



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 October 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:29 P.M., 20 October 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Prosecutions: Standards

Munira Wilson:[\[57385\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many open cases the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has closed due to the CPS sending queries to those that had submitted the case, but receiving no response in the allotted time, in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

Alex Chalk:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) may close cases at the pre-charge stage as 'pending response – further investigation' for a number of reasons, which are not limited to queries about submitted cases. The reasons could include, for example, that the suspect had died. However, it is not possible to distinguish in the CPS figures between the reasons.

Closing a case that is pending response for further investigation is known as an 'administrative finalisation', not a legal decision, and may not be the end of the case. The table below shows the numbers finalised pending response for further investigation, excluding submissions for early advice (EA), per calendar year.

	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Pending Response - Further Investigation(excluding EA)	30,782	28,209	23,978	6,196

*In line with the CPS publication policy the 2021 figure covers January – March 2021.

■ Serious Fraud Office: Prosecutions

Kevin Hollinrake:[\[57166\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) company self-referrals, (b) whistleblower, (c) victim, (d) professional advisory, (e) competitor and (f) other referrals have been made to the Serious Fraud Office in each financial year between 2015-16 and 2020-21.

Alex Chalk:

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) receives a large number of reports and referrals from multiple different sources relating to a wide range of offences. Whistleblower referrals have been routinely published in the SFO Annual Report on Whistleblowing Disclosures since 2017. The figures are set out below:

- During the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the SFO managed 175 whistleblowing disclosures.
- During the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, the SFO managed 128 whistleblowing disclosures.
- During the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, the SFO managed 137 whistleblowing disclosures.
- During the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the SFO managed 102 whistleblowing disclosures.

The SFO does not hold a detailed breakdown of the number of referrals within each of the other categories requested. However, the total number of all other referrals made to the SFO within the time period requested are set out below:

- During the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 the SFO managed 1335 non whistleblower referrals.
- During the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 the SFO managed 1160 non whistleblower referrals.
- During the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 the SFO managed 1151 non whistleblower referrals.
- During the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 the SFO managed 1045 non whistleblower referrals.
- During the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 the SFO managed 1397 referrals – including whistleblower reports received in this financial year.
- During the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 the SFO managed 2749 referrals – including whistleblower reports received in this financial year.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Animal Experiments

Alex Sobel:

[\[57309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Centre for Economics and Business Research report, The economic impact of the UK's New Approach Methodologies sector, on behalf of Animal Free Research UK, published 6 October 2021, whether the forthcoming Spending Review will make further funding available to (a) support the NAMs industry and (b) accelerate the replacement of animals in research with NAMs including the use of human cells and tissues, artificial intelligence and organ-on-a-chip technology.

George Freeman:

Future funding decisions will be subject to the outcome of the Spending Review 2021.

Alex Sobel:

[\[57311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Centre for Economics and Business Research report, The economic impact of the UK's New Approach Methodologies sector, on behalf of Animal Free Research UK, published 6 October 2021, what steps he is taking to provide support for the NAMs industry and accelerate the replacement of animals in research in addition to providing funding for the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research.

George Freeman:

The Government actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs), which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice and regulations on animal research.

The NC3Rs receives its core funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s Medical Research Council (MRC), and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC). Since the NC3Rs was launched in 2004, it has committed £100 million in research to develop 3Rs technologies.

In 2015, the NC3Rs with Innovate UK, alongside the MRC, BBSRC, Economic and Social Research Council, and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, developed the non-animal technologies roadmap setting out a 2030 vision and strategy for how non-animal technologies could be used to replace the use of animals in research across a number of sectors for the UK.

The roadmap sets a vision and strategy to accelerate the translation of technologies emerging from research into tests for assessing the safety and efficacy of chemicals (including medicines and drugs) without the use of animals and to guide those working in this area to adopt more humane approaches.

In addition to funding the NC3Rs, UKRI also funds a portfolio of research projects involving humans, human materials, animal models, and non-animal technologies. The replacement, refinement and reduction principles are embedded in all the research within UKRI's remit involving (or potentially involving) animal use. UKRI also encourages grant applicants, including those whose research does not involve animals but could contribute to greater reduction and replacement, to consider further opportunities to advance the 3Rs.

The MRC has recently launched a new Precision Medicine Accelerator to take the most exciting ideas from discovery science into research using humans, focused on early clinical application. The first step was the establishment of the Experimental Medicine Panel in 2020, which has so far awarded £5.5 million to projects investigating the mechanisms behind diseases such as liver failure, polycystic ovary syndrome, vasculitis, mild autonomous cortisol secretion and malaria.

Between 2015-2019, the BBSRC spent over £7 million on research grants aimed at developing and applying innovative methodologies to studying human and animal physiology, including in silico approaches, organ-on-a-chip, organoid and other advanced cell culture systems.

■ Banks

Mr William Wragg:

[\[56365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of an exclusion order for regional mutual banks to allow those banks to scale up their offerings.

Paul Scully:

The Government welcomes the efforts to establish regional mutual banks in the UK. The Government is also committed to seeing a highly competitive banking sector, working in the interests of all consumers and businesses across the country, and recognises the potential of regional mutual banks in achieving this goal. HM Treasury officials have been engaging with prospective mutual banks over challenges to their establishment.

The Government has the power to relax competition rules where there are exceptional and compelling reasons of public policy to do so. The Government does not use these powers lightly as under normal circumstances, a sector should be able to operate in a way that is compatible with competition law. We will consider requests for public policy exclusion orders where the exceptional and compelling reasons of public policy have been demonstrated.

■ Clean Steel Fund

Gill Furniss:

[\[56525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide a timescale for the allocation of funding under the Clean Steel Fund.

Lee Rowley:

In its response to the Call for Evidence on the Clean Steel Fund, the steel industry indicated a preference for the Fund to start in 2023.

The Government recognises the vital role that the sector plays in all areas of the UK and our economy and will continue to work with the sector to support its decarbonisation. The Department announced the Clean Steel Fund in 2019 and a number of options have been explored, together with ongoing feedback from industry.

In March 2021, the Government published the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy in which we committed to working with the Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035 and the business environment necessary to support the transition. We will provide further information in due course.

■ Consumer Goods: Internet

Gerald Jones:

[\[57191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that people who buy goods via online marketplaces are afforded the same level of consumer protections as customers who buy goods in person on the high street.

Paul Scully:

There is already robust legislation in place that protects consumers when purchasing goods and services online. The Consumer Rights Act 2015 sets out the rights consumers enjoy while shopping online and in store. Online consumers have additional rights over and above on-premises rights, and are able to cancel orders for any reason and seek a full refund.

The Department recently consulted on advancing online consumer rights in its "Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy" consultation. A copy of the consultation can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-competition-and-consumer-policy>. The consultation closed on 1 October and the Department will publish a response in due course.

■ Help to Grow Scheme

Seema Malhotra:

[\[56300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people (a) have completed or (b) are undertaking the (i) Help to Grow: Management Scheme and (ii) Help to Grow: Digital Scheme.

Paul Scully:

Help to Grow: Management will support up to 30,000 UK small and medium-sized businesses leaders over three years - to develop their strategic skills, create jobs and boost their business performance. As of 19 October, 810 business leaders are currently participating in the programme.

Help to Grow: Digital will launch in Autumn 2021 and aims to support 100,000 small businesses with online advice and a voucher for software costs. The voucher is expected to be available to UK businesses that have more than 5 and fewer than 249 employees and that have been trading for more than 12 months.

■ Iron and Steel: Energy Supply

Gill Furniss:

[\[56485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to his Answer of 22 September 2021 to Question 51016, how much funding from the public purse has been diverted through relief schemes to the steel sector to help reduce the effect of recent energy price increases on that sector.

Lee Rowley:

The value of the schemes was £122m in 2020.

■ Morrisons: Takeovers**Seema Malhotra:**[\[56505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what role the Government had in the CD&R takeover of Morrisons.

Paul Scully:

Under the Enterprise Act 2002, the Government has the power to intervene in mergers on public interest grounds covering national security, media plurality, the stability of the UK financial system and the need to maintain in the UK the capability to combat, and to mitigate the effects of, public health emergencies.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State had a constructive call with the Chief Executive of WM Morrisons and they discussed the company's plans to protect jobs, pensions and footprint in the UK in any potential acquisition. However, the details of the proposed acquisition are primarily a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

■ Post Offices: ICT**Chi Onwurah:**[\[57031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications have been received for the Post Office Interim Payment Scheme; how many applications have been awarded compensation under that scheme; how many applications for that scheme have been declined; and what discussions his Department has had with Herbert Smith Freehills on the definition of (a) viable claims and (b) hardship when assessing applications for that scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Post Office has received 57 applications for interim payments. Post Office has made offers in 52 cases and made 43 payments so far. Other claims are progressing. Payments made to date have all been for maximum amount of £100,000. There have been 3 cases where interim payments were declined. Applications for interim payments are considered on a case-by-case basis. Individuals can pursue claims should they wish irrespective of whether or not they receive an interim payment.

Officials from BEIS and UKGI meet regularly with Post Office and their legal representatives to discuss Horizon related issues. These discussions have included issues related to interim compensation payments. The application form for interim compensation payment allows postmasters to provide details to Post Office of any issues, which may include hardship, that they consider Post Office should take into account when assessing an application.

Peter Grant:[\[57139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of the applications received after the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme closed on 27

November 2020 have (a) been assessed, (b) had an award made from that scheme and (c) been excluded from that scheme.

Paul Scully:

There are a small number of individuals (107) who did not apply to the HSS before 27 November 2020 and Post Office is seeking fair and consistent solutions for these cases. Post Office is keeping those affected updated.

The Historical Shortfall Scheme which opened in May 2020 was advertised in national, regional and local media and individual letters were sent to all former postmasters that Post Office was able to obtain records for, plus all current postmasters. The HSS mailing was sent to 19,972 former and 7,155 current postmasters.

Peter Grant:

[\[57140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many former postmasters applied to the Historical Shortfall Scheme after it closed on 27 November 2020.

Paul Scully:

One hundred and seven current and former postmasters applied to the Historical Shortfall Scheme after it closed on 27 November 2020.

■ **Self-employed: Conditions of Employment**

Patrick Grady:

[\[56540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing a mandatory minimum cancellation period for the employment of freelance staff.

Paul Scully:

Although freelancers are generally understood to be self-employed, a freelancer could be either self-employed, a limb (b) worker or an employee depending on the reality of their relationship with their employer or engager.

Current legislation is clear that an individual's entitlement to employment rights is based on whether they are a limb (b) worker or employee. The Government recently consulted on two policy proposals to tackle issues with non-guaranteed hours contracts, such as employers cancelling shifts at the last minute. These are a right to reasonable notice of work schedules and a right to compensation for short notice shift cancellation. We are analysing consultation responses, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will respond in due course.

Self-employed freelance workers do not have employment rights as they are in business for themselves, but their contract for services may specify a minimum cancellation period.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Civil Servants: Location****Stuart Anderson:**[\[56155\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent progress the Government has made on the Places for Growth programme.

Michael Ellis:

As part of Budget 2020, the Government committed to moving 22,000 Civil Service roles out of central London within the next decade. These roles will be moving to locations across the UK, including Glasgow, Belfast, Cardiff, Darlington and Wolverhampton. 11 departments have announced their location plans so far.

Places for Growth is working closely with Government departments as part of the Spending Review and has early commitments to move up to 15,000 Civil Service roles by 2024/25. Additional plans for the relocation of roles will be finalised in the coming weeks.

■ Cobra**John Spellar:**[\[56770\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether COBRA has met since 16 September 2021 to discuss fuel supply shortages.

Michael Ellis:

As a matter of policy, the government does not comment on COBR meetings.

With respect to the fuel crisis more generally, the Government acted swiftly to respond to the rapid increase in demand for fuel (observed from 24 September 2021) which caused shortages at forecourts around the UK. Regular ministerial and senior officials' meetings were convened, both before and after the peak in demand. These meetings were all supported by data feeds collated by departments that informed Government of consumer demand, forecourt stock levels, fuel delivery capabilities and other key metrics.

The government has tried and tested plans in place to manage fuel supply. The Government implemented a range of timely measures to resolve the situation, including deployment of military drivers to staff the Reserve Tanker Fleet, the activation of the Downstream Oil Protocol, the relaxation of drivers' hours regulations and the roll out of short-term visas so that haulier firms could source trained drivers from overseas.

■ Coronavirus: Contracts**Dan Carden:**[\[56676\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will ask the relevant authorities to undertake detailed audits of the 73 Government covid-

19 contracts identified by Transparency International UK as containing corruption red flags.

Michael Ellis:

Intensive collaboration with the private sector specifically on procurement has been, and continues to be, both necessary and essential for Government to properly manage and handle the Covid-19 crisis. During the most challenging periods, being able to procure at speed was critical in providing that response. Despite that, the Government has always made clear that all contracts, including all those entered into as part of the Government's Covid-19 response, must achieve value for money for taxpayers and use sound commercial judgement. The details of all awards are published in line with Government transparency guidelines.

Proper due diligence is carried out for all government contracts and Government takes these checks extremely seriously. Government Departments, as individual contracting authorities, are responsible for ensuring that they have in place robust processes for spending public money fairly and achieving value for money for the taxpayer. This includes ensuring that appropriate levels of due diligence are undertaken on the supplier prior to award of contracts.

■ **Development and Use of Supply Chain Finance (And Associated Schemes) in Government Review**

Dan Carden:

[\[56701\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government plans to publish its response to Nigel Boardman's report into the development and use of Supply Chain Finance (and associated schemes) related to Greensill Capital in government.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Honourable member to Written Statement [HCWS293](#).

The Government notes the work of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs and Treasury Committees, as well as the forthcoming Standards Matter 2 report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Once these reports have been published, we will consider their work alongside Mr Boardman's recommendations, and set out a substantive Government policy statement to Parliament in due course.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[56892\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 28 July 2021 from the hon. member for West Lancashire, transferred to his Department from the Department for Health and Social Care, on covid-19 vaccine certification, reference ZA57209.

Michael Ellis:

A response was sent to the hon. Member by Lord True, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, on 8 October.

■ Procurement: Coronavirus

Dan Carden: [\[57295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government plans publish details of (a) companies that were awarded contracts via the high-priority lane for covid-19 procurement and (b) who referred them.

Michael Ellis:

Details of Government contracts above £10,000, and £25,000 in the wider public sector, are publicly available and published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

We plan to publish details of companies that were awarded contracts via the high-priority lane for Covid-19 procurement, and who referred them to the high-priority lane, in due course. This commitment goes above and beyond usual transparency obligations.

■ Public Sector: Procurement

Dan Carden: [\[56150\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's timetable is for publishing its response to its consultation on planned reforms to public procurement.

Michael Ellis:

Leaving the EU provides the UK with the opportunity to overhaul the public procurement regulations that govern how contracting authorities spend some £290bn of taxpayer's money.

We received over 600 responses as part of the consultation exercise. The process of analysis of these comments is now complete and we are finalising our response to the consultation ahead of publication in the coming weeks.

■ Succession: Males

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[57352\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to end male primogeniture.

Michael Ellis:

Reform of the succession to the hereditary peerage raises a variety of complex issues and therefore any changes need careful consideration and wider engagement.

■ UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

Afzal Khan: [\[56198\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2021 to Question 11654, when he plans to the

announce the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration.

Michael Ellis:

While the Government's immediate focus is on protecting lives and livelihoods, the Government fully recognises the need to mourn those who have died and how this period in our history should be remembered and commemorated.

The Government will set out the membership and terms of reference of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration in due course.

COP26

■ Climate Change

Jeff Smith: [\[903719\]](#)

What steps he is taking to mobilise public and private climate finance ahead of COP26.

Alok Sharma:

We have been working tirelessly to encourage donor nations, and multilateral development banks, to increase their commitments to meet the \$100bn goal, which is within touching distance. We are also working closely with the private sector to promote and support initiatives which mobilise private finance towards climate action.

■ Climate Change and Coronavirus

Dan Carden: [\[903718\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to promote climate action and a green recovery from the covid-19 pandemic ahead of COP26.

Jacob Young: [\[903720\]](#)

What steps he is taking with international partners to help ensure that climate action contributes to the post-covid-19 pandemic economic recovery.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Prime Minister's 10-Point Plan and Net Zero Strategy sets out our blueprint for a Green Industrial Revolution. The plan invests in green technologies and industries; leverages billions of pounds of private sector investments to create and support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs, and level up across the UK. It's a clear plan to build back greener from the covid pandemic.

■ Climate Change: International Cooperation

Karl McCartney: [\[903717\]](#)

What progress the Government has made on raising international ambition to tackle climate change as part of its preparations for COP26.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Over 70% of the global economy now has net zero or carbon neutrality commitments, up from less than 30% when the UK assumed the COP Presidency. Over 100 countries have submitted enhanced 2030 targets, but we must increase global ambition to keep 1.5 degrees in reach and will continue to push all countries, particularly the G20, to do so.

DEFENCE■ **Afghanistan: Interpreters****Hilary Benn:**[\[56566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2021 to Question 41667 on Afghanistan: Immigration, and with reference to the email of 6 October 2021 from the Right Hon. Member for Leeds Central, if he will urgently review the application by S, the former interpreter for UK forces whose case was covered on BBC Newsnight on 2 August 2021 and 19 August 2021, under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme.

James Heappey:

This application for relocation under the ARAP scheme is now subject to legal proceedings brought by the applicant against the MOD. These proceedings are ongoing, so it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees****Mrs Pauline Latham:**[\[56153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse is to date of the Afghan relocation programme (ARAP); and whether funding for ARAP is classified as Official Development Assistance and payable from the present ODA budget.

James Heappey:

The current estimate of MOD cost of supporting the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) is £8.25 million. This includes:

- Pre Op PITTING movement of ARAP persons to UK.
- The ARAP share for Op PITTING.
- Early costs arising from the movement of ARAP persons from 3rd

The MOD continues to incur costs for the movement of persons to the UK, but is not responsible for the significant costs will be incurred by Home Office in delivering the Managed Quarantine Service, bridging accommodation and wrap around support for the ARAP population in the UK, including costs of accommodation and services once in the UK.

We do not anticipate that this expenditure will be classified as Official Development Assistance

■ Armed Forces: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers**Ian Mearns:** [\[56228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military personnel employed by the Army are qualified as Class 1 HGV drivers; of those how many are stationed in the UK; of those stationed in the UK how many are qualified to drive hazardous or dangerous goods, such as petrol.

James Heappey:

Under Military Aid to Civilian Authority, Defence has made available approximately 250 military fuel tanker drivers and a similar number of support staff, to assist the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy with ensuring the continuity of fuel supplies around Great Britain. As part of ensuring that Defence has a suitably qualified workforce, we train personnel in a variety of different categories of driving licences. This is primarily to enable the safe operation of military vehicles and equipment in worldwide operations and qualified personnel are regularly deployed overseas. It would therefore be misleading to specify numbers of qualified personnel against specific driving license requirements currently held within Defence or specifically in the UK.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicle: Ammunition**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[56832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department purchased a war stock of 40mm case telescoped ammunition for the (a) Warrior CSP fleet and (b) Ajax fleet.

Jeremy Quin:

A combined war stock of 40mm case telescoped ammunition is in the process of being delivered to meet defence requirements.

■ Helicopters**Dr James Davies:** [\[58438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's plans are for a new Medium Lift Helicopter.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 October 2021 to Question 56262 from the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Mr Morgan).

Attachments:

1. Helicopters: Contracts for Services [UIN 56262.docx]

■ HMS Queen Elizabeth: Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[56841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK-operated F-35s are currently onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth.

James Heappey:

The UK has eight RAF F-35s onboard HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH.

■ Military Bases: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:**[\[57464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the disposal of the Kinnegar Logistics Base in Holywood, County Down, in the last 18 months.

Jeremy Quin:

Ministry of Defence officials have continued to discuss the future plans and disposal options for Kinnegar Logistics Base with Ards and North Down Borough council, their planning team and their regeneration team on a regular basis over the last 18 months. The last meeting was on 30 September 2021.

■ Ministry of Defence: Assets**John Healey:**[\[56784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 158 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2013 to 2014, what the constructive loss of £860,000,000 for impairment charges for certain non-current assets and current asset inventory resulting from inventory impairment exercise conducted in year relate to.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence Accounts had been subject to a National Audit Office (NAO) audit qualification in the years prior to 2013-14 due to failures to demonstrate adequate consideration of potential impairments of non-current and current asset inventory holdings. As a result, an extensive exercise was undertaken during 2013-14 of all such holdings which identified both historic and current year events that gave rise to accounting impairments.

For example, the then planned earlier retirement of Tornado necessitated an impairment as it was considered that not all asset holdings would now be fully utilised prior to end of service life. It was also identified that a number of other programme holdings were in surplus relative to usage profile whilst a smaller number had suffered damage or technical obsolescence limiting or precluding future use. The value of these assets therefore needed to be impaired to reflect their realistic useful value to MOD. The overall value of these impairment adjustments being £860 million.

As part of the activity, a business as usual process was also established to ensure enduring consideration and recognition of impairment. The full details of the exercise and conclusions reached were subject to internal audit review and then submitted to the NAO who conducted further testing, the result of which was the audit qualification was lifted.

■ Ministry of Defence: Research

Chris Evans: [\[56995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's total expenditure for Research and Development was in each year between 2010-11 and 2020-21.

Jeremy Quin:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces an annual 'Research and development expenditure by the UK Government' publication which provides detail of research and development expenditure for UK Government Departments including the Ministry of Defence (MOD). The total net R&D spend for MOD in each year since 2010/11, in current prices, is summarised in the table below.

£MILLION	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total R&D expenditure	1,693	1,306	1,460	1,516	1,704	1,636	1,623	1,634	1,647	1,017

The ONS publications covering expenditure in financial years 2010-11 to 2019-20 can be found here: [Research and development expenditure by the UK government Statistical bulletins - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

The detail of MOD's net research and development expenditure for 2020-21 will be published by the ONS in April 2022. MOD's audited Annual Report and Accounts, which will include total R&D spend in financial year 2020-21, is expected to be published in November.

Chris Evans: [\[56996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's planned Research and Expenditure spend is for (a) this financial year and (b) each of the next four financial years.

Jeremy Quin:

The 2020 Spending Review (SR) Settlement sets out a ringfence for defence R&D amounting to at least £6.6 billion over four years from 2021-22. This funding will support next generation capabilities from satellites and automation to AI and novel weapons.

For this financial year, current plans indicate that we will spend in excess of the £960 million ringfence as reported at Main Estimates. Investment plans for the subsequent 4 years are still subject to change and will be considered in annual budgeting cycles. However, R&D investment is expected to meet the £6.6 billion ringfence by financial year 2024-2025.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Marketing****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[57375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the devolved Administrations on best practice on protecting (a) children, (b) people in recovery from alcohol addiction and (c) other vulnerable populations from alcohol marketing on TV and online.

Julia Lopez:

When making legislation or policy decisions with regard to marketing for TV and online, DCMS officials regularly engage with their counterparts in the devolved administrations. DHSC officials in alcohol policy liaise with their DA colleagues once a quarter.

■ Destination Management Organisations: Reviews**Alex Sobel:**[\[57312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to respond to the independent review of Destination Management Organisations in England.

Nigel Huddleston:

I welcome the publication of the Destination Management Organisations (DMO) review in September 2021. I am grateful to Nick de Bois and stakeholders across the sector for their engagement in this review of how tourism is structured, organised and funded at a local level in England.

We are now carefully considering the recommendations made by Nick de Bois and hope to publish a response in the coming months.

■ Just Ask Estate Services**John McDonnell:**[\[53174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the management of The Royal Parks estate on the level of job reductions included within the tender contract specification for roles currently undertaken by those employed by Just Ask Estates Services Ltd across that estate.

John McDonnell:[\[53175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department takes to monitor the employment practices of private suppliers given contracts on the Royal Parks estates to ensure they comply with Public Sector Equalities Duties.

John McDonnell:

[\[53176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the management of the Royal Parks Estate on the employment practices of private contractor Just Ask Estate Services Ltd; and whether she has received representations on that company not providing employees with accurate contracts of employment.

Nigel Huddleston:

The management of the Royal Parks has been delegated by The Secretary of State to The Royal Parks Limited which is responsible for all operational decisions in relation to the maintenance of the Parks.

The Royal Parks Limited must, in the exercise of its public functions, have due regard to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

■ **Platinum Jubilee 2022**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[56450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to encourage community participation in celebrations marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee; and whether she plans to provide advice to organisers of community events on how to achieve live screenings, in community halls, of BBC coverage of the national celebrations without incurring costs required by the BBC for such screenings.

Chris Philp:

My department is delighted to be working with Buckingham Palace, and a range of partners, to develop UK-wide opportunities to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

DCMS's Platinum Jubilee website includes guidance on how Local Authorities, communities and individuals can get involved in the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

TV licensing is a matter for the BBC, though I am aware it has applied dispensation for public community screenings of events of national importance in the past. I am assured the BBC will be looking into arrangements around the Platinum Jubilee in due course.

■ **Public Lending Right**

Ben Lake:

[\[57256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the total cost to the public purse was of the Public Lending Right in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Public Lending Right was allocated £6.6 million for the PLR Scheme year 2019/20; and £6.6 million for the PLR Scheme year 2020/21.

Ben Lake:[\[57257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many authors received compensation through the Public Lending Right in (a) Wales, (b) Scotland, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) England in 2019.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Public Lending Right Act 1979 provides a right for authors, known as the “public lending right”, to receive payments from a central fund for the loan of their books to the public by local library authorities. The central fund is provided from government grant-in-aid, and the PLR Scheme is administered for DCMS by the British Library.

The PLR Scheme sets out how to calculate the payments that authors can expect to receive from the central fund and this is calculated, and recommended to the government, by the British Library using the number of ‘notional loans’ of their books from public libraries in the UK. The PLR Scheme sets out a maximum payment threshold per author of £6,600 and the minimum level for authors to receive payments is £1.

Royal Parks: Industrial Disputes**Patrick Grady:**[\[57108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish a response to Early Day Motion 476 on Royal Parks cleaners and playground attendants dispute.

Nigel Huddleston:

The management of the Royal Parks has been delegated by The Secretary of State to The Royal Parks Limited which is responsible for all operational decisions in relation to the maintenance of the Parks.

The Royal Parks Limited must, in the exercise of its public functions, have due regard to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Social Media: Fraud**Nadia Whittome:**[\[57490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle scams on online dating sites; and what support is available to victims of such scams.

Chris Philp:

The Online Safety Bill will increase people's protection from scams facilitated via dating sites. Dating sites will have to assess the risk of fraud arising from user-generated content on their service and then take steps to mitigate and tackle that risk. This is just one part of the government's plan, led by the Home Office, to tackle fraud in all its forms.

Victims of fraud must feel they can come forward to report these crimes and receive the support they need. The government is working to improve the victim support

system to make sure that everyone receives the advice and care they need to move beyond the impact of this crime.

■ Sports: Gender Recognition

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[56575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the report from the Sports Councils Equality Group and its Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Sport, published in September 2021.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[56576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference Sports Councils Equality Group report entitled, Project for Review and Redraft of Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport 2021, published September 2021, what steps he is taking to address (a) intimidation, (b) threats of non-selection and (c) sanctions aimed at individuals in UK sports organisations who support fair sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, as well as safety and fairness across all levels of sport. This is at the heart of our strategy 'Sporting Future'. Sports governing bodies each have their own rules on transgender issues and it is appropriate that they can determine the right position for their own sport.

The Sports Councils' Equality Group (SCEG) transgender guidance is a carefully considered report which addresses the complexities of transgender inclusion in sport. The report has concluded that there is an inherent tension between delivering inclusion, fairness and safety when including transgender women into the women's sport category due to retained physiological differences.

The guidance advises the national governing bodies (NGBs) of each sport to define the best options for their sport, subject to their assessment of inclusion, fairness and safety. It also includes a decision making framework to help sports undertake such an assessment and if appropriate consider options to modify or adapt their offer to facilitate participation.

Our arm's length bodies Sport England and UK Sport will continue to support NGBs to undertake the necessary assessment for their sport.

■ Swimming Pools: Finance

Kate Osborne: [\[56546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department for funding (a) the building of new and (b) refurbishing of existing swimming pools in the upcoming Budget and Spending Review.

Nigel Huddleston:

We recognise the importance of ensuring public access to indoor and outdoor pools and that swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy.

Government has provided a range of support for swimming pools during the pandemic. The £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund supported the reopening of local authority swimming pools throughout the country. In addition, Sport England have made 127 Covid support awards to the Swimming & Diving community (totalling £1,100,560), and a further 20 awards to multi-sport projects (totalling £211,171) where swimming and diving are expected to benefit.

Beyond Covid, Sport England have awarded £8,529,154 to swimming and diving projects since April 2017, and have provided £16,123,002 of funding to Swim England in the same period.

EDUCATION

■ Breakfast Clubs

Sarah Atherton: [\[56211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools currently use or provide breakfast clubs in (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) Scotland.

Sarah Atherton: [\[56609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure children have access to breakfast clubs in the school holidays during the 2021-2022 academic year.

Will Quince:

Decisions around school funding and the provision of school food including breakfast clubs are a matter for the devolved administrations.

Data is not held on the number of schools operating breakfast clubs. However, schools have the freedom to run before school childcare and breakfast clubs.

The government is committed to continuing support for breakfast clubs in England in schools in disadvantaged areas. A further £24 million has been invested to continue our national programme for the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas in England, including Opportunity Areas. This will mean that thousands of children from low income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing and readiness to learn.

The department is investing up to £220 million in the Holiday Activities and Food programme in 2021. Taking place in schools and community venues across England, delivery began at Easter, ran across the summer and will run in the Christmas holidays. The programme supports disadvantaged children, and their families, by providing them with healthy food and enriching activities during the school holidays.

■ Children: Afghanistan

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[53222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure effective support for refugees arriving from Afghanistan, including the enrolment of school aged children.

Mr Robin Walker:

Work is underway across government departments, and with charities and local authorities, to ensure refugees arriving from Afghanistan are properly supported so they can rebuild their lives. Local authorities will receive a funding package to support the resettlement of these families.

We are prioritising making sure that children of all ages have access to education, including by working with local authorities and other networks to make sure this can happen as soon as possible.

We are providing at least £12 million in extra education funding, which prioritises additional school places for children and young people, but also covers school transport, extra English lessons, specialist teachers and more.

■ Children in Care

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[56537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 51628 on Children in Care, for what reasons the Department does not account for the outcomes of children placed in care across borders; and if the Department will reconsider conducting research into the long-term outcomes of children placed across borders.

Will Quince:

Statistically, the department collects data on placement type, reason for placement change and three separate pieces of information in relation to the locality of placements. The location data includes:

- Information about the distance the child is placed away from their home postcode
- Whether the placement is located inside or outside their responsible local authority
- The country of the placement (England, UK or otherwise)

Figures on placements, distance from the home placement and the location of the placement, inside or outside the council boundary, were published in the underlying data, 'National - children looked after at 31 March by placement type, distance of placement and locality of placement' of the statistical release 'Children looked after in England including adoption: 2019 to 2020' at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2020>.

It is the duty of the local authority to ensure placements are suitable for the young people in their care. Alongside this, Virtual School Heads have a statutory duty to

promote the educational attainment of the children in their local authority's care, wherever they live or are educated. This includes children who are placed out of area. Virtual School Heads manage additional funding of £2,345 per looked-after child, that we have provided through the pupil premium plus.

This government is committed to making a real difference to the needs, experience and outcomes of those supported by children's social care. To do this, we need to make fundamental changes to the current system. That is why we launched the bold, broad and independently led Care Review, a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform systems and services. The government will respond to the recommendations made by the review once it concludes.

■ Children: Day Care

Sarah Olney:

[\[57225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to (a) support the sustainability of the childcare sector and (b) facilitate access to affordable and high-quality early years providers.

Will Quince:

Early years are a vital part of a child's education, enabling them to develop the cognitive, social, and emotional skills that set them up for life.

To facilitate access to affordable and high-quality early years provision, we have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past 3 years on the government's early years entitlements. This financial year the department is investing £44 million for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers.

The department is also investing £180 million on education recovery in the early years, to support the youngest children's learning and development.

With regard to sustainability, despite the reduction in the number of children in the age range for early years provision, the number of childcare places on Ofsted's early years register has remained broadly stable since August 2015, at around 1.3 million places.

Ofsted also has regard to the early years foundation stage framework in carrying out its inspections and reporting on the quality and standards of early years provision and, overall, quality in this sector is very high with 96% of all childcare providers on Ofsted's early years register judged either Good or Outstanding at their most recent inspection, the highest level ever.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[57397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of commissioning an independent review of childcare funding and affordability in the UK.

Will Quince:

The department's officials are in regular discussions with Her Majesty's Treasury, and as we prepare for the forthcoming Spending Review settlement for the 2022-23

financial year and beyond, we will continue to press the importance of the early years sector across government. We will not be launching an independent review of childcare at this time.

This issue was debated in Westminster Hall on 13 September pursuant to e-petition 586700, and I refer the hon. Member for Coventry South to the transcript of this debate available here: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-09-13/debates/55E6BB12-54B7-4C08-8D68-00140DFFB5B1/Childcare>.

■ Children: Disability

Wera Hobhouse: **[56263]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Scope and the Disabled Children's Partnership's report, The gap widens, published in October 2021, which found that by funding additional investment in disabled children's social care more disabled young people and parent carers would be able to access employment and education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic and social benefits from additional investment in disabled children's social care.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for Bath to the answer given to Question [44424](#), on 14 September 2021.

Grahame Morris: **[56976]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the finding of Scope and the Disabled Children's Partnership's report, The gap widens, published September 2021, that there is a £573 million funding gap in disabled children's social care, what steps he is taking to ensure that every family with a disabled child can access the care they need.

Will Quince:

The department believes it is right for local authorities, who know their areas' needs best, to determine what services are required locally, including early help.

In line with this, respite care services for disabled children are provided on the basis of an individual assessment of each child and family's needs.

This year councils have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including a £1.7 billion grant for social care. The government has also given over £6 billion in unringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services.

The department will continue to work with other government departments, including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to ensure the upcoming Spending Review reflects the needs of children's services.

In addition to statutory services, the department is providing £27.3 million to the Family Fund in financial year 2021-22 to support over 60,000 families on low incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses. Grants can be used for a range of purposes, including family breaks.

■ Computacenter: Remote Education

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices were purchased by the IT firm Computacenter for the purpose of the Get help with technology scheme; and what brand and model of devices were purchased by that firm for the scheme.

Mr Robin Walker:

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has distributed over 1.35 million laptops and tablets to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education providers for disadvantaged children and young people through the Get Help With Technology programme. This formed part of the £400 million government investment to support access to remote education and online social care services. Of these, 920,120 devices were purchased via contracts held with ComputaCenter. A table containing information on device type is attached.

Attachments:

1. 57354_table [57354_table_showing_Computacenter_and_device_type.xls]

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Kate Green:

[56280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding has been allocated through the Holiday Activities and Food Programme to each local authority.

Will Quince:

Funding allocations for each local authority are listed in Annex A of the grant determination letter for this programme, which is available at the following link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001998/Updated_HAF_grant_determination_-_9_July_2021.pdf.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Children

Helen Hayes:

[57199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to include disabled children in the levelling up agenda and help them recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

We are committed to helping all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to make up learning lost as a result of COVID-19. Since June 2020, the department has announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery in schools, which includes support for children with SEND, 16-19 providers and early years to help pupils make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The department's recovery programmes have the flexibility to support those pupils most in need, including children with SEND, with additional funding provided for those

interventions that the evidence tells us will have a significant impact on high quality tutoring and teaching.

We have consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts, both in the 2020 catch-up premium and in the 2021 recovery premium and providing the flexibility to deliver provision based on pupils' need.

Additionally, specialist settings have also received an uplift to deliver the summer schools programme.

The department has also ensured that schools, colleges, and universities have the flexibility to target this to meet the needs of their pupils and students. In addition, we continue to work hard to ensure children and young people are given access to therapies and equipment so that the right support is in place for all children and families, including addressing the backlog in assessments.

The department is providing over £42 million in the 2021-22 financial year to continue funding projects to support children with SEND. This investment will ensure that specialist organisations around the country can continue to help strengthen local area performance, support families, and provide practical support to schools and colleges. This includes £27.3 million to the Family Fund in the 2021-22 financial year to support over 60,000 families on low incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses.

■ Local Government: Children

Helen Hayes:

[\[57198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that local authorities have the capacity and resources to meet their targets for providing Education, Health and Care plan assessments.

Will Quince:

This year, local authorities have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including special educational needs and disability (SEND) services. Local authorities have the flexibility to spend according to local needs and priorities, including to undertake education, health and care needs assessments.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is responsible for local government funding including funding necessary to meet their statutory duties.

The Department for Education has been supporting local authorities to meet their statutory duties for SEND, including by providing challenge and support to those local authorities where there are long-standing delays. Each year, the department also delivers a training programme to local authorities, health, and social care staff on their statutory duties, as well as funding projects to support children with SEND.

Furthermore, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) continue with their full inspection programme and our team of SEND advisers and colleagues in NHS England are continuing to provide support and challenge to help improve performance. Depending on the underlying issues that each authority faces in this

regard, the department commissions specialist support from our delivery partners or facilitate/fund peer to peer support. The department also funds and provides regional support to address issues common in specific regions. We have commissioned the CQC and Ofsted, with the support of the Department of Health and Social Care, to develop a new area SEND inspection framework to launch after the existing cycle has finished.

The government's review of the SEND system is making good progress in identifying improvements needed to secure lasting and tangible change to the special educational needs system, drawing on significant input from a wide range of organisations, children, young people and parents. Proposals for consultation will be published as soon as possible.

■ **Respite Care: Disability**

Helen Hayes:

[\[57197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that local authorities have adequate resources to ensure every family with a disabled child can receive the respite care they need.

Will Quince:

The department believes it is right for local authorities, who know their areas' needs best, to determine what services are required locally, including early help.

In line with this, respite care services for disabled children are provided on the basis of an individual assessment of each child and family's needs.

This year councils have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including a £1.7 billion grant for social care. The government has also given over £6 billion in unringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services.

The department will continue to work with other government departments, including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to ensure the upcoming Spending Review reflects the needs of children's services.

In addition to statutory services, the department is providing £27.3 million to the Family Fund in the financial year 2021-22 to support over 60,000 families on low incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses. Grants can be used for a range of purposes, including family breaks.

■ **Schools: Capital Investment**

Kate Green:

[\[57027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools have received capital funding in each financial year since 2015-16, broken down by region.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department provides annual capital funding to support sufficient school places and to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate. In addition, the

department also delivers capital building programmes, including the free schools programme, the Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) and the new School Rebuilding Programme (SRP). Schools included in the PSBP can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/priority-school-building-programme-psbp>.

The first 100 schools in the new SRP can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme/school-rebuilding-programme>.

For a breakdown of the Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) in each financial year since 2015-16 please see the table below:

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
CDEL £m	5,068	5,732	4,907	5,402	4,864

Note: 2015-2019 figures are taken from the DfE accounts which can be found here : <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/df-e-annual-reports>.

The figures for 2020-21 will be published in due course. This year, the department is providing £5.6 billion of capital funding to support the education sector. Capital funding for years beyond 2021-22 will be determined at the Spending Review.

A large proportion of schools' capital funding is delivered through annual allocations to local authorities, larger multi-academy trusts, and large voluntary-aided school bodies. This means that the majority of annual capital funding is not allocated at school level and investment decisions are taken at a local level. Some allocations, such as those to large multi-academy trusts, will also cut across regional boundaries.

The department allocates Basic Need capital funding annually to local authorities, to support them to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient school places in their area: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>. In February 2021, we announced nearly £500 million to provide places for September 2023.

The department also allocated £365 million across 2018 to 2021 through the Special Provision Capital Fund, specifically aimed at helping local authorities develop provision for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-provision-capital-funding-for-pupils-with-ehc-plans>.

A further £300 million in High Needs Provision Capital Allocations was allocated in the financial year 2021-22 to support the delivery of new places for children with special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations>.

The government's free schools programme has delivered hundreds of new schools and provided thousands of good new school places across the country. Information on the current and pipeline schools in that programme is provided in the following

link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>.

Since 2015, the department has allocated £11.3 billion in annual capital funding to improve the condition of the school estate, including £1.8 billion committed in the 2021-22 financial year. Condition funding allocations for this year, and links to allocations from previous years, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding#funding-allocations-for-the-2021-to-2022-financial-year>. Local authorities, larger multi-academy trusts, and large

voluntary-aided school bodies (such as dioceses) receive an annual School Condition Allocation to invest in maintaining and improving the condition of the buildings for which they are responsible. Smaller and stand-alone academy trusts, voluntary-aided schools not part of larger bodies, and sixth form colleges, instead bid into the Condition Improvement Fund each year. All schools also receive funding to spend on their capital priorities through an annual Devolved Formula Capital allocation.

■ Sikhs: Curriculum

Alex Sobel:

[\[56200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing education around the Sikh faith in Key Stage 1 of the national curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

There are no plans to introduce teaching about specific faiths in any of the subjects of the national curriculum at any of the key stages.

The teaching about the Sikh faith by any school would be expected to be part of the religious education (RE) curriculum. The RE curriculum must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in the UK are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the principal religions represented in the UK, including Sikhism.

The RE curriculum is part of the basic curriculum, rather than one of the subjects within the national curriculum. In addition, the RE curriculum is compulsory in all state-funded schools from age 5 to 18, which includes Key Stage 1.

Schools have the freedom to include content about specific faiths as part of their teaching of the subjects in the national curriculum, such as history or citizenship, but this would need to be in line with the purpose and aims of the subjects themselves.

■ Students: Finance

Sarah Owen:

[\[56562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will commit to a date by when students will be able to access Takaful-based loans.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[57279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has been made on implementing the Takaful fund for student finance.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer the hon. Members for Luton North and Slough to the answer I gave on 21 September 2021 to Question [49129](#).

■ Teachers: Qualifications

Peter Kyle:

[57196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of teachers hold a degree or degree-level qualification in the subject they teach (a) nationally, (b) regionally in England and (c) by local authority for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr Robin Walker:

Information on the proportion of teachers nationally that hold a degree or degree-level qualification in the subject they teach is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication. Teachers are counted against each subject taught and may therefore appear under more than one subject. This means it is not possible to calculate a total across all teachers. A breakdown for individual subjects is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/0ec7c7e8-7ad2-4a20-a343-e46150028b62>.

To provide the information requested at regional and local authority level would require additional analysis which would incur disproportionate cost for a written parliamentary question.

To reduce burden during the COVID-19 outbreak, schools were not required to provide information on teacher qualifications in 2020. Therefore, the information provided relates to the November 2019 School Workforce Census.

■ Universities: Remote Education

Nickie Aiken:

[57336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of universities that are continuing to run classes remotely, rather than returning to in-person learning.

Michelle Donelan:

We expect all universities to continue to deliver excellent learning, in line with guidance from the Office for Students (OfS), to provide students with a full experience. The OfS, as regulator of Higher Education in England, will be monitoring to ensure this is the case, and universities should be open about what students can expect.

As autonomous institutions, it is for HE providers to determine their own provision, taking account of government guidance. However, as we have now lifted restrictions

on HE, providers should not be limiting access to face-to-face teaching based on COVID-19 controls.

Online learning should only be offered to enhance the student experience, not detract from it, by making learning more accessible for students, including those who cannot yet attend face-to-face lectures. It should not be used as a cost cutting measure.

Any policies and terms, or changes to existing policies and terms, must be clearly communicated to students. If students have concerns, they should first raise them with their HE provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at HE providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton:

[\[52397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2021 to Question 44161, on DEFRA: Listed Buildings, if he will publish a list of the (a) properties classified as heritage assets owned by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties as opposed to the details of the body responsible for advising him on the management of those properties.

Victoria Prentis:

This information is set out in the table below.

(A) SITE	(B) VALUE (EXISTING USE VALUE)	(C) INCOME
Rhydymwyn, North Wales	£0 In accordance with accounting standards.	£0
Weybourne Building, Weybridge. One building on a large site, with many different specialist buildings.	Unable to identify the value of just the Weybourne building as its value is a function of its role as part of a larger science campus. It cannot be segregated from the rest of the campus.	£0

■ Disposable Wipes: Plastics**Fleur Anderson:** [\[57403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on the regulation of single use wet wipes containing plastic.

Jo Churchill:

My officials are currently working to assess the issues associated with plastic-containing disposable wet wipes and to identify possible solutions. We will be providing details later this year.

■ Fisheries**Olivia Blake:** [\[57471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will (a) develop and (b) publish a climate-smart fisheries strategy ahead of COP26.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK fisheries administrations will include legally binding policies, which will contribute to the achievement of the climate change objective in the Fisheries Act 2020, in the Joint Fisheries Statement available for public consultation this winter.

■ Hunting Act 2004**Zarah Sultana:** [\[56640\]](#)

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 amend the Hunting Act 2004 to prevent dogs from (a) seeking out, (b) injuring and (c) killing wild mammals.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act, and completely bans hare coursing. The Government does not therefore see the need to review the Hunting Act 2004.

■ Meat: Ritual Slaughter**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[56802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the Jewish community is able to continue performing Shechita.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to protecting the rights of Jews to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. This includes slaughtering animals by the shechita method. This is a fundamental issue of religious freedom and belief, which the Government upholds.

■ Timber: Regulation

Simon Hoare:

[\[57187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to review the UK Timber Regulations.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Timber Regulations are not currently under review. We have, however, committed in the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan to increase the use of timber in construction, identifying it as key measure in encouraging commercial forestry. Our England Trees Action Plan includes measures to encourage both supply and demand for UK grown timber, including our commitment to increase public demand for sustainably sourced timber through procurement policies. We committed in the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan to increase the use of timber in construction, identifying it as key measure in encouraging commercial forestry. Our England Trees Action Plan includes measures to encourage both supply and demand for UK grown timber, including our commitment to increase public demand for sustainably sourced timber through procurement policies.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[53883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what documents her Department recognises as providing proof of nationality status for British nationals stuck in Afghanistan without their passport.

James Cleverly:

As a result of the current political and security situation in Afghanistan, the British Embassy in Kabul has suspended in-country operations and cannot issue or deliver emergency travel documents to British nationals. Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO) are currently unable to offer passport services to British nationals in Afghanistan. The FCDO will continue to discuss with Her Majesty's Passport Office how to support vulnerable British nationals secure an emergency travel document or replacement British passport in Afghanistan as the situation on the ground develops and options become available.

■ Afghanistan: EU External Relations

John Howell:

[\[56934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 30 September 2021 on Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

The Government has been clear that that the Taliban regime will be judged by its actions not its words. We agree with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that the situation requires a coordinated international approach and the Government has been working hard to achieve this.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[53835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to decide which international partners will be included in the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme; and when those partners will be notified.

James Cleverly:

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme has already resettled thousands of Afghans who have worked with the UK Government, and their families. The ARAP scheme is a UK run scheme, managed by the MOD.

■ Arab States: Israel**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[56879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43429 on Arab States: Israel, whether the Government is encouraging Arab countries that do not conduct normalised relations with Israel to do so.

James Cleverly:

The UK warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan. These are historic steps which see the normalisation of relations between friends of the UK. The United Kingdom will continue to encourage further dialogue between Israel and other countries in the region, to work towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

■ Armenia: Azerbaijan**John Howell:**[\[56941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 27 September 2021 on humanitarian consequences of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government welcomes the important and influential role that the UK delegation to the CoE Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) continues to play. We note the Assembly debate on 27 September, on the humanitarian consequences of last year's conflict. I have continued to engage with the Armenian and Azerbaijani

Governments on many of the topics discussed during that debate and will continue to do so. This includes key topics such as the return of prisoners of war and the remains of the deceased, and the importance of a sustainable and peaceful settlement that has been negotiated under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group.

■ **Balkans: EU External Relations**

John Howell:

[\[56935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 30 September 2021 on the Western Balkans.

Wendy Morton:

We welcome the role the Council of Europe plays in the Western Balkans. Euro-Atlantic integration is the sovereign choice of the governments and people of the countries of the Western Balkans. The UK works with the governments of the region and other partners to support internal reforms, in particular on the rule of law - including to tackle organised crime, illicit finance and corruption - and to promote reconciliation and good neighbourly relations.

■ **China: Foreign Relations**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[57067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to restore people-to-people links between the UK and China.

Amanda Milling:

We understand the difficulties faced by British Nationals wishing to travel to China due to the current restrictions on entry linked to the COVID pandemic. The former Foreign Secretary raised this issue in his last call with his Chinese counterpart on 19 August, including requesting a resumption of direct UK-China flights. Officials continue to discuss this and related issues with the Chinese authorities in London and in Beijing. The Government supports the strengthening of people to people links between the UK and China.

■ **China: Travel Restrictions**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[57066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Chinese counterpart on the challenges faced by British Nationals wishing to travel to China as a result of entry restrictions.

Amanda Milling:

We understand the difficulties faced by British Nationals wishing to travel to China due to the current restrictions on entry linked to the COVID pandemic. The former Foreign Secretary raised this issue in his last call with his Chinese counterpart on 19 August, including requesting a resumption of direct UK-China flights. Officials continue to discuss this and related issues with the Chinese authorities in London

and in Beijing. The Government supports the strengthening of people to people links between the UK and China.

■ Dalal Mughrabi

Andrew Gwynne: [\[56856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 March 2017 to Question 67423, on Dalal Mughrabi, whether the youth camp named after Dalal Mughrabi was renamed after the Government raised concerns with the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly:

We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties. We will continue to raise concerns about this with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and continue to urge all parties to condemn incitement wherever and whenever it occurs.

■ Developing Countries: Climate Change

Jess Phillips: [\[56168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will make it its policy to introduce specific targets for climate finance that support gender equality and women and organisations at the frontlines of the climate crisis.

Vicky Ford:

Since 2011, UK International Climate Finance (ICF) has directly supported 88 million people to cope with the effects of climate change. We have committed to doubling our ICF to £11.6bn between 2021 - 2026 and through this will continue to empower and support women and girls. Through the UK COP Presidency, we are championing the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Action Plan which seeks to increase the gender-responsiveness of climate finance.

■ Developing Countries: Maternity Services

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[56931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department plans to publish its action plan on ending preventable deaths.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[56932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funding will be allocated to the forthcoming ending preventable deaths action plan.

Wendy Morton:

We plan to launch the Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan this year, but exact dates have yet to be finalised. Ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn and children requires work across sectors to address the complex pathways leading

to mortality. This includes provision of family planning, maternal and neonatal health, immunisation, nutrition, water and sanitation and health systems strengthening work.

The FCDO funds a range of mechanisms that support ending preventable deaths, such as the Global Financing Facility, Reproductive Health Supplies and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, as well as work at the country level through our bilateral programmes. Additional funding will be determined after the Spending Review. FCDO spend is calculated using OECD-DAC sector codes, details of which are available in the Statistics on International Development publication and DevTracker. We do not calculate spend on ending preventable deaths interventions in their totality. Broad donor Reproductive Maternal Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) spend is calculated by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) using the internationally recognised Muskoka2 methodology, found here: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/6/e006089.full>

■ **Developing Countries: Nutrition**

Stephen Timms:

[\[56326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to renew the commitment to improve the nutrition of at least fifty million people for the period 2021-26; and if she will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is actively considering its approach to the Nutrition 4 Growth summit, including any new nutrition commitment, and will update the house following the conclusion of the Spending Review.

■ **Eastern Europe: Undocumented Migrants**

John Howell:

[\[56936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 30 September 2021 on migration pressures at the borders between Belarus and Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Wendy Morton:

We remain concerned at Lukashenko's continued use of migrants and refugees to increase pressure on neighbouring states. This harmful, aggressive and exploitative behaviour must stop. We stand in support and solidarity with Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in dealing with this situation. The Foreign Secretary discussed the issue with her Baltic counterparts on 11 October.

■ **HIV Infection: Criminal Law**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[57244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help tackle inequitable access to HIV testing and treatment faced

by some demographics and remove socio-economic, racial and structural barriers and ensure care reaches marginalised people throughout the world.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[57245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking with her international counterparts to help repeal laws on HIV criminalisation throughout the world.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[57246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking with her international counterparts in jurisdictions that criminalise people who live with HIV to encourage reform of relevant legislation.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government recognises that we are not going to achieve an AIDS-free generation and ensure 'no-one is left behind' unless we tackle the wider issues such as criminalisation, stigma, violence against women and girls, and harmful gender norms that drive infection, particularly among adolescents, women and girls and inadequately served groups such as men who have sex with men, transgender, injecting drug users, sex workers and prisoners. That is why the UK was proud to play a strong role with our international partners in shaping both the progressive new Global AIDS Strategy "Ending Inequalities" 2021-26 and ambitious UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS in June, to help encourage reform of relevant legislation that criminalise people living with and affected by HIV so the world has the best chance of meeting the 2030 goal to end AIDS.

The UK continues to support the global AIDS response with major investments which are saving lives around the world, such as to the WHO and the Global Fund. We are also supporting civil society through the Robert Carr Fund which helps marginalised groups to build strong networks that amplify people's voices, helping them to address harmful policies, challenge human rights abuses, shape HIV services and advocate for their rights.

■ Israel: Occupied Territories

Mr David Jones: [\[56582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what is the Government's policy on UK direct investment in Israeli enterprises operating in the occupied Palestinian territories.

James Cleverly:

We routinely update our guidance to British businesses on the Overseas Business Risk website. We advise British businesses to bear in mind the British Government's view on the illegality of settlements under international law when considering their investments and activities in the region. When approached by businesses, we set out the UK's clear position on Israeli settlements, and share with them our online

guidance. This is voluntary guidance to British businesses on doing business in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Ultimately it will be the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but the British Government would neither encourage nor offer support to such activity.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[56855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43430, on Israel: Palestinians, what steps her Department has taken to take forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development entitled Value for money investment in people to people programming in Israel and Palestine.

James Cleverly:

We are taking forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development: "Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine". A just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. The recommendations of the research report are already being incorporated into other UK peacebuilding programmes.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[56880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the research study for the Department for International Development entitled Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine, what steps her Department has taken to implement the recommendation that donors fund programmes over longer time horizons.

James Cleverly:

We are taking forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development: "Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine". A just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. The recommendations of the research report are already being incorporated into other UK peacebuilding programmes.

■ Norway: Travel Restrictions

Tim Loughton:

[\[56289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if people vaccinated with the AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine batch are required to have their vaccine recognised and approved by Norway as a condition of entry.

Wendy Morton:

Border restrictions are the prerogative of the receiving state. Norway will exempt travellers who are fully vaccinated with a European Medicines Agency approved vaccine from presenting evidence of a negative test on arrival, completing an entry registration form, being tested at the border or quarantining after arrival. As outlined on FCDO Travel advice, this can be evidenced by UK travellers through presenting the NHS COVID Pass with a verifiable QR code (or their Devolved Administration equivalents).

Those who have been vaccinated with one of the 5 million doses of AstraZeneca/Vaxzevria manufactured in India but deployed in the UK's rollout do not need to have their vaccine recognised separately. All AstraZeneca vaccines given in the UK are the same product and appear on the NHS COVID Pass as Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency has authorised Vaxzevria and we're confident that travel to Norway should not be affected. Where there have been instances of confusion about the vaccine used in the UK, our officials have worked to clarify those misunderstandings with the governments concerned.

■ Occupied Territories: Teachers**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[56859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 138479, on Occupied Territories: Education, how much funding UK Aid has contributed to the salaries of educational professionals in the Palestinian Authority since 1 January 2016.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO's programme spend is publicly available on devtracker. UK funding to the Palestinian Authority since 2016 to support the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers is available here: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300050/transactions>

■ Palestinians: Overseas Aid**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[56882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 9 April 2019 to Question 240936 on Palestinians: Overseas Aid, whether the Government made representations to the Palestinian Authority (PA) on concerns over the naming of the PA Ministry of Education sports festival after Dalal Mughrabi; and what assessment she has made of the impact of those representations on the decision to rename that festival.

James Cleverly:

We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties. We will continue to raise concerns about this with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and continue to urge all parties to condemn incitement wherever and whenever it occurs.

■ **Palestinians: Schools**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[56883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information her Department holds on the reasons for the delayed publication of the Georg Eckert Institute's report on incitement in the Palestinian school curriculum.

James Cleverly:

The Georg Eckert Institute, who were commissioned by the EU to undertake a review into Palestinian textbooks published the final report on 18 June 2021. The review is publicly accessible on their website: <http://www.gei.de/en/departments/knowledge-in-transition/analysis-of-palestinian-textbooks-paltex.html>

■ **Palestinians: Teachers**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[56881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of children in the Palestinian Authority who have been taught by UK-funded teachers.

James Cleverly:

Access to a quality education for all, especially girls, remains a key priority for the UK Government. It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. UK education funding to the Palestinian Authority between March 2018 and March 2021 contributed to the salaries of around 31,000 education workers (including teachers). In 2020 451,000 children (50% girls) were in basic education in Palestinian Authority schools in the West Bank. Our continued support to UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) will help provide basic education to over 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls).

■ **Poland: Travel Restrictions**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[56552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure that UK citizens who have received the Vaxzevria vaccine produced in India are able to participate in travel to Poland without having to quarantine.

Wendy Morton:

Border restrictions are the prerogative of the receiving state. Poland will exempt travellers fully vaccinated with a vaccination approved for use in the European Union from quarantine on arrival. All AstraZeneca/Vaxzevria vaccines given in the UK are the same product and appear on the NHS COVID Pass as Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency has authorised Vaxzevria and we're confident that travel to Poland should not be affected. Where there have been instances of confusion about the vaccine used in the UK, specifically around the 5 million doses of Vaxzevria

manufactured in India, our officials have worked to clarify those misunderstandings with the governments concerned.

Nevertheless, travel restrictions can change, sometimes without notice. Travellers should check the FCDO's Travel Advice for Poland prior to travel to ensure they are familiar with the latest restrictions.

■ UK Delegations

Sir Charles Walker: [\[56846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to make any changes to the process of selecting delegates to represent the UK at all Conferences of Parties within the UN treaty system.

Amanda Milling:

There are numerous international Conferences of the Parties (COPs) organised on a range of issues (e.g. Biodiversity COP, Desertification, Chemical Weapons). The UK's engagement with each depends on the specific of these and there is no single process for the selection of delegations. The Government does not plan to introduce one.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict

Sir Mike Penning: [\[56877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to bring an end to the war in Yemen through (a) its membership of the UN Security Council and (b) other diplomatic channels.

James Cleverly:

We fully support the UN-led peace process in Yemen and urge the parties to engage constructively with the new UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg. UK Ministers and officials engage with their international and regional counterparts on Yemen regularly and use the monthly briefings to the UNSC to encourage efforts towards a political solution, deliver further economic support and bring an end to the humanitarian suffering. On 22 July I met UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator David Gressly to discuss the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and on 17 August, I offered the UK's continued support to the new UN Special Envoy in a call. On 22 September the Minister for Asia delivered a speech at the Yemen humanitarian side event at the UN General Assembly to urge parties to the conflict to come to the negotiating table and to call on all states to release humanitarian funding commitments promptly.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Chemotherapy: Nurses**

Nadia Whittome: [\[57476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of palliative care nurses.

Nadia Whittome: [\[57478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the recruitment of chemotherapy nurses.

Nadia Whittome: [\[57479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy and availability of chemotherapy nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

Specialist clinical nursing workforce working in chemotherapy and palliative care are post-registration qualifications. It is the responsibility of individual employers to ensure that they have the staff available to provide clinical services. NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing a programme in 2022 to assess the palliative workforce, training, and support requirements of health care systems in England.

The Spending Review in 2020 provided £260 million to continue to support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan, of which £52 million was provided to Health Education England (HEE) to invest in the cancer and diagnostics workforce. In 2021/22 HEE has provided 105 training grants to National Health Service trusts in England for existing and aspiring chemotherapy nurses to enable them to undertake further training and education.

Over the next three years, £36 billion will be invested in the health and care system to ensure it has the appropriate long term resources. Allocations and profiles will be confirmed as part of the up-coming Spending Review, which will set out the Government's spending plans including investment in the NHS workforce.

■ Coronavirus

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[56817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the three million reported positive covid-19 cases in the three months from 8 July 2021 to 8 October 2021 were (a) aged more than 12 years and (b) had not received a double vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

The data is not available in the format requested.

Of 750,518 cases reported with a specimen date between 6 September to 3 October 2021, 402,004 were in individuals aged over 18 years old. Of these, 60,497 cases

were unvaccinated and 21,340 had a specimen date at least 21 days post receiving one vaccine dose.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Martyn Day: [\[33279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccinations have been delivered through community pharmacies to date; and if he will publish each of the top 10 community pharmacy contractors which have delivered the highest number of covid-19 vaccinations to date.

Steve McCabe: [\[36524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccinations have been delivered through (a) community pharmacies and (b) each of the top ten community pharmacy contractors which have delivered the highest number of covid-19 vaccinations to date.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: As at 14 September 2021, over 11.1 million people have received their COVID-19 vaccination at a community pharmacy. We are unable to provide data on the number of vaccinations delivered by individual community pharmacy contractors to protect the security of those sites.

Theresa Villiers: [\[56182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date it will be possible for vaccinated children in England to obtain QR codes to prove their vaccination status when travelling abroad.

Theresa Villiers: [\[56854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if vaccinated children in England are able to obtain a QR code to prove their vaccination status when travelling abroad.

Maggie Throup:

The NHS COVID Pass is currently available to those aged 16 years old and over. Few countries require children's' vaccination status, as testing is generally available or entry on the parent/guardians' status. The Government recognises that a small proportion of children over 12 years old have or will receive a full course of vaccination following the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice and the growing requirement abroad for children to demonstrate their status. The international standards for travel require a full course to be recognised as 'fully vaccinated'. We are exploring ways for fully vaccinated children over 12 years old to demonstrate their vaccination status for travel. Those aged 12 to 15 years old offered one Pfizer dose should continue to follow destination countries' entry requirements for unvaccinated arrivals.

Patrick Grady:

[\[57106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the UK joining the EU Digital Covid certificate scheme.

Maggie Throup:

The NHS COVID Pass for international travel was launched on 17 May, prior to the European Union Digital COVID Certificate (EUDCC). We have engaged with the European Commission on a technical basis to align the NHS COVID Pass with the EUDCC system. The United Kingdom already accepts the EUDCC as proof of vaccination for international travel, and UK COVID-19 certification is recognised in the majority of EU countries.

■ **Health Services: Coronavirus**

Mr David Davis:

[\[48137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England has spent on purchasing hospital capacity and health services from private sector providers during the covid-19 outbreak since March 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: The information requested is not currently available while the reconciliation of these contracts is completed.

■ **Hospitals: Pharmacy**

Alberto Costa:

[\[52522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve the dispensing of prescriptions when patients are waiting to be discharged to avoid delays.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement support systems to improve their discharge processes through the Emergency Care Improvement Support Team and provide a number of resources that share best practice.

■ **Maternity Services: Fees and Charges**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[56351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will suspend charges for all maternity services to safeguard the health of women and children.

Edward Argar:

We have no plans to suspend the overseas visitor charges for maternity care. We have defined maternity care as immediately necessary or urgent care under the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015. Under these Regulations, all maternity services, including pre and post-natal care should always be provided without delay to any chargeable patient, regardless of their ability to pay.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:** [\[50642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to help the hon. member for West Lancashire to secure a response from the Minister for COVID Vaccine Delivery to her letter dated 7 May 2021, reference ZA56429.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 21 September 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member on 12 October 2021.

NHS: Agency Workers**Rosie Cooper:** [\[56639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what processes are in place to check whether NHS bank staff are not simultaneously reporting off sick from their permanent place of employment.

Rosie Cooper: [\[56884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of NHS employees who are (i) off sick and (ii) working on the bank for other organisations on any given day and (b) cost to the public purse of that behaviour.

Rosie Cooper: [\[56885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS takes to help ensure that the bank staff they employ are not simultaneously in receipt of (a) their NHS salary while reporting to be off sick and (b) pay for working on the bank at another hospital.

Edward Argar:

NHS England's data to 6 October 2021 shows there was an average of 74,863 sickness absences in National Health Service trusts per day, of which 15,546 staff were absent for COVID-19 related reasons, including the need to self-isolate. Data is not held centrally on the number of those staff who were simultaneously working for a bank. NHS trusts address any such fraud at a local level through their disciplinary processes.

Smoking**Mr David Jones:** [\[56277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the development of the Tobacco Control Plan.

Maggie Throup:

Departmental officials regularly meet with the devolved administrations to discuss tobacco control matters and share best practice, including progress on the forthcoming Tobacco Control Plan.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Huw Merriman:

[\[53935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the equity of international travel rules in relation to covid-19 for UK residents who have (a) received one dose of a covid-19 vaccine in Scotland and one dose of the vaccine in England and (b) participated in the Novavax trial.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: NHS Digital has established data flows between England and Scotland which allow United Kingdom residents to obtain a NHS COVID Pass, regardless of which nation their vaccine was administered in. These individuals are able to demonstrate their fully vaccinated status for international travel purposes.

All Novavax trial participants can now access a domestic NHS COVID Pass. The majority of trial participants can also access a NHS COVID Pass for international travel. Discussions are ongoing with other countries, including through bodies such as the G7, G20, the European Union and the World Health Organization to shape a common approach for trial participants around the world.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[56551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that UK citizens who have received the Vaxzevria covid-19 vaccine produced in India are able to participate in travel to Poland without having to quarantine.

Maggie Throup:

All AstraZeneca vaccines administered in the United Kingdom are the same product and appear on the NHS COVID Pass as 'Vaxzevria', which has been permitted for international travel since May 2021.

The European Union has published a list of vaccines it recognises as equivalent to those authorised by the European Medicines Agency, which includes all approved vaccines administered in the UK, including Vaxzevria. Decisions on which vaccines countries will accept at their borders and their subsequent quarantine arrangements are a matter for respective Governments. Where countries have introduced vaccine status into their entry requirements, we continue to engage to ensure there are no limitations for those in receipt of doses administered in the UK.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Caroline Lucas:

[\[51667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information he is requiring from hotels responsible for managed covid-19 quarantine provision on the handling of any (a) physical and (b) mental health emergencies for people quarantining; whether he is monitoring the handling of those emergencies; whether appropriate treatment and care is provided; if he will take steps to ensure that hotels know what to do in the event of a managed quarantine guest experiencing a mental health emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The Department's Landside Operations team produces a report for each quarantine hotel describing all notable incidents occurring in the previous 24 hours, including the handling of mental and physical emergencies. Managed Quarantine hotels are required to provide daily contributions for this report.

If a hotel guest experiences a physical or mental emergency, medical care is accessed directly from the National Health Service. Landside Operations liaison officers are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can facilitate transition from the hotel for a mental or physical emergency.

Patricia Gibson:[\[56532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that companies contracted to provide managed quarantine packages to passengers arriving in England from red list countries are fulfilling their obligations to provide transport both to and from quarantine hotels, given that many such passengers are travelling on to other parts of the UK once their quarantine has been completed and need to check back into their arrival airport, often at unsociable hours.

Maggie Throup:

The managed quarantine package includes travel to and from the quarantine facility. We expect that passengers are transported back to the airport they were collected from when they arrived in England. Onward travel to other parts of the United Kingdom is not included within the quarantine package. The Department has on-site liaison officers within all facilities to ensure that any issues with transportation can be effectively dealt with.

■ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control**Sir Charles Walker:**[\[56843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will place a copy of the UK's submission to the Secretariat in the Library in advance of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Sir Charles Walker:[\[56844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the UK delegation to the Ninth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control will be announced; and who will form the UK delegation.

Sir Charles Walker:[\[56847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether provision is being made for observers, outside the national delegations, to attend the Ninth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[56933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is aware of third-party representatives, including journalists and Interpol, being excluded from meetings of the Ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Maggie Throup:

The Department has no plans to provide a submission to the Ninth Session of the Conference of the Parties' secretariat ahead of the Conference. The Deputy Director for Addictions and Inclusion Policy at the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will lead the United Kingdom delegation with support from officials at the UK Mission in Geneva.

Applications to attend as an observer are a matter for the Conference secretariat and consequently, we are not aware of exclusions of third party representatives.

HOME OFFICE

■ Arrest Warrants: Cross Border Cooperation

Conor McGinn:

[\[57132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions since January 2021 individuals have been stopped and released by UK authorities in circumstances where it has subsequently been found that an Interpol notice had been raised against those individuals.

Damian Hinds:

The Home Office does not hold the information requested.

■ Asylum: Housing

Helen Hayes:

[\[56179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase the volume of suitable accommodation in which people seeking asylum are housed.

Kevin Foster:

We have established the Local Government Chief Executive Group (HOLGCEX) group to bring together senior representatives from Home Office, Local Government Association and local authorities with the aim of working in partnership to improve the asylum dispersal process for the people who use this service and the communities in which they reside.

With the support of local authorities we, and our housing providers, are continuing to engage with areas which to date have not participated in asylum dispersal with a view to negotiating voluntary agreements to do so.

We are grateful to those local authorities who participate in the dispersal scheme and will continue to work in partnership with them to procure suitable accommodation.

Sadly, many local authorities do not currently participate in the dispersal scheme, making it harder to procure sufficient dispersal accommodation. I would encourage them to step up and play their part in the UK-wide effort to provide accommodation to those seeking asylum who would otherwise be destitute.

■ **British Citizens and EU Nationals: Social Security Benefits**

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[57063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that EU citizens with status and British citizens living in the UK who have received letters from the Department for Work and Pensions stating that they must apply for immigration status, following the UK's departure from the EU, within 28 days or their benefits will stop, do not have their entitlements terminated.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has worked closely with the DWP to identify individuals in receipt of benefits who may be eligible but have yet to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). In trying to reach as many people as possible, there were a small number of instances where letters were sent to recipients who were naturalised, or dual British and EU citizens, or had other forms of immigration status.

We have taken a range of steps to ensure EU citizens with status and British citizens were removed from our data matching exercise, including re-running the exercise and establishing a dedicated customer service team to manage queries from those who had received a letter and are British or Irish citizens, or already held a valid immigration status. The helpline number was included in the letter sent out in August.

In September, DWP wrote to benefit holders who had still not applied to the EUSS or confirmed their immigration status in the UK with the Home Office, to determine whether they remained entitled to their benefits. Due to some overlap between the sharing of data lists and the DWP mailout, a small number of individuals were contacted by DWP despite having previously contacted the Home Office to confirm their status. Details of the individuals in this small cohort who have verified their status have now been passed to DWP to remove them from their data lists so no further action to suspend or terminate their benefits is taken as a result of not applying to the EUSS.

Individuals wishing to evidence their eligibility for benefits as a result of a letter received from DWP - including those who are British or Irish citizens or already have immigration status - must contact DWP. DWP will carry out further checks, including with the Home Office, and carefully consider evidence before taking any suspension or termination action.

■ Chevening Scholarships Programme: Afghanistan

Clive Lewis:

[53291]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Afghan Chevening scholars who were due to return to Afghanistan following their studies, but now cannot due to the situation in the country, will be included in the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

Information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at [Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement). The ACRS is being developed at pace and further details will be released in due course.

We have also announced a package of concessions for Afghan nationals and their dependants who are already present in the UK that will enable them to switch into, and use, temporary economic and study routes. This means that those who are unable to provide documents as a result of the unique circumstances in Afghanistan to provide as much flexibility as possible when accessing routes that allow them to continue to work and study in the UK.

■ Convention on Cybercrime

John Howell:

[56937]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 30 September 2021 on the Convention on Cybercrime.

Damian Hinds:

The Government strongly supports the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime as the leading international treaty on cybercrime. We also welcome the work of the Council of Europe to develop the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention, to ensure that the Convention remains effective in the face of changing threats in cyberspace, and that it continues to provide an effective legal basis for international cooperation to tackle these threats.

■ Crime: Cross Border Cooperation

Conor McGinn:

[57131]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress has been made with Interpol on the delivery of the Government's I-LEAP law enforcement alerts platform.

Damian Hinds:

1. The International Law Enforcement Alert Platform (I-LEAP) is a new single technical mechanism that is being developed to enable UK law enforcement

agencies to access, share and take action on alerts related to people, documents and objects with international partners on a reciprocal basis

The current priority of the I-LEAP programme, which is at an early stage of development, is to further enhance the UK's connectivity to INTERPOL. We aim to initiate two pilots at the end of this year that will test I-LEAP's real-time connection to INTERPOL nominals data in a live environment. The gradual rollout of I-LEAP's INTERPOL capability to UK policing more widely should then commence in 2022.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Dan Carden:

[R] [\[57299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for his policies of the funding recommendation in part 2 of the Government's Independent Review of Drugs by Dame Carol Black.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to tackling substance misuse and working with Dame Carol Black to ensure high quality services are in place to support people dependent on drugs.

On 27 July we published an initial response to Part 1 and Part 2 of Dame Carol Black's review, outlining the urgent action needed to turn the tide on drug-related deaths and get more people access to higher quality services. As part of this response, the government committed to publishing a new drug strategy which will respond in full to Dame Carol's recommendations.

The strategy will build on the £148m package the Government announced in January, which included *£80m for drug treatment services right across England*. The strategy will present our whole of government approach to drive down drug supply and demand, including support for people through treatment and recovery.

■ Extradition: India

Patrick Grady:

[\[57105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the risk of torture for (a) members of the Sikh community and (b) other religious minorities facing extradition to India.

Damian Hinds:

In UK extradition cases, requested persons are given the opportunity of a fair and balanced hearing before an independent court, with procedures which are robust and transparent. It is the role of the UK courts to thoroughly examine whether the conditions which would allow an extradition to take place are met.

These conditions include a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of whether extradition is compatible with the human rights of requested individuals. If there is a risk that the extradition could lead to a breach of those rights, the Extradition Act 2003 ('the Act') creates a statutory bar to extradition. Human rights are an extensive

suite of protections contained in the Act, which fall to be considered by the courts in every case and includes the risk of torture. These considerations are a judicial not an executive function.

■ Fraud: Crime Prevention

Conor McGinn: [\[57133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the 52 recommendations set out in the Government's Economic crime plan 2019 to 2022, published on 12 July 2019, how many of those recommendations his Department (a) has implemented, (b) is in the progress of implementing and (b) has not yet implemented and are overdue in line with the deadlines set in that plan.

Conor McGinn: [\[57134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government is on course to complete all of the actions outlined in its Economic crime plan 2019-2022 by the deadlines set in that plan.

Conor McGinn: [\[57135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the deliverables set out in the Government's Economic crime plan: statement of progress, published in April 2021, what progress her Department has made on (a) reviewing the national support provided to victims of fraud and (b) testing innovative approaches to improve that support.

Damian Hinds:

HMG are making significant progress delivering the Economic Crime Plan 2019-2022. Of the 52 actions, 24 actions are complete with a further 26 in progress expected to be delivered by their delivery dates which are set out in the Economic Crime Plan Statement of Progress published in May 2021.

There are 2 actions (17 and 29) that are currently forecast to be overdue against the planned delivery dates although there has been considerable progress on both actions. These are:

- Action 17 (led by HM Treasury): HMG continues to consider the most proportionate response to this action and will be engaging industry in the coming months.
- Action 29 Build our Government Counter Fraud Profession (led by Cabinet Office): The Profession continues to be developed and includes more than 6,800 members. A project is underway to open membership of the profession more widely, using a knowledge check to ensure that those wishing to join the Profession meet the standard. The Profession is creating a new awarding body, which will assess learning providers and approve their courses and qualifications, aligned to the Profession standards. New Professional Standards are being written for the Prevention discipline. A new programme of learning and development for senior counter fraud leads is being developed and will be piloted with a first cohort by the end of March 2022.

In collaboration with the Serious Fraud Office, the Home Office has established the Victims of Fraud Working Group, bringing together key stakeholders working with victims of fraud and cyber crime from across government, law enforcement, charities and voluntary organisations. This group met for the second time in September. The group is building a better understanding of the national fraud landscape to help understand a victim's journey and how their needs can be met.

The Home Office is supporting National Trading Standards in the national rollout of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH). The hubs are in the process of being rolled out within England and Wales and will improve the quality of victim care available to local fraud victims by establishing a holistic multi-agency support service that listens to victims and works with them to address their immediate and longer-term needs.

■ Honour Based Violence

John Howell:

[\[56940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate on so-called honour crimes at the Council of Europe on 28 September 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

So called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) is a terrible form of abuse, and we are clear that we will not allow political or cultural sensitivities to get in the way of tackling it. No-one should suffer because of who they are or what community they are born into.

Our focus remains on preventing these crimes from happening, supporting and protecting survivors and those at risk, and bringing perpetrators to justice. The Home Office is providing up to £150,000 to the charity Karma Nirvana this year to run its national HBA helpline; between April and September 2021 the helpline provided assistance to 1,212 users of the service. The joint Home Office/Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Forced Marriage Unit has provided advice and support for thousands of victims of forced marriage and delivers regular training to police officers and social workers.

The Government's recent Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy set out a number of further actions to tackle HBA, including that the Home Office will seek out community advocates who can talk to community audiences to explain why HBA practices are wrong, that the College of Policing will produce advice for police officers to advise both first responders and investigators on how to deal with cases of HBA, and that the Department for Health and Social Care will work to criminalise 'virginity testing' to send a clear message that this practice is wholly unacceptable in our society.

We welcome the insights communicated in the debate at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe last month. The Government pays close attention to the experiences of our international partners in tackling HBA and works closely with them in tackling it. For example, in 2018 the Government signed a protocol on female

genital mutilation (FGM) with the United States to increase collaboration and the sharing of intelligence between the two countries. This enabled the UK and the United States to run Operation Limelight (a joint operation between border staff and the police which seeks to raise awareness of FGM and forced marriage at the border in order to safeguard potential victims) concurrently at several ports in the two countries.

■ Immigration Controls

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57350]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) reduce the average time taken to process passenger arrivals at Heathrow Airport, (b) tackle shortages of Border Force staff and (c) tackle broken e-gates at UK airports.

Kevin Foster:

Throughout the pandemic we have been clear queue times may be longer as we ensure all passengers are compliant with the health measures put in place to keep the UK public safe.

We have endeavoured to improve waiting times this week, for example by flexibly deploying staff across Heathrow Airport and continue to work closely with all airports and airlines to make sure passengers can have a safe and hassle-free journey.

Border Force regularly reviews staffing requirements to ensure resources are deployed flexibly when required to carry out the vital function of border security.

In recent weeks there have been a series of short interruptions of service for the Border Crossing system and eGates. We have taken actions to review and address the cause of these issues and have increased monitoring to identify system pressures early to avoid interruptions to service.

Border Force work closely with technology partners to minimise the impact of service interruptions and have a series of operational mitigations to manage the impact on passenger flows and ensure border security has been maintained at all times.

■ Immigration Controls: EU Nationals

Hilary Benn:

[56648]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current average processing time is for EU family permit applications.

Kevin Foster:

The published service standards for EEA and EUSS family permits can be found at [Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk), which states;

If you are applying for an EEA family permit or an EUSS family permit you will get a decision as soon as possible after proving your identity and provided your documents.

Therefore, there are no time-bound service standard attached to these routes. Our aim is to process all applications for an EUSS Family Permit as soon as possible. The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on EEA Family Permit and EU Settlement Scheme family permit applications and outcomes are published in table Vis_D01 and Vis_D02 of the [entry clearance visa detailed datasets](#). Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Hilary Benn: [\[56794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to suspend the requirement for spouses from Afghanistan to pass the English language test in order to be able to enter the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Government believes those seeking to enter and make a permanent home in the UK should be equipped to integrate successfully in UK society, with an appropriate level of English and an understanding of British life.

There are no current plans to suspend the requirement for spouses specifically from Afghanistan to pass an English language test to enter the UK.

However, under the current Rules an applicant can already be exempted from the English language requirement to enter the UK if a decision maker considers there are exceptional circumstances preventing the applicant from meeting the requirement.

The applicant must demonstrate, as a result of exceptional circumstances, they are unable to learn English before coming to the UK or it is not practicable or reasonable for them to travel to another country to take an approved English language test.

Each application for an exemption on the basis of exceptional circumstances will be considered on its merits on a case-by-case basis.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Hilary Benn: [\[56649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU family permit applications have been received since 1 January 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on EU Settlement Scheme family permits in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release' which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the number of EU Settlement Scheme family permit applications are published in table Vis_D01 of the entry clearance visas applications and outcomes dataset. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2021.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Helen Hayes: [\[57200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Department's service standards are for responding to correspondence from Honourable Members on (a) asylum applications, (b) visa applications and (c) passport applications; and how meeting those standards and corresponding targets have potentially been affected by the outbreak of covid-19.

Helen Hayes: [\[57201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of correspondence from Honourable Members on (a) asylum applications, (b) visa applications and (c) passport applications were responded to within her Department's service standard in every month in the last year.

Helen Hayes: [\[57202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many items of correspondence from hon. Members on (a) asylum applications, (b) visa applications and (c) passport applications were awaiting a response as at 15 October 2021.

Helen Hayes: [\[57203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average response time for her Department was to respond substantially to hon. Members' correspondence in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 so far.

Kevin Foster:

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of MPs' written correspondence within 20 working days, for all areas of the business, including asylum, visa and passport applications.

Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, including items relating to the situation in Afghanistan.

The Department recognises it has not been able to meet service standard in some cases but has implemented an action plan to clear backlogs and drive up performance.

■ **Migrant Workers: Carers**

Bill Esterson: [\[57003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) correspondence and (b) representations she has received from representatives of the social care sector on adding carers to the shortage occupation list.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office regularly receives correspondence and representations from a broad range of stakeholders from all sectors, including social care.

Senior care workers were added to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) in April 2021, joining other key health and care occupations such as nurses, occupational therapists and social workers. It is worth noting a role at RQF 3 level or above does not need to be on the SOL to qualify for recruitment via the Skilled Worker Visa.

In July, I commissioned the MAC to review the impact of ending free movement on the social care sector. The MAC have issued a call for evidence with stakeholders and we look forward to receiving their report in April 2022.

■ Migrant Workers: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Ian Mearns: [\[56222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to include HGV drivers on the list of shortage occupations list to allow people who reside in the UK with work permitted status, who hold the correct qualifications, to take up such work.

Kevin Foster:

For an occupation to be placed on the Shortage Occupation List, it needs to be eligible under the Skilled Worker route of the Points Based System.

The independent Migration Advisory Committee found the occupation of HGV driver did not meet the requirements under the Skilled Worker route to be eligible.

Stephen Timms: [\[56754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to publish details of the arrangements for issuing 5,000 temporary visas to HGV drivers; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Full details of the arrangements for issuing temporary visas to HGV drivers were published on 11 October. Guidance can be found on the Gov.uk website at:

[Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors: sponsor a seasonal worker - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Migrants: Finance

Stephen Timms: [\[56753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to publish its proposals on additional information on No Recourse to Public Funds change of conditions applications, including on repeat applications and on reasons for refusal; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Information on No Recourse to Public Funds change of conditions applications, including on repeat applications and on reasons for refusal has been set out in revised guidance which was published on 18 October.

The information can be accessed from page.88 onwards of the Family life (as a partner or parent), private life and exceptional circumstances guidance and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-life-as-a-partner-or-parent-private-life-and-exceptional-circumstance>

■ Motor Vehicles: Recovery Orders

Sir Mike Penning: [56872]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of guidance to the statutory charges recovery industry on (a) punitive charges and (b) income generation; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Mike Penning: [56873]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with representatives from the recovery industry on the practice for Police forces and Highways Authorities to use Statutory Fees as an income generator for their own organisations; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Mike Penning: [56874]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department have made for the implications of her policies of the increasing number of management companies in the statutory charges recovery industry who take a proportion of the Statutory Fee which decreases the revenue for vehicle recovery operators; and will she make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

No assessment has been made of statutory charging guidance nor the number of management companies used by the police and National Highways for vehicle recovery operations.

Details of the contracts and of the obligations between the parties to those contracts, are between the police, National Highways and individual contractors or managing agents whom the police and National Highways employ to run schemes on their behalf. These, and any other arrangements that might be made for vehicle recovery are operational matters for the police and Highways England.

The Home Office met with representatives of the recovery industry on 11 August to listen to their concerns. We advised the representatives that vehicle recovery contracts continue to be operational matters between the police, National Highways and individual recovery operators.

The Home Office's role is limited to setting the statutory charges which the Police and National Highways can levy when they have exercised their recovery powers.

■ Psilocybin

Crispin Blunt:

[R] [\[56632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Crime and Policing of 17 June 2021, Official Report, Column 531, on the Misuse of Drugs Act, what criteria her Department has applied or plans to apply when making an assessment as to whether psilocybin has a proven clinical and medical use for the purposes of determining whether to adapt the relevant legislation.

Kit Malthouse:

There is an established process for the development of medicines, which enables medicines (including those containing Schedule 1 drugs such as psilocybin) to be developed, evaluated in clinical trials and licensed based on an assessment of their safety, quality and efficacy.

The Government recognises that a number of studies into the potential use of psilocybin as part of the treatment for mental health conditions have been or are being conducted in the UK. However, medicines based on psilocybin have not yet been licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) which would address safety, quality and efficacy concerns. If a psilocybin-based medicine is made available following an assessment of its quality, safety and efficacy by the MHRA, the Home Office will seek and then consider advice provided by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) on its scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 as soon as possible. Such advice is a statutory requirement and will be considered before any decision is taken on scheduling under the 2001 Regulations.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[53882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme will become operational.

Victoria Atkins:

Through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), the UK will relocate up to 20,000 people at risk, including women and girls and minority groups, so they can rebuild their lives in safety.

The scheme is not yet open. However, the first to be resettled through this scheme will be those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk – including women's rights activists, prosecutors and journalists.

We are working urgently to open the scheme, amid the complex and changing picture. We are working closely across government and with NGOs, charities, local authorities and civil society groups to ensure support is provided to people who are resettled through this route.

Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement.

Afzal Khan:

[56184]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 September 2021 to Question 51839, by what process Afghan nationals already in the UK with limited leave under (a) the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy or (b) Afghan Locally Employed Staff are expected to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain, and if this process will be (a) online and (b) free of charge.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Home Office has established a dedicated caseworking team, which is working jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence. This team will contact all those who recently arrived to discuss their leave arrangements and ensure they get the right form of leave.

(a) Those who are here with limited leave under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy can apply to convert this to indefinite leave to remain at any time before their limited leave expires. This application is a free application and can be applied for online.

(b) Locally employed staff who meet the eligibility criteria for relocation under the ARAP scheme will have the opportunity to apply for limited leave to enter the UK. Locally employed staff already in the UK with temporary status under ARAP can apply, free of charge, to convert their status to indefinite leave to remain. This can be applied for online.

Details of the type of leave to be granted to those arriving from Afghanistan, and how they will be supported in obtaining that leave, can be found in the Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration policy statement.

The policy statement can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version#afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy>

Further information regarding Locally employed staff, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-locally-engaged-staff>

Hilary Benn:

[56795]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government has taken to ensure that people with a connection to the UK because of their work with UK universities on issues such as gender, which put them at particular risk of Taliban reprisals, are being helped as part of the ARAP scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

Details of the criteria for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) can be found in the Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration policy statement. The ARAP was established to support those who worked for and alongside the UK Government in Afghanistan; it does not generally include those who worked with UK universities.

In addition to ARAP, the Government has announced the new Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will welcome 5,000 people at risk in the first year, and up to 20,000 in the coming years.

Further details of the Government's approach can be found in the policy statement published on 13 September: [Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-statements/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement).

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Cheese: Japan**

Emily Thornberry: [\[56290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which UK cheese products are currently (a) designated as having full geographical indication status in Japan, or (b) awaiting the completion of domestic procedures in Japan prior to the designation of protected geographical indication status, in accordance with Chapter 14, Section B, Sub-Section 3 and Footnote 2 of Annex 14-B of the UK-Japan CEPA.

Emily Thornberry: [\[56292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which UK alcoholic beverages are currently (a) designated as having full geographical indication status in Japan, or (b) awaiting the completion of domestic procedures in Japan prior to the designation of protected geographical indication status, in accordance with Chapter 14, Section B, Sub-Section 3 and Footnote 2 of Annex 14-B of the UK-Japan CEPA.

Emily Thornberry: [\[56467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to Footnote 2 of Annex 14-B of the UK-Japan CEPA, for which (a) agricultural products, and (b) alcoholic beverages the Government has to date received notifications from the Japanese authorities informing them of the completion of domestic procedures required to designate those items as having protected geographical indication status, in accordance with Chapter 14, Section B, Sub-Section 3 of that agreement.

Emily Thornberry: [\[56469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which UK fish and shellfish products are currently (a) designated as having full geographical indication status in Japan, or (b) awaiting the completion of domestic procedures in Japan prior to the designation of

protected geographical indication status, in accordance with Chapter 14, Section B, Sub-Section 3 and Footnote 2 of Annex 14-B of the UK-Japan CEPA.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[56503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which UK meat products are currently (a) designated as having full geographical indication status in Japan, or (b) awaiting the completion of domestic procedures in Japan prior to the designation of protected geographical indication status, in accordance with Chapter 14, Section B, Sub-Section 3 and Footnote 2 of Annex 14-B of the UK-Japan CEPA.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) currently secures the protection of the following UK Geographical Indications (GIs) in Japan: Stilton White Cheese, Stilton Blue Cheese, West Country Farmhouse Cheddar Cheese, Scottish Farmed Salmon, Irish Whiskey/Whisky, Irish Cream, Scotch Whisky.

■ **Tradeshaw Access Programme: Finance**

Bill Esterson:

[\[56580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the analysis by London Economics of the Tradeshaw Access Programme to the UK economy; and what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding for that programme in this financial year.

Mike Freer:

The London Economics report was from 2008, and as the Tradeshaw Access Programme had evolved (and now ceased), some implications no longer apply. We are discussing revised support for trade shows with HM Treasury (HMT), which considers key implications raised in the analysis. We continually review support to ensure maximum impact and that services meet business needs in the current economic context.

2021-22 programme funding was discussed with HMT during the 2020 Spending Review.

JUSTICE

■ **Aiding and Abetting: Convictions**

Dan Carden:

[\[57298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has plans to keep official statistics on how many convictions rely on the law of joint enterprise.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice only collects information on how many defendants are prosecuted and convicted for each offence in any given year. Information is not collated on whether a prosecution or conviction relied on the law of joint enterprise.

Such information may be held on court records but could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Judges

Nadia Whittome: [\[57482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the last minute cancellation of court hearings as a result of a lack of availability of judges.

Nadia Whittome: [\[57483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of judges available for criminal trials.

James Cartlidge:

The timely delivery of justice is a priority for the government. The department is working closely with the judiciary to ensure we have the capacity required to maximise the number of court hearings taking place this year and to minimise disruption to cases listed for hearings. We allocated over a quarter of a billion pounds on recovery last financial year, making court buildings safe, rolling out new technology for remote hearings, recruiting additional staff and opening Nightingale courtrooms. We are now focused both on increasing capacity and maximising use of that which we already have. There is no limit on the number of days Crown Courts can sit this financial year and we are supporting temporary changes to court operating hours.

Judicial capacity is being boosted through a programme to recruit up to 1100 judges this year. When there is a business need, in any jurisdiction, the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice can approve extensions of relevant judges' appointments past their mandatory retirement age and approve retired salaried judges to sit in retirement on an ad-hoc basis. Significant action is also being taken every day by both individual court and Regional Judicial Secretariats to ensure judges are available for all hearings. Every effort is made to contact judges to ensure a case can proceed, from contacting individual judges directly to request cover, to assessing whether other nearby courts can assist.

■ Judicial Review: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: [\[56694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of potential effect of changes to judicial review on Scots Law; and what consultation he has had with Scottish (a) political and (b) judicial representatives on that matter.

James Cartlidge:

Only one of the judicial review measures in the Judicial Review and Courts Bill applies to Scotland: removal of the Cart route of judicial review. This protects certain decisions of the Upper Tribunal from judicial review where the case relates to a reserved matter and will not have an adverse impact on Scots Law.

In developing the policy, the previous Lord Chancellor was in contact with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice in the Scottish Government. Ministry of Justice Ministers and officials will continue to work with their counterparts in the devolved Governments.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Nadia Whittome:

[\[57484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of legal aid providers in (a) Nottingham East constituency and (b) the UK.

James Cartlidge:

The Government is taking steps to review the long-term sustainability of the Criminal Legal Aid market across England and Wales. Last year, following phase one of this review, we injected up to £51m per annum into Criminal Legal Aid, in areas of work that practitioners told us mattered the most. This year we launched the second phase, an independent review, led by Sir Christopher Bellamy QC, that will consider the sustainability of the whole Criminal Legal Aid system so that it can meet demand now and into the future, provide an effective and efficient service that ensures value for money for the taxpayer and provide defendants with high-quality advice from a diverse range of practitioners. Sir Christopher will submit his recommendations to the Lord Chancellor later this year.

In addition, MoJ continues to consider the long-term sustainability of civil legal aid, recognising that we need to take a whole system approach. The department has also been engaging with representative bodies and providers within the sector to increase our understanding of the challenges providers currently face.

The Legal Aid Agency continue to keep legal aid provision under constant review, ensuring access across England and Wales and taking immediate action whenever this could be threatened. Additionally, the LAA continues to monitor the state of the market to ensure access to justice is maintained.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Housing

Nadia Whittome:

[\[57485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has for the future of legal aid funding for housing cases.

James Cartlidge:

MoJ continues to consider the long-term sustainability of civil legal aid, recognising that we need to take a whole system approach. The department has also been engaging with representative bodies and providers within the sector to increase our understanding of the challenges providers currently face. Housing is a key focus of this work and we will shortly be publishing a consultation on proposals for the future of the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS).

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Mediation**Nadia Whittome:** [\[57486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of legal aid assistance in mediation cases.

James Cartlidge:

Whilst the Government has no current plans to extend legal aid for mediation cases, The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has launched a voucher scheme which will provide a contribution of up to £500 towards the mediation costs for eligible cases, supporting people in resolving their family law disputes outside of court, where appropriate.

The early data we have on outcomes shows the scheme has been positively received and is achieving its purpose of assisting families to mediate their issues. We will continue to monitor the take up of the scheme and look closely at the data we collect. This will help shape future initiatives in this space.

As a result of the success of the scheme so far, we will be extending the scheme until the end of the year.

■ Police Custody: Legal Opinion**Anna McMorrin:** [\[56383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his policy is on the use continued use of Joint Interim Interview Protocol 4 with regard to access to remote legal assistance during police interviews.

James Cartlidge:

From 4 October 2021 the default position is that advice is provided to suspects by legal representatives in person during police interviews. The Joint Interim Interview Protocol now only allows for remote advice in limited circumstances, such as when the detainee is confirmed or believed to be Covid positive.

■ Prisons: Staff**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[56391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has received representations from prison leaders on (a) unsafe staffing levels and (b) regime restrictions as a result of increased levels of staff absence linked to recent fuel shortages.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[56394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has received representations from probation leaders on (a) staff absences and (b) delays in face-to-face monitoring appointments linked to recent fuel shortages.

Victoria Atkins:

As a contingency, we remained in close contact with senior leaders across Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in the period where there were difficulties getting fuel to petrol stations. No groups reported staff having difficulty in

reporting to work, or any subsequent regime or probation delivery difficulties as a result. There were no reports of people on probation encountering problems travelling to their appointments in the community as a result of these shortages.

■ **Secure Accommodation: Young Offenders**

Anna McMorrin:

[\[57260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's policy is on the placement of young offenders into secure children's homes.

Victoria Atkins:

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) placement team is responsible for placing children under the age of 18 that have been remanded or sentenced into youth secure accommodation. This includes Secure Children's Homes (SCHs), which are operated by local authorities, and accommodate boys and girls aged 10-17. The YCS contract 107 beds for children sentenced or remanded into custody at eight SCHs, however, children held on secure welfare orders are also present at SCHs.

A decision on the most appropriate accommodation to place a child is made following an assessment by a local authority led Youth Offending Team (YOT). The YCS will then make a decision about the most appropriate placement after consideration of each child's individual needs and their YOT's placement recommendation, against a view of the available accommodation. Decisions will be made with the child's best interests as a primary consideration, with areas of consideration including age and gender; previous history; risk of harm (to self and others); family and resettlement; and maturity. Some particular considerations may make a child more suited to a particular type of accommodation. For an SCH placement, these might be a young age; particular vulnerabilities; better suited to living in smaller groups; and/or a requirement for high levels of support.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ **Building Safety Fund: Leeds**

Hilary Benn:

[\[56646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether Cartier House, Leeds Dock, has been successful in its bid for funding from the Building Safety fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department and its delivery partner Homes England are working with the representatives of the building owner of Cartier House to assist in progressing its application for the Building Safety Fund.

■ Buildings: Safety

Lucy Powell: [\[56244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the costs to fully repair all buildings under 18m with building safety defects.

Christopher Pincher:

Work is underway to collect data on a sample of 11-18 metres residential buildings in England. The information collected will include the existing building condition including the materials in use on the external wall system, and the costs of making the building safe. We will publish further details shortly.

■ Help To Buy Scheme

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[56699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the Help to Buy Equity Loan for use on properties other than new build homes.

Christopher Pincher:

The Help to Buy Equity Loan has helped over 328,500 households buy a home from its launch in spring 2013 until the end of March 2021. All homes have been new-build, and around 82% of sales have been to first-time buyers.

A key objective of the scheme, alongside supporting people into homeownership, is to increase housing supply. By focusing the scheme on new build homes, Help to Buy has been very successful in achieving that. Our latest independent evaluation concluded that 14.5% of all new homes in England between 2015 and 2017 would not have been built without Help to Buy. Making Help to Buy available on second hand homes would not have the same supply effect and as such there are no plans to extend the offer to existing stock.

■ Housing: Construction

Daisy Cooper: [\[54019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what powers local authorities have to ensure that housing permissions are built-out by developers and not left to lapse.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is clear that new homes should be built out as soon as possible once planning permission is granted. Where build-out is delayed, it is for councils and developers to work closely together to overcome any barriers.

Local authorities can issue completion notices or use compulsory purchase powers to ensure planning permissions are built-out promptly. Completion notices allow council's to withdraw a permission where they feel it will not be completed within a reasonable time. Compulsory purchase powers allow local authorities to acquire land,

including for the delivery of new housing, where there is a compelling case in the public interest to do so. Both measures are intended as a last resort. This issue has been raised in debates on the Planning for the Future White Paper, and an announcement on next steps will be made in due course.

■ Landlords: Licensing

Grahame Morris:

[\[56975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he received Durham County Council's application seeking approval for a selective licensing scheme; and when he plans to make a determination on that application.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We received Durham County Council's application for a selective licensing scheme on 23 December 2020. Each application is assessed case by case on its merits against the statutory criteria. We will update on the outcome of the application.

■ Permitted Development Rights

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[56504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Written Statement of 1 July 2021, HCWS145, on revitalising high streets and town centres, what additional guidance his Department has provided to local planning authorities on Article 4 directions.

Christopher Pincher:

Permitted development rights provide greater flexibility for businesses to change use, responding quickly to changing market demands without the need for a planning application. Where a local authority considers that a specific permitted development right is not appropriate in a particular location, and that a planning application should be required, it may introduce an Article 4 direction to remove that permitted development right. From 1 July, our policy requires that all Article 4 directions should be targeted, based on robust evidence and apply to the smallest geographical area possible. This provides a balance between protecting core high streets and town centres without unnecessarily restricting the flexibilities provided by permitted development rights.

■ Property Development: Land

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[57136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 49182, what steps the Government is taking to strengthen the ability of local authorities to encourage faster build out rates.

Christopher Pincher:

The issue of slow build out has been raised in response to the Planning for the Future consultation. There are instances where delays in starting or progressing sites may

be avoidable and the Government wants to empower authorities with the tools to respond to such cases. Consequently, we are exploring options to support faster build out as part of the wider package of proposed planning reforms. We are continuing to reflect on the many responses received to last year's White Paper and an announcement on next steps will be made.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Castlereagh Foundation

Stephen Farry: [\[53371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish the members of the Castlereagh Foundation Advisory Panel.

Stephen Farry: [\[53372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, for what reason his Department did not publish a press release on the appointment of the members of the Castlereagh Foundation Advisory Panel.

Stephen Farry: [\[53373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish the biographies and any declared interests of the members of the Castlereagh Foundation Advisory Panel.

Conor Burns:

The members of the Castlereagh Foundation Advisory Committee are:

Arlene Foster (Chair),

Simon Routh Jones CBE QFSM,

Julie Andrews,

Frederick Lauritzen,

Mary Madden CBE and,

Professor Peter Shirlow.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced the appointments to the Advisory Committee on 23 July 2021. These are non-statutory appointments for which no remuneration is payable.

The Advisory Committee will provide an independent advisory function to the Secretary of State and will report directly to him within a period of six months. The Government has full confidence that this committee will be fair and balanced in the analysis and advice they provide to the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation.

PRIME MINISTER**Members: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:**[\[56886\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 18 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire regarding social distancing measures at the G7 summit, reference ZA56790.

Boris Johnson:

A reply has been sent.

SCOTLAND**Retail Trade: Scotland****Ian Murray:**[\[56974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what contribution his Office is making to the development of the Scottish Retail Strategy.

Mr Alister Jack:

We have been engaged with the Scottish Retail Consortium Board at Ministerial level to discuss ongoing challenges facing the retail sector. A number of the Covid-19 measures that impact retailers in Scotland are devolved. My officials have continued to engage with the retail sector to provide support and guidance.

Scotland Office: Correspondence**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[56172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking to improve his Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Government recognises the importance of responding to members of the public in an effective and timely manner, and the Cabinet Office published an updated [Guide to Handling Correspondence](#) for government departments and agencies in July 2021.

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance. The Office for the Secretary of State for Scotland's correspondence response times are regularly monitored and internal processes have been improved to ensure members of the public are responded to in a timely manner.

■ Scotland Office: House of Lords**Alan Brown:** [\[57151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will provide (a) a list of the Ministers in his Department who have been appointed from the House of Lords and (b) the length of their period in office since 2000.

Mr Alister Jack:

Since 2000, the following Lords have been appointed to the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland:

Lord Offord of Garvel – 4 October 2021 to present (Ennobled 14 October 2021)

Lord Duncan of Springbank – 15 June 2017 to 27 July 2019

Lord Dunlop – 14 May 2015 to 14 June 2017

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock – 26 January 2001 to 29 May 2002

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Crew****Paul Girvan:** [\[54000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that licences held by UK pilots are EASA recognised.

Robert Courts:

The UK Government places the highest importance on ensuring the opportunities arising from our exit from the European Union are realised. Withdrawing from the European Union means we have more autonomy to tailor aviation regulation according to the UK's competitive needs, whilst adhering to international standards.

UK licences are valid to fly UK registered aircraft in the EU. EU law requires that a licence issued or validated by an EU Member State must be held by a pilot to fly an aircraft registered in the EU – in line with the requirements of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

The procedures set out in Commission Delegated Regulation 2020/723 to obtain an EU licence continue to apply to UK license holders wishing to obtain a valid EU license. I should stress that receipt of an EU licence will not of itself provide a right to work in the EU.

■ Aviation: Exhaust Emissions**Ben Lake:** [\[53994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Climate Change Committee's recommendation in its June 2021 Progress Report to develop a demand management framework for aviation.

Trudy Harrison:

The Jet Zero Consultation set out our vision for the aviation sector to reach net zero by 2050. The consultation presented a draft strategy to decarbonise the sector, focussing on the rapid development of technologies in a way that maintains the benefits of air travel and maximises the opportunities that decarbonisation can bring for the UK.

Analysis developed for the Jet Zero Consultation shows that there are scenarios that can achieve net zero aviation by 2050 without capping demand. Indeed, our 'high ambition' scenario is in line with the Climate Change Committee's Balanced Pathway, with similar levels of residual emissions by 2050.

As a responsible government, we recognise that we will need to keep our strategy under review and intend to assess progress on the sector's emission reduction pathway and update our strategy where necessary through five-year reviews .

We plan to publish the final Jet Zero Strategy early next year.

■ Aviation: Fuels**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**[\[56902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the environmental standards will be for fuels in aviation in the (a) UK and (b) EU; and whether his Department has plans to harmonise those rules.

Robert Courts:

Between July and September, the Department consulted on proposals for a UK sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) mandate requiring jet fuel suppliers to blend an increasing proportion of SAF into aviation fuel from 2025.

The consultation sought views on the eligibility criteria SAF will need to meet, the interactions between SAF and other domestic and international policy, and the compliance, reporting and verification principles of the proposed SAF mandate scheme. The consultation proposes strong sustainability criteria that SAF will need to meet to receive support. Our proposed criteria would restrict support to SAF produced from feedstocks and process inputs that deliver significant GHG emissions savings, when considering their supply chains and direct and indirect sustainability and land use impacts.

The Department is carefully considering responses received to the consultation and will publish a summary of responses including next steps in due course. This will formalise our position on the GHG emissions savings and other sustainability criteria that SAF would have to meet under a UK mandate.

■ Carbon Emissions: Aviation

Ben Lake: [\[53995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the Jet Zero strategy's alignment with the UK's (a) Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement and (b) sixth Carbon Budget.

Robert Courts:

The approach set out in the Jet Zero Consultation, which commits the UK aviation sector to net zero by 2050 and sets out our proposals for how that will be achieved, is aligned to our economy wide and legally-binding net zero commitment.

Our Nationally Determined Contribution and the Sixth Carbon Budget are both informed by the net zero commitment, and guidance from the Climate Change Committee.

We have committed to include the UK's share of International Aviation and Shipping (IAS) emissions in the Sixth Carbon Budget. Emissions from IAS are not included in the scope of the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution, in line with international expectations and the guidance of the CCC.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Greg Clark: [\[56920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help improve communication between the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and its customers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has added new ways and updated existing methods to ensure clear communication for customers. A guidance is in place to advise customers of the latest processing times. To date, this page has had almost two million unique views. The information contained in this page is based on customer feedback and designed to help customers with their most common queries.

The DVLA regularly posts information on its social media channels signposting followers to different sources of information designed to help customers transact quickly and easily with DVLA. Since September 2020, the DVLA has run two communication campaigns targeted at encouraging customers to use the DVLA's extensive suite of online services instead of a paper alternative as online services are not subject to delays. Content is regularly updated on GOV.UK and incorporates customer feedback.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards

Greg Clark: [\[56918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2021 to Question 50953 on Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards, what progress his Department has made in helping to improve the efficiency of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing staff who are working from home are mainly from support areas. These staff are fully productive and are not contributing to delays. Staff working from home is in line with Welsh Government guidance and allows the DVLA to maximise office space for operational staff processing paper applications as these roles cannot be carried out remotely.

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

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

The DVLA has introduced additional online services and is urgently securing extra office space to house more staff. This will help reduce waiting times while providing future resilience and business continuity.

The DVLA understands the impact that delays can have on people's everyday lives and is working to process paper applications as quickly as possible.

Greg Clark:[\[56919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help tackle the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's delays in dealing with applications arising from working from home, industrial action and recent increases in demand.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing staff who are working from home are mainly from support areas. These staff are fully productive and are not contributing to delays. Staff working from home is in line with Welsh Government guidance and allows the DVLA to maximise office space for operational staff processing paper applications as these roles cannot be carried out remotely.

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The DVLA has introduced additional online services and is urgently securing extra office space to house more staff. This will help reduce waiting times while providing future resilience and business continuity.

The DVLA understands the impact that delays can have on people's everyday lives and is working to process paper applications as quickly as possible.

■ **Driving Instruction: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell: [\[53957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending existing Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) licences in the context of the holders of those licences having only been able to practise for eight out of the last 15 months as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has no statutory power to issue partial refunds nor extend registration beyond four years.

■ **Driving Licences**

Jess Phillips: [\[56616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he is taking to process the backlog of applications at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Trudy Harrison:

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

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

The DVLA has introduced additional online services and recruited additional staff. The DVLA is urgently securing extra office space to house more staff as surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce waiting times while providing future resilience and business continuity.

The DVLA understands the impact that delays can have on people's everyday lives and is working as quickly as possible to process paper applications and return people's documentation to them.

■ Driving Licences: Internet

Peter Grant:

[\[57141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 23 February 2021 to Question 157213 on Driving Licences: Internet, what progress his Department has made with implementing system interface enhancements between the DVLA and Her Majesty's Passport Office to allow driving licences to be renewed online for applicants without a digital passport signature.

Trudy Harrison:

Since 24 June 2021, customers applying for their provisional driving licence are now able to upload their signature for the first time and track or update their application.

This functionality will enable the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to further develop services, including online renewals, without requiring a digital passport signature.

■ Driving Licences: Italy

Ian Murray:

[\[56971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with the Italian government on allowing UK residents living in Italy to drive under their existing licence without having to take a test and exchange their licence.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government is committed to establishing reciprocal arrangements with Italy that facilitate private motoring with a minimum amount of bureaucracy. UK photocard licence holders do not need to carry an additional International Driving Permit (IDP) when visiting Italy, nor any EU Member State.

Department for Transport officials continue to negotiate exchange arrangements for UK licence holders resident in Italy and vice versa as a matter of priority. I will ensure that GOV.UK pages are updated as soon as future arrangements are finalised (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/driving-in-the-eu-uk-licence-holders-living-in-the-eu#italy>).

Whilst discussions are ongoing, UK licence holders can continue to use their UK licence until 31 December 2021, or for 12 months from becoming a resident in Italy, whichever is later.

■ Driving Tests: Highlands of Scotland

Drew Hendry:

[\[57149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the availability of practical driving tests in the Scottish Highlands.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has a number of measures in place to increase practical driving tests, including in the Scottish Highlands.

These include offering a national recovery allowance 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 and weekends). The DVSA has also started a recruitment campaign to increase the number of examiners.

■ Electric Scooters

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[56715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) preventive measures and (b) sanctions are in place to ensure that e-scooters are used only within the law; what safety criteria must be met before e-scooters are judged fit for use; what data have been analysed in his Department on casualties resulting from the use of e-scooters on (i) roads and (ii) pavements in other countries; how and by whom the success or failure of UK experimental use of e-scooters is being assessed; and if he will list the (A) advantages and (B) disadvantages his Department has assessed will result from permitting the widespread use of e-scooters in the UK.

Trudy Harrison:

In the UK, e-scooters are treated like any other motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Act 1988. However, as the law was not drafted with e-scooters in mind, it is not possible for an e-scooter user to comply with the legal requirements for motor vehicles, such as having appropriate insurance, driving licences, number plates, and helmets.

It is, therefore, illegal to use an e-scooter on a public road without it complying with these legal requirements. It is also illegal to use an e-scooter, not approved for use in trials, in spaces which are set aside for use by pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-riders. This includes on the pavement and in cycle lanes.

A range of offences may apply, including those relating to speeding and dangerous driving, drink and drug driving, as well as insurance and licensing. Users can be fined up to £300, have 6 points put on their driving licence, and the e-scooter can be impounded.

In 2020, the government permitted trials of rental e-scooters by introducing legislation for trials. To be eligible, local authorities and operators had to show how they would use controls such as geo-fencing, parking restrictions and driver licence checks. The Department for Transport provided guidance to e-scooter operators and local authorities which can be found on GOV.UK: www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators

With regard to safety criteria that must be met before rental scheme e-scooters are judged fit for use as part of e-scooter trials, the Department established a set of vehicle design and construction standards and approvals requirements. These are also outlined in guidance to e-scooter operators and local authorities on GOV.UK.

The Department is continuously reviewing a variety of evidence on e-scooter related casualties from other countries. For example, the International Transport Forum (ITF) collated evidence on e-scooter fatality rates from various sources in its 2020 study on 'Safe Micromobility'.

To assess the experimental use of e-scooters, the Department has in place a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme managed by our evaluation contractor, Arup. We will be publishing reports in autumn 2021 and spring 2022.

■ Ferries: Government Assistance

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[56696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to provide a replacement for the EU Motorway of the Seas funding that was available to ports and ship operators for the establishment of ferry services.

Robert Courts:

EU Motorways of the Sea funding is provided by the Connecting Europe Facility Transport programme (CEF-T), which focused its funding on major cross-border links for surface transport. Given the limited nature of cross-border surface routes between the UK and EU, CEF-T receipts for UK entities have been far less than for EU Member States. Consequently, the Government decided to end participation in the CEF programme.

The Maritime sector is largely private in the UK so decisions on establishment and funding of international ferry routes are for individual companies operating in the market.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Sarah Green:

[\[57506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of Schedule 17 applications submitted by High Speed 2 Limited have been (a) refused or (b) modified by the relevant planning authority.

Andrew Stephenson:

To date 407 Schedule 17 applications have been made by HS2 Ltd, of which nine (2.2%) have been refused by the relevant local planning authority. This does not include applications where the local authority has failed to determine an application within the specified timescale, or extended determination timescales agreed with HS2 Ltd, resulting in HS2 Ltd submitting an appeal to the Secretaries of State in order to maintain the programme.

Applications can be modified in a variety of ways. Local planning authorities may place conditions on an approval. Alternatively, pre-application discussions in advance of formal Schedule 17 applications being submitted, often result in a design being modified or adapted through direct requests from local authority officers, or due to questions or concerns being raised.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Karin Smyth: [\[53945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage category C or D driving licence holders not currently employed in the HGV industry to take up work in that sector.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport is working closely with the road haulage industry to support them in attracting back inactive drivers, with many employers already offering increased salaries and other incentives. In addition, the Department, along with leading logistics organisations, has sent nearly 1 million letters to thank HGV drivers for their vital role supporting the economy, and to encourage those who have left the industry to return. The letter informs recipients of the employment opportunities in the sector, to encourage them to return.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Drew Hendry: [\[56317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of HGV drivers who use short-term medical driving licences; and what the average waiting time was for renewing a HGV short-term medical driving licence as at 1 October 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

Information requested about the number of HGV drivers who have a short-term medical driving licence cannot be retrieved in the time available. Officials will write to the Honourable Member when the information is available.

On 1 October 2021, the average time to process a vocational driving licence application where a medical condition has been declared was 75 days. Vocational applications include those applying to drive both HGVs and buses as it is not possible to separate them.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests

Karin Smyth: [\[53943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 16 September 2021, Legislation - Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, HCWS292, if he will publish the potential scope of an industry led accreditation scheme as referenced in that Statement.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is exploring options for an industry-led accreditation that could offer a standardised non-statutory testing approach, and is engaging with key stakeholders, trainers and insurers, to discuss this issue. It is also in discussions with the training industry to understand their capacity to deliver the off-road manoeuvres element of the vocational test and will

work with them to develop a robust and clear process by which to assess, accredit and audit any trainers who wish to assess the manoeuvres element of the test.

The DVSA takes its commitment to road safety extremely seriously and encourages drivers to undertake training to help ensure they are safe and competent to tow larger trailers. It will continue to work with the training industry and other interested parties to provide guidance on training.

The Department will keep any changes made to driving tests under review to ensure they are effective whilst making sure road safety is not compromised.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[57068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that the safety standards of HGV driving tests are not lowered as a result of the reversing exercise element being tested separately by a third party.

Trudy Harrison:

Consistent with other areas of delegated vocational testing, the Department for Transport and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency will ensure there is a meaningful quality checking and auditing process for those organisations which will carry out the assessment of the off road exercises.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete**

Hilary Benn:

[\[56792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether an environmental impact assessment has been undertaken on the number of additional journeys that will result from the introduction of a 32 tonne limit on volumetric mobile plants.

Trudy Harrison:

The standard weight limits applicable to four-axle rigid vehicles is 32 tonnes. In 2017, the Government published the response to a consultation relating to specialised vehicle testing in which it was asked whether volumetric mobile plants (VCMs) should be permitted to exceed the standard 32-tonne weight limit for vehicles of their design.

Vehicle weight limits are necessary to maintain the integrity of road structures and ensure vehicles are not overloaded, presenting a danger to other road users. No environmental impact assessment has been undertaken; however, an impact assessment was conducted at the time of the regulatory change, which included these factors, and is available online.

■ **Parking: Pedestrian Areas**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési:

[\[56393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of pavement parking on those with a visual impairment.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department carried out a public consultation on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem, which ran from 31 August 2020 to 22 November 2020. Members of the public, including many who identified as having visual impairments, and organisations including those representing people with disabilities, participated. The consultation received over 15,000 responses. The Department has been carefully analysing the consultation responses and will publish the findings as soon as possible.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[57278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to tackle pavement parking.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department carried out a public consultation on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem, which ran from 31 August 2020 to 22 November 2020. The consultation received over 15,000 responses. The Department has been carefully analysing the consultation responses and the consultation results will inform our policy decision. We will publish the outcomes as soon as possible.

■ Railways: Electricity**Ian Mearns:**[\[56417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much Network Rail has increased the electricity prices it charges to (a) Freight Operating Companies and (b) Train Operating Companies to operate electric train services in each month since October 2020 to date.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail (NR) does not set traction electricity charges for train operators.

Network Rail procures traction electricity on behalf of the rail industry, which is then charged to operators at the price that NR pays. This means that Network Rail does not set the price or make a profit or loss in this process. If market electricity prices change, the risk or benefit rests with train and freight operators.

Each train and freight operator has its own strategy for securing future traction electricity prices. These strategies are then enacted by Network Rail according to the Traction Electricity Rules referenced in Track Access contracts. The process replicates what operators would need to do if they bought directly from an energy supplier.

■ Railways: Midlands**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[53209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of jobs that will be created as a result of the Midlands Rail Hub in (a) Birmingham Ladywood constituency, (b) Birmingham City region and (c) the West Midlands.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The objectives of the Midlands Rail Hub are to support economic growth across the region. At this early stage of development, no detailed assessment of the number of jobs created either directly or indirectly by the scheme has been undertaken.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[53859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the viability of proposals to reintroduce Birmingham Snow Hill Platform 4 as part of the Midlands Rail Hub.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Reinstatement of Snow Hill Platform Four is being considered as part of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Midlands Rail Hub, following consideration and approval of the SOBC in 2020. I expect Network Rail to complete this work by late-2022.

Railways: Scotland**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[56617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a sleeper train service from Scotland to the European continent.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government supports the future growth and success of international passenger rail services, which provide many benefits for passengers, businesses and the wider economy including significant environmental benefits.

The Government regularly engages with international partners, as well as industry, to discuss and encourage the expansion of international rail connections to Europe. The Government stands ready to engage with other partners and private operators to facilitate potential new sleeper services, where there is a commercial proposition to do so.

Schools: Buildings**Kate Green:**[\[57025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many retired pacer trains are planned to become classrooms in how many schools.

Kate Green:[\[57026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many schools are planned to receive pacer trains for classrooms by (a) region and (b) local authority.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has no plans to convert any pacer train carriages into classrooms.

■ Shipping: Scotland**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[56695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has received from the Scottish Government on financial support for (a) ports and (b) ship operators in connection with services from Scotland to the European continent.

Robert Courts:

We have not received representations from the Scottish Government on financial support for (a) ports and (b) ship operators in connection with services from Scotland to the European continent.

However, any such service would have to operate on a commercially viable basis and this would be a matter for any prospective ferry operator to consider.

■ Southeastern**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[57271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether there will be investigations into Govia's other franchise agreement following LSER/Southeastern franchise being taken over by the Government's Operator of Last Resort.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is engaging with a non-executive committee formed of the Chairs of both Govia owning groups, who are leading an investigation into the issues. The investigation will carefully examine the role of LSER, and its owning groups to understand the extent of the issues. The Department will undertake a rigorous review and examination of the evidence provided, to consider whether further action or investigation is required. However, due to the unique arrangements of the HS1 contract, there is no reason to believe the issues will be present on other TOCs.

■ Southeastern: Finance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[57270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date his Department first identified evidence that historic taxpayer funding had not been returned by Southeastern railway.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In Spring 2021, officials became aware of the most material matters, that LSER had concealed over £25m of taxpayer funding due back to the Department. Due to the complexity of the issues involved we took action as soon as reasonably practical with investigations still on-going.

■ Trailers: Driving Instruction**Karin Smyth:** [\[53944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, what assessment he has made of the

effect of those regulations on businesses whose sole purpose is to provide training for the driving licence category BE test for the towing of trailers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency are working with the trailer towing sector to develop a voluntary accredited training scheme to ensure drivers have the skills, knowledge and expertise required to tow safely.

■ **Trailers: Driving Licences**

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[56230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the new rules for towing a trailer or caravan with a car from autumn 2021, published September 2021, what assessment he made of the potential risk to road safety that (a) car drivers would no longer need to take a test to tow a trailer and (b) that the test would be shorter and would no longer include the coupling and uncoupling exercise in the test.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[57468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he made of the effect his policy on issuing licences to drive articulated vehicles, without requiring a licence for a smaller vehicle, on road safety.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[57469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he made of the number of people likely to cancel their trailer training courses and tests as the new rules for towing a trailer or caravan with a car from autumn 2021, published on 10 September.

Trudy Harrison:

Road safety remains of paramount importance, and we are already working with training providers to explore options for an industry-led accreditation scheme for trailer training. This could offer a standardised training and assessment approach, keeping driving and towing skills current and of a high standard.

The reversing exercise of HGV driving tests and the uncoupling and recoupling exercise of the lorry and trailer test will still be tested but separately by third party assessors. This will enable the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to carry out more on-road tests without compromising the overall standard of driving required to pass the test. The DVSA is working with the training industry to develop the necessary robust accreditation, assessment and audit processes.

One of the changes announced is to enable new drivers to take a category C+E test without having to take a category C test first. Existing category C licence holders will still need to pass their C+E practical test to demonstrate their competency to drive these larger vehicles.

The DVSA does not hold information on the number of people who have booked or cancelled a trailer training course as individuals book these courses directly with the training provider. The DVSA stopped conducting B+E tests from 20 September.

We have made provision in the regulations for post implementation review of the change in the rules, with the first review after three years. We will gather data during that period and monitor the impact on road safety and make changes if needed in the light of that review.

Virginia Crosbie: [\[57467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the new rules for towing a trailer or caravan with a car from autumn 2021 published on 10 September, what assessment he made of the financial impact on small businesses that train and test drivers for HGV and for towing trailers and caravans; and if he will set up a compensation scheme for those businesses who have lost income as a result of his policy.

Trudy Harrison:

We are working with industry to consider options for accredited training that could offer a standardised non-statutory testing approach. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has received strong support for an accreditation training scheme which is also generating considerable interest from companies who tow as part of their business. We are progressing discussions urgently.

Businesses that require help and support should contact the Business Support Helpline at <https://www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline>

■ Trailers: Safety

Karin Smyth: [\[53940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on road safety of there no longer being a mandatory separate driving licence category BE test for the towing of trailers.

Trudy Harrison:

There is currently no evidence to suggest that competence and skills will worsen if drivers do not take a statutory test to tow a trailer. We are taking a number of measures that we would expect to have a positive impact, including working with industry to consider options for accredited training that could offer a standardised non-statutory testing approach.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has received strong support for an accreditation training scheme, which is also generating considerable interest from companies who tow as part of their business. We are progressing discussions urgently.

Karin Smyth: [\[53941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure the safety of drivers towing trailers in response to the proposed changes under the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

Working with the trailer towing sector, the Department for Transport and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency are developing a voluntary accredited training

scheme to ensure drivers have the skills, knowledge and competencies required to tow safely.

Karin Smyth:

[53942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to ensure that drivers holding a category B driving licence who tow trailers have a full understanding of the additional requirements for towing a trailer, including but not limited to, coupling and reversing procedures.

Trudy Harrison:

Working with the trailer towing sector, the Department for Transport and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency are developing a voluntary accredited training scheme to ensure drivers have the skills, knowledge and competencies required to tow safely.

■ **Train Operating Companies: Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[57272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Departmental press notice entitled Government takes over running of LSER services in response to over £25 million breach of franchise agreement, published 28 September, if his Department has plans to investigate other Railway operators on the uses of historic taxpayer funding.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The issues identified are highly unusual and specific to the London and South Eastern Railway (LSER) franchise, they represent a significant breach of the good faith obligation within the franchise agreement and this is why the Department has acted swiftly and decisively to protect taxpayer interests and recover the money owed. At this stage, given the issues are unique to the LSER contract, I have no reason to believe this activity is part of wider-industry practice. The Department will undertake a rigorous examination and review of all the evidence provided, to consider whether further action or investigation is required.

■ **Transport: Carbon Emissions**

Rachael Maskell:

[57161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish his decarbonisation plan.

Trudy Harrison:

I am pleased to confirm our Decarbonising Transport, a better, greener Britain was published on the 14th July, it can be accessed by the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>

■ Travel Requirements

Zarah Sultana: [\[57394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of working with governments around the world to develop a blueprint for travel regulations.

Robert Courts:

HM Government has, and will continue to have, a leadership role in shaping the emerging global framework for international travel in a steady state of an international travel landscape that co-exists with an endemic COVID-19 including through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and through numerous bilaterals attended by myself and officials.

The UK has also recently chaired the G7 transport and health ministers meeting to endorse and promote a set of high-level principles for international travel. G7 members affirmed their support for the work of ICAO to align travel requirements and help facilitate interoperability of vaccination certificates and applications to further support the recovery of the travel sector.

■ Travel Restrictions: Nepal

Ian Murray: [\[56973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department is using to decide whether to move Nepal from the covid-19 red list to the amber list to enable non-essential travel to that country to resume.

Robert Courts:

Nepal was removed from the red list at 4am on Monday 11 October and the FCDO no longer advises against all but essential travel to Nepal, based on the current assessment of COVID-19 risks.

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produce risk assessments of countries and territories for the red list for international travel. Decisions on red list assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account the JBC risk assessments, alongside wider public health factors.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[53830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Government Ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning from the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting officials business.

Robert Courts:

Ministers from the Department for Transport have not claimed any exemptions from the requirement to quarantine in a managed quarantine facility that is required after returning from a red list country. The Department for Transport does not hold information on exemption usage by ministers from other government departments.

TREASURY**■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges****Mr Nicholas Brown:**[\[56810\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support he is making available for small businesses paying high bank card processing fees to prevent them reverting to cash-only transactions.

John Glen:

The Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) was established in 2015, with statutory objectives to promote competition, innovation, and to ensure that payment systems are operated in a way that considers the interests of all the businesses and consumers that use them.

The PSR is currently carrying out a market review into card acquiring services to examine how effectively competition is working in the provision of these services. This includes an assessment of the fees that small and medium-sized businesses pay, including card scheme and interchange fees, and the quality of service they receive. The Government looks forward to the final PSR report and recommendations later this year.

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

It remains the individual retailer's choice as to whether to accept or decline any form of payment, including cash or card.

■ Bank Services: Fraud**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[57351\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that banks are accountable for overseeing the accounts of disabled and vulnerable people for irregularities and fraudulent activity.

John Glen:

The Government is working with industry to close down the vulnerabilities that fraudsters exploit and ensure members of the public have the information they need to spot a scam and stand up to fraudsters. This is a shared endeavour between Government, law enforcement and the private sector. It is vital we ensure that disabled and vulnerable customers are included in this effort, but there are no additional requirements on a bank to check for irregularities or fraudulent activity if a customer is disabled or vulnerable.

UK banks' and building societies' treatment of their customers is governed by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in its Principles for Businesses. This includes a general requirement for firms to provide a prompt, efficient and fair service to all of their customers.

The FCA's Guidance for firms on the Fair Treatment of Vulnerable Customers also requires that firms should understand what harms their customers are likely to be vulnerable to and ensure that customers in vulnerable circumstances receive the same fair treatment and outcomes as other customers.

If a firm has doubts about a consumer's ability to understand a product or service, suspects they do not have capacity to make decisions or that they are acting as a result of fraud or coercion, the firm should assess whether it should allow the consumer to proceed. It may be appropriate for firms to contact, or act on the instructions of, a family member, friend or other third party.

In addition, like all service providers, banks and building societies are bound under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments, where necessary, in the way they deliver their services. This may include allowing for a carer or deputy to act for the disabled person.

■ Business and Food

Geraint Davies: [\[56415\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent impact assessment his Department has made of the potential cost of upcoming Government regulations on (a) businesses and (b) food prices.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to well-designed and effective regulation that achieves the right balance between supporting excellent business practice and protecting workers, consumers and the environment.

Impact assessments help to inform regulatory design that achieves those outcomes. Therefore, Government Departments, including the Treasury, produce and publish impact assessments for all new regulations in accordance with the rules of the Better Regulation Framework. Individual impact assessments for new regulations will assess evidence of impacts on businesses, food prices and other areas as is appropriate to the regulation in question.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Aviation

Zarah Sultana: [\[57395\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the aviation industry beyond September 2021.

Lucy Frazer:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was designed as a temporary economy-wide measure to support businesses while widespread restrictions were in place. After running for nineteen months, the scheme closed on 30 September 2021. To date, it has succeeded in supporting 11.7 million jobs across the UK, with employer claims totalling £69.3 billion.

As the economy has reopened, the jobs market has recovered, vacancies are at record highs and the success of the Government's vaccine programme has allowed us to lift almost all restrictions. That is why it is right that the Government continues to wind down its temporary pandemic support, while continuing to support businesses to invest in the recovery and supporting people into new jobs.

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances the aviation industry has faced as a result of Covid-19. The aviation and aerospace sectors are being supported with over £12 billion that has been made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF), and grants for research and development.

Thanks to the rollout of the UK's vaccination programme, the Government has been able to relax the rules on our international travel programme. A new system for a safe and sustainable return to travel has been set out, which separates countries into a red list and the rest of the world. On Monday 11 October 2021, England's red list was reduced to just seven countries, with 47 countries coming off the red list.

From 24 October 2021, fully vaccinated passengers with an authorised vaccine and most under 18s arriving in England from countries not on the red list can take a cheaper lateral flow test, instead of a PCR test, on or before Day 2 of their arrival into the UK. They will not need to self-isolate or take a pre-departure or day eight test.

Eligible travellers vaccinated in over 100 countries and territories including Brazil, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, South Africa and Turkey, will not need to self-isolate, nor complete pre-departure testing and day eight testing requirements on arrival to the UK from non-red list countries and territories, like UK vaccinated adults. Anyone who tests positive will need to take a confirmatory PCR test which can be genomically sequenced to help identify new variants.

The Government is focused on fully reopening international travel as soon as it is safe to do so and will further review England's international travel policy in the new year.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Neale Hanvey:**[\[56442\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on tackling the discrepancy between the 5 per cent VAT incurred for home charging for electric vehicles and 20 per cent VAT for on-street electric vehicle charging.

Neale Hanvey: [\[56444\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to take steps to tackle the discrepancy between the 5 per cent VAT incurred for home charging for electric vehicles and 20 per cent VAT for on-street electric vehicle charging.

Neale Hanvey: [\[56446\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent representations he has received on the discrepancy between the 5 per cent VAT incurred for home charging for electric vehicles and 20 per cent VAT for on-street electric vehicle charging.

Lucy Frazer:

Electricity supplied at electric vehicle charging points in public places is subject to the standard rate of VAT (twenty per cent). In order to keep costs down for families, the supply of electricity for domestic use, including charging electric vehicles at home, attracts the reduced rate of VAT (five per cent).

Expanding the relief would come at a cost. VAT makes a significant contribution towards the public finances, raising around £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps fund the Government's priorities including the NHS, schools, and defence. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

■ Equipment: Tax Allowances**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[56998\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the HMRC policy paper entitled, Temporary increase in annual investment allowance for plant and machinery, published 3 March 2021, whether he has made an estimate of the number of firms likely to invest more than £1 million in plant and machinery in (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Scotland, (d) Northern Ireland and (e) in the UK during the 2021-22 financial year.

Lucy Frazer:

The temporary increase in the limit of annual investment allowance (AIA) from £200,000 to £1,000,000 for expenditure on plant and machinery incurred during the period of 1 January to 31 December 2021 was estimated to impact 31,500 businesses.

A geographical breakdown of the number of businesses by levels of capital expenditure in 2021-22 will not be available until HMRC has received and processed the relevant tax returns.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT**Greg Smith:** [\[56254\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on employment in the hospitality sector when VAT is returned to 20 per cent for this sector.

Seema Malhotra: [\[56301\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of a higher rate of VAT on debt repayment by businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors.

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[56816\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the 12.5 per cent VAT rate for the hospitality sector beyond 31 March 2022.

Greg Smith: [\[57389\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the hospitality industry on the impact of VAT rates returning to 20 per cent by 2022.

Greg Smith: [\[57390\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the projected level of economic activity in the hospitality sector when VAT returns to 20 per cent in the sector.

Lucy Frazer:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of around 150,000 businesses and protect over 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors. As announced at Budget 2021, the Government has extended the temporary reduced rate of VAT of 5% for the tourism and hospitality sector. This relief ended on 30 September. On 1 October 2021, a new reduced rate of 12.5% was introduced to help ease affected businesses back to the standard rate. This new rate will end on 31 March 2022.

This relief will cost over £7 billion and, while all taxes are kept under review, there are no plans to extend the 12.5% reduced rate of VAT. The Government has been clear that this relief is a temporary measure designed to support the cash flow and viability of sectors that have been severely affected by COVID-19. It is appropriate that as restrictions are lifted and demand for goods and services in these sectors increases, the temporary tax reliefs are first reduced and then removed in order to rebuild and strengthen the public finances.

■ ICT: Northern Ireland

Gavin Robinson: [\[57055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to support proposals to establish a global centre for secure intelligent regulatory technologies in Northern Ireland.

John Glen:

The government is committed to maintaining the UK's position a world-leading destination for fintech.

In line with this ambition, the Government is taking forward key recommendations of the independent Kalifa Review of UK Fintech as part of ensuring the UK remains at the global cutting edge of technology and innovation in financial services.

Government funding for future years will be confirmed as part of the Spending Review which will be announced on 27th October.

■ **Loans: Small Businesses**

Mr William Wragg: [\[56374\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to extend the Term Funding Scheme to non-bank lenders to improve alternative financing options.

John Glen:

The Term Funding Scheme (TFS) is a monetary policy tool of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England. Therefore, it is not appropriate for the Government to comment on its conduct or effectiveness.

The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy.

We will continue to work with non-bank lenders to support their participation in the new Recovery Loan scheme following the closure of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs).

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Sir Mike Penning: [\[56875\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to correspondence from the hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead dated 27 May 2021 on Fix Care for All, reference MP69886.

Mr Simon Clarke:

I responded to the Honourable Member's correspondence on 19 October 2021.

■ **Minimum Wage: Tax Allowances**

Duncan Baker: [\[57393\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the personal allowance in proportion to rises in the National Minimum Wage to ensure as much tax-free income as possible is earned by people on the lowest wages; and what steps he is taking increase the personal allowance to protect as many as people as possible on the lowest earnings from the effects of inflation.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government remains committed to protecting the living standards of the lowest earners and has taken action to do this. Increases to the real terms value of the Personal Allowance by nearly 50 per cent in the last decade mean that, compared to 2010-11, a typical basic rate taxpayer will pay over £800 less Income Tax in 2021-22.

The Government must also ensure the sustainability of the public finances to fund excellent public services and has done so in a fair and progressive way by maintaining the Income Tax Personal Allowance and Higher Rate Threshold at 2021-22 levels. The 20 per cent highest income households will contribute 15 times that of the 20 per cent lowest income households.

At £12,570, the Personal Allowance is the highest basic personal tax allowance of all countries in the G20, and it remains one of the most generous internationally.

On 1 April 2021, following the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission (LPC), workers on the National Living Wage saw a 2.2 per cent pay increase to £8.91 an hour. The Government remains committed to supporting low paid workers and looks forward to receiving the recommendations for the 2022 National Living and Minimum Wage rates from the independent LPC this Autumn.

■ Overseas Aid: Sudan

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[56689\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether debt relief for Sudan will be counted as Official Development Assistance (ODA) in (a) 2021-22 and (b) future financial years; and how much ODA it will be counted as.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[57229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether debt relief for Sudan has been included in his Department's accounts for (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23 and (c) 2023-24.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[57230\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether debt relief for Sudan will be counted as contributing to the target of 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income being spent on Official Development Assistance.

Mr Simon Clarke:

As part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, the UK will provide debt cancellation on Sudan's bilateral debt owed to the UK.

Sudan owes the UK a total of £861m (as of August 2020).

HM Treasury does not hold any of the debt owed to the UK by Sudan and the debt relief for Sudan will not appear in HM Treasury's annual report and accounts.

The UK reports all ODA eligible spend in line with international rules set by the OECD.

■ Research: Tax Allowances

Alex Sobel: [\[57310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the system of research and development tax reliefs provides support for research that uses and develops new approach methodologies including the use of (a) human cells and tissues, (b) artificial intelligence and (c) organ-on-a-chip technology.

Lucy Frazer:

Research and Development (R&D) tax reliefs support companies carrying out projects which seek to make advances in science or technology through the resolution of scientific or technological uncertainty.

At Spring Budget 2021, the Government launched a wide-ranging review of R&D tax reliefs, which was supported by a consultation with stakeholders. The consultation also explored definitions, eligibility, and scope of the reliefs, to ensure they are up-to-date, competitive, and that they reflect how R&D activity is conducted now. The consultation ran from 3 March to 2 June 2021. The Government will respond in due course.

■ Small Businesses: Regional Assistance

Mr William Wragg: [\[56379\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the British Business Bank's regional angels programme will be extended with funding from his Department.

Julian Knight: [\[56385\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the British Business Bank's Regional Angels programme will be extended through funding from his Department.

Helen Whately:

The British Business Bank's Regional Angels Programme provides early-stage equity capital to smaller businesses with high growth potential across the UK. The British Business Bank's funding for the next three years will be set out at the Spending Review.

■ Universal Credit: Tameside

Andrew Gwynne: [\[56860\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the estimated £20 million that the economy of Tameside will lose as a result of the suspension of the universal credit uplift.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The government has always been clear that the £20 per week increase to Universal Credit was a temporary measure to support households whose incomes and earnings were affected by the economic shock of Covid-19.

Now that the economy has reopened, the government is focusing on supporting people to move into and progress in work through the comprehensive Plan for Jobs. The £2 billion Kickstart scheme will create 250,000 new, fully subsidised jobs for young people, and the new three-year Restart programme will provide intensive and tailored support to over one million unemployed Universal Credit claimants.

At Spring Budget, the government announced policies that will benefit places most in need, including additional funding for skills and job support and the first round of the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund. Furthermore, 11 local authorities – including Tameside - in

the North West will be priority places for the £220 million Community Renewal Fund, which will invest in people, communities and businesses across the UK. The government will announce successful bids in due course.

■ Welfare Tax Credits: Overpayments

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[56502\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the total amount which is due to HM Revenue and Customs as a result of tax credit overpayments.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The most recent estimate of the total amount due from Tax Credits overpayments was published in October 2020 in the 2019/20 HM Revenue and Customs Annual Report and Accounts as £4.8 billion as at 31 March 2020.

■ Whisky: Scotland

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[56407\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the contribution of the Scotch Whisky industry to (a) the Scottish and (b) UK economies in the last three years.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[57356\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact on the purchasing of alcohol through consumers being charged different amounts of tax per unit of alcohol consumed in line with the Chief Medical Office's guidelines; and what assessment his Department has made of that policy on sales of spirits as the highest taxed category of alcohol.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[57357\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the contribution of Scotch Whisky distilleries as job creators in rural Scottish communities in each of the last three years.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises the important contribution the spirits sector makes to the economy. This is why we announced a freeze on spirit duties at March Budget 2021, making the price of a typical bottle of Scotch whisky 30p lower than it would have been had prices risen with inflation. When added to the cuts and freezes made in the last five years, this means that the price of a typical bottle of Scotch Whisky in 2021 will be £2.15 lower than it otherwise would have been since ending the spirits escalator in 2014.

To further support Scotch, the Chancellor has announced £1 million of additional funding for the promotion of Scottish food and drink products overseas, and £10 million of research and development funding to help the distilling sector transition to net zero emissions.

More broadly, the Government keeps all taxes under review. We are continuing to monitor emerging public health data and will provide further updates on our alcohol duty review in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carers Allowance

Jess Phillips:

[\[57056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the threshold for weekly earnings to be eligible for Carers Allowance.

Chloe Smith:

The Carer's Allowance (CA) weekly earnings limit has increased by nearly a third since 2010 (£100 to £128), reflecting the increase in average earnings in recent years.

Going forward we plan to modernise the CA earnings rules and processes so they do more to support carers in combining their caring responsibilities with work where they can, by automating more of the earnings process by making fuller use of HMRC's real time earnings information.

The Government keeps the earnings limit under review and increases it when warranted and affordable.

■ Covid-19 Local Support Grant

Zarah Sultana:

[\[57396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits for vulnerable households of extending the Covid-19 Local Support Grant until December 2021.

David Rutley:

The Covid Local Support Grant ended on September 30th 2021. However, we recognise that some people continue to require extra support, which is why we have introduced £500m of funding to boost households this winter. £421m of this will help vulnerable people in England with essential household costs through the Household Support Fund, whilst almost £80m will be given to the devolved nations (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive). This new grant began on 6th October 2021, and will run to 31st March 2022.

■ Employment and Social Security Benefits: Learning Disability

Helen Hayes:

[50104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is she taking to improve the collection of benefit and employment data about people with a learning disability within her Department.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Department collects data in relation to people with a learning disability where it is relevant to their claim to certain health and disability benefits, as well as making use of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey.

The Department regularly publishes these statistics for those claiming Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance, and these can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

Detailed information about the primary disability of those on Universal Credit receiving the Limited Capability for Work or Limited Capability for Work Related Activity element, and those receiving Employment and Support Allowance is not readily available and has not previously been published.

The Department already publishes annual Official Statistics on the employment of disabled people. These include employment levels and rates for disabled people with severe or specific learning difficulties.

The data can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-employment-of-disabled-people>

■ Employment Schemes: Autism

Nadia Whittome:

[57492]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to assist autistic people into employment.

Chloe Smith:

A range of DWP initiatives are supporting disabled people to start, stay and succeed in work. These include the Work and Health Programme, one-to-one support and training through the Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme, Access to Work, Disability Confident and support in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we provided specialist employment support remotely and made programmes easier to access.

Every autistic person experiences autism differently, and many have complex needs or other conditions, such as a learning disability or mental health condition. We therefore design our programmes to tailor support to meet the needs of individual participants, while recognising that some approaches, such as the “place and train” model have been successful with autistic participants who have more complex needs. The IPES programme provides support that is highly personalised to meet the needs of disabled participants who are further from employment and have more complex barriers to work- this includes people with autism.

We are working with the National Autistic Society to test how we can make Jobcentre Plus services more accessible to and supportive of autistic customers, including accrediting individual offices. This test will run to the end of March 2022 and will inform future decisions about JCP provision.

■ Government Departments: Disability

Marion Fellows: [\[57123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to coordinate the work of the Ministerial Disability Champions to help disabled children and their families recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

Marion Fellows: [\[57127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Disability Strategy published by the Government in July 2021, when the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work plans to chair the first quarterly meeting of the Disability Ministerial Champions; and whether her Department plans to publish targets to review in each of those meetings to hold the cross-government strategy to account.

David Linden: [\[57284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the Departmental Ministerial Disability Champions' effectiveness will be assessed.

David Linden: [\[57285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what tasks the Departmental Ministerial Disability Champions are undertaking in helping to deliver the national disability strategy.

Chloe Smith:

The first Ministerial Disability Champions were appointed in summer 2020, at the request of the Prime Minister, to drive the development and delivery of the National Disability Strategy.

Their role, as set out on GOV.UK, includes championing disabled people and driving the delivery of the National Disability Strategy in their respective departments. All champions contributed a statement of intent, and a specific range of commitments published in the Strategy.

The Strategy committed to publishing an annual report in summer 2022, which will detail the progress made against the commitments. The Ministerial Disability Champions will have direct input into the annual report.

An updated list of Departmental Ministerial Disability Champions will be published on GOV.UK in due course. The next ministerial champions meeting is due to happen this month.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[57022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether all assessors at each stage of (a) a personal independence payment assessment and (b) subsequent appeals have access to insight condition reports for fetal valproate spectrum disorder as recommended in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report.

Chloe Smith:

Both Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment providers have a Condition Insight Report (CIR) on Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder, which all their Health Professionals (HPs) have access to during the course of the PIP assessment process.

The CIR on Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder is a product specifically developed for HPs. It is therefore not shared with DWP Case Managers, who make decisions on entitlement and mandatory reconsiderations, or Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), who handle appeals.

DWP Case Managers use the content within the assessment report provided by the HP, and any other available evidence, to make a decision for each claimant.

However, HP advice is available throughout the process if a DWP Case Manager requires input following the initial assessment.

■ Social Security Benefits

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[56662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to improve her Department's processes in response to the completion of internal process reviews in the last three years.

Chloe Smith:

Recommendations from IPRs are a critical source of insight and learning.

Improvements the Department has made in response to the completion of following IPRs in the last three years include:

- Introducing a holistic check of a customer's circumstances prior to issuing them with a large payment, in order to identify whether it might cause risk to that individual.

- Improving staff guidance to ensure vulnerable customers' benefits are not automatically stopped when they cease engaging with the Department.

■ Universal Credit

Mr Richard Holden:

[56619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make a comparative assessment of the potential effect on public finances of an (a) increase and (b) decrease of 1p per £1 to the earnings taper rate for universal credit.

David Rutley:

No such assessment has been made. Whilst we keep our policies under review, no decisions have been taken about making further changes to the Universal Credit Taper rate.

The way Universal Credit treats people's earnings seeks to ensure they are better off in work. The single 63% taper rate reduces their Universal Credit by less than they are earning and some claimants, those with children or limited capability for work, will also benefit from a work allowance which is the amount they can earn before their benefit is reduced.

Universal Credit reduces the financial and administrative barriers to work in the former system of benefits and tax credit, where claimants could face a withdrawal rate of over 90%, meaning Universal Credit claimants get to keep more of their earnings.

Hilary Benn:

[56796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants received their final payment of the £20 a week universal credit uplift on or prior to 8 September 2021.

David Rutley:

For Universal Credit claimants, Assessment Periods that ended on or after 6 October 2021 will not include the additional £20 per week.

The latest available statistics, taken from [Stat-Xplore](#), show that the number of people who were on Universal Credit on 9 September 2021 was 5.8 million.

These statistics are published monthly and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

Bill Esterson:

[57002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of varying the taper rate of universal credit for workers in the social care sector.

David Rutley:

No such assessment has been made. Universal Credit was designed with the aim of simplifying the benefits system and making work pay, and does not differentiate by different sectors of work. The single taper rate makes it much easier for people who are working or who are considering a job to see clearly how much financial support they will receive and to understand the advantages of work.

Drew Hendry:[\[57143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what funding the Government plans to make available for face to face support from third sector organisations currently contracted to assist the most vulnerable with universal credit claims over the next 12 months.

David Rutley:

The Department is committed to providing the best possible support for all our claimants, including the most vulnerable in society, in both making and maintaining their claim.

Help to Claim support delivered through Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland offers tailored, practical support to help people make a Universal Credit claim, up to receiving their first full correct payment on time.

This support has been bolstered by the announcement in March this year of a further 12 months of funding for Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to deliver Help to Claim.

Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland continue to deliver the Help to Claim support, mainly through their telephony and web chat channels. However, both organisations have started re-introducing face to face support within a number of sites, in line with guidance, and we will continue to support them with this.

Throughout the pandemic, our jobcentres also remained open so that the most vulnerable claimants could continue to have face-to-face meetings as necessary.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ BEIS Update

Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change (Greg Hands):
[\[HCWS334\]](#)

This statement will be made at a later date.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid): [\[HCWS337\]](#)

The Prime Minister's announcement of the formation of the Antivirals Taskforce in April 2021 brought new impetus to the search for potential antiviral treatments for UK COVID-19 patients.

Effective treatments for COVID-19 will be vital to manage the risk of infection, as we learn to live with the virus. COVID-19 treatments are especially important for people who cannot take a vaccine for medical reasons or for whom vaccines may be less effective, such as those who are immunocompromised.

Antivirals may help reduce the development of severe COVID-19 and its transmission by targeting the virus at an early stage, preventing progression to more severe disease by blocking virus replication.

The Antivirals Taskforce, under the leadership of Eddie Gray, has worked at speed to identify and evaluate potential antiviral candidates that meet the criteria set out by the Prime Minister: oral antivirals which can be taken at home following a positive COVID-19 test and are available for deployment this autumn / winter.

Commercial negotiations have concluded for the first antiviral candidates, with two supply agreements now signed to ensure that they are available for UK patients. We have secured 480,000 patient courses of Molnupiravir from Merck Sharp and Dohme (MSD) along with 250,000 patient courses of PF-07321332 from Pfizer. Payment will only be made, and product delivered following UK market authorisation from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Molnupiravir and PF-07321332 are both oral antivirals which can be taken at home to target the SARS-CoV-2 virus, but with different mechanisms of action. Molnupiravir is a ribonucleoside analogue which inhibits viral RNA replication. PF-07321332 is a protease inhibitor which prevents virus replication by selectively binding to viral proteases preventing the cleavage of proteins which are necessary to produce infectious virus particles.

Should these antivirals receive appropriate MHRA approvals, the UK Government's intention is to deploy these treatments to NHS patients via a national study which will allow us to collect further data on how these treatments work in vaccinated patients. The Antivirals Taskforce is working across the health and care system in the UK, including NHS England and NHS Improvement, UK Health Security Agency, and our partners in the Devolved Administrations to plan the deployment of antiviral treatments as more data is available. Our deployment plans will prioritise the most clinically vulnerable to COVID-19. The Department of Health and Social Care will publish a further update in due course.

SCOTLAND

■ Outcome of referrals to the UK Supreme Court under section 33 of the Scotland Act 1998

Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack):

[[HCWS336](#)]

On 6 October 2021, the UK Supreme Court handed down their judgment on the UK Law Officers' (the Advocate General for Scotland and the Attorney General) referral of two Scottish Government bills - the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill ("the UNCRC Bill") and the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill ("the ECLSG Bill").

The UK Supreme Court found that all UNCRC and ECLSG provisions referenced would be outside legislative competence on the basis that they modified section 28(7) of the Scotland Act 1998. They also found that section 6 of the UNCRC Bill (the duty on public authorities to comply with the UNCRC) related to reserved matters and modified the law in relation to reserved matters, and in that context gave some guidance on the limits of section 101(2) of the Scotland Act 1998. The Court found that section 6 could not be interpreted narrowly to bring it within competence. The full judgments are available here:

- REFERENCE by the Attorney General and the Advocate General for Scotland - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill: <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2021-0079.html>
- REFERENCE by the Attorney General and the Advocate General for Scotland - European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill: <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2021-0080.html>

The UK Law Officers made the referrals under section 33 of the Scotland Act 1998 on 12 April 2021. In advance of that, the Secretary of State for Scotland had written to the Scottish Government to highlight the UK Government's concerns and suggest remedies. The UK Supreme Court heard submissions from both governments on 28 and 29 June 2021. The full written cases for all parties, including UK Law Officers, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supreme-court-case-no-20210079-and-20210080-written-submission>.

It is for the Scottish Government to consider next steps with the Scottish Parliament. As with any legislation the Scottish Government seeks to bring forward, the UK Government

stands ready to engage constructively with the Scottish Government to ensure relevant issues that may arise are addressed at the earliest possible stage.

The UK Government remains committed to protecting children's rights, and the legal protection for vulnerable children in England is frequently recognised as being amongst the strongest in the world. The UK Government's commitment to the UNCRC is reflected in legislation. The Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, for example, set out a range of duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Furthermore, in 2014 the Council of Europe reported that local government in the UK in general complies with the obligations under the European Charter of Local Self Government, and the UK Government remains committed to fulfilling the Charter obligations.

TRANSPORT

■ HS2 6 monthly report to Parliament

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[\[HCWS335\]](#)

Review of High Speed 2 (HS2) including programme update, local community impact and engagement, environment and benefits.

I am proud to report significant progress on High Speed 2 (HS2) in my third update to Parliament on the project. We remain within budget and schedule, have hit major construction milestones, made substantial progress with key procurements, and are crucially supporting more jobs than ever before – all demonstrating just how HS2 is central to this Government's mission to '[Build Back Better](#)' from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key achievements in this reporting period are (February to August 2021 inclusive):

- Recent announcement that the project now supports 20,000 jobs, just over a year since the Prime Minister marked the start of main construction. To date, over 2,200 businesses, 97% of which are UK-registered, have delivered work on HS2.
- Launching the first tunnel boring machines (TBMs) that are digging the 10-mile-long tunnels underneath the Chilterns hills. The two TBMs have driven a combined distance of approximately 1.5 miles and are progressing ahead of schedule. Construction on the new 'superhub' HS2 station at Old Oak Common (supporting 2,300 jobs and 250 apprenticeships) has also started.
- At Euston, we've confirmed the move to a less complex, more efficient 10-platform design, which can be built in a single-stage, and can still support the full operation of the HS2 network.
- Releasing tenders for Phase One and 2a rail systems packages, with 14 rail systems packages available over the next 2 years (which include systems for track, power, signalling and communications).
- On Phase 2a, commencing early environmental works which marked the first stage in extending the railway from the West Midlands to Crewe and starting procurement for a Design and Delivery Partner (DDP).

- Announcing the Government's [commitment](#) to deliver a 'net gain' in biodiversity for the next Phase of HS2 (Crewe to Manchester).

This report uses data provided by HS2 Ltd to the HS2 Ministerial Task Force for Phases One and 2a, and covers the period between February 2021 and August 2021 inclusive. Recommendations from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) [report](#) of 22nd September 2021 have been considered and I will provide an update on the continued implementation of these recommendations in my next report.

Programme update

Schedule

1. In my last report, I confirmed that Phase One remained within its projected Delivery into Service (DiS) range of 2029 to 2033. I also committed to providing an update on the outcome of a schedule re-planning exercise to mitigate the impact of delays that have arisen since the schedule was set at the start of last year (of which some are COVID-19 related).
2. This exercise was undertaken by HS2 Ltd and its suppliers, and the exercise has now concluded. Construction activities have been successfully re-sequenced to deliver a schedule that reflects an increasingly mature understanding of the years of works ahead. The re-sequencing helps resolve a large number of previously reported schedule pressures, whilst still retaining the Phase One DiS range of 2029 to 2033. The cost of these mitigations has been assessed at £110m and will be covered by contingency delegated to HS2 Ltd.
3. Whilst the forecast DiS range for Phase One remains 2029 to 2033, HS2 Ltd has identified some potential minor delays in the southern section of the line-of-route and tunnels leading into Old Oak Common from outer London. Our focus now is to identify efficiencies and control risk in these key areas. The most notable risks include:
 - residual delays in completing enabling works and handover to Main Works in certain locations.
 - slower than planned design progress and securing planning consents by the Main Works Civils Contractors that are limiting productivity of the supply chain.
 - the consequential impacts of COVID-19, which has continued to cause disruption within this reporting period.
4. Following Royal Assent of the Phase 2a High Speed Rail Bill, the Phase 2a DiS range has now been set to 2030 to 2034. New delivery arrangements have been approved, including a DDP that will act as a strategic partner for HS2 Ltd to provide support in managing design and construction.

Affordability

5. HS2 remains within budget. The overall budget for Phase One, including Euston, remains £44.6bn. This is composed of the target cost of £40.3bn and additional Government-retained contingency of £4.3bn. The target cost includes contingency delegated to HS2 Ltd of £5.6bn for managing risk and uncertainties.

6. On Phase 2a, revised delivery arrangements were [approved](#) in June based on an updated cost range of £5.2bn to £7.2bn, broadly similar to the National Audit Office's (NAO's) report of January 2020. Arrangements will be formalised in the Spending Review.

7. To date, out of the Phase One target cost of £40.3bn, £12.9bn has been spent, with an additional £1bn for land and property provisions. £12.4bn has additionally been contracted, with the remaining amount not yet under contract or drawn as contingency.

8. Since my last report, the first £15m of the £4.3bn of Government-retained contingency for Phase One has been allocated, to increase the number of trains that Old Oak Common station can serve from three to six trains per hour whilst it acts as the temporary London terminus. This will unlock substantial economic benefits until the completion of the new HS2 station at Euston.

9. To date, HS2 Ltd has drawn about £0.8bn of its £5.6bn delegated contingency. Contingency use to-date reflects an increase of about £0.4bn since my last report to Parliament. The rate of contingency draw is expected at this stage given the nature of current enabling and civils works and the scale and complexity of the programme.

10. HS2 Ltd is currently reporting future potential cost pressures of around £1.3bn (compared with my previous update of about £0.8bn). If these cost pressures materialise, they will be drawn from contingency held by HS2 Ltd, of which £4.8bn remains. Of the £1.3bn potential contingency drawdown, the key cost pressures currently being reported which may require a call on contingency delegated to HS2 Ltd if not mitigated are:

- An estimate of £0.6bn for the slower than expected mobilisation of Main Works Civils Contractors for Phase One, associated with delays to enabling works handovers, design approvals and securing of planning consents. This estimate is, in part, informed by the schedule re-planning exercise.
- A £0.4bn pressure on Euston cost estimates (which remains unchanged from my last update to Parliament). However, now that the move to a smaller, less complex 10-platform single-stage delivery strategy at Euston has been confirmed (which will still support the full operation of the HS2 network), the Department for Transport (DfT) anticipates that cost pressures at Euston will be reduced as the updated station design is developed over the coming months.
- A further £0.15bn pressure has been reported for delivering on-network works on the existing Euston network that are required to facilitate the new HS2 station.

11. HS2 Ltd has identified over £0.3bn in savings and continues to focus on realising further efficiencies and opportunities to reduce the cost of Phase One.

12. On COVID-19 costs (which will be managed from within Government-retained contingency), HS2 Ltd is making good progress with its suppliers to quantify the impacts on individual contracts ahead of submitting claims to request drawdown of Government-retained contingency. Since my last report, HS2 Ltd has updated its assessment of the likely financial impact of the pandemic on delivering Phase One and estimates the full costs within the range of £0.4bn to £0.7bn (this has been authorised by DfT). The

assessment was based on the extended duration of restricted working practices anticipated to run to a revised end-point assumption of December 2021.

13. DfT and HS2 Ltd have agreed in principle a set of initial claims that include direct and measurable costs of restrictions that relate to the initial phases of COVID-19 in 2020. These will now be subject to Government scrutiny and will require formal approval before funds from Government-retained contingency can be allocated.

Delivery

14. On Phase One, work is well underway at our 340 sites between London and the West Midlands and construction of the line-of-route continues to gather pace. Health and safety remains a top priority for the project as work continues to ramp-up. With over 4 million hours worked across the programme per month, there has been an increase in the number of safety-related incidents. HS2 Ltd is focused on continual improvement with its supply chain including through embedding lessons learned and cross-functional learning between integrated project teams comprising of HS2 Ltd staff and its contractors.

15. The launch of the first 2 TBMs (Florence and Cecilia) marked a significant moment for the project. The TBMs are the largest ever used on a UK rail project and will excavate tunnels underneath the Chilterns for the next 3 years. Further TBM launches are planned in the coming months, including excavation under Long Itchington Wood.

16. Elsewhere, good progress has been made on the four new HS2 stations along Phase One. In June, the Transport Secretary visited Old Oak Common to mark the start of permanent construction. This 'super-hub' station truly shows the Government's ['Plan for Jobs'](#) in action – kickstarting major regeneration, supporting 2,300 jobs and 250 apprenticeships in construction.

17. In the West Midlands, a design and build contract for Birmingham Curzon Street station was awarded to HS2 Ltd's new construction partner on time. HS2 Ltd has also recently announced the shortlist of bidders for the contract to build the award-winning Interchange Station in Solihull, and contract award is planned for Summer 2022.

18. In response to a recommendation from the Oakervee Review about looking into the efficiency of the Euston station, the move to a smaller, simpler 10-platform station design at Euston has now been confirmed, which can be built in a single-stage (instead of an 11-platform, two-stage build). This will provide a more efficient design and delivery strategy and play a significant role in mitigating the affordability pressures recently identified. Moving to this revised HS2 Euston station design maintains the station infrastructure capacity to run 17 trains per hour, as set out in the Phase One [Full Business Case](#). We are continuing to explore opportunities for greater integration between the HS2 and Network Rail stations through The Euston Partnership, and to optimise the oversite development above the Euston terminus. Further details will be provided in my next update.

19. We have reached a major milestone on the procurement of rail systems. HS2 Ltd has started to release tenders for Phase One and 2a rail systems packages for systems such

as track, catenary, power, control and communications. This will continue over the next two years.

20. There have been various legal challenges to the rolling stock process, but we expect the contract award to be in the Autumn subject to there being no further challenges. It is not expected that this delay will affect the planned opening of Phase One services.

21. Following Royal Assent of the Phase 2a High Speed Rail Bill, we have continued to deliver the enabling works contracts, consisting of ground investigations, utility diversions and environmental works. Early environmental works mobilisation commenced in April and the second enabling civil works package in July. The procurement of the DDP and Advanced Civil Works contract (ACW) started in June; the tenders for ACW have now been released; and the publication of the DDP tenders is due to happen shortly.

22. On Phase 2b, preparations are underway for a hybrid Bill for the Western Leg (between Crewe and Manchester) to be deposited in Parliament in early 2022.

23. We will soon publish the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the North and Midlands which will set out how we will deliver and sequence HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail and other major rail schemes, such as Midlands Rail Hub, to ensure transformational rail improvements and benefits are delivered to passengers, businesses and communities more quickly.

Local community impact and engagement

24. As HS2 Minister, I expect affected communities to be at the heart of our plans for this project. That is why I previously committed to follow-up on the conclusions of the Land and Property Review published in November 2020.

25. The Land and Property Review generated a number of proposals intended to transform how people and businesses affected by HS2 are treated. I am delighted that DfT and HS2 Ltd have implemented over half of these proposals, double the number implemented at the time of my last report. This Spring, I went a step further and launched a 6-week [public consultation](#) to seek views on proposals that required further engagement (e.g. how to improve community engagement on the land and property buying programmes, and how to protect the interests of those affected). Findings from the consultation, which will be published this Autumn, will inform policy changes.

26. A priority since my last report has been to ensure that the Transport Secretary secures all the land needed to build the first phase of HS2 before compulsory purchase powers expire in February 2022. HS2 Ltd remains on target to complete the process of serving compulsory purchase notices on landowners where property is to be permanently acquired before the end of compulsory purchase powers. Affected property owners are being notified. We recognise that compulsory purchase has an impact on property owners, some of whom will see land that was previously taken into temporary possession now permanently acquired, and HS2 Ltd is talking to land owners to explain why this is necessary.

27. Over £10m of funding has now been distributed by the HS2 Business, Community and Environment Funds. This milestone means over a quarter of the Phase One funds

have now been allocated, delivering community benefits across 172 projects located near the line of route. Since April this year, a further £5m has been made available to extend the funds to communities and businesses living on the Phase 2a route. These funds play a crucial role in ensuring a positive legacy for communities most affected by HS2 construction and I look forward to many more projects up and down the line being supported.

28. In terms of community impacts, DfT's independent team of Construction Inspectors now act on my behalf to objectively assess community concerns. The Inspectors have now visited many sites along the Phase One route, identifying a range of good practice and innovation, as well as some risks – notably difficulties with acquiring planning consents and delays caused by illegal protestors. A refreshed HS2 Community Engagement Strategy will also be launched soon.

29. With regard to protester activity, which HS2 Ltd estimates has cost the project up to £80m, the Government is making sure that HS2 Ltd, its supply chain, emergency services and wider Government have a coordinated response to illegal protest. Regrettably, some protesters have turned to violent and aggressive behaviour, particularly against HS2 Ltd's supply chain. The Government is taking steps to ensure that illegal protestor activity is properly dealt with and that safety risks are minimised.

Environment

30. As we look to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), I wanted to reiterate the Government's ambition of building the most sustainable high-speed railway in the world, so we play our part in helping the UK to tackle climate change and reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

31. I am delighted to confirm that HS2 Ltd will shortly publish its first Environmental Sustainability Report, which will provide a clear and up-to-date account of HS2's environmental impacts and the important work that is being deployed to mitigate for any adverse effects.

32. Further to this Government's previous commitment to deliver 'no net loss' to biodiversity across all Phases, I am pleased the Government confirmed in June its further commitment to aim to deliver a 'net gain' to biodiversity for the next Phase of HS2, the Crewe to Manchester scheme. This commitment will build on the significant environmental legacy of earlier Phases, such as the new nature reserve on the Colne Valley Western Slopes, which recently received local planning approval.

33. I also recently launched the new £2 million Biodiversity Investment Fund (BIF) on Phase 2a to identify opportunities to work with local stakeholders to produce biodiversity gains through the creation and restoration of ecological habits along the Phase 2a route.

34. Good progress is also being made on delivering our decarbonisation agenda. The Government published its Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which outlines the policies required to enable the sector to meet its net zero emissions target by 2050. HS2 will be an integral part in delivering the UK's future net zero rail network.

Benefits

35. Since my appointment as HS2 Minister, I have been totally committed to ensuring the benefits of HS2 are realised as widely as possible. In August I welcomed the announcement that, at its peak, HS2 will support 34,000 jobs, 4,000 more than forecast in my last update. The jobs boost comes at a crucial time as the UK strives to 'Build Back Better' from the pandemic. HS2 is already playing a crucial role in the UK's post-pandemic economic recovery, with over 20,000 jobs currently supported. In addition, over 2,200 businesses have delivered work on HS2, with 97% UK registered.

36. HS2 Ltd has a clear benefits management and evaluation strategy that drives how the programme's benefits for each phase flow through to the HS2 supply chain. The DfT continues to work closely with HS2 Ltd, local Government and central Government Departments to maximise the benefits of HS2 for people, communities and businesses. The DfT and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are continuing to engage with HS2 station places, to understand their local growth and regeneration ambitions, and how we can work with them to realise those ambitions.

37. The publication of HS2 Ltd's '[Building Skills to Deliver](#)' report demonstrates the potential opportunities HS2 has to offer as we level up our country. The report highlights the critical role that HS2 is playing in supporting young people and unemployed people back into work after the pandemic. It notes that the total workforce for Phase One and 2a is expected to peak at around 26,500 people over the next two years and that there will be a constant labour demand of 23,600 to 26,500 people from now until 2025/26. The report also reaffirms that the HS2 programme will create 2,000 apprenticeships, with over 650 having been started since 2017. HS2 Ltd is also committed to promoting opportunities to local people as well as those from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

Forward Look

38. On Phase One, focus remains on overseeing the massive construction programme and I expect progress on closure of remaining Early Works, with handover of sites by Summer 2022. I expect to see HS2 Ltd award the contract for rolling stock, and for HS2 Ltd to complete the process of serving compulsory purchase notices on landowners where properties are to be permanently acquired.

39. On Phase 2a, focus remains on selecting a DDP and to launch procurement for the Main Civil Works Framework which is expected to commence in early 2022.

40. On Phase 2b, work on legislation for the Crewe to Manchester scheme continues, with the view to depositing a hybrid Bill in early 2022.

41. On wider programme governance, I would like to thank Allan Cook CBE who left HS2 Ltd in July after 2.5 years as Chairman. A search is underway to find a new Chair and I will provide an update on this in my next report. I am also currently working to complete an updated HS2 Framework Document and Development Agreement to ensure continued effective governance between DfT and HS2 Ltd.

42. I will continue to engage closely with Parliament and will provide my next report in Spring 2022.

Annex A: Six-Monthly Financial Report

All figures in this report are presented in 2019 prices unless stated otherwise.

Forecasts costs by Phase

PHASE	TARGET COST	TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS RANGE 1
One	£40.3bn	£35 to £45bn
2a	Not set yet	£5 to £7bn 2
2b	Not set yet	To Be Determined 3

1. Rounded to nearest billion.

2. Arrangements will be formalised at the next Spending Review.

3. In the last six-month report, the Government explained that the cost range of £32-46bn would be subject to update. The Government expects to set out more fully the costs of Phase 2b in the IRP and when it brings forward a hybrid Bill for the Western Leg of Phase 2b.

Historic and forecast expenditure

PHASE	SPEND TO DATE 1	2021 TO 2022 BUDGET 2	2021 TO 2022 FORECAST 2	VARIANCE
One	£13.9bn	£4.7bn	£4.8bn	£0.1bn
2a	£0.5bn	£0.3bn	£0.3bn	£0.0bn
2b	£1.1bn	£0.3bn	£0.3bn	£0.0bn
Total	£15.5bn	£5.3bn	£5.4bn	£0.1bn3

1. Total spend to date in actual prices is £15.3bn. In my first update to Parliament in October 2020, spend to date for the whole programme was reported at £11bn; this figure represents actual prices. In 2019 prices spend to date at the time was £11.3bn. Spend to date stated above for Phase One includes a £1 billion liability (provision) representing the DfT's obligation to purchase land and property.

2. Figures provided include land and property expenditure.

3. The total variance of £0.1bn is due primarily to estimated in-year additional COVID related costs.

Evolution of Phase One HS2 Ltd contingency drawdown over last three Parliamentary Reports

		PARLIAMENTARY REPORT	
October 2020	March 2021	October 2021	
Total HS2 Ltd contingency drawdown and % used	£0.2bn (4%)	£0.4bn (7%)	£0.8bn (14%)
Total HS2 Ltd contingency remaining	£5.4bn (96%)	£5.2bn (93%)	£4.8bn (86%)

Evolution of Phase One Government-retained contingency drawdown over last three Parliamentary Reports

		PARLIAMENTARY REPORT	
October 2020	March 2021	October 2021	
Total Government-retained contingency drawdown and % used	£0bn (0%)	£0bn (0%)	£0bn (0%) ¹
Total Government-retained contingency remaining	£4.3bn (100%)	£4.3bn (100%)	£4.3bn (100%)

1. £0.015bn has been allocated to enable Old Oak Common to increase the number of trains it runs from three to six trains per hour but has not yet been drawdown from Government-retained contingency.

■ **Planning Update**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):
[\[HCWS333\]](#)

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This Statement concerns the application made by North Somerset District Council under the Planning Act 2008 for the construction of a new railway on the trackbed on the former branch line from Bristol to Portishead.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on the Portishead Branch Line – MetroWest Phase 1

development consent order application on 19 July 2021 and the current deadline for a decision was 19 October 2021.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 19 April 2022 (an extension of 6 months) to allow further consideration of environmental matters.

The decision to set new deadlines is without prejudice to the decisions on whether to grant development consent for the above application.