scheme from residents living in (a) Lewisham Deptford constituency, (b) London and (c) the UK have been fully settled.

**Priti Patel:**

The nationality and country of residence of applicants is published as part of the regular transparency data release which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-march-2021>.

We do not currently record data in a way which allows us to report on the location of applicants in the UK.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[179275]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what provision has been made in the Windrush Compensation Scheme for claimants who die before their claim under that scheme is fully settled.

**Priti Patel:**

Where individuals sadly pass away before their claim under the Windrush Compensation Scheme is fully determined and paid, the Home Office will work with their families to ensure compensation is still paid out.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[179276]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Windrush Compensation Scheme, what criteria her Department uses to determine the effect of the Windrush scandal on the lives of the claimants to that scheme.

**Priti Patel:**

The Windrush Compensation Scheme awards compensation in thirteen different categories covering a range of impacts to individuals' lives. Compensation claims are determined in accordance with the scheme rules, which are available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-full-rules>

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[179277]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of claims to the Windrush Compensation Scheme from residents living in (a) Lewisham Deptford constituency, (b) London and (c) the UK have been considered eligible for a preliminary payment under the terms of that scheme.

**Priti Patel:**

The nationality and country of residence of applicants is published as part of the regular transparency data release which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-march-2021>.

We do not currently record data in a way which allows us to report on the location of applicants in the UK.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [179278]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her October 2019 report to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the Windrush scandal, how many of the families of the 14 Commonwealth citizens who died after having been removed from the UK by her Department since 2002 have applied for compensation under the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

**Priti Patel:**

Representatives of the estate of affected individuals who have sadly passed away can claim compensation. Close family members of an eligible primary claimant, including in cases where the primary claimant has died, can also make a claim for compensation in their own right. Guidance and claim forms are available on GOV.UK.

The specific information requested on the number of Windrush Scheme overseas applicants who had passed away before the application process was completed is not included in statistical data published by the Home Office.

The Home Secretary provides updates to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the work of the department in connection with Windrush.

The updates can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/correspondence-on-the-work-of-the-home-office-windrush>.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**James Cartlidge:** [914321]

What steps he is taking to reform planning rules in England.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We are transforming the planning system, through recently announced changes and our proposals for ambitious long-term reforms.

Our White Paper, published in August 2020, proposed comprehensive reform of the planning system.

We have also published changes to calculating local housing need, to enable more homes to come forward where we need them most, and a National Model Design Code, which will drive up the quality of new development.

**Paul Blomfield:** [914322]

What recent steps his Department has taken to tackle regional inequality.

**Taiwo Owatemi:** [914330]

What recent steps his Department has taken to tackle regional inequality.

**Luke Hall:**

Government is tackling regional inequality through our commitment to level up all corners of the United Kingdom. Our actions include establishing the Levelling up Fund; the UK Community Renewal Fund; the Community Ownership Fund; creating Freeports whilst empowering our regions by devolving money, resources and control away from Westminster.

Alongside this, the Government has also committed over £35 billion to help councils support their communities and local businesses during the pandemic.

**Sarah Olney:**[\[914324\]](#)

When his Department plans to respond to the consultation on raising accessibility standards for new homes, which closed on 1 December 2020.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Evidence gathered will help government work out the best way to raise accessibility standards and we will respond the consultation – once we've had the time to give full consideration to the responses received.

However, most homes were built before standards were introduced; this is why the Disabled Facilities Grant is so important. By the end of this financial year, the Government will have invested over £4 billion through the Disabled Facilities Grant, funding home adaptations – including stair lifts, wet rooms and ramps - to almost 450,000 homes since 2010.

**■ Building Safety Fund: Housing Associations****Apsana Begum:**[\[176076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of delays to the timescales for the Building Safety Fund on the ability of housing associations to plan financially.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government does not expect there to be delays to the Building Safety Fund. All buildings, whether in the social or private sector, with an existing application to the Fund should be planning to start remediation work on site by September 2021. To ensure this critical safety work can commence at pace we offer expert construction consultation support to actively engage with those planning and undertaking remediation work under the Building Safety Fund.

**■ Buildings: Insulation****Apsana Begum:**[\[174976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department press release of 10 February 2021, Government to bring an end to unsafe cladding with multi-billion pound intervention, whether the Home Office's analysis of fire and rescue service statistics used by his Department as evidence on which to base the findings in that press release measured building heights from bottom to

the top of the building or to the finished floor level of the top occupied storey of that building.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Methodological notes, including information on height measurements, is available in the Home Office publication here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/831136/detailed-analysis-fires-attended-fire-rescue-england-1819-hosb1919.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831136/detailed-analysis-fires-attended-fire-rescue-england-1819-hosb1919.pdf)

**Apsana Begum:**

**[176075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish details of how to access the additional funding for the removal of unsafe cladding that was announced by his Department on 10 February 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The additional £3.5 billion of funding announced on 10 February provides assurance for leaseholders that all eligible applications to the Building Safety Fund will be able to proceed and that Government will fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for all leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England.

■ **Community Centres: Coronavirus**

**Mr Steve Baker:**

**[R] [180478]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when community centres can re-open as covid-19 restrictions are eased; and whether those facilities are allowed to offer food and beverages.

**Luke Hall:**

As part of the Government's 'COVID-19 Response Spring 2021' roadmap, community centres can re-open in the whole of England from 12 April, but restrictions on meeting indoors with people not in your household or support bubble will remain unless the community centre is used for the purposes set out in the exemptions at Paragraph 14(5) of Schedule 1 to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021. Any facility which offers food and drink for consumption, must close any indoor premises or indoor parts of the premises in which food or drink are provided, the food and beverages must be consumed off the premises in a seated area, and the person responsible for the facility must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the customer remains seated outdoors whilst consuming the food or drink on the premises.

■ **Devolution**

**Steve Reed:**

**[180508]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish the proposed recovery and devolution White Paper.



**Luke Hall:**

Levelling up all areas of the country remains at the centre of government's agenda. We want to devolve and decentralise to give more power to local communities, providing an opportunity for all places to level up. That is why we intend to bring forward a White Paper in due course, setting out our plans for devolution and detailing how the UK government will partner with places across the UK to build a sustainable economic recovery.

**Domestic Violence: Housing****Neil Coyle:**[\[179156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the finding of Solace Women's Aid's report entitled Violence against women and girls, housing and homelessness: A joined up strategy, that 70 per cent of women who have experienced domestic violence also have a housing need, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the shortage of suitable long-term housing for domestic abuse survivors.

**Eddie Hughes:**

It is critical that victims of domestic abuse get support, especially when they are in housing need. In May 2020 the Government announced its intent to give those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority. This will be achieved through the Domestic Abuse Bill and will help to ensure victims do not remain with their abuser for fear of not having a roof over their head.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for households in priority need and owed the main homelessness duty until suitable long-term accommodation can be offered to them. Housing authorities have a continuing obligation to keep the suitability of accommodation under review, and to respond to any relevant change in circumstances which may affect suitability.

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

**First-time Buyers****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[180517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of completed house sales involving first-time buyers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each month since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[180518]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of home ownership among first-time buyers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We have taken steps to keep the housing market open during the Covid-19 and allow people to buy, sell and view properties during periods of national restrictions. This is supported by the temporary cut to Stamp Duty Land Tax for home buyers and underpinned by our guidance for consumers and industry on how the process can operate while minimising the risks presented by the virus.

This Government is committed to helping people get on the housing ladder across the country. Over 687,000 households have been helped to purchase a home since spring 2010 through government-backed schemes such as Help to Buy: Equity Loan and Right to Buy. New initiatives including First Homes, improving shared ownership and a new £11.5 billion affordable homes programme will bring more affordable housing to those who need it.

In addition, the Government has announced a new mortgage guarantee scheme to support a new generation in realising the dream of home ownership. This will increase the availability of 95% loan-to-value mortgage products, enabling more households to access mortgages without the need for prohibitively large deposits.

The English Housing Survey is published annually and reports on housing trends in England, including homeownership rates. Data for 2019-20 is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>. Data for 2020-21 will be published at the end of this year.

Data on the number of first-time buyers using Help to Buy: Equity Loans is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/help-to-buy-equity-loan-scheme-data-to-30-september-2020>. This data indicates that, despite a drop in the earlier stages of the pandemic, the number of first-time buyers who bought a home in England in Q3 2020 using a Help to Buy equity loan, exceeds the number in Q3 2019 before the pandemic, with 11,150 and 9,774 first-time buyers respectively. A similar rate of recovery can be seen in the number of first-time buyers in the West Midlands, the Coventry North East constituency and across Coventry.

■ **First-time Buyers: Help to Buy Scheme**

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[174986]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of first time buyers that have used the existing Help to Buy scheme in (a) England and (b) Stockport.

**Christopher Pincher:**

From the start of the scheme on 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2020, there were (a) 240,083 first-time buyers in England and (b) 709 first-time buyers in Stockport.

Statistics for Help to Buy: Equity Loan to 30 September 2020 can be seen here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/help-to-buy-equity-loan-scheme-data-to-30-september-2020>

**■ Help to Buy Scheme****Navendu Mishra:****[174990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the value of the applications to the existing Help to Buy scheme in (a) England and (b) Stockport.

**Christopher Pincher:**

From the start of the scheme on 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2020, the total value of equity loans has been: (a) £17,413,247,594 in England and (b) £45,697,965 in Stockport. Statistics for Help to Buy: Equity Loan to 30 September 2020 can be seen here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/help-to-buy-equity-loan-scheme-data-to-30-september-2020>.

**Navendu Mishra:****[174991]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the regional price caps on the effectiveness of the new Help to Buy scheme in (a) England and (b) Stockport.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The new Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme will introduce regional property price caps which set the maximum purchase price in each region. For example, the cap for the North West is set at £224,400. The regional caps are aligned to the first-time buyer market. They are all set at 1.5 times the forecast regional average first-time buyer price, in line with the Office of Budget Responsibility's house price inflation forecast for 2021/22 as at Budget 2018, up to a maximum of £600,000 in London. The caps were designed to support the purchase of properties that are more consistent with the wider first-time buyer market. This in turn helps optimise the resources available to enable purchasers to achieve the dream of home ownership. The Government has reviewed the caps and continues to be satisfied they allow good availability of first-time buyer type properties in each region.

There will of course be local hotspots within each region that are more expensive. However, the approach is aimed at striking the right balance between better targeting the scheme so it can assist more first-time buyers, whilst accounting for a degree of price variation within regions without the additional complexity that may arise from more localised caps. Therefore, there are no plans to revise the caps.

**■ Help to Buy Scheme: Insulation****Daniel Zeichner:** [174864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many leaseholders with a Help to Buy loan are in buildings with ACM, MCM or HPL cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Information on the number of Help to Buy equity loan properties with unsafe ACM cladding can be found in the NAO's report entitled *Investigation into remediating dangerous cladding on high-rise buildings*, which is available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Investigation-into-remediating-dangerous-cladding-on-high-rise-buildings.pdf>. Equivalent information for properties with MCM or HPL cladding is not available.

**■ Housing: Business Premises****Steve Reed:** [180510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what impact assessment his Department has carried out on plans to create a new permitted development right to enable the change of use from the new Class E to residential use.

**Steve Reed:** [180511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of cafes that could be converted to residences under the proposed permitted development right to enable the change of use from the new Class E to residential use.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We aim to publish an Impact Assessment on the measures as soon as possible in accordance with the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015.

**■ Housing: Construction****Colleen Fletcher:** [180519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the rate of house building in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Estimates of building control reported new build dwellings starts and completions for Coventry, the West Midlands and England in each quarter to December 2020 are shown in Live Tables 253a and 217 at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>.

These cover new build dwellings only and should be regarded as a leading indicator of overall housing supply. An assessment of recent trends is published in the latest

release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-supply-indicators-of-new-supply-england-october-to-december-2020>.

The Department also publishes an annual release entitled 'Housing supply: net additional dwellings, England', which is the primary and most comprehensive measure of housing supply. This is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/net-supply-of-housing>.

**Anthony Browne:**

**[914318]**

What steps he is taking to increase the supply of new homes.

**Christopher Pincher:**

This Government cares deeply about building more homes. We are working tirelessly with industry to keep the sector open safely through every level of restriction to continue building the new homes this country needs, support home movers, and sustain hundreds of thousands of jobs. I would like to pay tribute to the sector for their support.

We are investing in supply, with over £12 billion in affordable housing over five years, the largest investment in a decade; and £7.1 billion in the National Home Building Fund, including much-needed new homes on brownfield land.

## ■ **Housing: Insulation**

**Neil Coyle:**

**[175876]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to help leaseholders secure a low interest rate on loans taken to cover fire safety costs.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government has announced a globally unprecedented investment in building safety and hundreds of thousands of leaseholders will be protected from the cost of remediating unsafe cladding from their homes. Lower-rise buildings between 11 and 18 metres will gain new protection from the costs of remediating dangerous cladding through a long-term, low interest, government backed financing scheme.

The Government is conscious of the need to make any financing scheme affordable for leaseholders. That is why we have said that the financing scheme will have a £50 a month cap. Now that the financing solution has been announced, we will publish more details on how it will work as soon as is feasible.

## ■ **Infrastructure: Finance**

**Steve Reed:**

**[180509]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to invest in new civic infrastructure.

**Luke Hall:**

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

The prospectus published at Budget provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22. This includes guidance on the process for submitting bids, the types of projects eligible for funding, and how bids will be assessed.

**Landlords: Standards****Navendu Mishra:**[\[174997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many orders have been issued banning landlords under the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

**Christopher Pincher:**

There are 7 landlords who have been issued with a banning order under the Housing and Planning Act 2016. Only banning order offences committed after 6 April 2018 are eligible for a local authority to apply to the First Tier Tribunal for a banning order.

**Leasehold: Ground Rent****Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[181151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether any exclusions will apply to the proposed changes to enable leaseholders to have the right to extend their lease by a maximum of 990 years at zero ground rent.

**Eddie Hughes:**

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, in January we announced reforms to the valuation process and length of lease extensions, in response to Law Commission recommendations.

The Law Commission's report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to the qualifying criteria for enfranchisement and lease extensions, including any potential exemptions. We will bring forward a response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations in due course.

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[181152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish an estimate of costs to leaseholders other than legal fees of extending their lease by a maximum term of 990 years at zero ground rent.

**Eddie Hughes:**

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.

Whilst the cost of a lease extension will vary depending on a number of factors including the time remaining on the existing lease, under the current system too many 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.

We will translate these measures into law as soon as possible, starting with legislation to set ground rents on newly created leases to zero in the upcoming session. This will be the first part of major two-part legislation to implement leasehold and Commonhold reforms in this Parliament.

**■ Levelling Up Fund: Appeals****Jamie Stone:**[\[180579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the process is for local authorities to appeal the tier that they have been allocated for the Levelling Up Fund.

**Jamie Stone:**[\[180580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish his Department's criteria for putting the Highlands local authority in tier 3 for the Levelling Up Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. It is open to all local areas and will be allocated competitively



As set out in the prospectus published at Budget, the index used for the Levelling Up Fund places areas into category one, two or three based on the local area's need for economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and regeneration. We have published further details of the methodology used to calculate the index of places on GOV.UK.

## ■ Levelling Up Fund: Northern Ireland

**Louise Haigh:** [\[174902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will detail the level of funding in each of the four financial years of the Levelling Up Fund for Northern Ireland.

**Luke Hall:**

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

The Fund will operate UK-wide, extending the benefits of funding for priority local infrastructure across all regions and nations.

The Fund will set aside at least £800 million across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland over four years from 2021-2022 to 2024-2025.

## ■ Liverpool City Council: Standards

**John Spellar:** [\[175696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, apart from Case Studies A, B and C in the Liverpool City Council: Best Value inspection report published on 24 March 2021, (a) how many other case studies were undertaken and (b) were they reported to his Department.

**Luke Hall:**

I am not aware of any additional case studies that were produced during the independent Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council.

## ■ Local Government: Capital Investment

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[175835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to make a submission to the consultation by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy on proposed changes to the Prudential code for capital finance in local authorities which closes on 12 April 2021.

**Luke Hall:**

Government is committed to promoting prudent financial management within local authorities and appreciates the important role that CIPFA has in helping ensure this. The Prudential Code forms an important part of the capital framework and officials have worked closely with CIPFA and other stakeholders as the revised Code has

been developed and will continue to do so. Alongside this, the department is taking forward measures to strengthen the capital framework including by reducing excessive risk, while allowing authorities to invest sensibly for service delivery, local regeneration and housing, and is working closely with CIPFA and the sector to implement these.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Cities and Local Growth Unit**

**Steve Reed:**

[\[175859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many FTE staff from his Department were employed in the Cities and Local Growth Unit in each of the last five years.

**Luke Hall:**

The Cities and Local Growth Unit sits across two Departments, reporting jointly into the MHCLG and BEIS Secretaries of State. In each of the last five years, MHCLG FTE employed in the Cities and Local Growth Unit is detailed in following chart.

MHCLG FTE EMPLOYED IN THE CLGU FROM 2017 TO \*2021

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
64.4	83.9	102.7	110.4	379.6

\*379.6 reflects data up to 28 February 2021, and is inclusive of an increase in FTE after a restructuring within MHCLG

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Pay**

**Steve Reed:**

[\[180986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether officials from his Department receive remuneration for paid work for organisations or companies outside of Government.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Department has procedures in place for the declaration of conflicts of interests which includes a requirement to declare remuneration for paid work for organisations or companies outside of Government in line with the Civil Service Code. Where the civil servant is a member of the Departmental Board any outside employment, as well as other relevant interests, will be published as part of the Annual Report and Accounts or other transparency publication. For more junior posts, this information is held within the Department.

## ■ Neighbourhood Development Plans

**Anthony Mangnall:**

[\[914313\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that neighbourhood plans continue to be prioritised as part of the reformed planning system.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Neighbourhood plans are a valuable tool that empower communities to proactively shape what their areas will look like.

As we set out in the Planning White Paper – neighbourhood plans will continue to play a key role in our reformed planning system.

Indeed under the new system neighbourhood planning groups will have a stronger role in producing local design codes – setting out the preferences of the local community and the high standards that new development will be expected to meet.

## ■ Owner Occupation

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[914317\]](#)

What steps he is taking to promote homeownership.

**Robert Jenrick:**

This Government cares deeply about helping even more people to achieve the dream of owning their own home, and turning Generation Rent into Generation Buy.

And today we see many of the country's largest lenders launch the new 95% mortgages – backed by the Government's new mortgage guarantee announced by the Chancellor at last month's Budget.

This comes on top of our Shared Ownership reforms, our new Help to Buy scheme, and our First Homes scheme – all of which will help more people get onto the housing ladder and have a home they can call their own.

## ■ Public Sector and Supported Housing

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[914312\]](#)

What steps he is taking to implement the policies set out in his Department's recent response to its consultation on supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure.

**Christopher Pincher:**

To support our town centres, we laid legislation on 31 March for a new permitted development right to allow conversions from the Commercial, Business and Service uses to residential.

The same legislation gives additional flexibility for development at ports and allows for extensions of hospitals, schools, colleges and prisons.

Separately, we are aiming to implement a faster planning application process from 1 August for new schools, prisons and hospitals.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development

**Steve Reed:**

**[180987]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to produce a definition of levelling up against which the effectiveness of the Government's policies can be assessed.

**Luke Hall:**

The Spending Review established a set of provisional priority outcomes and metrics across all departments and policy areas which have been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents> . This includes an outcome to “raise productivity and empower places so that everyone across the country can benefit from levelling up”. These outcomes are now being embedded by departments into Outcome Delivery Plans, which will set out strategy and planning information for delivering the priority outcomes and for delivering on strategic “enabling” activities that are crucial to successful delivery. We continue to work with Departments x-govt to design and deliver our approach to levelling up.

## ■ Social Rented Housing

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[174996]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support to local authorities with the development of new social housing.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and has given local authorities a comprehensive range of tools to deliver a new generation of council housing.

To support the development of new affordable homes we are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme. We are keen to see local authorities playing a key role in the delivery of this programme alongside housing associations.

To further support local authority development, in March 2021 we announced a package of reforms that will give local authorities increased flexibility over how they spend their Right to Buy receipts on replacement homes. This package will make it easier for authorities to fund new homes using Right to Buy receipts including homes for social rent.

In addition, since the abolition of the Housing Revenue Account in 2018 that enables local authorities to borrow for building, we have given social landlords a longer term rent deal for 5 years from April 2020 allowing them to charge rents of up to CPI +1% per annum, and reduced the Public Works Loan Board interest rates for borrowing for housing, providing a stable investment environment to deliver new homes.

We want to see local authorities using these tools to build more affordable homes.

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[174884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the review of the Decent Homes Standard, whether the Government plans to provide funding to local authorities and other social housing providers to meet the new standard.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Social Housing White Paper announced a review of the Decent Homes Standard to consider whether it needs to be updated to ensure it is delivering what is needed for safety and decency now, including on energy efficiency and green spaces.

As a first step, the review will consider the case for change. If the evidence demonstrates that we need to revise the Standard, we will consider new criteria as a second stage of the review.

## ■ Social Services: Finance

**Kate Hollern:**

[\[180992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of social care funding for local authorities.

**Luke Hall:**

The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22 confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.6% in cash terms - a real terms increase. Within their Core Spending Power, councils will have access to an additional £1 billion for social care this year, made up of a £300 million increase to the social care grant and 3% Adult Social Care precept. The additional £1 billion of grant funding announced at SR19 for Adult and Children's Social Care will be continuing, along with all other existing social care funding including the improved Better Care Fund.

Complementing this is an unprecedented package of support for local authorities to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, including £4.6 billion of un-ringfenced funding for Covid-19 pressures in 2020/21 and an additional £1.55 billion of un-ringfenced funding for Covid pressures in 2021/22, including social care.

## ■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

**Steve Reed:**

[\[175866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what rental income his Department has received for the provision of sites for telecommunications infrastructure for each of the last five years.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government received the following income in each of the last five years for the provision of sites for telecommunications infrastructure:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT
2016/17	£ 68,988
2017/18	£ 70,213
2018/19	£ 95,893
2019/20	£109,500
2020/21	£ 95,254

**Steve Reed:**

[\[175867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the rental income his Department will receive for the provision of sites for telecommunication infrastructure for each of the next five years.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government estimates the following income in each of the next five years for the provision of sites for telecommunications infrastructure:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT
2021/22	£120,000
2022/23	£30,000
2023/24	Nil
2024/25	Nil
2025/26	Nil

**Steve Reed:**

[\[175869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will list the dates that (a) he and (b) officials in his Department met with representatives of the Speed up Britain Campaign.

**Eddie Hughes:**

No meetings have taken place between Ministers in the Department and representatives of the Speed Up Britain Campaign. To ascertain if any officials from the Department have met with this organisation would require an extensive search of records, which would incur disproportionate cost. Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on Gov.uk.

## ■ Temporary Accommodation: Greater London

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[\[178728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the number of families living in temporary accommodation in London who have to travel over an hour each way to their children's schools.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Time spent in temporary accommodation means people are getting help and it ensures no family is without a roof over their head.

We do not collect data on the distance of temporary accommodation from the household's school. The legislation and guidance set out that in the first instance, local authorities should try to place individuals within their own area, and retain established links with schools, doctors, social workers and other key services and support. However, when this is not possible, they should place the household as near as possible to the original local authority. Placing a household out of the local authority area should be as a last resort and authorities must consider the impact a change in location would have on a household.

If a local authority places a household into accommodation in another local area, they are required by law to notify the local authority of any placement, to ensure there is no disruption to schooling or employment for example.

## ■ UK Community Renewal Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Steve Reed:**

[\[180988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the UK Community Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-22 and the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, whether the place-based portion will be targeted based on indices of multiple deprivation data.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places.

A portion of the Fund will target places most in need across the UK, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities. It will support people and communities, opening up new opportunities and spurring regeneration and innovation.

A second portion of the Fund will be targeted differently to people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes that are tailored to local need. This will support improved employment outcomes for those in and out of work in specific cohorts of people who face labour market barriers.

The Government will set out further details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide investment framework published later in 2021.



## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Steve Reed:**

[\[180989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what further stakeholders his Department plans to consult on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Steve Reed:**

[\[180990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to carry out further consultation with representatives of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

Officials have held 26 engagement events on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, attended by over five hundred representatives from a breadth of sectors including businesses, public bodies, higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups. We will continue to engage stakeholders as we consolidate policy development for UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

## ■ Waking Watch Relief Fund

**Royston Smith:**

[\[175942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Waking Watch Relief Fund applications his Department has received to date.

**Royston Smith:**

[\[175943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Waking Watch Relief Fund applications have been successful to date.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Waking Watch Relief Fund opened for applications for buildings in England, except private sector buildings in London, on 31 January 2021 and closed on 14 March. Applications received are currently being processed. For private sector buildings in London the Fund opened on 18 March 2021 and remains open until 30 April. We will publish complete data on the Waking Watch Relief Fund, including the number of applications.

**Royston Smith:**

[\[175945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will backdate applications to the Waking Watch Fund for buildings that had installed alarms before 17 December 2020.

**Royston Smith:**

**[175946]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to backdate access to the Waking Watch Fund for buildings that have installed alarms pre-dating the 17 December 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Waking Watch Relief Fund is designed to incentivise buildings to install a common alarm system and to reduce the dependency on Waking Watch. As such the Fund does not cover the retrospective costs of alarms installed before the Fund was announced on 17 December 2020.

**Royston Smith:**

**[175947]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure fire alarms are an sufficient replacement for waking watchers in all qualifying buildings for the Waking Watch Relief Fund.

**Royston Smith:**

**[175948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of a specific fund for waking watchers for unsafe high-rise residential buildings with a complex structural integrity which potentially require both waking watchers and alarms.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has been clear in its [guidance published on 1 October 2020](#) that, where a building moves to a simultaneous evacuation fire safety strategy, building owners should move to install common fire alarm systems as quickly as possible to reduce or remove dependence on waking watches. The Waking Watch Relief Fund follows the NFCC guidance that alarms are safer and more cost effective. The specification of suitable alarm systems is set out in the guidance for the Fund which also follows NFCC advice. Alarms must meet that specification in order to be funded or if not give evidence as to why from the Fire and Rescue Service. The Fund is specifically designed to remove the need for waking watch only. When waking watch is replaced with a common fire alarm system the NFCC guidance states that there may still be a need for a 24-hour presence of one or more trained persons to undertake the role of evacuation management – which is a different requirement and will depend on the individual circumstances of a particular building. We anticipate that in most circumstances the evacuation management role is not required, or it may require a reduced number of staff from a full waking watch. However, neither a waking watch or an alarm system is an adequate substitute for the swift remedial action which is why the Government is providing over £5 billion in grant funding for the remediation of unsafe cladding systems.

## ■ Waking Watch Relief Fund: High Rise Flats

**Royston Smith:**

**[175941]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of high-rise residential buildings that will benefit from the Waking Watch Relief Fund.

**Royston Smith:**

**[175944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Waking Watch Relief Fund covering the cost of alarms installed after 17 December 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We estimated that the £30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund will pay for the installation of alarms in between 300 to 460 buildings and will benefit between 17,400 and 26,680 leaseholders. These estimates are based on fire alarm costs data provided by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) with additional modelling to account for the average number of dwellings in buildings over 18 metres. These are published in the Waking Watch costs data release which is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-waking-watch-costs](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-waking-watch-costs). The Fund is not intended as a substitute for swift remediation of unsafe cladding for which the Government is providing £5 billion financial support.

## ■ Welcome Back Fund

**Steve Reed:**

**[175870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much each local authority will receive in funding allocations under the Welcome Back Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

On Saturday 20 March we announced the £56 million Welcome Back Fund to support local authorities and their business communities to reopen safely and successfully as lockdown restrictions ease. This funding builds on the £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund announced in May 2020, doubling original funding allocations with an additional £6 million for coastal communities given the unique challenges they face. The full list of Welcome Back Fund allocations can be found on [Gov.uk](http://Gov.uk).

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Arms Trade: Ethiopia

**Layla Moran:**

**[181102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) standard individual export licences and (b) open individual export licences have been granted for the shipment of arms to Ethiopia in the last (i) six and (ii) 12 months.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

HM Government publishes Official Statistics on GOV.UK on a quarterly and annual basis on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations. These reports contain detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This information is available at: [gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data](https://gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data) and the most recent publication was on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021, covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

Two Standard Individual Export Licences (SIELs) were granted for military rated items to Ethiopia between July and December 2020 and no other licences were granted in the six months prior to this period.

Information on licences granted between 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 will be published as Official Statistics on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021; and for licences granted from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, information will be published in October 2021.

All export licence applications are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

**■ Department for International Trade: Staff**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[175762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the total size was of her Department's overseas network by headcount as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[175763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in the Africa region there were in her Department's overseas network as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[175764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in her Department's overseas network were in the Asia Pacific region as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[175765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in her Department's overseas network were in the China and Hong Kong region as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[175766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in her Department's overseas network were in the Europe region as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[175767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in her Department's overseas network were in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[175768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in the Latin America and Caribbean region there were in her Department's overseas network as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[175769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in the South Asia region there were in her Department's overseas network as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[175770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan there were in her Department's overseas network as at 1 March 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[175771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) UK staff deployed overseas, (b) local staff and (c) local interns in the North America region there were in her Department's overseas network as at 1 March 2021.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for International Trade (DIT) employs both domestic and overseas staff, who are contracted separately through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Staff working on DIT objectives, but contracted through the FCDO total 1,560. This consists of 148 UK staff deployed overseas, 1,357 local staff and 55 local staff interns. The table attached shows the breakdown of these staff, across each of the nine HM Trade Commissioner regions.

These figures do not include staff on loan to DIT from other government departments but who remain on their home departments payroll, contractors, military staff, people on secondment from other organisations, those who are on loan or secondment out of DIT, on unpaid special leave or career break and people working in UK Export Finance.

**Attachments:**

1. HM Trade Commissioner regions [HMTCC Region.docx]

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[175772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the breakdown of her Department's overseas network in the Europe region was by each individual location where they are based as at 1 March 2021.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for International Trade (DIT) employs both domestic and overseas staff, who are contracted separately through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Staff working on DIT objectives but contracted through the FCDO and based in the Europe region total 335. The table attached shows the individual country locations of where these staff are based.

These figures do not include staff on loan to DIT from other government departments but who remain on their home departments payroll, contractors, military staff, people on secondment from other organisations, those who are on loan or secondment out of DIT, on unpaid special leave or career break, and people working in UK Export Finance.

**Attachments:**

1. Headcount based in Europe [Headcount in the Europe region.docx]

**■ GREAT****Emily Thornberry:**[\[178918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when and for what reason her responsibilities for chairing the Ministerial Committee on the Government's GREAT campaign were transferred to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[178919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what (a) staff, (b) budget and (c) other resources have been transferred from her Department to the Cabinet Office alongside the transfer of Ministerial responsibility for the Government's GREAT campaign.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[178920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what (a) line management and (b) contract management responsibilities have been transferred from her Department to the Cabinet Office alongside the transfer of Ministerial responsibility for the Government's GREAT campaign.

**Greg Hands:**

Policy responsibility for the GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign (GREAT) transferred from the Department for International Trade (DIT) to the Cabinet Office via a Written Ministerial Statement laid in Parliament on 20 April. The Prime Minister requested that GREAT was moved to the Cabinet Office. GREAT can play an enhanced role at the heart of government rather than within a specific department.

The headcount of 13.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees has been transferred from DIT to the Cabinet Office. The total GREAT campaign budget agreed at the 2020 Spending Review for FY21/22 is £60 million. £30 million of this budget was transferred from DIT to Cabinet Office in Main Supply Estimates. The remaining £30 million will remain with the other contributing government departments until Supplementary Estimates. At this point, the necessary transfers to other government

departments for the funding allocations agreed by the GREAT Programme Board will be made. No other resources are being transferred.

The GREAT team's line management structures have transferred over to the Cabinet Office, and all of the team continue to report into the Director of the GREAT Britain campaign. No commercial contracts are being transferred.

## ■ Import Duties: Serbia

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[179574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the cost to the UK frozen food industry of tariffs applied to frozen fruit imported from Serbia as a result of the UK not yet having a trade deal with that country.

**Greg Hands:**

The United Kingdom has been trading on Most Favoured Nation (MFN) terms with Serbia since the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. Prior to this imports of frozen fruit from Serbia had been eligible for tariff free access to the UK.

Overseas trade data is only available for the first two months of 2021, but the UK has imported approximately £350,000 of frozen fruits from Serbia in this period. Estimated additional duties paid on these imports are approximately £40,000.

Signature of the UK-Serbia continuity agreement is expected imminently, which would remove future MFN duties on imports of frozen fruit from Serbia.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[178945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 12 February 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on access to seed potato markets, reference ZA55507.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for International Trade's correspondence team has transferred your letter to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a response as the subject of the letter sits within their portfolio.

**Attachments:**

1. Rosie Cooper's letter to Liz Truss [ZA55507 to DIT.pdf]

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[178947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 12 February 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA55555, regarding delays to international purchasing and business imports.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for International Trade's correspondence team has transferred your letter to the Cabinet Office for a response as the subject of the letter sits within their portfolio.



**■ Trade Advisory Groups: Arts**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[174778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to appoint a replacement for Helen Keefe as the BBC's representative on her Trade Advisory Group on Creative Industries.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

My department is appointing Paul Oldfield, Controller of Policy at the BBC, to sit on the Creative Industries Trade Advisory Group.

**■ Trade Agreements**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[178923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which issues in (a) trade policy and (b) ongoing trade negotiations require the coordination of cross-Government positions with the support of the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, Lord Frost.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[178924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what support her Department receives from the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, Lord Frost, for the coordination of cross-Government positions on trade issues.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[178925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason the decision was taken to give responsibility to the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, Lord Frost, for supporting the coordination of cross-Government positions on trade issues; and when that decision was taken.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[178926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether (a) staff, (b) budget and (c) other resources have been transferred from her Department to the Cabinet Office to enable that department to provide support on the coordination of cross-Government positions on trade issues.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has appointed my noble Friend Lord Frost as Minister of State for the Cabinet Office where he will lead the United Kingdom's institutional and strategic relationship with the European Union and help secure the benefits of Brexit.

The Department for International Trade will work closely with Lord Frost and the Cabinet Office to maximise the benefits to the United Kingdom, both from her trade deal with the EU, and her newly independent trade policy. HM Government will continue to provide support for businesses to adapt to the United Kingdom's new trading arrangements with the EU.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Australia

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[179164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to lay before Parliament an impact assessment of the proposed free trade agreement with Australia as per clause 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020.

**Greg Hands:**

A HM Government report relating to the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Australia – in compliance with the provisions under section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 – will be laid before Parliament before the proposed FTA is laid before Parliament under Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Brazil

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[176063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans her Department has to engage with stakeholders in the higher education and research sector on potential free trade agreements with Brazil.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

I refer my hon. Friend for Dudley North to the answer given to the hon. Member for Harrow West by my hon. Friend the Minister for Exports on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 (UIN: 168823).

The Department for International Trade engages regularly with higher education and research stakeholders through the United Kingdom-Brazil Education Working Group for Higher Education and is in discussions with the Group's members to facilitate greater collaboration on transnational education, including mutual recognition of degrees (under- and post-graduate degrees), industry-academia relationship, and language policies to internationalisation. We aim to promote a virtual trade mission later in the year to foster further partnerships between British and Brazilian universities.

## ■ Trade and Agriculture Commission

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

[\[179267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the members nominated for the Trade and Agriculture Commission have (a) science-led animal welfare expertise and (b) practical commercial experience in farming to high welfare standards.

**Greg Hands:**

The Trade and Agriculture Commission will be composed of independent experts in their field, whose expertise will be driven by the scope of the provisions of the amendment to the Trade Bill. This includes UK animal welfare standards, as well as UK animal and plant health standards, UK environmental standards relating to agricultural products, and international trade law and policy.

**■ Trade: Wales****Hywel Williams:**[\[175725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to support the Welsh Government's trade responsibilities established through the 2013 Devolution Memorandum of Understanding.

**Graham Stuart:**

The 2013 MoU states that HMG has lead responsibility for the provision of support and assistance to new and existing exporters and outward investors both at home and overseas, and for promoting the UK to foreign investors. The Welsh Government is responsible for devising and implementing additional programmes to meet the particular needs of companies in Wales and for promoting Wales to foreign investors.

We are dedicated to providing the best possible trade and investment support for all nations of the United Kingdom. Last month, we announced a new Trade and Investment Hub in Cardiff as part of a new strategy to boost exports and bring the benefits of the government's global trade policy to the whole of the UK, including benefits from future free trade agreements with the US, Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP. My colleague, the Minister of State for Trade Policy, holds regular bilateral meetings with his Welsh counterpart as well as the quarterly Ministerial Forum for Trade.

In 2020 more than 56,000 jobs were created throughout the UK through foreign investment, including 2,736 new jobs in Wales. Our free trade agreements will significantly benefit exporters in Wales. For example, indicative estimates show that an ambitious UK-US FTA could boost the economy in Wales by £154m.

**JUSTICE****■ Appeals****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[175711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications for permission to appeal have been made in each of the last 10 years (a) within and (b) outside the 28 day time limit.

**Chris Philp:**

The information requested by The Hon. Member can be found in the table below.

	APPLICATIONS FOR PERMISSION TO APPEAL A CONVICTION*			APPLICATIONS FOR PERMISSION TO APPEAL A SENTENCE ONLY		
	Outside 28 days	Within 28 days	Total	Outside 28 days	Within 28 days	Total
2011	822	729	1,551	1,428	3,814	5,242
2012	894	804	1,698	1,408	3,873	5,281
2013	863	684	1,547	1,220	3,445	4,665
2014	746	678	1,424	1,227	3,115	4,342
2015	869	646	1,515	1,164	2,889	4,053
2016	828	542	1,370	1,188	2,803	3,991
2017	708	593	1,301	1,055	2,871	3,926
2018	633	594	1,227	861	2,892	3,753
2019	639	445	1,084	905	2,452	3,357
2020	542	213	755	739	1,593	2,332
Total	7,544	5,928	13,472	11,195	29,747	40,942
	* includes appeals against Conviction and Sentence					

## ■ Courts

**Mr David Lammy:**

[\[174720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hearings were adjourned in (a) family, (b) criminal and (c) civil courts in each of the last three months.

**Chris Philp:**

The information requested is provided in the table below for hearings in the Crown Court and the magistrates' courts:

**HEARINGS ADJOURNED IN THE CROWN COURT**


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October 2020	22,883
November 2020	21,630
December 2020	19,140

**Hearings adjourned in the magistrates' courts**

October 2020	52,260
November 2020	43,840
December 2020	35,195

In the civil courts, we regularly publish data on hearings adjourned due to Covid-19 at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-march-2020-to-february-2021>. We have extracted the last three months of data in the table below. Data on hearings adjourned overall in the civil courts is not held centrally, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

**HEARINGS ADJOURNED IN THE CIVIL COURTS DUE TO COVID-19**


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November 2020	385
December 2020	177
January 2021	168

We do not hold data centrally on hearings adjourned in the family courts. Our case management system does record where a hearing has been vacated, but we do not hold information on whether this is because the hearing was adjourned, the case was concluded, or the hearing was not required.

**Mr David Lammy:**

**[174722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases have been transferred from the Magistrates' Court to the Crown Court in each of the last 10 years.

**Chris Philp:**

The Ministry of Justice has published information on the number of defendants sent to Crown Court for trial and sentencing in England and Wales up to December 2019, available in the 'Magistrates' Court' data tool, which can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/888347/magistrates-court-tool-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888347/magistrates-court-tool-2019.xlsx)

The pivot sheet shows the number of defendants sent for trial (row 27) and committed for sentencing (row 29) from the Magistrates' Court to the Crown Court in each of the last 10 years.

#### ■ Courts: Coronavirus

**Mr David Lammy:**

[\[174721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many buildings currently used for Nightingale Courts will have their lease expire by June 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

Nightingale courts have provided a much-needed boost to the crown-court system, providing more capacity at a time of social distancing. As at 31 March we have 30 Nightingale courts open, providing a total of 60 courtrooms.

There are 19 Nightingale venues where hire agreements are currently due to expire at the end of June. We are exploring options to extend the leases in order to maximise the use of the court estate. We will continue to consider where Nightingale courts are needed for local operational reasons and we remain in close contact with the landlords of all existing venues.

#### ■ Courts: West Yorkshire

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[175009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the backlog before the courts in West Yorkshire.

**Chris Philp:**

The courts in West Yorkshire have continued throughout the pandemic and list as many cases as possible whilst complying with HMCTS COVID-secure working arrangements.

This has been enabled by physical changes to courtrooms and jury facilities through the use of Plexiglass screens, which have been installed in magistrates' courts and the Crown Court, and other significant physical changes to the dock and courtroom provision to enable large multi-handed trials to proceed.

The use of buildings has changed: the proactive management of public areas, provision of additional waiting areas in some busy buildings, and opening more magistrates' courtrooms on Saturdays has further increased capacity. A Nightingale Court has additionally been opened in Cloth Hall Court, Leeds.

The way that cases are heard has also changed: using the Cloud Video Platform to enable certain cases to be heard remotely has helped limit the number who need to physically attend court and increased overall capacity.

Arrangements are also in place for flexible deployment of work between Bradford and Leeds Crown Courts, and listing some magistrates' court work in nearby Skipton.

## ■ Crimes of Violence: Suspended Sentences

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[180505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of suspended sentences on the safety of communities where the offender has a violent criminal history.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[180506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of stopping the use of suspended sentences involving offenders with a violent criminal history.

**Chris Philp:**

Suspended sentences are an important element of the sentencing framework. In appropriate cases, they avoid the breaking of support networks and continue offender stability in the community, whilst presenting the offender with opportunity to engage in rehabilitative work to reduce levels of risk and likelihood of offending.

The independent Sentencing Council produce sentencing guidelines which assist courts in deciding appropriate sentences for criminal offences. The Council's *Imposition of Community and Custodial Sentences* guideline sets out the key factors which courts should consider when deciding on whether to suspend a custodial sentence. The guideline is clear that 'Offender presents a risk/danger to the public' is a factor which indicates that it would not be appropriate to suspend a custodial sentence.

The court may impose one or more community requirements together with the suspended sentence, which are designed to help address offending behaviour. All decisions on how offenders in the community should be managed are based on a rigorous assessment of the risk they may pose. To supplement their own professional judgement, probation practitioners make use of risk-management tools to assist them in their decision making. If the offender breaches a requirement or commits a new offence during the suspension period, there is a presumption that the court will activate the custodial sentence.

## ■ Criminal Proceedings: Appeals

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[175712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many loss of time orders have been made by the Court of Appeal, Criminal Division in each of the last 10 years.

**Chris Philp:**

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.



## ■ Domestic Abuse: Females

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[174745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps the Government is taking to improve access to support services for women suffering from domestic violence in east London boroughs.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government is committed to supporting victims of domestic abuse and ensuring that they receive the support they need when they need it. In 2020/21, the Ministry of Justice provided around £12.2m to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to commission victim support services, including services for victims of domestic abuse. Further in 2020, given the impact of the Covid-19, two rounds of emergency funding were provided to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to specifically support victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse. MOPAC received around £4.5m. For 2021/22, the Ministry of Justice has committed to match the same levels of core funding for PCCs to ensure that victims continue to receive the support they need.

In addition, as part of an extra £40m package, £9.7m will be available for community-based services for domestic abuse and £16m to recruit more independent sexual violence and domestic abuse advisers (ISVAs/IDVAs). On 15 February, a further £11m was announced for the ISVA/IDVA fund meaning a total of £27m will be available. All of this funding will be distributed through PCCs including MOPAC.

Finally, on 12 February, it was announced that £125m would be provided to fund the new statutory duty, as part of the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, for local authorities to provide safe accommodation for women and their children. This will ensure that women continue to be able to access vital support such as therapy, advocacy and counselling in safe accommodation.

## ■ Importance of Strengthening Female Offenders' Family and other Relationships to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime Review

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[181123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress has been made on implementing the recommendations of the 2019 Farmer Review For Women.

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[181124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the 2019 Farmer Review for Women, what progress has been made on the introduction of a Personal Circumstances File for women in contact with the criminal justice system.

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[181125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to recommendation 8 of the 2019 Farmer Review for Women, what progress has been made on making written Pre-Sentence Reports mandatory for all women and male primary carers before a custodial sentence is passed.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Government has made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the Farmer Review for Women, since its publication in June 2019. Ten recommendations have already been implemented and a further eight are expected to be completed this year. Achievements so far include increased access to telephone contact in court custody suites, allowances for the increased use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), amending the eligibility for Child Resettlement Leave to include primary carers as well as sole carers, and the rollout of video calling across the Women's Estate.

As set out in the Female Offender Strategy, the Government is working to ensure women's personal circumstances are identified and shared by all agencies in the criminal justice system, in order to inform decisions and support. Lord Farmer's recommendation on the Personal Circumstances File forms part of this work.

We are also committed to increasing the delivery of quality and timely pre-sentence reports (PSRs) and understand the particular importance of PSRs for women. HM Prison and Probation Service has developed a Pre-Sentence Report interview checklist which focuses on the specific needs of female offenders. Following a series of briefing events, this was rolled out nationally in August 2019 and is available to all practitioners.

Additionally, in the Sentencing White Paper we committed to ensuring that probation staff are supported to deliver a high standard of reports and to significantly increase the proportion of court disposals which benefit from a PSR. This pilot has now launched, and will be in all 15 pilot magistrate courts across 10 probation regions in England and Wales by mid-May. One element of this pilot looks specifically at female offenders, given this cohort often have particularly complex needs. We will use the findings from this pilot to further inform how we take forward Lord Farmer's recommendation.

**■ Ministry of Justice: Interpreters****Apsana Begum:****[176069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether interpreters which hold (a) Level 1 foundation in public service interpreting, a two-to-four-week course, (b) Level 2 public service interpreting qualifications, (c) Level 3 and Level 4 community service interpreting qualifications, A-level standard, (d) a bachelor's degree in philology but no public service interpreting qualifications and (e) a bachelor's degree in linguistics but no public service interpreting qualifications are accepted on his Department's list of interpreters.

**Apsana Begum:****[176070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of interpreters on his Department's list of interpreters engaged by HM Courts and Tribunal Service have a Level 6, Bachelor's degree level, Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) or Diploma in Police Interpreting (DPI).

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[176071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps HM Courts and Tribunals Service is taking to ensure that interpreters are on his Department's list of interpreters in order to improve the vetting of evidence relating to their experience and qualifications.

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[176072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of interpreters on his Department's list of interpreters engaged by HM Courts and Tribunal Service who (a) hold a Level 6 public service qualification and (b) have more than 400 hours' public service interpreting experience that comply with the National Register of Public Service Interpreter's Code of Professional Conduct.

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[176073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of interpreters have been referred to The Language Shop for independent assessment; and what proportion of those interpreters have been reinstated since 2019.

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[176074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how long it takes to complete the justice system training course for interpreters; and which organisation oversees that course.

**Chris Philp:**

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

The MoJ does not directly employ interpreters. The MoJ commissions the services of suitably qualified interpreters through its contracted service providers, thebigword and Clarion Interpreting.

MoJ accepts individuals who hold (a) Level 1 foundation in public service interpreting, a two-to-four-week course, (b) Level 2 public service interpreting qualifications, (c) Level 3 and Level 4 community service interpreting qualifications, A-level standard, (d) a bachelor's degree in philology but no public service interpreting qualifications and (e) a bachelor's degree in linguistics onto the MoJ Register. They would however only be engaged in work for MoJ if other requirements are also met. These requirements include the hours of experience they have, the complexity of the booking itself and whether the language in question is considered as rare or otherwise.

The contract has a clearly defined list of qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements interpreters must meet, which have been designed to meet the needs of the justice system. All interpreters are also required to complete a justice system specific training course before they are permitted to join the MoJ's interpreter register.

The full details of the standards required for our Language Professionals is set out in our contracts, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137?p=@=UFQxbIRRPT0=NjJNT08>

Currently there are 1073 interpreters across the MoJ register that hold a Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) or Diploma in Police Interpreting (DPI). The number of interpreters listed on the MoJ register fluctuates regularly. The data that has been provided here is accurate to March 2021. Each interpreter has only been counted once irrespective of whether they hold multiple DPSI's/DPI in different languages.

Evidence of public service interpreting is vetted and accredited via references obtained by our Service Provider thebigword. Thebigword contacts each of the referees to validate all of the information that has been provided.

The hours of experience that are required to be evidenced varies according to the complexity levels and the language itself (rare or otherwise) The contract has a clearly defined list of qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements that interpreters must meet.

The MoJ does not hold information regarding the number of interpreters that hold a Level 6 public service qualification and (b) have more than 400 hours' public service interpreting experience that comply with the National Register of Public Service Interpreter's Code of Professional Conduct. as there is no requirement to do so within the contract.

Data concerning NRPSI registration is not routinely recorded and is not a requirement of working for the MoJ. The MoJ requires all interpreters to abide by a code of conduct specific to the MoJ. This code of conduct forms part of their contract with the Service Providers under the language services contract.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019, 118 unique language professionals have had either a spot check or an In Person Assessment (IPA) performed by The Language Shop as the result of a referral, 59 of these passed their spot check/IPA and were not removed from the register. Of the 59 that failed their first assessment 5 of these have successfully completed an In-Person Assessment to enable them to re-join the register.

The Justice Sector programme is facilitated by the International School of Linguists Ltd and takes approximately 4 hours to complete.

## ■ Miscarriages of Justice: Appeals

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[175710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the March 2021 report of the all-party Parliamentary group on miscarriages of justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of the substantial injustice test on the ability of the Court of Appeal to correct miscarriages of justice in change of law cases including joint enterprise.

**Chris Philp:**

MoJ is considering the findings of the Westminster Commission but there are currently no plans to review the substantial injustice test. Amending the test would require primary legislation and has wider implications than the work of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). It would also not be appropriate to comment on how the Court of Appeal applies the test.

**■ Nature Conservation: Prosecutions****Emily Thornberry:**[\[175777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 167839, on Ivory: Smuggling, what information his Department holds on (a) prosecutions, (b) convictions and (c) sentences on triable either way offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[175778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 167839, on Ivory: Smuggling, what information his Department holds on (a) prosecutions, (b) convictions and (c) sentences on offences under the Ivory Act 2018.

**Chris Philp:**

The Ministry of Justice holds and publishes information on the volume of prosecutions, convictions and sentences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018, in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx)

In the Offence code filter, select the following:

- 099/17 - Triable either way offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018, paragraph 1
- 099/18 - Triable either way offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018, paragraph 2

Similar information under the Ivory Act 2018 legislation is not centrally held in the Court Proceedings Database by the MoJ.

**■ Prison Sentences****Zarah Sultana:**[\[181127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison Reform Trust's report, No life, no freedom, no future, published December 2020, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of repealing IPP sentences.

**Alex Chalk:**

While the Government has no plans to repeal IPP sentences, it keeps the operation of those sentences under review. The focus is on ensuring, via a joint HMPPS/Parole

Board action plan, that IPP prisoners have every opportunity to progress towards safe release.

This approach is working, with high numbers of unreleased IPP prisoners achieving a release decision each year. All IPP prisoners will have their continued detention reviewed by the independent Parole Board at least once every two years.

## ■ Probation

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [174788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that offending behaviour programmes accredited by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service are evaluated for the effect on rates of reoffending.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [174789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the value for money of offending behaviour programmes accredited by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is committed to engaging in impact evaluations of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) accredited offender behaviour programmes. It is the ambition of the MoJ that all HMPPS accredited programmes will have an impact evaluation to measure proven reoffending outcomes and where possible this will include a value for money analysis.

However, impact evaluations are reliant on large enough cohorts to attend and complete the programme, complete their sentence, and spend sufficient time in the community to provide suitable follow-up periods to detect statistically significant differences between treatment and comparisons groups. This means that it can take many years to design and conduct an impact study that delivers reliable conclusions.

International evidence has shown that cognitive behavioural offender programmes for moderate and high risk offenders can yield a return on investment.

Most recently, in January 2021, MoJ published a large-scale reoffending impact study of the Resolve general violence programme. The report is published on .gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/justice-data-lab-statistics-january-2021>

## ■ Probation: North West

**Conor McGinn:** [181053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has for the provision of services under the National Probation Service in the Metropolitan Borough of St Helens.

**Conor McGinn:** [181054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many service users of the National Probation Service there have been in (a) Liverpool City Region and (b) the North West in each year since 2010.

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[181055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much funding his Department has allocated to maintain probation services in (a) Liverpool City Region and (b) the North West in each year since 2010.

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[181056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what funding his Department has allocated to maintain probation services for each National Probation Service region from April 2021 onwards.

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[181057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to increase the number of Probation Service user contact centres in (a) Liverpool City Region, (b) the North West and (c) England.

**Alex Chalk:**

Public Protection remains the number one priority in the probation system. With this in mind we continue to manage our high risk and complex cases face to face, as far as possible. Last summer, the Probation Roadmap to Recovery was published, which has since been revised to align with the Prime Minister's National Roadmap. It sets out the aims for delivery in the coming weeks and months and outlines when we will lift national pauses, rather than mandate when services will be re-introduced.

A four-year estates strategy will see £131m of funding allocated to the refurbishment of existing sites and creation of 65 new sites across England and Wales. As part of the Probation Reform Programme 191 sites which are currently used by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) will be transferred to the National Probation Service.

As part of the Probation Reform Programme, the estates strategy for Liverpool City region and the North West has been reviewed. The probation contact centre in St Helens closed in March 2021 as a result of the Probation Reform Programme estates strategy review. Staff and supervised individuals subsequently moved to Probation contact centres in Knowsley and Prescot. Changes to the estate have not affected the existing partnerships arrangements that are in place between the National Probation Service and key stakeholders/partners in St Helens. Currently there are no plans to increase the number of Probation contact centres in the region, however, we continue to source local premises for specific needs as required.

Funding for the Probation regions for 2021/22 is yet to be finalised. Given the changes to the nature and scope of Probation Service provision since 2010 it is not possible to provide meaningful figures covering the period requested without incurring disproportionate costs.

Data on the number of service users from 2014 to 2019 is provided on the attached table. It is not possible to provide probation caseload figures for the Liverpool City region specifically prior to 2014 as this would involve re-extracting data which would now be incomplete due to deletions in line with Data Protection Act rules applied on



the recording system at the time; the cost of undertaking this exercise would therefore be disproportionate.

The number of offenders supervised by each National Probation Service region, division and CRC is regularly published as part of the Offender Management Quarterly series of statistics and can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>

**Attachments:**

1. Table [PQ181054 - Conor McGinn - NPS NW service users - Data.xlsx]

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Addictions: Northern Ireland

**Colum Eastwood:** [180647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what additional funding has been made available for the Derry Addiction Centre as committed to in Annex A of the New Decade New Approach Deal.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

I recognise the additional pressures on services arising from the pandemic and am delighted that the Northlands Centre in Derry/Londonderry has been able to reopen, following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

The UK Government is committed to providing NDNA funding to the Executive for the Derry/Londonderry Addiction Centre.

We will continue to work with the Executive to disburse funding from the NDNA financial package and we will announce the details for the allocation of this additional funding in due course.

### ■ Community Development and Cultural Heritage: Northern Ireland

**Colum Eastwood:** [180648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what progress has been made on establishing a Culture and Community fund as committed to in Annex A of the New Decade New Approach Deal; and what the eligibility criteria will be to access that fund.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Since the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) deal was reached in January 2020, the UK Government has provided £2 billion in funding to support the implementation of the agreement and has continued to make good progress on delivering these commitments. This includes a £1 billion Barnett-based investment guarantee from the UK Government, which will include significant new funding to turbocharge infrastructure investment. This guarantee will apply in all circumstances, and allow the Executive to plan new investment over a five-year period.

The UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive have recently agreed to the allocation of £40 million of unique circumstances funding as part of our commitment to the New Decade, New Approach Agreement. The UK Government remains committed to providing funding for the establishment of a Culture and Community Fund and we are currently reviewing options with regards to the delivery of the fund and the eligibility criteria.

## ■ **Cybercrime: Northern Ireland**

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[180645]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he has taken to promote Northern Ireland as a global cyber security hub as committed to in Annex A, Section 6 of the New Decade New Approach Deal.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The UK Government is committed to meeting its New Decade, New Approach pledge to have 5,000 cyber professionals working in Northern Ireland by 2030.

Northern Ireland already benefits from an exceptionally strong cyber talent pool, including through the Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Research at Queen's University, and as being positioned as the number one international investment location for US cyber security development projects.

The UK cyber sector is worth over £8 billion, and we have invested £1.5 billion in the creation of a UK-wide National Cyber Force. We are continuing to work with key cyber stakeholders in Northern Ireland to identify opportunities to encourage more research and development, and have identified cybersecurity as a sector to support via the Belfast and Derry City and Growth Deals. Moreover, we are looking to accelerate skills programmes and build the talent pipeline going forward so that Northern Ireland can continue to lead the way in cyber security.

## ■ **Northern Ireland Government: Greater London**

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[180646]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what progress has been made on the establishment of a Northern Ireland hub in London as committed to in Annex A, Section 7 of the New Decade New Approach Deal.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The UK Government is committed to delivering on its commitments under the New Decade, New Approach Agreement as well as strengthening the ties across the UK.

We recognise the strong case for a Northern Ireland hub in London and I hope that the Executive might be able to support the proposal, which would strengthen Northern Ireland's presence and impact in London and more widely. However, this proposal has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and remains at the early scoping stage. The next step will be to explore the feasibility of the proposal and the Executive's appetite for a base in London.

In the meantime, InvestNI has an existing hub in London that supports business development, networking and marketing opportunities for InvestNI clients across the UK. Part of the New Deal for Northern Ireland included £8m funding to InvestNI to expand their presence overseas and help increase exports and attract investment.

We are also committed to continuing to showcase the brilliance of Northern Ireland across the UK and to the world. The Centenary of Northern Ireland this year presents a wonderful opportunity to drive this forward, including through our hosting a NI Business Showcase event in London to boost exports and investment into Northern Ireland.

We will continue to work with partners in Northern Ireland and beyond to champion all that it, and the rest of the United Kingdom has to offer.

## ■ Overseas Trade: Northern Ireland

**Colum Eastwood:**

[180644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what progress he has made on (a) establishing a new Trade Advisory Board in Northern Ireland, (b) appointing Northern Ireland Trade Ambassadors and (c) developing a Trade Accelerator Plan as agreed to in Annex A, Section 4 of the New Decade New Approach deal.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The UK Government is committed to delivering on its commitments under the New Decade, New Approach deal and more widely promoting Northern Ireland as a great place to live, work, visit and do business.

On 8 March 2021, we announced the allocation of £8m from the New Deal for Northern Ireland funding, to enhance InvestNI plans to expand their presence into new locations, crucially opening up exciting opportunities for NI businesses to access a rapidly changing global market.

However, the commitments relating to the establishment of a new Trade Advisory Board, appointment of NI Trade Ambassadors and developing a Trade Accelerator Plan are important matters for the Executive to deliver.

The UK Government stands ready to support the Executive with these initiatives.

## ■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

**Dan Jarvis:**

[R] [180503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to bring forward legislative proposals to tackle Northern Ireland legacy issues.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address Northern Ireland legacy issues that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims and ends the cycle of investigations that is not working for anyone.

Engagement with key stakeholders on the way forward has taken place at both ministerial and official level, and continues to take place. We remain committed to working with all parts of the community in Northern Ireland to make progress on this issue as quickly as possible

## ■ UK Trade with EU: Northern Ireland

**Jim Shannon:**

**[178609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what his plans are for the future of the Northern Ireland protocol; and what steps he is taking to consult unionist communities in Northern Ireland on those plans.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Northern Ireland Protocol was designed to protect the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in all its dimensions and the gains of the peace process; prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland; and safeguard Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom. For the Protocol to succeed, it must command the enduring support of all communities.

The Government has provided a proposed work programme to the EU as the first step in working jointly to make progress across the full range of issues identified. Our priority is now to move those discussions forward, address concerns, and ensure the Protocol is given effect in the pragmatic and proportionate way intended.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I continue to meet with community leaders to ensure that the views of people in Northern Ireland are heard throughout this process. Following an informal meeting between Maroš Šefčovič and Lord Frost on 15 April, the priority to engage jointly with the UK, with businesses and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland was reiterated, with meetings to be organised within the next fortnight.

## ■ Veterans: Health Services

**Jack Lopresti:**

**[179030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if his Department will hold discussions with the Northern Ireland Health Minister on ensuring that veterans in Northern Ireland receive urgent medical care, including accessing medical care in Great Britain, to reduce the time they have to wait for surgery.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Armed Forces Covenant makes clear that veterans should not be disadvantaged as a result of their service, including in the provision of healthcare.

Health is a devolved matter, within the competence of the Northern Ireland Executive. The NI Health Minister, Robin Swann, is therefore responsible for issues relating to the health of all citizens in Northern Ireland, including veterans.

The New Decade, New Approach deal committed to the establishment of a Veteran's Commissioner in Northern Ireland and I recently met with the new Commissioner, Danny Kinahan. We are keen to support him in his important work.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I will continue to engage with veterans' support networks in Northern Ireland, the Office of Veterans' Affairs and the NI Department of Health on matters pertaining to veterans' welfare.

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rosie Cooper:** [\[180453\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 10 February 2021, ref ZA55528, on flooded subways in Skelmersdale.

**Boris Johnson:**

My Office has no record of receiving this letter. I have asked my Office to contact the Hon Member's Office to re-send the correspondence and arrange for a reply to be sent.

### ■ Prime Minister: Disclosure of Information

**Layla Moran:** [\[180587\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many discussions he has had with leaders of other nations where a readout has not been provided to the media following the event to date.

**Boris Johnson:**

As has been the case under successive Administrations, Prime Ministers will speak to their international counterparts on a range of issues.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Aviation: Coronavirus

**Mr Virendra Sharma:** [\[178988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to require people seeking to board international flights to provide a negative covid-19 test.

**Robert Courts:**

Pre-departure testing is already a requirement for anyone travelling to the UK. Once international travel resumes, passengers will need to check the requirements of their destination country as they may require proof of a negative Covid-19 test to travel abroad.

## ■ Aviation: EU Countries

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[181164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the UK seeking a reciprocal agreement with the EU on the transfer of UK Civil Aviation Authority Flight Crew Licences to EU member states signed up to the European Union Aviation Safety Agency.

**Robert Courts:**

The UK and EU have agreed a high-level Aviation Safety Agreement, with an annex on Airworthiness. We are aware that there is interest in further annexes on topics such as licencing recognition between the UK and EU. There is potential to negotiate further annexes to the agreement in the future, and the UK will continue to engage with the EU on this matter.

## ■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[180629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations his Department has made to airlines to help ensure British citizens are able to return to the UK during international Covid-19 restrictions and limited international flights.

**Robert Courts:**

Ministers and officials have engaged extensively with the aviation and travel industries throughout the pandemic. We remain committed to an open engagement with the sector and continue to work with industry partners to share information with the aim of ensuring a safe return of international travel and that commercial routes continue to remain open to enable British citizens to return to the UK.

## ■ Bus Services

**Stephen Hammond:**

[R] [\[178672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department plans to use to define model networks in the National Bus Strategy.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Bus Strategy, published on 15 March, sets out the Government's ambitious vision for bus networks across the country, making services more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.

By the end of October 2021, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) are expected to publish Bus Service Improvement Plans, setting out how they will achieve the Strategy's ambitious vision for travel by bus in their area. The Department will shortly publish detailed guidance to assist LTAs on preparing their plans.

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [\[178676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is mandatory for every combined authority and local transport authority to commit to a franchise or an enhanced partnership arrangement for the provision of their bus services by the end of June 2021.

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [\[178968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the funding identified in the National Bus Strategy is dependant on a local transport authority committing to either a franchise or an enhanced partnership arrangement for the provision of their bus services.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Bus Strategy, published on 15 March, sets an expectation that by 30 June, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and their local bus operators have committed to establishing an Enhanced Partnership or the LTA has started the statutory process of franchising bus services.

From 1 July 2021, only LTAs and operators who meet these requirements will continue to receive the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant or any new sources of bus funding. From April 2022, LTAs will need to have an Enhanced Partnership in place, or be following the statutory process to decide whether to implement a franchising scheme, in order to receive the new discretionary schemes of bus funding.

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [\[178966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the definition is of socially necessary networks in the National Bus Strategy.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) have the ability to subsidise bus services that are not commercially viable and which they determine necessary for their local area. As outlined in the Strategy, we expect LTAs in collaboration with bus operators to deliver more comprehensive, socially necessary services, including services to smaller and isolated places and more services in the evenings and at weekends.

We will issue further guidance on the meaning and role of socially necessary services in due course.

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [\[178967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to provide statutory backing to the policy proposals in the National Bus Strategy.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Bus Strategy sets out the Government's vision for bus services, and how it will be delivered through local transport authorities (LTAs) using existing powers in the Bus Services Act 2017 to form Enhanced Partnership and franchising arrangements; those powers provide the statutory backing for delivery. The strategy sets out what LTAs and bus operators must do, and from when, in order to access



discretionary sources of bus funding, including the £3 billion for buses announced in February 2020.

#### ■ **Bus Services Act 2017**

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [[178970](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to amend the provisions of the Bus Services Act 2017.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Bus Services Act 2017 prevents further local authority-owned bus companies being set up from scratch, and the National Bus Strategy commits that we will review whether that remains right.

If the review concludes it should be changed, a legislative proposal will be brought forward in due course. We will also update our existing guidance on using the Enhanced Partnership and franchising powers in the Act, to make it easier for operators and local transport authorities to focus on what they want to achieve.

#### ■ **Bus Services: Cost Benefit Analysis**

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [[178668](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the National Bus Strategy, what cost-benefit analysis his Department has undertaken on the value of (a) bus franchising and (b) enhanced partnerships.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The cost and benefits of franchising and enhanced partnerships vary by authority. The Bus Services Act 2017 Impact Assessment details cost benefit analysis of illustrative scenarios.

It is for Mayoral Combined Authorities and other local transport authorities on a case-by-case basis to decide whether to pursue franchising or an enhanced partnership.

The franchising legislation specifically requires a franchising assessment business case, which considers the costs and benefits of franchising, to be prepared by the authority.

#### ■ **Bus Services: Finance**

**Stephen Hammond:** [R] [[178674](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to make funding for buses available beyond the £3 billion worth of funding set out in the National Bus Strategy.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Bus Strategy announced £3 billion of transformational and long-term funding for buses.

In addition, the Government currently provides up to £27 million a week to support bus services through the COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant scheme and the

ongoing Bus Service Operator Grant which is worth approximately £260 million each year. The Government also supports council spending of around £1 billion a year on concessionary travel.

## ■ Bus Services: Private Sector

**Stephen Hammond:**

[R] [\[178969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a private bus operator will be permitted to provide bus services outside of an enhanced partnership arrangement as proposed in the National Bus Strategy in the event that that operator is willing to forego any form of public subsidy for the provision of those bus services.

**Rachel Maclean:**

An enhanced partnership scheme specifies standards of service that must be met by all operators running local bus services in the scheme area, regardless of whether they receive subsidy. A private bus operator cannot provide local bus services outside of the terms of an enhanced partnership arrangement, irrespective of how the bus operator is funded. The only exemption is for community bus services provided under section 22 of the Transport Act 1985.

These standards can apply in a specific geographical area set out in the enhanced partnership scheme. For example, it can require all local bus operators running services in that area to participate in a defined multi-operator ticketing scheme. Or standards can apply to individual bus routes. For example, it can specify limits on the frequency of local bus services on that route.

## ■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[179537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to ensure the affordability of bus fares in rural areas.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government pays almost £260 million per year in Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), which benefits passengers by helping operators keep fares down, and enabling operators to run services that might otherwise be unprofitable and could lead to cancellation, particularly in rural areas.

In the National Bus Strategy, published on 15 March, we set out our intention to consult on reforms to BSOG. We will consider the needs of rural bus users amongst many things.

The Government is committed to ensuring the unique needs of rural areas are met, and so will boost the Rural Services Delivery Grant by £4 million to £85 million next year, making it the highest rural grant paid to date.

## ■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[179668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to purchase the remaining 3,200 zero-emission buses in the 2021-22 financial year.

**Rachel Maclean:**

On 30 March 2021 the Government launched the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme. Under this scheme local transport authorities will be able to bid for up to £120 million in 2021-22 to introduce zero emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them. The funding from this scheme could assist with the introduction of up to 500 zero emission buses and associated infrastructure.

In addition, £50 million was provided in 2020-21 through the All-Electric Bus Town or City scheme. This funding could assist with the introduction of up to 300 zero emission buses and associated infrastructure. Together, Government funding could support the purchase of an initial 800 zero emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

The Department is currently considering how to support the introduction of zero emission buses and associated infrastructure in future years.

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[179669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many of the new zero emission buses will be manufactured in the UK.

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[179670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many of the new zero emission buses will be manufactured overseas.

**Rachel Maclean:**

On 30 March 2021 the Government launched the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme. Under this scheme local transport authorities will be able to bid for up to £120 million to introduce zero emission buses and associated infrastructure.

Decisions around the purchase of zero emission buses will be made by local areas.

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[179671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average time taken is from the announcement of previous Government funding rounds for zero-emission buses to those buses being available to operators to run services.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Previous government funding schemes have supported the introduction of low emission, ultra-low emission and zero emission buses and associated infrastructure.

The time between the announcement of Government funding for zero emission buses and their introduction into service will vary depending on a number of factors including: the vehicle technology that is chosen, the approach of the local area to

procuring the vehicles, and the associated infrastructure required to support the vehicles.

**Sam Tarry:** [\[179672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by what date orders should be placed to ensure the delivery of 4,000 zero emission buses by 2025.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The time between the allocation of Government funding for zero emission buses and their introduction into service will vary depending on a number of factors including: the vehicle technology that is chosen, the approach of the local area to procuring the vehicles, and the associated infrastructure required to support the vehicles.

On 30 March 2021, the Government launched the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme. Under this scheme local transport authorities will be able to bid for up to £120 million to introduce zero emission buses and associated infrastructure.

The scheme is a two-stage funding competition consisting of an Expression of Interest stage and a business case development stage. Local transport authorities will be able to choose whether they want to follow a fast track application process or a standard application process, depending on how well developed their proposals are.

#### ■ Buses: Procurement

**Sam Tarry:** [\[179667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to bring forward the end date for his Department's competition to select areas for bus orders so that the necessary infrastructure can be built.

**Rachel Maclean:**

On 30 March 2021 the Government launched the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme. Under this scheme local transport authorities will be able to bid for up to £120 million in 2021-22 to introduce zero emission buses and associated infrastructure.

Following feedback from local transport authorities and industry, local transport authorities can choose to follow a fast track application process if they already have well developed proposals. This will allow local transport authorities to move quickly in their bid to secure funding for zero emission buses and associated infrastructure.

#### ■ Carbon Emissions

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[179056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department's forthcoming decarbonisation strategy will include carbon reduction targets for the (a) aviation and (b) shipping sectors.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan will include plans to tackle emissions in every form of transport, including maritime and aviation, and how these plans come together to deliver transport's contributions to carbon budgets and net zero.

**■ Delivery Services: Electric Vehicles****Stephanie Peacock:**[\[179350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support businesses to electrify their road delivery fleet.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We recognise that business fleets have an important role to play in the transition to zero emission driving. A central part to supporting this transition is the recently announced 2030 phase out of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, and the upcoming consultation on phasing out the sale of new diesel heavy goods vehicles.

The Government is investing £2.8 billion through a package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. This includes £582m for grant schemes to help with the cost of purchasing vehicles and £1.3 billion for the associated recharging infrastructure, which supports businesses to make the transition. We are showing leadership by working towards electrifying the Government's fleet. In 2017 the Government committed that 25% of central Government cars will be ultra low emission by 2022, and in 2018 through the Road to Zero strategy committed to 100% ultra low emission cars by 2030.

The Government has funded a series of R&D competitions, focussed on developing zero emission vehicle and associated infrastructure technology, including seeking solutions to electrify fleets and improve fleet charging capability. The £20m Low Emission Freight and Logistics Trial funded a series of industry-led trials of alternative propulsion technologies for UK commercial fleets. Other R&D programmes supporting fleet electrification include the £10m Wireless EV Charging for Commercial Users competition to examine the potential of wireless charging technology for taxi and home delivery fleets.

**■ Department for Transport: Members and Ministers****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[175759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish minutes of meetings between the Minister of State in his Department and hon. Members representing constituencies in the North of England in each of the last 12 months.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

I meet with MPs on a regular basis. Most recently, I held a MP surgery that all MPs were invited to on the 24th March. I am happy to engage with any MPs who request a meeting.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[175760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what dates the Minister of State in his Department held discussions with hon. Members representing constituencies in the North of England in the last 12 months.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

I meet with MPs on a regular basis. Most recently, I held a MP surgery that all MPs were invited to on the 24th March. I am happy to engage with any MPs who request a meeting.

■ **Department for Transport: Rail Delivery Group**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[175761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the (a) dates and (b) minutes of meetings between the Minister of State in his Department and representatives of National Rail in each of the last 12 months.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

National Rail is a trading name licensed for use by the Rail Delivery Group used to promote passenger railway services. In line with their roles and portfolios, both Ministers of State have met with the Rail Delivery Group and their representatives when appropriate over the past year.

■ **Driving Licences: France**

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[178819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has received from UK citizens living in France on the problems that those citizens are encountering in exchanging a UK driving licence for a local driving licence; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is committed to establishing reciprocal arrangements with France with the minimum of bureaucracy. The Government has secured interim arrangements with the French authorities which will allow UK licence holders to continue to use their valid UK licence until 1 January 2022. We are working with the French government to finalise a permanent arrangement and to find a solution for those with expired UK licences. The Government commits to providing an update as soon as possible.

■ **Driving Tests: Waiting Lists**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[179186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the backlog of drivers that are waiting to take a practical driving test as quickly as possible.

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[179187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to reimburse learner drivers who have had to retake their driving theory test as a result of the cancellation of practical driving tests due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has a number of measures in place to increase the availability of practical driving tests when it is safe for them to resume. These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). The DVSA has also started a recruitment campaign to increase the number of examiners. The aim is to increase testing capacity and reduce the backlog as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners.

There are no current plans to reimburse learners drivers, given that they will have already received the service for which they paid.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) pays its contractor, Pearson, per theory test delivered. If candidates were exempted from having to pay for a retake then the DVSA and in turn other fee payers would incur these costs. This would be unfair to fee payers who would not benefit from the arrangement. In addition, applications for a re-test would need to be validated and systems amended to remove the requirement for payment in these cases. The DVSA's focus should rightly be on developing solutions to address the backlog of practical driving tests that has arisen as a result of the pandemic.

## ■ East Coast Railway Line

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[178909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has for the long-term capacity of the East Coast Main Line between Berwick and Northallerton.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands – which is looking at how best to deliver High Speed 2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail and other Network Rail programmes – will be published soon. The Department recognises the strategic importance of the East Coast Main Line (ECML) and is working with Network Rail to identify the infrastructure upgrades needed to increase capacity between Northallerton and Newcastle. Network Rail is also preparing an assessment of the Newcastle to Edinburgh section of the ECML and, together with the Integrated Rail Plan, this will help the Department assess the long-term capacity requirements of the route.



## ■ Electric Vehicles

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[180941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of public sector fleets have made the transition to electric vehicles in the UK; and when he estimates the rest to fully transition.

**Rachel Maclean:**

At Autumn Budget 2017, Government committed to electrify 25% of central Government car fleets by 2022. The Government's Road to Zero Strategy published in 2018, further committed to electrifying 100% of central Government car fleets by 2030. As at October 2020 there were 1,848 ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) across the central Government car fleet. This means progress towards the target of 100% of central Government car fleets to be ultra low emission by 2030 for central government is 8%. The Government does not hold figures for ULEV uptake in wider public sector fleets such as local authorities and NHS trusts. But we welcome the increasing numbers of commitments in this space, including Hampshire County Council that has recently approved a policy that will see electric vehicles become the default choice across the authority, and Gloucestershire Constabulary that is soon to adopt 75 new electric vehicles into their fleet.

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[180942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the role of telematics in assisting the rollout of electric vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is aware that telematics is being used by the fleet industry as an important tool to assess the readiness of fleet vehicles for electrification, making it a valuable tool in the move to reduce emissions from road transport. Through the Energy Savings Trust (EST), the Government encourages the widespread adoption of low and zero emissions motoring by businesses operating fleets, company car owners and private motorists.

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[180943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles in public and private sector fleets ahead of the 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government recognises the role fleets have to play in the transition to zero emission driving. Public and private fleet operators are able to take advantage of a range of grant funding schemes for cars, vans and trucks which are provided through the £1.5 billion the Government committed to support the early market. In November, the Government pledged a further £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. This includes £1.3 billion to support charging infrastructure over the next four years, targeting £950m support on rapid chargepoints on motorways and major roads to facilitate long

journeys, and £365m for installing chargepoints in motorists' homes, at workplaces and on residential streets. We will consider what additional support might be appropriate to support fleet operators. The Government is leading by example and has committed to electrify 100% of the central government car fleet by 2030.

■ **Ferries: Isle of Man**

**Kim Johnson:**

**[178537]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the Isle of Man Government on the potential effect of the Liverpool City Region Freeport on infrastructure projects affecting Isle of Man Steam Packet services between Liverpool and the Isle of Man; and if he will make a statement.

**Kim Johnson:**

**[178673]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of the Liverpool City Region Freeport on existing (a) road, (b) rail and (c) ports infrastructure.

**Robert Courts:**

There have been no Ministerial discussions at this point in time with representatives of the Isle of Man Government on this subject. My Department will consider the implications of the Freeport business cases for our transport networks and any potential future infrastructure investment/decisions.

My Department recognizes that appropriate links will be vital to ensure the success of the UK's newly established Freeports. My Department will consider the implications of the Freeport business cases for our transport networks and future infrastructure investment/decisions.

■ **Global Travel Taskforce**

**Clive Lewis:**

**[178667]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Global Travel Taskforce report to the Prime Minister on international travel of 12 April 2021, whether the report or its findings or recommendations will be published; and when the Global Travel Taskforce will next report after that.

**Robert Courts:**

The "Report of the Global Travel Taskforce: The Safe Return of International Travel" was published on 9 April 2021. It can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-travel-taskforce-safe-return-of-international-travel>

The report and its annexes have also been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

**■ High Speed 2 Railway Line****Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish minutes of meetings between the Minister of State in his Department and representatives of HS2 operators in each of the last 12 months.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department publishes information about ministerial meetings, including dates, who the meeting is with, and the purpose of the meeting. While minutes of meetings are not published, to enable Ministers and officials space to have full and frank discussions about developing policy, we are openly reporting progress on the project to Parliament twice-yearly. Our latest report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hs2-6-monthly-report-to-parliament-march-2021>

**■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Coronavirus****Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[174786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the feasibility of the proposed 2031 opening date for High Speed Rail Two.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

We have recently published the second HS2 Parliamentary report with an update provided on potential Covid-related impacts on Phase One. HS2 Ltd is currently re-planning its schedule for Phase One to mitigate slower than planned progress on construction, including verified impacts from Covid-19. However, this will not impact the projected Delivery into Service date range of 2029-2033.

The full impact of Covid-19 on cost and schedule continues to be assessed, including work to disaggregate Covid-19 impacts from other cost and schedule impacts on the programme.

**■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Euston Station****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[174949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the number of planned HS2 platforms at Euston Station has been reduced from 11 to 10.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[175996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of reducing the number of High Speed Two platforms from 11 to 10 at Euston Station on the delivery of that programme.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[175997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policy on delivering High Speed Two in full of the proposed reduction in platforms from 11 to 10 at Euston Station.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

As set out in Autumn 2020 and in March 2021 Parliamentary Report, development of the baseline scheme at Euston Station has identified a significant cost pressure. As this remains at the design stage, work is ongoing to develop an optimised design and delivery strategy for Euston Station, including consideration of opportunities, efficiencies and scope reductions to address identified cost pressures.

As part of this work, the Department and HS2 Ltd have, with the involvement of other partners, been investigating whether building the HS2 station in a single phase would speed up delivery and reduce the overall cost. This work is currently indicating that moving to a slightly smaller, simpler HS2 station at Euston would have some benefits in terms of terms of reducing costs and risks. This work will help inform the way forward, with a final decision expected in Spring 2021.

Initial HS2 Ltd analysis indicates that moving to a slightly smaller HS2 station at Euston maintains the station infrastructure capacity to run all of the services in the planned HS2 Phase 2b Train Service Specification. The future development of the final HS2 timetable, in due course, will have close regard to optimising resilience and capacity.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[174950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the costs associated with reducing the planned number of HS2 platforms at Euston Station from 11 to 10.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd are continuing to investigate whether building the HS2 station in a single phase would speed up delivery and reduce the overall cost. Work to assess the impact of the proposed design changes to the HS2 Euston Station are ongoing. Initial HS2 Ltd analysis indicates that moving to a slightly smaller HS2 station at Euston maintains the station infrastructure capacity to run all of the services in the planned HS2 Phase 2b Train Service Specification. A final impact assessment is expected in Spring 2021.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[175998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to make further reductions to High Speed Two following the reduction of proposed platforms at Euston Station.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

There are currently no plans to reduce core scope for the consented HS2 scheme (as set out in the 2017 and 2021 Acts of Parliament for Phase One and Phase 2a respectively) outside of the Euston area. The two HS2 Acts are specifically designed to provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate scope changes where appropriate or

necessary. On Phase One, an alteration to extend the Bromford Tunnel in the West Midlands has already been promoted in 2020.

### ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Jason McCartney:**

[\[175803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress has been made on the eastern leg of HS2 that connects the line to Yorkshire.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The government is committed to ensuring Yorkshire reaps the benefits on high-speed services. The Integrated Rail Plan will consider the sequencing and delivery of HS2, as well as Northern Powerhouse Rail and other rail investment projects to ensure the benefits of these investments are delivered to passengers and communities more quickly. We intend to publish the IRP this Spring.

### ■ Large Goods Vehicles: UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[180447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the cultural and creative touring working group on the effect of EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement rules on specialist hauliers.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department for Transport continues to have regular discussions with colleagues across Whitehall on this issue, and is working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport through their touring working group. The Department also continues engage directly with the road haulage sector to help them adapt to the new rules under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

### ■ Local Pinch Point Fund

**Ben Bradley:**

[\[179490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether applications made to the Pinch Points Fund will be automatically resubmitted to the Levelling Up Fund.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund announced at the 2020 Spending Review will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities, including investing in local transport schemes across the UK.

The Fund will supersede existing local growth funding streams in England including the Local Pinch Points Fund. Projects previously submitted to the Local Pinch Points Fund will not be automatically resubmitted into the Levelling Up Fund.

Department officials have written to local authorities asking them whether they would like any Local Pinch Points Fund Expression(s) of Interest submitted to the DfT to be considered for funding through the Levelling Up Fund in 2021/22 and local authorities in England are encouraged to consider prioritising these projects for the first round of

the Fund. These will be subject to the same assessment process as set out in the technical guidance published on the UK Government website on 26 March.

■ **Manchester Piccadilly Station: Domestic Visits**

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has travelled on the TransPennine train from Manchester to Hull.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Hull Paragon station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Manchester Piccadilly train station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Darlington train station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Sheffield train station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Leeds railway station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Newcastle Central railway station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has visited Liverpool Lime Street railway station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State in his Department plans to visit station operators at Newcastle Station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State in his Department plans to visit station operators at Manchester Piccadilly Train Station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State in his Department plans to visit station operators at Sheffield Train Station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State in his Department plans to visit station operators at Manchester Victoria Station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State in his Department plans to visit station operators at Scarborough Railway Station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[175753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister of State in his Department plans to visit station operators at Cleethorpes Railway Station.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Ministers very much look forward to visiting a range of stations and locations in due course once circumstances allow.

#### ■ **Ministers: Department for Transport**

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide the dates of meetings the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has had with hon. Members representing constituencies in the north of England since his taking up that post.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

I meet with MPs on a regular basis. Most recently, I held a MP surgery that all MPs were invited to on the 24th March. I am happy to engage with any MPs who request a meeting.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide the minutes of the meetings the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has had with hon. Members representing constituencies in the north of England, since his taking up that post.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

I meet with MPs on a regular basis. Most recently, I held a MP surgery that all MPs were invited to on the 24th March. I am happy to engage with any MPs who request a meeting.



## ■ Network Rail: Contracts

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) internal rate of return and (b) profit margin has been for rail renewal contracts let by Network Rail in each of the last five years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The information requested is commercially sensitive and is therefore not available to the Department for Transport or Network Rail.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much Network Rail has spent on agency contracts in each of the last five years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail has directly spent £478m on agency/contractors over the last 5 financial years (2016/17 to 2020/21)

£M	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	GRAND TOTAL
<b>Agency or Contractor Costs</b>	96.5	85.5	78.4	91.5	126.5	478.4

## ■ Network Rail: Zero Hours Contracts

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information Network Rail holds on the number of agency staff working on railway infrastructure contracts let by Network Rail.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information (a) he and (b) Network Rail holds on the number of staff on zero hours contracts working on railway infrastructure contracts let by Network Rail.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information (a) his Department and (b) Network Rail holds on the spend on contracts let by Network Rail which use workers on zero hours contracts, in the last five years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail does not hold this information as it is a commercial matter for suppliers as to how they recruit their workers. Network Rail has put in place a Code of Conduct for its supply chain that does not preclude the use of zero hours contracts, but outlines key requirements in terms of safety, driving, health & wellbeing, competency

& training, tools & equipment, behaviours and ethics for workers deployed on Network Rail contracts. The Code of Conduct is a requirement in all new contracts.

■ **Passengers: North of England**

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[174770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what meetings the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has had with passenger groups representing disabled people based in the North of England since his appointment.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Ministers hold meetings with a wide range of stakeholders including operators and passenger groups. During the pandemic these meetings have been held virtually. I am the Minister responsible for HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Transpennine route upgrade, and skills. Chris Heaton-Harris MP is Minister of State and has responsibility for rail, Williams Review, Beeching, Crossrail 2, East West Rail, cycling and walking, accessibility and corporate.

■ **Railway Stations: Access**

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[181025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made in assessing the need for investment to extend step-free access to all stations on the rail network.

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[181026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the timescale for delivering step-free access to all stations on the rail network.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

We will shortly be commissioning accessibility audits of all mainline stations that will allow us to prioritise future investment in station accessibility.

Further measures to improve rail accessibility will be included in the forthcoming rail reform White Paper.

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[181027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £4.2 billion for intra-city transport settlements referred to in Build Back Better: our plan for growth published by the Treasury in March 2021 will be allocated to extending step-free access to existing stations on the rail network.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

As announced at Budget 2020 and confirmed in the subsequent Spending Review, the Government is investing £4.2 billion in the transport networks of eight city regions across England from 2022/23.

This funding will be delivered through multi-year consolidated transport settlements negotiated with central Government and based on plans put forward by city regions.

It will be for the eligible Combined Authorities, in their role as the local transport authorities, to prioritise projects within their local areas.

The Department is looking forward to working towards and agreeing settlements based on each eligible city region's transport priorities.

#### ■ **Railway Stations: Swansea**

**Jonathan Edwards:**

**[179010]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has received from the Welsh Government in support of the proposal for a West Wales Parkway station near Swansea for the South Wales Mainline.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

I am not aware of any formal representations received from the Welsh Government in relation to the proposal for a West Wales Parkway station. However, my department is in regular communication with them regarding the progression of this scheme."

#### ■ **Railways: Bridges**

**Ian Mearns:**

**[179040]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect Highways England's policy to infill bridges which spanned railway lines using permitted development powers on the Government's policy to (a) increase walking and cycle routes and (b) reinstate disused railway lines.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Highways England manages the Historical Railways Estate on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport and has been in touch with all the local authorities affected, to advise them of its plans, and to see if they have any use for the structures. Highways England are pausing works where local authorities have raised queries about the works, and where there is credible interest for possible re-purposing and transfer of ownership of the assets. The Department has also asked Highways England to consult with the relevant local authorities concerning the retention, where practicable, of access for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, Highways England has arranged for seven structures to be transferred to local authorities which wish to use them for cycle routes.

Permitted Development Orders exist in order to prevent an emergency from occurring and Highways England would only use these powers for that purpose. Where the need for emergency works has been identified, letters are sent to the relevant planning authorities to check if there are any requirements or restrictions. Highways England uses permitted development rights (where appropriate) to undertake some of the infilling and demolition schemes where issues of overriding public safety are in play. Most of the works completed to date have been granted full planning permission

The Department and Highways England are working together to ensure opportunities for the reinstatement of disused railway lines are identified and considered wherever possible.

**■ Railways: Contracts**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [179395]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding he has provided for rail renewals contracts let by Network Rail in the last five years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

For the financial years 15/16 to 19/20 the Secretary of State for Transport has provided £12.084 billion in funding for renewals contracts let by Network Rail in England and Wales. However, these figures do include some internal costs, such as staff and materials. Due to the way in which Network Rail record expenditure, it is not possible to extrapolate the internal costs from these figures.

**■ Railways: Coronavirus**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [179384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with rail operators on their planned timetable changes following the reduction of services in response to covid-19 guidance.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

In response to Covid-19 guidance, the Department asked rail operators to reduce the numbers of services they run to reflect lower passenger demand, deliver better value for taxpayers, and to ensure that services remain reliable.

The Department continues to work closely with operators and Network Rail to ensure that services are appropriate to passenger demand whilst responding to the challenges of Covid-19 and delivering value for the tax payer. From 12 April, operators have increased provision to around 75% of pre-pandemic service levels and targeted areas of potentially high demand.

**■ Railways: Electrification**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [176011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, if he will publish details of the 40km of line(s) electrified in 2019-20 in England.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail publish scheme by scheme data on electrification projects in table 66 of their annual return, which is available at <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/who-we-are/publications-and-resources/regulatory-and-licensing/annual-return/>

**■ Railways: England**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, if he will publish details of the 212km of line(s) electrified in 2019-20 in Wales.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, if he will publish details of the 554km of line(s) electrified in England in 2018-19.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, if he will publish details of the 291km of line(s) electrified in England in 2017-18.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712, if he will publish details of the 7km of line(s) electrified in England in 2015-16.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178618]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, if he will publish details of the 89km of line(s) electrified in England in 2014-15.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, if he will publish details of the 61km of line(s) electrified in England in 2013-14.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail publish scheme by scheme data on electrification projects in table 66 of their annual return, which is available at <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/who-we-are/publications-and-resources/regulatory-and-licensing/annual-return/>

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712 on Railways: Electrification, for what reason there was no electrification of lines in England in 2016-17.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712, for what reason there was no electrification of railway lines in England in 2012-13.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [178626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170712, for what reason there was no electrification of lines in Wales between 2012 and 2019.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Decisions about rail enhancements including electrification reflect issues including value for money, affordability and deliverability. These considerations have meant variation in the amount of electrification delivered over time across the country.

However, 1,110 miles of track in Great Britain were electrified for passenger traffic between 2010 and March 2020, compared to 63 miles between 1997 and 2010.

**■ Railways: Freight****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[178539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to ensure that projects, such as Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges approved as National Significant Infrastructure Projects meet project projections after operations commence.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) proposals should meet market requirements and the National Networks – National Policy Statement (NN-NPS) states that they should be located near the business markets they will serve. The NN-NPS states that at a minimum SRFIs should be capable of handling four trains per day.

The Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State use the policy framework of the NN-NPS as the primary basis for making decisions on Development Consent Order (DCO) applications for SRFIs, including considering the potential benefits and adverse impacts of the scheme. Currently, it is for the private sector operators of SRFIs to ensure market conditions remain favourable to ensure SRFI operation is sustained and viable once operational.

**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[178549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to assess proposals for Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges; and what criteria is used to ensure that those projects meet stated objectives.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Under the Planning Act 2008, prospective developers of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) must submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate. If the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, accepts the application they must carry out an examination of the proposed SRFI and produce a report and recommendation. The Secretary of State must then make a decision on the proposal.

Both the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State use the framework of the National Networks – National Policy Statement (NN-NPS) as the primary basis for making decisions on DCO applications for SRFIs, including taking into account the potential benefits and adverse impacts of the scheme.

## ■ Railways: North East

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[178564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that the North East receives equitable investment as part of the Integrated Rail Plan; and what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) Tyne and Wear Metro can maintain services as passenger levels remain affected by the covid-19 outbreak and (b) the Leamside rail line is re-opened.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Ahead of finalising the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), Ministers are fully considering the evidence from all stakeholders, including those from the North East, as well as the NIC's Rail Needs Assessment, to ensure that the benefits of investment in rail infrastructure are delivered to passengers and communities more quickly, levelling up and spreading greater prosperity across the country.

Government is committed to investing nearly £340m to upgrade the Tyne and Wear Metro fleet and secure its future for decades to come. The first new trains arrive from 2022 and enter passenger service in 2023. The Government has invested £317m in a major Metro renewals and refurbishment programme to 2020/21 and has supported the running costs with a £256m revenue grant over the same period. We have confirmed £20m of capital funding for renewals this year and £27.1m to support operations.

The proposal to reinstate the Leamside Line is being examined by Transport for the North to inform the design of Northern Powerhouse Rail, and, as such, is being considered as part of the IIRP. Its forthcoming publication will therefore inform the Department's planning for the long-term future of both the East Coast Main Line and additional rail routes throughout the North East.

## ■ Railways: North of England

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[174769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what meetings the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has had with passenger groups based in the North of England since his appointment.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Ministers hold meetings with a wide range of stakeholders including operators and passenger groups. During the pandemic these meetings have been held virtually. I am the Minister responsible for HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Transpennine route upgrade, and skills. Chris Heaton-Harris MP is Minister of State and has responsibility for rail, Williams Review, Beeching, Crossrail 2, East West Rail, cycling and walking, accessibility and corporate.



**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[174771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish the minutes of all meetings the Minister of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle, has attended on the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

As part of my responsibilities as the Minister of State I have many meetings regarding the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[174780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to improve the hygiene and social distancing capacity of the Transpennine Rail upgrade in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The business case for the Transpennine Rail Upgrade is being developed. Steps to improve hygiene and social distancing will be fully considered as part of the delivery of the programme. In the interim the rail industry will continue to actively encourage passengers to socially distance, manage passenger flows and increase cleaning regimes.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[174781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of skills shortages in the transport sector on the effectiveness of the Transpennine Rail upgrade.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

On TRU, Network Rail has developed an operating model which utilises two separate alliances on the east and west of the Transpennine route. These aim to tap into the best capability from rail and construction to mitigate the risks of skill shortages.

**Jason McCartney:**

[\[175804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress has been made on updates to the Transpennine rail route.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

£589m funding announced in July 2020 has enabled further design and development work on the Transpennine Route Upgrade programme. The first stages of Overhead Line Electrification (OLE) installation have begun between York and Church Fenton, and in the Spring Network Rail will be carrying out engineering work between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge to support future masts and electric wires.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[176005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 171706 on Railways: North of England, what plans he has to electrify the route between Leeds and York via Cross Gates and Garforth.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

£589m funding announced in July 2020 has enabled further development of electrification design for the section between Church Fenton and York. We are actively reviewing the case for TRU to deliver full electrification on the route, with construction decisions to be taken once TRU's full business case is approved.

**Railways: Safety****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[179393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many rail workers hold personal track safety tickets allowing them to work on mainline railway infrastructure.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail inform me that there are 93,840 Personal Trackside Safety (PTS) competence holders.

**Railways: Season Tickets****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[179383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of rail operating companies on the implementation of flexible season tickets.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Government recognises the change in travel patterns, the impact of COVID-19 and therefore the need to accommodate a more flexible style of working and travelling.

The Department is regularly engaging with the rail industry and operators to develop a solution and make flexible ticketing a reality for commuters. We will provide further details in line with the Government's four-step roadmap out of lockdown.

**Railways: Staff****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[176007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Questions 171702 and 171703 on railways: staff, when he plans to publish that White Paper.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[176008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Questions 171702 and 171703 on railways: staff, what factors and characteristics will be examined in that White Paper.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The government is committed to bringing forward vital sector-wide reforms and commissioned Keith Williams to carry out the first root and branch review of the rail industry in a generation. The Williams Rail Review was in its final stages at the outbreak of Covid-19 and was then extended to ensure that its conclusions were

appropriate in the light of the ongoing pandemic. The reforms are as important as ever and the government intends on publishing a White Paper with details of its plans for rail reform when the course of the pandemic becomes clearer.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[176010]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 170710 on Railways: Staff, if he will publish that diversity data in accessible formats.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

There are no current plans to publish the information currently being provided to the Department by Train Operating Companies (TOC's) on the diversity of its workforce.

Information from TOC's under Emergency Recovery Measure Agreements (ERMA) has started to be received by the Department, for initial consideration. Those TOC's not contracted under an ERMA do not currently have this obligation in place and as such the information currently collated will not be an accurate reflection of the whole rail industry workforce.

## ■ Rolling Stock: Diesel Engines

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

**[175754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of diesel rolling stock on the environment.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Rail is a comparatively green mode of transport, but the Government is working to further reduce emissions and reduce the impact of air and noise pollution.

Diesel freight and passenger trains in Great Britain created 1,788 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> e last year (April 2019-April 2020). The Government will reduce these emissions through our ambition to phase out diesel-only trains by 2040 and deliver a net-zero transport system by 2050.

The Department is working to gain a more comprehensive understanding of air pollution in stations by funding a new £4.5 million air quality monitoring network. This will be rolled out over the next three years, with air quality monitors installed in around 100 stations across England and Wales from summer 2021. Once established, the network will help to identify priority locations where air quality improvement measures are most needed.

Noise from the railway can have an impact on the lives of the people who live along its routes, and the industry is working to minimise the impact of noise from the railway on its neighbours and on passengers. The Department supports periodic strategic noise mapping to identify the most sensitive areas on and around the rail network that are exposed to railway noise. We assess the sensitive areas as described in the Noise Action Plan: Railways - this plan is updated every 5 years and was last updated in 2019.

## ■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[180444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the level of emissions that, based on current projections and without the introduction of any new measures to reduce emissions, will be attributable to (a) domestic and (b) international shipping by 2050.

**Robert Courts:**

The Department for Transport has commissioned extensive research and modelling assessing a range of emissions scenarios for both international and domestic shipping out to 2050.

These scenarios consider both 'business as usual' emissions and a range of possible interventions that could be undertaken in the UK, or through the auspices of the International Maritime Organization.

This analysis has been published on Gov.UK at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-maritime-plan-maritime-2050-environment-route-map](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-maritime-plan-maritime-2050-environment-route-map)

## ■ Stratford Station

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[174782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that there are effective links between (a) the High Speed Rail One network, (b) the planned High Speed Rail Two network and (c) Stratford International station.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Secretary of State commissioned the HS1 Connectivity Study Report in 2015 which considered a wide range of high speed rail and conventional rail options to link High Speed 2 (HS2) with High Speed 1 (HS1) at St Pancras International and Stratford International stations. No suitable option could be identified that delivered value for money for the tax payer due to the complexity in construction, excessive costs and the level of disruption it would cause.

The Department for Transport is working with HS2 Ltd, Camden Council, Transport for London and other local stakeholders to enhance non-rail connectivity between the HS2 station at Euston and the HS1 station at St Pancras as part of the planned wider redevelopment of the Euston area.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[174783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of High Speed Rail Two on traffic volumes at Stratford International station.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[174784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of High Speed Rail 2 on congestion at central London stations.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The impacts on central London stations (and all London stations including Stratford International) were reviewed as part of the AP3 Euston scheme for the Bill in September 2015. The Transport assessment to this set out the cross-London rail impacts for the design year of 2041 in section 3.5\*. It should be noted that Stratford International was not identified as having any substantial change in use at that time.

As neither HS2 Ltd nor the Department believe the impact of HS2 will cause a material change to the underlying long-term usage of the London rail network, the analysis does not currently need updating.

\*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/460749/SES2 AP3 ES Volume 5 Transport Assessment TR-001-000 Part 2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/460749/SES2_AP3_ES_Volume_5_Transport_Assessment_TR-001-000_Part_2.pdf)

**Ms Lyn Brown:****[174787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to plans for High Speed Rail Two, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of adding Stratford International as an operating station to the High Speed Rail One route.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

There are no plans to add Stratford International as an operating station on the HS2 network. The Department considered Stratford International in the initial HS2 station selection process, however, it was not taken forward as it was not considered to release the same level of benefits to onward connectivity and passenger journey times as the planned HS2 London stations.

The Department for Transport also considered a number of rail and tunnel link options between HS2 and HS1, including a long tunnel connecting Stratford International station and Old Oak Common. However, these were rejected on the basis of excessive cost and disruption.

**■ Transport for the North: Finance****Dame Diana Johnson:****[175755]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister of State for Transport of 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 448, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of Transport for the North's ability to charge £2.5 million of the costs that previously came from its core budget to the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme on improvements to the North's rail network.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

This decision has no impact on the Government's ambitions to significantly improve the North's rail network.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[175756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State for Transport of 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 448, what his Department's definition is of a (a) budget reduction and (b) budget adjustment.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

On this occasion, the terms 'reduction' and 'adjustment' were used interchangeably to refer to the change in Transport for the North's core funding allocation for 2020/21 and 2021/22.

## ■ **Transport: Carbon Emissions**

**Christian Wakeford:**

[\[179736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to reduce overall travel through the upcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set out a bold and ambitious pathway for decarbonisation. The Plan will take a holistic and cross-modal approach to decarbonising the entire transport system, and as part of this will include measures to accelerate modal shift to public and active transport.

**Christian Wakeford:**

[\[179737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the upcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set out quantified emissions reductions pathways for decarbonising the transport sector.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) will provide quantified estimated greenhouse gas (GHG) emission projections based on implementation of the policies in the Plan, including estimates of uncertainty. The Plan will also include projections broken down by transport sub-sectors.

**Christian Wakeford:**

[\[179738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) economic and (b) employment benefits of the policies which will be set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The economic and employment benefits of the policies set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan are under active consideration. Their assessment is being carried out in line with existing analytical frameworks and approaches, including for instance using the Government's Energy Innovation Needs Assessment (EINAs) methodology to estimate the GVA and jobs opportunities for road transport<sup>1</sup>, and considers analysis and evidence from external sources, including for example the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) and Maritime UK. Further details will be provided in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan which we expect to publish this spring.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-innovation-needs-assessments>

## ■ Travel Restrictions

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

**[180907]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide exemptions to covid-19 travel restrictions to permit family reunifications in circumstances where a family relationship can be established notwithstanding there being no marriage or civil partnership.

**Robert Courts:**

The decision to introduce enhanced border measures is in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of the new COVID-19 variants identified in other countries. These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under constant review.

The government has made it consistently clear that it will take decisive action to contain the virus, including adding further countries to the red list if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

There are an extremely limited number of exemptions from enhanced border measures, and only introduced where absolutely necessary for reasons of national importance. Exemptions from enhanced border measures are set out on Gov.uk and are kept under regular review.

## ■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

**Darren Jones:**

**[178746]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to enable parents whose children live in the UK and another country to see those children during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Robert Courts:**

The government has put in place measures to reduce the impact of border measures on families. For arrivals who have not been in a red-list country in the previous 10 days children are required to self-isolate, however they can do so in the family home and may also move between family homes during that period of isolation.

For managed quarantine facilities, family groups will be able to quarantine together as long as the hotel is able to accommodate them. This includes couples and parents with children.

The Global Travel Taskforce recently reported on “the safe return of international travel” and we will implement its recommendations in a way that is based on science while supporting the economy and allowing families and friends to reunite.



**Darren Jones:**

[179364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to issue guidance to enable parents to hand over children that live between two parents in separate countries in an airport before returning to their own country during covid-19 travel restrictions.

**Robert Courts:**

Guidance for parents escorting children for overseas travel from England during the national restrictions is published on GOV.UK, at: <https://www.gov.uk/travel-abroad>.

Further detail is also available under the 'Reasonable excuses for travel abroad' section of the following GOV.UK site: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-declaration-form-for-international-travel>

Guidance is also available on GOV.UK for those travelling into the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>

A parent accompanying a child to England who will immediately return to their country of origin should review transit guidance published on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules#transiting-through-the-uk>

Different international travel rules may apply in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and individuals should follow the guidance of the relevant Devolved Administration.

## ■ Travel: Coronavirus

**Catherine West:**

[179316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether procedures are in place to ensure that all airlines have up-to-date lists of approved providers for day two and day eight covid-19 testing for travel.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government provides links to all post-arrival testing providers on Gov.uk to support operators as well as travellers who need to book post-arrival tests in the UK.

The test package prices listed on the website are for the provider's standard service, which meets the Government's minimum standards, although prices may differ to reflect different levels of customer service and speed of results.

The list is continually updated as providers are reviewed by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service and declare that they meet the required standards.

**■ West Coast Partnership Rail Franchise**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Prior Information Notice issued on 31 March 2021, for what reasons his Department is planning to give a direct award of 10 years to run the West Coast Main Line franchise from 1 April 2022, rather than the six years it had anticipated in the Prior Information Notice issued in November 2020.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department has made no decisions with regard to the length of the West Coast Direct Award. The revision to the Prior Information Notice to reflect a contract length of up to 10 years gives the Department maximum flexibility in developing options to ensure value for money and the successful delivery of future passenger services.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons he is seeking to give a direct award to operate the West Coast Main Line franchise from 1 April 2022 instead of taking control of its operations via the Operator of Last Resort.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Prior Information Notice provides the opportunity to develop a Direct Award in line with the Secretary of State's duties under section 26 of the Railways Act. No decision has been made on West Coast franchise.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the level of annual subsidy that will be paid to the operator of the West Coast Main Line from 1 April 2022.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

No such estimate has yet been made. Department for Transport budgets for 2022/23 onwards have not yet been set and will be agreed at the Spending Review later this year.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[179398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons he is seeking to obtain a direct award for the West Coast Main Line franchise from 1 April 2022; and what comparative assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) that approach and (b) a franchise competition exercise.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Prior Information Notice provides the opportunity to develop a Direct Award in line with the Secretary of State's duties under section 26 of the Railways Act. No decision has been made on West Coast.

The Direct Award will replace the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA), which expires in March 2022. There is insufficient time to hold a competition before the end of the ERMA.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[179399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the value for money of a direct award for ten years for the operation of the West Coast Main Line franchise from 1 April 2022.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

No assessment of value for money for the Direct Award for West Coast has yet been made. However, value for money will be a consideration within the decision-making process at the appropriate time.

## ■ **West Coast Railway Line**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[179402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's notice entitled West Coast Partnership: prior information notice published on 31 March 2021, what management fee the operator of the West Coast Main Line will receive under the anticipated direct award from 1 April 2022.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

No decisions have been taken so far on this matter.

## TREASURY

### ■ **Bank Services: Sudan**

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[179605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Government's guidance is to UK-based banks on allowing money transfers to Sudan-based bank accounts.

**John Glen:**

HM Treasury is responsible for the Money Laundering Regulations, which set out the high-level requirements on regulated firms to combat money laundering and ensure that key professionals verify their customers' identities.

The Regulations are not prescriptive in setting out how firms should carry out customer due diligence and instead require firms to take a proportionate approach commensurate with their assessment of the risk. Each firm will therefore have their own policies on identification and customer due diligence, including on when additional, more comprehensive checks should be undertaken.

Specific guidance on how banks should conduct customer due diligence is published by the Joint Money Laundering Steering Group. This includes guidance on assessing the money laundering and terrorist financing risk associated with individual countries.

## ■ Business: Overseas Trade

**Zarah Sultana:** [180620]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what measures the Government has put in place to support businesses that have experienced a decline in (a) exports and (b) imports between December 2020 and March 2021.

**Zarah Sultana:** [180621]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government has taken to support businesses that are unable to purchase essential materials from the EU.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has put in place a range of measures to facilitate trade with the EU and to avoid disruption at ports including publishing comprehensive guidance on the new arrangements for trade with the EU and operating a staged approach to customs controls. Until 31 December 2021 most traders importing non-controlled goods from the EU can make a declaration in their own records and defer making a customs declaration to HMRC for 175 days. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/delaying-declarations-for-eu-goods-brought-into-great-britain>. The Government has also provided a £20 million Brexit Support Fund to support small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) in adjusting to new customs, rules of origin, and VAT rules when trading with the EU.

In addition, businesses can choose to use customs facilitations to make trading across borders quicker, cheaper and easier. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-can-delay-customs-duty-and-import-vat>.

## ■ Developing Countries: Debts

**Alexander Stafford:** [179712]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials in his Department are having with their counterparts in G7 countries on providing debt relief that supports climate and nature investments in developing countries.

**John Glen:**

Support for low-income countries and tackling climate change are key priorities for the UK as G7 and COP26 Presidents this year.

We are concerned by the debt vulnerabilities low-income countries face, which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This month the G20, with full support from the G7, agreed to a six-month extension to the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which will continue to provide countries with additional fiscal space to respond to the crisis, and to free up resources to fund social, health, economic and climate measures. The G7 is also committed to the successful implementation of the Common Framework, which as we look to prioritizing a longer-term approach to addressing debt vulnerabilities, is the most effective mechanism to help countries achieve debt sustainability. The fiscal headroom provided by the Common

Framework will allow low-income countries to spend on productive investments that are aligned with Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of our G7 and COP26 Presidency, we are seeking to improve the quantity, quality, effectiveness and accessibility of public climate finance and working to ensure that every financial decision – public and private – takes climate change into account. This will help to ensure that countries have the resources they need to reach their climate and nature goals.

## ■ **Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation**

**Ruth Jones:**

**[179543]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will take steps to ensure that victims of the Equitable Life scandal receive full compensation for their losses.

**John Glen:**

The Equitable Life Payment Scheme closed to claims in 2015. There are no plans to reopen the Payment Scheme or review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it. Further guidance on the status of the Payment Scheme after closure is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equitable-life-payment-scheme#closure-of-the-scheme>.

## ■ **Financial Institutions: Death**

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[178697]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for relatives of the recently deceased of requiring all UK registered financial institutions to register with the Death Notification Service.

**John Glen:**

Protecting vulnerable consumers, including those impacted by bereavement, is a key priority for the Government, and the Government expects the fair treatment of vulnerable consumers to be taken seriously by firms, and embedded into their culture, policies and processes.

The Death Notification Service (DNS) was launched in 2018 by members of the trade body UK Finance, to allow consumers to notify a number of financial institutions of a person's death, at the same time. It aims to make the process easier for those who have suffered a bereavement. At present, 24 financial services companies take part in the service, including major retail banks and building societies. While the Government is supportive of the DNS, it is fully independent from Government and membership of the service is currently voluntary.

## ■ First Time Buyers: Finance

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[180516\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support first-time buyers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England during the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government is supporting first-time buyers through a range of measures, including those announced at Budget 2021.

At Budget 2015, the Government announced the Help to Buy: ISA to support people saving up for their first home. Savers who opened an account before December 2019 are eligible to claim for a government bonus of up to £3000 towards the purchase of their first home. Since it launched in 2015, 472,702 bonuses have been paid through the scheme supporting 359,250 property completions across the UK with 36,190 completions in the West Midlands.

Similarly, the Lifetime ISA (LISA) allows those under 40 to save either towards buying a home or for the long term. Like the Help to Buy: ISA, the Government provides a 25% bonus month on month, meaning that people who save the maximum will receive a £1,000 bonus each year. First-time buyers saving into a LISA can use their tax-free savings, including the government bonus, to buy a home up to the value of £450,000 anywhere in the UK, at any point after the account has been open for 12 months.

The mortgage guarantee scheme announced at Budget and launching on 19 April 2021 will help to increase the supply of 95% loan to value (LTV) mortgages for credit-worthy households. The scheme follows on from the successful 2013 Help to Buy: Mortgage Guarantee Scheme, which helped to restore the high LTV market after the financial crisis, giving those who could afford mortgage repayments but not the larger deposits the chance to buy a new home.

The Government have also amended the Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) meaning for properties costing up to £500,000, first-time buyers will pay no Stamp Duty on the first £300,000 and then only pay Stamp Duty at a rate of 5% on the remaining amount, up to £200,000.

## ■ First-time Buyers: Stamp Duties

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[180563\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potentially detrimental effects of the extension of the stamp duty holiday on the ability of first-time buyers to purchase a home; and what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to mitigate those effects.

**Jesse Norman:**

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during

the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This momentum in the property market has supported jobs which rely on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

First Time Buyers will benefit from the increase in available properties and save up to an additional £10,000 in SDLT, on top of the £5,000 they could already save under First Time Buyers relief. When the nil rate band steps down to £250,000 in July, first-time buyers still benefit from their first-time buyer SDLT advantage.

The Government has also introduced help for first-time buyers, particularly those with smaller deposits, through the new mortgage guarantee scheme which will help to re-introduce 95% loan to value mortgage products to first-time buyers.

### ■ **Freezing of Assets: Libya**

**Stephen Farry:**

**[176118]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many licences have been granted in relation to frozen Libyan assets in the UK; and to whom those licences have been granted.

**John Glen:**

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) releases an annual review each year, which provides information about the number of licences issued. From April 2017 to March 2020, OFSI issued a total of 66 new licences under the Libya regime.

OFSI does not publish details of individual licences granted.

### ■ **Greensill**

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

**[180408]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the minutes of the meetings held between officials in his Department and Greensill Capital; and whether there were any meetings that took place that were not minuted and for what reason.

**John Glen:**

HM Treasury has released a range of information relating to this matter both proactively and in response to FOI requests including details of meetings held between Greensill and HM Treasury senior officials between April – June 2020.

Links to these releases can be found online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-treasury-greensill-meetings> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-a-freedom-of-information-request-on-greensill>



**■ Greensill: Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility****Dame Angela Eagle:** [\[180409\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he had any discussions with the Bank of England on the potential to grant Greensill Capital access to its Covid Corporate Financing Facility.

**John Glen:**

In the context of discussions about Covid support schemes, the Bank, as operators of the CCFF, were informed that HM Treasury were not minded to adjust the scheme to include supply chain finance.

**■ Hong Kong: National Security****Stephen Kinnock:** [\[180514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to re-convene the China-UK Joint Trade and Economic Commission and the Economic and Financial Dialogue following their suspension as a result of the Chinese Government introducing the Hong Kong National Security Law.

**John Glen:**

China is an important trading partner for the UK and there is considerable scope for mutually beneficial trade and investment, while ensuring our national security and values are protected.

We have always been clear that our trade relationship does not come at the expense of human rights, and where we have concerns, we will continue to speak out and take action. The UK has taken firm action following restrictions on the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong and has introduced a bespoke immigration route for British Nationals (Overseas) and their families.

There is no date for the next Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) or the Joint Trade and Economic Commission (JETCO).

**■ Import Duties: Tax Yields****Bridget Phillipson:** [\[175824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the receipts were to the Exchequer from customs duty, excluding those paid on excise goods, in each of the last 144 months.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[175825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the receipts were to the Exchequer from customs duty on excise goods in each of the last 144 months.

**Jesse Norman:**

A monthly breakdown of Customs Duty receipts is available in the 'Receipts Published' table within the 'HMRC tax receipts and National Insurance contributions for the National Statistics publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>.

It is not possible to disaggregate this monthly time series into excise and non-excise goods through this monthly receipts data. However, information on excise duties is published at Excise duties, VAT and other indirect tax statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vat-excise-duties-and-other-minor-industry-specific-duties-and-levies>.

## ■ Imports: Customs

**Neil Coyle:**

**[175883]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support small businesses that have reported a loss of earnings as a result of supplies not being delivered on time due to a backlog at UK customs.

**Jesse Norman:**

There is no backlog of goods awaiting clearance by UK customs. The Government has put in place a number of measures to facilitate trade with the EU and to avoid disruption at ports including publishing comprehensive guidance on the new arrangements for trade with the EU and operating a staged approach to customs controls. Until 31 December 2021 most traders importing non-controlled goods from the EU can make a simplified declaration in their own records and defer making a customs declaration to HMRC for 175 days. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/delaying-declarations-for-eu-goods-brought-into-great-britain>.

The Government has also provided a £20 million Brexit Support Fund to support small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) in adjusting to new customs, rules of origin, and VAT rules when trading with the EU.

In addition, businesses can choose to use customs facilitations to make trading across borders quicker, cheaper and easier. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-can-delay-customs-duty-and-import-vat>.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Kevin Brennan:**

**[180418]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 April 2021 to Question 174736, on Members: Correspondence, how many of the 26,709 responses to written correspondence from Members of Parliament were responded to by (a) Ministers and (b) officials.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

It is not possible to provide the breakdown the Member has requested.

## ■ Music: SME Brexit Support Fund

**Kevin Brennan:**

**[180414]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether small and medium sized enterprises trading in the music industry are eligible to apply for the SME Brexit Support Fund.

**Jesse Norman:**

Small and medium-sized enterprises that were trading with the EU prior to 1 January are eligible for the SME Brexit Support Fund if they were only trading with the EU and therefore need to adjust to new customs, rules of origin, and VAT rules.

**■ National Insurance Contributions: Young People****Marco Longhi:**[\[176140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of exempting (a) employers of people aged 25 and (b) people aged under 25 from national insurance contributions to (i) boost youth employment and (ii) increase and improve training of employees under 25.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has taken significant action to reduce the cost of employing young people. Since April 2016, employers do not pay employer National Insurance contributions (NICs) for apprentices under the age of 25 on earnings up to the Apprentice Upper Secondary Threshold (£967 a week in 2021-22). This builds on action the Government has already taken to remove employer NICs on those aged under 21 up to the Upper Secondary Threshold (£967 a week in 2021-22) in April 2015.

The Government is committed to keeping taxes low to support working people to keep more of what they earn and to encourage individuals to progress, ensuring work always pays. In April 2020, the NICs Primary Threshold – the level of earnings at which employees start paying NICs – was increased to £9,500. This provided a tax cut to about 31 million people, with a typical employee saving about £104. As announced at the recent Spending Review, the Primary Threshold will increase to £9,568 in 2021-22.

**■ Off-payroll Working: Prosecutions****Carol Monaghan:**[\[181049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many IR35 cases have been pursued through tribunals and the courts.

**Carol Monaghan:**[\[181050\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much HMRC has spent on pursuing IR35 cases through tribunals and the courts.

**Carol Monaghan:**[\[181051\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue to the Exchequer has been raised in pursuing IR35 cases through tribunals and the courts in the most recent period for which figures are available.

**Carol Monaghan:**

[\[181052\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC has undertaken a cost analysis of its pursuit of IR35 cases.

**Jesse Norman:**

The vast majority of employment status decisions, including decisions on the off-payroll working rules (commonly known as IR35), are straightforward and settled without the need to go to tribunal. However, a number are more finely balanced, generally because of their complexity or because there are unusual circumstances and it is not possible to reach agreement. It is right for HMRC to litigate these cases.

HMRC's responsibilities are to secure the best practicable return for the Exchequer. Entering into, taking forward and resolving disputes contribute to meeting that objective. This requires consideration not only of the tax at stake in cases (i.e. a straightforward costs analysis) but also wider impacts, including potential tax liabilities of other taxpayers.

Since 2001, HMRC has taken 40 cases regarding the off-payroll working rules to the Tax Tribunal.

Work on off-payroll working rules cases is carried out by a number of HMRC teams. These teams are also involved in other cases and other litigation and as a result, HMRC do not hold specific information relating to the overall cost of pursuing cases (which is mitigated to some extent by HMRC's recovery of costs in litigation which it wins).

HMRC's approach to litigation generally is set out in their published Litigation and Settlement Strategy. Disputes are costly for both HMRC and individual taxpayers and HMRC are committed to supporting taxpayers to get their tax right without the need for a dispute.

## ■ Public Sector Debt: China

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[175848\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of the UK's national debt is owed to Chinese financial institutions.

**John Glen:**

Most of the Government's debt is in the form of publicly traded bonds ('gilts'). The most recent data release by the Office for National Statistics indicates that, at the end of 2020, overseas investors held £708 billion of gilts, a minority of the total stock of outstanding gilts (28%). These data are not broken down by country.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Contracts

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[176085\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what systems HMRC has in place to monitor the regularity of supplier termination events.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC records are not held in such a way as to identify contracts that have ended due to a supplier termination event.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[176086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is taking to (a) monitor and (b) minimise supplier termination events in respect of contracts.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC records are not held in such a way as to identify contracts that have ended due to a supplier termination event.

HMRC adopts Government Commercial Organisation standards and best practice methodologies for contract management and supplier relationship management.

**■ Second Homes: Rural Areas****Tim Farron:**[\[174790\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Stamp Duty holiday on the number of second homes purchased in rural communities.

**Jesse Norman:**

The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to create immediate momentum within the property market, where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. The downturn in the market meant that the future was uncertain for many people whose jobs relied on custom from the property industry. Since July, the SDLT holiday has supported about 640,000 residential property transactions in England and Northern Ireland.

Purchases of second properties are still liable to pay the higher rate of SDLT for additional dwellings, which is three percentage points above the standard rates.

**■ Shares: Sales****Stuart C McDonald:**[\[179172\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on short selling the financial market of The Short Selling (Notification Thresholds) Regulations 2021; and what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to regulate short selling in the future.

**John Glen:**

Short selling is regulated in the UK under the Short Selling Regulation, introduced in 2012. As with all regulation, the Treasury works closely with the regulators and market participants to monitor the effectiveness of the regulatory regime, in line with the government's objectives of supporting economic growth and financial stability.

The Short Selling (Notification Thresholds) Regulations 2021 lowered the threshold for the reporting of net short positions to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), in

relation to the issued share capital of a company that has shares admitted to trading on a trading venue, to 0.1%. HM Treasury will continue to consider with the FCA whether the notification threshold remains appropriate given market conditions.

## ■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[174719\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the zero rate of Stamp Duty Land Tax beyond 30 June 2021 for leaseholders unable to complete property sales in buildings awaiting remedial works required to obtain an EWS1 certificate; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

The SDLT nil rate band will continue to be set at £500,000 until 30 June 2021. In order to ease the housing market back to the standard rates, from 1 July the nil rate band will step down to £250,000, before returning to the standard rate of £125,000 from 1 October 2021.

The Government has always been clear that the SDLT relief is a temporary measure to support the housing market. There will not be a further extension of the SDLT holiday.

## ■ Treasury: Parliamentary Questions

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[175823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of the Answers to parliamentary questions given by him or other Ministers in his Department since 13 February 2020 were prepared by, or prepared in collaboration with, contractors not directly employed by the Crown.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

All answers to parliamentary questions given by Treasury Ministers are drafted by civil servants.

## ■ UK Trade with EU

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[175884\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the expected timeframe for EU imports arriving into the UK to be checked at customs.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government's priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border. HMRC use a risk based, intelligence-led response to compliance issues working alongside Border Force.

The Government has put in place a number of measures to facilitate trade with the EU and to avoid disruption at ports, including publishing comprehensive guidance on the new arrangements for trade with the EU and operating a staged approach to customs controls in Great Britain. Until 31 December 2021 most traders importing

non-controlled goods from the EU can make a simplified declaration in their own records and defer making a customs declaration to HMRC for 175 days. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/delaying-declarations-for-eu-goods-brought-into-great-britain>.

## ■ VAT: Tax Yields

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[175826\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the receipts were to the Exchequer from VAT on goods imported to the UK directly by VAT end-users, in each of the last 144 months.

**Jesse Norman:**

Data on import VAT receipts received directly from end-users is not available. Traders do not have to declare the position whether the goods are to be used privately, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

## WALES

## ■ Rivers: Sewage

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[180473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment his Department has made of the level of illegal discharges of sewage into Welsh rivers.

**Simon Hart:**

The responsibility for the management of pollution and assessments into the illegal discharge of sewage falls within the remit of the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

## ■ Ethnic Groups: Human Rights

**Zarah Sultana:** [\[180622\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans the Government has to implement the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Human Rights report entitled Black people, racism and human rights, published in November 2020.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The UK has made significant progress over the years in tackling racism. This Government made manifesto commitments to tackle prejudice, racism and discrimination and is committed to making further progress.

The Government has considered the recommendations and conclusions in the Joint Committee on Human Rights report. We have responded to each of these in turn in



our [response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2019–21](#) published on 11 February 2021.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Business: Pensions

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[180642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to undertake a consultation on how pension rules will be reformed to allow funds to be used to make equity offerings for businesses.

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[180643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what types of businesses will be able to access equity from pension funds under the new pension reforms; and what steps she plans to take to reach a decision on how much of a pension fund can be released for investment in businesses.

**Guy Opperman:**

The government are committed to ensuring both that pension funds have the opportunities to invest in UK businesses as we build back better, and that this process is made easier and simpler. We believe this will benefit both individual pension scheme members and the wider UK economy.

Private equity and venture capital, including releasing equity to new and innovative British businesses, already can and does form part of a pension scheme's investment strategy. Trustees are currently free to make these types of investments if they believe the balance of risk and return to be in the best interest of members.

Over the past 6 months, DWP has made real efforts to respond to trustees and make this process simpler and easier: DWP has published two consultations relating to this issue. Improving outcomes for members of defined contribution pension schemes: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-outcomes-for-members-of-defined-contribution-pension-schemes> and, Incorporating performance fees within the charge cap: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/incorporating-performance-fees-within-the-charge-cap>

The proposals included allowing schemes to smooth the incurrence of performance fees over multiple years to allow schemes greater flexibility to innovate their investment strategy whilst maintaining the important member protection that is the charge cap. We intend to bring forward regulations which seek to make investment in a wider range of assets easier for defined contribution schemes.

Through the consultation we also gathered evidence on the specific question of steps the Government can take to better enable these types of investments. The consultation closed on April 16<sup>th</sup> and we will publish a response in June.

## ■ Carer's Allowance: Overpayments

**Chris Stephens:**

[\[179232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are repaying overpayments of carer's allowance; and what the total value being repaid is.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As of 13th April 2021, 42,400 people were repaying Carer's Allowance overpayments.

The total original value of those debts was just over £138million; the total amount currently outstanding is £89million.

The Department has a duty to recover overpaid benefits as quickly and efficiently as possible, but it is not intended that the recovery of an overpayment should cause any customer undue financial hardship.

Overpayment recovery of Carer's Allowance, as with all benefits is subject to various legislative limitations and safeguards.

## ■ Cold Weather Payments: West Midlands

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[180521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many cold weather payments have been issued to people in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry and (c) the West Midlands in each of the last five years.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Cold Weather Payment scheme is administered at weather station level rather than at a constituency or regional level. The coverage area for each weather station is determined by the Met Office, which assesses the most appropriate weather station for each postcode area. Cold weather payments are triggered when the average temperature recorded at the weather station has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days, during the Cold Weather season (November to March).

There are three constituencies in Coventry: Coventry North-East, Coventry South and Coventry North-West. Postcodes within these constituencies are linked to the weather station Coleshill. **Table 1** shows the weather station linked to Coventry postcodes, and also includes postcodes in constituencies other than those in Coventry.

**TABLE 1 POSTCODE SECTORS MAPPED TO WEATHER STATIONS**

Weather station	Postcode Sectors Covered
Coleshill	B1-21, B23-38, B40, B42-50, B60-80, B90-98, CV1-12, CV21-23, CV31-35, CV37, CV47, DY1-14, LE10, WS1-15, WV1-16.

**TABLE 2 ESTIMATED NUMBER OF COLD WEATHER RECIPIENTS LINKED TO THE COLSEHILL WEATHER STATION**

Year	Estimated number of recipients	Number of triggers
2020/21	262,000	1
2019/20	264,000	0
2018/19	279,000	0
2017/18	289,000	1
2016/17	299,595	0

Qualifying individuals living in this area will have received a £25 payment in respect of a seven-day period of Cold Weather. Expenditure can be estimated by multiplying the number of payments by £25.

**Table 2** shows the estimated number of cold weather payment recipients, and the number of cold weather triggers in the period of 1 November to 31 March, for each of the last five years.

c) There are 59 constituencies in the West Midlands area. Summarising cold weather payment estimates per constituency is completed manually, and we are unable to provide a breakdown for this area as this is a labour intensive process.

#### ■ **Employment: Pregnancy**

**Kevin Brennan:**

[\[180416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to ensure that employers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the protection of pregnant workers.

**Kevin Brennan:**

[\[180417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Health and Safety Executive holds employers to account on the protection of pregnant workers.

**Kevin Brennan:**

[\[180419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to ensure that all employers adhere to (a) the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and (b) guidance issued by the Government on pregnant workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mims Davies:**

Employers are required to carry out risk assessments for all pregnant workers and protect them from harm. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website has

guidance on managing the risks for pregnant workers. [Protecting new and expectant mothers at work - HSE](#)

Employers have a legal duty, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations sec 16(4) to act in accordance with the results of their risk assessment for pregnant workers. Where employers are not doing so, workers can contact the HSE to raise their concerns which will be followed up.

HSE has specific guidance for employers to protect vulnerable workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, which includes the health and safety responsibilities for pregnant workers. [Protect vulnerable workers - Working safely during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

## ■ Employment: Young People

**Cat Smith:**

**[180546]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support young people from marginalised groups entering employment.

**Mims Davies:**

This Government is committed to providing support to help all young people move into work and avoid the scarring effects of unemployment, as we recover from the Covid pandemic.

Youth Employability Coaches are providing flexible support to young people with significant complex needs and barriers to help them move into employment and offering six weeks of in-work support when they start work. This support is one element of the DWP Youth Offer, alongside the Youth Employment Programme and Youth Hubs designed to support young people enter the labour market.

In addition, the Kickstart scheme is available for young people aged 16-24, on Universal Credit and at risk of long term unemployment. Work Coaches refer eligible young people to Kickstart jobs and support them through the application process.

DWP also have a national programme of mentoring circles, involving employers offering specialised support to young (16-24 years old), unemployed, ethnic minority jobseekers. These provide customers with an opportunity to build confidence and job search skills, whilst at the same time helping employers understand and revise their recruitment practices. As a result of Covid-19, we are additionally delivering virtual Mentoring Circles sessions to comply with national lockdown and social distancing guidelines.

Young people identified as being involved or at risk of being involved in gangs or serious violence are recognised as a priority group and eligible for early entry to the Work and Health Programme in England and Wales. In addition, Jobcentres work with local partners to provide local support to suit individuals' needs.

## ■ Funeral Payments

**Rosie Cooper:**

**[178930]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 162619, o Funeral Payments, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the rejection of 47 per cent of applications for the funeral expenses payment in January 2021.

**Guy Opperman:**

In reference to the Answer of 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to Question 162619, the following figures were included: In January 2021 there were 3,890 Funeral Expenses Payment applications received, and 2,050 awards paid.

Reasons for this discrepancy are below:

- The figures relate to applications received by DWP, not applications processed. Some applications may have been withdrawn before a decision was made.
- Applications received aren't always processed in the same month in which they are received. The clearance standards for average actuals clearance times for Funeral Expenses Payments are 13 days. An application made in January 2021 might not have been awarded until February 2021.
- The number of applications made is not equal to the number of people who made applications, as individuals may make multiple applications in a given time period.
- Differences between any comparisons made of applications received, initial decisions, awards and initial refusals are due to applications being withdrawn; applicants rejecting or not responding to loan offers; and decisions outstanding at the time of the count.

We publish application success rate in Annex 1 of the Social Fund Annual Report. The latest available is the 2018/19 report:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-fund-annual-report-2018-to-2019/social-fund-annual-report-2018-to-2019>

## ■ Job Centres: Mental Health

**David Linden:**

**[176015]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what mental health training has been put in place for work coaches in job centres.

**Mims Davies:**

There are three mental health training products available for Work Coaches in job centres.

Since August 2018 mental health training has been included in the fundamental learning journey which is available to all new staff or those new to the role. This product is designed to improve learners' understanding of mental ill health and states

where to find further information regarding mental health for themselves and the customer.

During their initial technical learning, Work Coaches complete training in two sessions as part of their complex needs learning. In the first session Work Coaches cover a range of complex needs and the routes to take to support customers and themselves. They discuss what signs may alert them to a customer struggling with their mental health and how they can support them. In the second session Work Coaches consolidate what they learned in the first session by considering an example, recapping on the support they would offer to customers who have mental health issues.

There is further mental health training that has been specifically designed for Work Coaches which ideally takes place at around week 26 of their learning journey. In this learning, the Work Coaches explore their impact on customers, the steps needed to build relationships and learn how to respond appropriately to unexpected customer behaviour. This learning includes the opportunity for the Work Coach to practice the skills they have learned during the training.

The rollout of this specific Work Coach mental health learning began in November 2017 and was completed for existing work coaches in March 2018. In 2020, DWP paused this specific mental health training to divert resources to learning related to covid-19 impacts. Our ambition is to re start this training in 2021/22.

## ■ Kickstart Scheme

**Shabana Mahmood:**

**[174797]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobs where businesses have applied for support via the KickStart scheme her Department has (a) approved, (b) rejected and (c) not made a decision on in (i) England, (ii) West Midlands and (iii) Birmingham, Ladywood constituency.

**Mims Davies:**

There have been over 180,000 jobs approved by the Department of Work and Pensions' Kickstart scheme nationally. We are not able to break this information down geographically.

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.

**Shabana Mahmood:**

**[174798]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average number of jobs is that businesses have applied for support for via the KickStart scheme to date.

**Mims Davies:**

As of the 18<sup>th</sup> March, the average number of jobs per application to the Department of Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme was around 50 jobs.

This figure is based on the total number of applications received and their associated total number of jobs, an employer or Gateway can make multiple applications. From 3rd February 2021, we removed the 30 vacancy threshold for a direct application to Kickstart, allowing employers to make smaller applications which will affect this average.

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.

**Cat Smith:**[\[180548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to extend the Kickstart Scheme until 2022.

**Mims Davies:**

There are currently no plans to extend the Kickstart Scheme. Eligible young people will be able to start new Kickstart jobs until December 2021, meaning the final cohort of six-month jobs will end in Summer 2022.

**■ Kickstart Scheme: Disability****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[179285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Kickstart candidates are disabled.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [143815](#).

**■ Maternity Pay****Stephen Farry:**[\[179694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that pregnant women are not disadvantaged when changing jobs with respect to statutory maternity pay.

**Guy Opperman:**

To qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), a woman must have been continuously employed by the same employer for at least 26 weeks when she enters the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the week her baby is due. Once a woman has qualified for SMP, her employer must pay it to her even if she subsequently leaves their employment or is made redundant.



These criteria are designed to achieve a balance between the needs of the employer and those of a pregnant employee, ensuring that a woman has made a reasonable contribution towards her employer's business before that employer is required to administer Statutory Maternity Payments, and bear a proportion of the cost.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

**Chris Stephens:**

[\[180553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 139055 on Personal Independence Payment: coronavirus, whether his Department plans to automatically apply extensions to all personal independence payments claimants, including those with a fixed term period decision awarded at a tribunal where a decision on their new award could not be made before they reach their end award date.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As referenced in my previous answer, as part of its response to the Covid-19 situation, in Spring 2020 the Department extended award dates for existing PIP claims. We restarted the PIP award review process in July. New decisions made since then will not have had their awards extended. However, we are aware that some claimants on fixed term awards without a review date are now falling out of payment before we have been able to make a decision on renewal claims they have made. We are prioritising these cases to ensure we can make a decision as quickly as possible.

■ **Sign Language**

**Chris Stephens:**

[\[181059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has to give British Sign Language legal status.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

On 18 March 2003 the UK government formally recognised that British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right. Provision for accessing services by users of BSL are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Existing equality legislation already means employers, service providers and public bodies have to provide services in BSL and other formats when it is reasonable to do so. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the needs of all those with protected characteristics.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Belgium**

**Jack Dromey:**

[\[178992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the reciprocal pension rights of UK and Belgian nationals who have yet to reach state retirement age, which

were accrued in Belgium or in the UK before the end of the transition period, are the subject of bilateral negotiations towards agreement between the UK and Belgium.

**Jack Dromey:** [\[178993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government has entered into negotiations with the Belgian Government to ensure the continued state pension rights of UK nationals who have paid into the Belgian state pension system.

**Jack Dromey:** [\[178994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Government's policy is on UK nationals' access to accrued state pension entitlements in the event that a reciprocal bilateral agreement on state pension entitlements is not agreed with Belgium; and which Minister is responsible for that policy.

**Jack Dromey:** [\[178995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and its integrated social security protocol, provides for UK nationals who worked and accrued state pension entitlements in Belgium before 1 January 2021, but have not reached state pension age, to maintain their state pension rights accrued in Belgium payable on the date they would be eligible for state pension under the Belgian system, including with any indexation increases.

**Guy Opperman:**

Further to my reply of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (UIN 162545), State Pension arrangements remain unchanged following the UK's Exit from the EU including for UK nationals who have relevant social security contributions in Belgium, as well as other EU member states.

All UK State Pension recipients in the EU will have their State Pension paid (including annual increases) in line with rates in the UK. These arrangements have been agreed with the EU and all its member states on a reciprocal basis in the Withdrawal Agreement for those who moved across borders up to 31 December 2020 and in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement for those who move across borders from 1 January 2021. This means that Belgium, and other EU Member States, will reciprocate the position outlined above in relation to pension entitlement in those States.

The Department for Work and Pensions, together with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and other departments, are working with the European Union and its Member States to ensure that that the Citizen's Right provisions under the agreements with the EU are implemented on both sides.

The UK Government is not entering any unilateral negotiations with Belgium on State Pensions.

**■ Television Licences: Older People****Chris Stephens:** [\[180552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the introduction of means-testing for the TV licence concession for people aged over 75 on levels of pension credit take-up.

**Guy Opperman:**

No assessment has been made. The latest estimates of Pension Credit take-up, published in October 2020, relate to the financial year 2018/19 and do not reflect any potential impacts of the BBC TV license.

**■ Universal Credit****Navendu Mishra:** [\[181146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Alternative Payment Arrangements were requested by claimants in (a) England, (b) the Northwest and (c) Stockport in (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20 and (iii) 2020-21.

**Navendu Mishra:** [\[181147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many requests for Alternative Payment Arrangements were refused in (a) England, (b) the Northwest and (c) Stockport in (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20 and (iii) 2020-21.

**Will Quince:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**■ Universal Credit: Coventry****Colleen Fletcher:** [\[175892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support universal credit claimants in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Will Quince:**

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government's priority has been to protect lives and people's livelihoods, including by:

- Extending the temporary £20 a week increase in Universal Credit originally introduced for 12 months, for a further six months, taking it well beyond the end of national lockdown.
- Spending almost £30 billion to support renters with their housing costs in 2020/21. This includes a boost of almost £1 billion to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) in response to Covid-19, which provided 1.5 million households in the private rented sector with around £600 more in housing support over the year. In 2021/22 all LHA rates will be maintained at their increased level, meaning claimants will continue to benefit from the significant increase in rates.

- Suspending the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit until 31<sup>st</sup> July, meaning self-employed Universal Credit claimants can access support on more generous terms.

The Jobcentre team in Coventry have delivered Mentoring Circles and Sector- based Work Academy Programmes in partnership with local employers, as well as a Youth Hub based at the Coventry Jobshop and additional support for young people with complex needs through our Youth Employability Coaches.

The £229.1m Covid Winter Grant Scheme was part of Government's Covid response to provide Local Authorities in England, including Coventry Local Authority, with funding to support vulnerable households with the costs of food and other essentials. Recognising that some restrictions on the economy continue, we are extending the scheme – renamed the COVID Local Support Grant - until the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

#### ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[178947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 12 February 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA55555, regarding delays to international purchasing and business imports.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 19 April 2021. The correct answer should have been:**

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for International Trade's correspondence team has transferred your letter to the Cabinet Office for a response as the subject of the letter sits within their portfolio.

**Attachments:**

1. [ZA55555 to DfIT.pdf](#)

#### ■ Trade Agreements: Brazil

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[176061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress her Department has made on negotiations with Brazil on a free trade agreement.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 13 April 2021. The correct answer should have been:**

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The United Kingdom does not currently have a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Brazil, ~~but~~ it remains a priority to deepen our trading relationship. Brazil ~~participates in free trade agreements via regional bloc~~ is in a Customs Union – Mercosur – so, at the United Kingdom-Brazil Joint Economic Trade Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020, we discussed the potential of a future United Kingdom-Mercosur FTA. We continue our work with Brazil and other Mercosur partners to open markets and strengthen the rules based international trading system too.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

#### ■ **Women, Peace and Security Annual Report 2020**

**Minister for Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly):**

[\[HCWS920\]](#)

I wish to inform the House that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, together with the Ministry of Defence, are today publishing the 2020 annual report on progress against the UK's fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Published on 18 January 2018, the National Action Plan (NAP) sets out the Government's objectives on the Women, Peace and Security agenda for the period 2018-2022. This is the UK Government strategy for how we will meet our Women, Peace and Security commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution and in building peace and security.

The report published today outlines our progress against the National Action Plan over the last 12 months, including our work in our nine focus countries of Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Syria, and Yemen as a priority country. It is centred around seven strategic outcomes where we expect to see progress over the five year duration of the NAP.

The progress report will be published on gov.uk. Copies will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ **One year report on the status of the non-devolved provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020: correction**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill):**

[\[HCWS923\]](#)

On 22 March 2021, the One-Year Status Report on the non-devolved provisions in the Act was laid in Parliament. The Report provided a thorough assessment of whether the provisions within the Act remained necessary and proportionate to support the response to the pandemic.

The report highlighted an intention to expire twelve provisions and suspend a further three. The cautious expiration and suspension of these provisions reflects the progress made in tackling the pandemic. Progress along the roadmap and continued success with the vaccine rollout, show we are moving in the right direction towards the national recovery.

Following the publication of the One-Year Status Report, the Government identified that it contained a factual error. This relates to text on pages 14, 30 and 31 of the Report,

regarding section 24 of the Act, which covers Home Office responsibilities relating to the retention of biometrics (fingerprints and DNA profiles) that are being retained for national security purposes. I would like to apologise and address the error.

The Report, laid in Parliament last month, stated that the regulations made under section 24 would expire in March 2021. However, it emerged that the second regulations made under this power, Coronavirus (Retention of Fingerprints and DNA Profiles in the Interests of National Security) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, are extant and will continue to have effect until 24 September 2021. This does not affect the substance of the report because the Government will shortly bring forward regulations to expire section 24, alongside other provisions set out in the One-Year Report.

We have taken the appropriate steps to rectify this error, and the corrections can be found at the end of this statement. An un-numbered Command paper will be laid before Parliament and published today setting out the changes. The published One-Year Report will also be updated on gov.uk to reflect those changes.

Since gaining Royal Assent on 25 March 2020, the Coronavirus Act has been an essential legislative tool in the Government response, enabling effective action to reduce the impact of the pandemic. The Government remains committed to keeping the powers in the Act under review and to retaining powers only where they continue to be necessary and proportionate.

This table highlights the changes made to the One-Year Report. The bold text represents additional text in the report compared to the previous version. Amendments to the One-Year Report

PAGE	REVISED TEXT	ORIGINAL TEXT
p.14	<p>Section 24 (applies to UK): Extension of time limits for retention of fingerprints and DNA profiles.</p> <p>This provision established a regulation-making power so that biometrics (fingerprints and DNA profiles) held for national security purposes could be retained for up to an additional six months beyond normal statutory retention deadlines <b>(with the possibility of a further six month extension; enabling retention for up to a maximum of 12 months).</b></p> <p>This provision has successfully including the risk of losing the</p>	<p>Section 24 (applies to UK): Extension of time limits for retention of fingerprints and DNA profiles.</p> <p>This provision established a regulation-making power so that biometrics (fingerprints and DNA profiles) held for national security purposes can be retained for up to an additional six months beyond normal statutory retention deadlines. This provision has successfully mitigated the risk of a critical national security capability being compromised because of the pandemic,</p>



PAGE	REVISED TEXT	ORIGINAL TEXT
	<p>mitigated the risk of a critical national security capability being compromised because of the pandemic, including the risk of losing the biometrics of up to 150 individuals per month (many of whom could be subjects of national security interest). <b>However, this power was exercisable only in relation to biometrics that would (ignoring the effect of regulations made under it) need to be destroyed within 12 months of the Act being passed. Regulations have been made to cover this 12-month period. A further extension beyond the second set of regulations made under this power was not necessary and therefore section 24 will be expired as part of the one-year review as it has served its original purpose. The second set of regulations made under this power – the Coronavirus (Retention of Fingerprints and DNA Profiles in the Interests of National Security) (No 2) Regulations 2020 –will be saved as they provide the current basis for retention of certain biometrics held in the interest of national security that [would otherwise would have fallen to be destroyed between 1 October 2020 and 24 March 2021].</b></p>	<p>biometrics of up to 150 individuals per month (many of whom could be subjects of national security interest). However, this power cannot be extended beyond the point the Regulations expire in March without primary legislation and therefore it will be expired as part of the one-year review as it has served its original purpose.</p>

PAGE	REVISED TEXT	ORIGINAL TEXT
p.30	<b>Counter-Terrorism Policing has confirmed that a further extension beyond that provided by the Coronavirus (Retention of Fingerprints and DNA Profiles in the Interests of National Security) (No 2) Regulations 2020 is not necessary and therefore a decision has been made to expire this provision.</b>	As the regulations under these provisions have expired, and cannot be extended under the Act, the decision has been made to expire these provisions as part of the one-year review.
p.30-31	This provision established a regulation-making power so that biometrics (fingerprints and DNA profiles) held for national security purposes could be retained for up to an additional six months beyond normal statutory retention deadlines <b>(with the possibility of a further extension of up to six months – for a total extension of up to 12 months). This power could only be exercised in relation to biometrics that would (ignoring the effect of regulations made under it) need to be destroyed within 12 months of the Act being passed.</b>	This provision established a regulation-making power so that biometrics (fingerprints and DNA profiles) held for national security purposes could be retained for up to an additional six months beyond normal statutory retention deadlines.
p.31	<b>A further extension beyond the Coronavirus (Retention of Fingerprints and DNA Profiles in the Interests of National Security) (No 2) Regulations 2020 was not necessary and therefore this section will be expired under</b>	The Regulations laid under this power have now expired, and there is no legislative means to extend these under the Act. Therefore, if the powers were needed in the future primary legislation would be required. As such, the powers will be

PAGE	REVISED TEXT	ORIGINAL TEXT
	the UK-wide SI which will be laid after Easter recess.	expired under the UK wide SI which will be laid after Easter recess.

## TREASURY

### ■ Contingencies Fund Advance

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):**

[\[HCWS921\]](#)

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021-22.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £6,065,000,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Main Estimate for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £6,065,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

### ■ London Capital and Finance

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):**

[\[HCWS922\]](#)

On 17 December 2020 I announced that the Treasury would set up a compensation scheme for bondholders who suffered losses after investing in London Capital & Finance (LCF) (HCWS678)[1]. This statement provides an update on the government's approach, including the details of the scheme and the next steps for bondholders.

LCF was a Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) authorised firm which issued unregulated non-transferable debt securities, commonly known as 'mini-bonds', to investors and then speculatively invested the funds received in a number of underlying businesses. LCF went into administration in January 2019 and at the point of failure 11,625 bondholders had invested around £237m.

This has been a very difficult time for LCF bondholders, many of whom are elderly and have lost their hard-earned savings. As I noted in my last statement, for some, this will have formed part of an investment portfolio, but for others, it will have represented a significant portion of their savings.

One of the key purposes of regulation is to ensure that investors have the right information to understand their risk. Within this system even a regulator doing everything right will not be able to, and should not be expected to, ensure a zero-failure regime. That is why statute has established the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), which is the compensation scheme for customers of failed financial services firms in the UK. Its scope is strictly limited and it is only able to pay out when a relevant regulated

activity has been undertaken. The FSCS has considered LCF claims in detail and has been able to protect around 2,800 bondholders, paying out over £57m in compensation.

It is an important point of principle that government does not step in to pay compensation in respect of failed financial services firms that fall outside the FSCS. Doing so would create the wrong set of incentives for individuals and an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer. However the situation regarding LCF is unique and exceptional. After considering the issues in detail, the government has decided to establish a compensation scheme for LCF bondholders. The scheme I am announcing today appropriately balances the interests of both bondholders and the taxpayer and will ensure that all LCF bondholders receive a fair level of compensation in respect of the financial loss they have suffered.

LCF's business model was highly unusual, both in its scale and structure. In particular, it was authorised by the FCA despite generating no income from regulated activities. This allowed LCF's unregulated activity of selling mini-bonds to benefit from the 'Halo Effect' of being issued by an authorised firm, helping LCF gain respectability and grow to an unprecedented scale before it failed, resulting in losses for thousands of bondholders.

A complex range of interconnected factors contributed to the scale of losses for LCF bondholders. Clearly individuals have responsibility for choosing investments that are suitable for their risk profile. The high interest rates on offer from LCF, particularly when compared to deposit accounts, should have prompted questions from potential bondholders about the risks. While some may have understood those risks and invested anyway, LCF's disclosure materials and marketing strategy may have led others to believe they were investing in a product that was far safer than it was.

Bondholders have reported LCF using a range of dishonest tactics to persuade them to invest. For example, some novice investors have said they were encouraged to declare themselves to be sophisticated and experienced, thereby enabling them to access products that should have been out of reach. Furthermore, LCF appears to have adopted flawed investment and marketing strategies and paid high commissions of up to 25% to the sales agent.

Bondholders have been badly let down by LCF, but they have also been let down by the regulatory system that is designed to protect them. The independent investigation led by Dame Elizabeth Gloster<sup>[2]</sup>, which the government published at the end of last year, concluded that the FCA did not discharge its functions in respect of LCF in a manner which enabled it to effectively fulfil its statutory objectives during the relevant period.

While I have not seen evidence that would indicate that the regulatory failings at the FCA were the primary cause of the losses incurred by LCF bondholders, they are a significant factor that the government has taken into account when deciding to establish this scheme. Indeed, the government does not ordinarily step in to pay compensation to consumers in relation to allegations of fraud, investment losses, mis-selling or mis-buying of investments. I would, however, like to make it clear that neither the government nor the FCA accepts any legal liability for the failure of LCF or the losses incurred by its bondholders.

In these extraordinary circumstances, the government has decided to establish a compensation scheme. However, it is imperative to avoid creating the misconception that government will stand behind bad investments in future, even where FSCS protection does not apply. That would create a moral hazard for investors and potentially lead individuals to choose unsuitable investments, thinking the government will provide compensation if things go wrong. The ultimate responsibility for choosing suitable investments must remain with individuals.

To avoid creating this misconception, and to take into account the wide range of factors that contributed to the losses that government would not ordinarily compensate for, the government will establish a scheme that provides 80% of LCF bondholders' initial investment up to a maximum of £68k. Where bondholders have received interest payments from LCF or distributions from the administrators, Smith & Williamson, these will be deducted from the amount of compensation payable. The scheme will be available to all LCF bondholders who have not already received compensation from the FSCS and represents 80% of the compensation they would have received had they been eligible for FSCS protection.

Around 97% of all LCF bondholders invested less than £85k and therefore will not reach the compensation cap under either the government scheme or the FSCS. The government expects to pay out around £120m in compensation in total and the scheme to have paid all bondholders within 6 months of securing the necessary primary legislation, which it will bring forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Bondholders do not need to do anything at this stage and government will provide further details on how the scheme will operate in due course. The scheme will be simple and straightforward to navigate. Bondholders will not need to use a claims management company, solicitor or any other organisation to help them claim.

I am mindful that some individuals may be anxious to receive their compensation and I urge bondholders to be vigilant to the risk of scammers posing as services to help them claim. To reiterate, the scheme has not opened yet and bondholders should await further announcements from the government on next steps.

One of the challenges highlighted by Dame Elizabeth Gloster's report is that, despite exhibiting many of the characteristics of other regulated financial services activities, the issuance of mini-bonds is not currently a regulated activity. The government is committed to ensuring the financial services sector is well regulated and consumers are adequately protected, and the Treasury is therefore today launching a consultation on proposals to bring the issuance of mini-bonds into FCA regulation. This consultation is the culmination of a review into the regulation of mini-bonds that I announced in May 2019 and delivers on one of the recommendations made in Dame Elizabeth Gloster's report.

In addition, the FCA is continuing its work to address the recommendations in Dame Elizabeth Gloster's report, including through its ongoing Transformation Programme. A number of important steps have already been taken and I welcome the FCA's commitment to report publicly on the progress of these vital reforms.

Finally, I wish to reiterate my sympathy for LCF bondholders. I hope the compensation offered by the government scheme will offer some relief to the distress and hardship suffered and provide closure on this difficult matter.

[1] A link to the previous WMS can be found via <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-12-17/hcws678>

[2] The full report can be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/945247/Gloster\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/945247/Gloster_Report_FINAL.pdf)

## ■ UK Listings Review: Government response

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):**

**[HCWS919]**

In November last year, I asked Lord Hill of Oareford CBE to carry out an independent review of the UK's listing arrangements. Strong public markets are a vital component of the UK economy and the Government is committed to ensuring that the UK's markets are as competitive as possible, and to supporting the many different companies that use markets to raise capital, including technology firms as mentioned in Lord Hill's report.

At Budget last month, Lord Hill published his UK Listing Review.[1] It made fourteen recommendations. Today, I am pleased to set out how the Government intends to take forward each of the recommendations made.

Seven of the recommendations are directed towards the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), our independent regulator. As the FCA set out in its public response on 03 March, it welcomes the report and intends to consider all the relevant recommendations carefully, including on free float, dual class share structures, and special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs). It has committed to acting quickly where appropriate, including by publishing a consultation by the summer, and a specific consultation on SPACs before that.

Six key recommendations are directed towards HM Treasury (HMT), and I outline how we will be taking forward each recommendation, in turn, below.

Firstly, I agree to present an annual 'State of the City' report to Parliament (recommendation 1). I am grateful for the suggestions provided as to what this report could cover, and I believe this would benefit the UK's capital markets. I will present the first of these reports in 2022.

Lord Hill recommended that HMT considers an additional 'growth' or 'competitiveness' objective for the FCA, as part of the Future Regulatory Framework (FRF) Review (recommendation 2). The first consultation on the FRF review closed on 19 February. This review seeks to ensure the UK's regulatory framework is fit for our future outside the EU and the first consultation welcomed stakeholder views on the current set of statutory objectives. It also sought views on the future overall accountability framework for the FCA (and PRA). The Government is currently considering the 120 stakeholder responses received in relation to this consultation and will use these to inform a second consultation later this year. I will carefully consider this recommendation as part of that process.

Three of the recommendations, on reviewing the UK's prospectus regime (recommendation 7), considering whether prospectuses drawn up under other jurisdictions' rules can be used to facilitate secondary listings in the UK (recommendation 8) and facilitating the provision of forward-looking information by issuers in prospectuses (recommendation 9), all deal with the UK's prospectus regime. Again, I strongly welcome this, and agree we need to consider reforms to ensure these documents are fit for purpose. I can confirm that the Government will bring forward a public consultation on the UK's prospectus regime later this year.

Lord Hill also raised the issue of improving the efficiency of further capital raising by listed companies (recommendation 13). This is a highly technical area, and I agree that bringing together expertise specifically on this issue will be helpful to consider what more can be done to improve capital raising processes and I am happy to help convene such a group. My officials will be considering what form this will take over the coming weeks.

One of the recommendations, concerning how technology can be used to improve retail investor involvement in corporate actions and their undertaking of an appropriate stewardship role, is directed towards the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). As such, this recommendation will be taken forward by BEIS as part of its wider consideration of the findings from the Law Commission's recent scoping study on intermediated securities. BEIS expects to announce a response to the study later this year.

Finally, Lord Hill concluded by drawing the Government's attention to other issues raised with the review illustrating how the wider financial ecosystem may impact UK listings. I would like to thank Lord Hill for bringing these issues to my attention.

I would like to conclude by again thanking Lord Hill for his work, and I look forward to taking forward his recommendations.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-listings-review>