



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 October 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:40 P.M., 21 October 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS 6
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY 6
Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme 6
Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Social Services 7
Business: Coronavirus 7
Business: Disclosure of Information 7
Companies: Scotland 8
Director of Labour Market Enforcement 8
Electric Vehicles: Charging Points 8
Insolvency: Standards 9
Magnesium: Prices 9
Parental Leave: Pay 10
CABINET OFFICE 10
Business Appointments Advisory Committee: Finance 10
Cabinet Office: Correspondence 11
Census: Latin America 11
Parents: Coronavirus 11
Procurement: Overseas Trade 13
CHURCH COMMISSIONERS 13
Church of England: Assets 13
Church of England: Finance 14
Church of England: Taxation 15
DEFENCE 17
Advanced short-range air-to-air missile: Procurement 17
Afghanistan: Refugees 17
Air Force: Training 18
Ammunition: Procurement 19
Armed Forces: Health Professions 19
Armed Forces: Mental Health 21
Army Air Corps: Staff 21
Artillery: Ammunition 21
Defence Equipment: Procurement 21
Islamic State: Armed Conflict 22
Lebanon: Military Aid 22
Military Aircraft 22
Royal Engineers: Location 23
Warships: Logistics 23
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT 23
Broadband: Standards 23

■ Channel 4: Hearing Impairment	24	■ Western Sahara: Armed Conflict	35
■ Internet: Children	24	■ Western Sahara: Human Rights	35
■ Internet: Pornography	24	■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty	35
■ Planning Permission: Newspaper Press	25	■ Western Sahara: Trade Agreements	36
■ Voluntary Work	25	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	36
EDUCATION	26	■ Cancer: Dental Services	36
■ Education: Equality	26	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	36
■ School Meals	27	■ General Practitioners	37
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	27	■ General Practitioners: Working Hours	37
■ Dangerous Dogs	27	■ GP Surgeries: Abuse	38
■ Ivory	28	■ Health Services: Females	38
■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies	28	■ Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments	38
■ Meat: Ritual Slaughter	29	■ Influenza: Mortality Rates	38
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	29	■ Lung Cancer	39
■ Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme	29	■ Maternity Services: Staff	39
■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid	30	■ Medical Equipment: Manufacturing Industries	40
■ Afghanistan: Refugees	30	■ Medical Records: Data Protection	40
■ Afghanistan: Repatriation	31	■ Mental Health: Research	40
■ Belarus: Diplomatic Relations	31	■ Midwives and Obstetrics	41
■ British Nationals Abroad: Detainees	32	■ NHS: Agency Workers	41
■ China: Uighurs	32	■ Radioligand Therapy	41
■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus	32	■ Travel: Coronavirus	42
■ Land Mines: Bomb Disposal	33	HOME OFFICE	42
■ Palestinians: Children	33	■ Asylum: Afghanistan	42
■ Palestinians: Education	34	■ Asylum: Children	43
■ Palestinians: Textbooks	34	■ Chevening Scholarships Programme: Afghanistan	43
■ Russia: Non-governmental Organisations	34	■ Drugs: Misuse	43

■ Home Office: Correspondence	44	■ Towns Fund	54
■ Police: Motor Vehicles	44	■ Urban Areas: Finance	54
■ Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes	44	■ Visual Impairment: Voting Methods	55
■ UK Border Force: Patrol Craft	45	NORTHERN IRELAND	56
■ UK Border Force: Shipping	46	■ Community Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland	56
■ Veterans: Immigration	47	SCOTLAND	56
■ Visas: Afghanistan	47	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	56
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	47	TRANSPORT	57
■ Trade Agreements	47	■ Driving Licences	57
JUSTICE	48	■ Driving Tests	58
■ Crime: Victims	48	■ Driving Tests: North East	58
■ Legal Aid Scheme	48	■ Driving: Qualifications	59
■ Prison Sentences	49	■ Electric Scooters	59
■ Prisons: Staff	49	■ Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme	60
■ Young Offenders	50	■ Electric Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries	61
LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	50	■ High Speed 2 Railway Line	62
■ Elections: Proof of Identity	50	■ High Speed Two: Apprentices	62
■ High Rise Flats: Safety	50	■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers	62
■ Land: Agriculture	51	■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences	62
■ Local Government: Energy	51	■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Facilities	63
■ Local Government: Local Press	52	■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies	63
■ Local Government: Meetings	52	■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Working Hours	64
■ Local Government: National Insurance	52	■ Local Government: Snow and Ice	64
■ Members: Correspondence	53	■ Motor Vehicles	65
■ Public Lavatories: Non-domestic Rates	53	■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	66
■ Recreation Spaces: Ministerial Responsibility	53		
■ Rented Housing	53		
■ Social Rented Housing: Construction	54		

■ Motorway Service Areas: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers	66	■ State Retirement Pensions	80
■ Ports: Staff	66	■ State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays	82
■ Railways: Snow and Ice	67	■ State Retirement Pensions: Females	82
■ Road Signs and Markings	67	■ State Retirement Pensions: Forecasts	83
■ Roads: Snow and Ice	67	■ State Retirement Pensions: Reform	84
■ Train Operating Companies	69	■ Winter Fuel Payments	84
■ Transport: Carbon Emissions	69	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	85
■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus	70	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	85
■ Travel Restrictions: South Africa	70	■ BEIS Update	85
■ Travel: Enfield North	71	CABINET OFFICE	85
TREASURY	71	■ Public Appointments Data Report 2021	85
■ Energy: VAT	71	DEFENCE	86
■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Appeals	72	■ Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report 2020	86
■ SME Brexit Support Fund	72	■ Sir Richard Henriques' Review	86
■ Taxation: Electronic Commerce	72	EDUCATION	88
■ UK Infrastructure Bank	73	■ Higher Education Student Finance	88
■ UK Infrastructure Bank: Staff	73	HOME OFFICE	90
■ Waste Disposal: Taxation	73	■ Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (1 June 2021 to 31 August 2021)	90
WORK AND PENSIONS	74	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	91
■ Debt: Money and Pensions Service	74	■ Trade Policy Update	91
■ Equality: Europe	74	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	92
■ Kickstart Scheme	75	■ Evaluation of the reformed annual electoral registration cavass	92
■ Local Housing Allowance	76		
■ New Enterprise Allowance	77		
■ Pension Credit	78		
■ Pensioners: Fuel Poverty	79		
■ Pensions and Unemployment: Portsmouth	80		
■ Social Security Benefits	80		

■ Quarterly report on intergovernmental relations	93	TRANSPORT	93
PRIME MINISTER	93	■ Planning Update	93
■ Cabinet Committees	93	WORK AND PENSIONS	94
		■ DWP – Expanding Our Services Update	94

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY****■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Owen Thompson: [\[58440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) current and (b) estimated rate of default amongst (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme borrowers.

Paul Scully:

Estimates of potential guarantee claims by lenders under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) were provided in the Department's 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts.

Owen Thompson: [\[58441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of default rates amongst (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme borrowers in its accounting calculations.

Paul Scully:

Estimates of potential guarantee claims by lenders under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) were provided in the accounts of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for 2019/20. These estimates were in the range of 10-25% for CBILS and 35-60% for BBLs. Accounting provision for losses and potential future losses will be made in the Department's 2020/21 accounts, which will be published in due course.

Owen Thompson: [\[58442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what provision has been made in Treasury accounts for the potential exercising of its Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme guarantee.

Paul Scully:

Provisions for guarantee claims by lenders under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme are made in the accounts of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. This is because the guarantees are issued in the name of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Potential losses arising from these two schemes are referenced in the Department's 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts as items arising after the reporting period. Accounting provision for potential future losses will be

made in the Department's 2020/21 Annual Report and Accounts, which will be published in due course.

■ **Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Social Services**

Munira Wilson: [\[58526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been granted through the (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme to (i) social care providers and (ii) the social care sector as a whole.

Paul Scully:

As of July 2021, the total value of CBILS and BBLS loans to businesses in the Human Health and Social Work sectors was £2,758,185,509, with 67,544 loans offered. The value of loans to businesses identifying as being in the residential care sector was £491,281,848, with 6,247 loans offered. The value of loans to businesses identifying as being in the non-residential social work sector was £512,447,147, with 13,083 loans offered.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Sarah Olney: [\[58474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses have defaulted on a loan provided through the (a) Bounce Back Loan and (b) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme (i) in total and (ii) by size of business.

Paul Scully:

Estimates of potential guarantee claims by lenders under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLS) were provided in the Department's 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts.

■ **Business: Disclosure of Information**

Dan Carden: [\[57297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government plans to publish a response to its consultation on corporate transparency and register reform.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department is considering the responses and will respond in due course.

■ Companies: Scotland

Alison Thewliss: [\[56226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many fines have been levied against Scottish Limited Partnerships for failing to register people with significant control in each of the last three years.

Alison Thewliss: [\[56231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the value was of fines levied against Scottish Limited Partnerships for failing to register people with significant control in each of the last three years.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: One fine has been levied against a Scottish Limited Partnership for failing to register people with significant control in the current 2021/2022 Financial Year.

■ Director of Labour Market Enforcement

Imran Hussain: [\[58419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 10 February 2021 to Question 147880 on Director of Labour Market Enforcement, on what date he plans to make an appointment announcement in respect of the post of Director of Labour Market Enforcement.

Paul Scully:

As set out in our answer of 10 February, earlier in the year we launched a campaign to appoint a Director of Labour Market Enforcement. Since then, we have been progressing the appointment process which is now nearing its conclusion. We hope to be able to announce the successful candidate in the near future.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Seema Malhotra: [\[56471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many electric vehicle charging points are available in each (a) nation and (b) region of the UK.

Lee Rowley:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]:

A BREAKDOWN ON THE NUMBER OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS ARE DETAILED BELOW (AS AT 1 JULY 2021):

UK	24,374
England	20,563
North East	887

A BREAKDOWN ON THE NUMBER OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS ARE DETAILED BELOW (AS AT 1 JULY 2021):

North West	1,620
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,156
East Midlands	1,280
West Midlands	1,591
East of England	1,569
London	7,489
South East	3,254
South West	1,717
Wales	916
Scotland	2,565
Northern Ireland	330

Source: DfT/Zap-Map

■ **Insolvency: Standards**

Mr William Wragg: [\[56362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to identify potential failures in the insolvency industry; and whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a single regulator and ombudsman to oversee that industry.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government is currently reviewing the arrangements for regulation of the insolvency profession and will shortly publish proposals for consultation.

■ **Magnesium: Prices**

Jane Stevenson: [\[57345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the rise in the price of magnesium and supply issues on the aluminium extrusion industry in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Lee Rowley:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: This is a global issue initiated by a reduction in Chinese magnesium production. The Government is monitoring the situation. At present there are no reported disruptions to the aluminium sector or supply chains.

As part of the work to develop a strategy on Critical Minerals, the Government will establish an Expert Committee on critical minerals. This committee will provide high quality, independent and well-considered advice to the Government on technology-critical minerals and metals priorities, including magnesium.

Parental Leave: Pay**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[58548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) extending the period of and (b) increasing rates of pay for (a) maternity, (b) paternity and (c) joint parental leave.

Paul Scully:

The Government believes that, overall, the current arrangements for parental leave and pay in the UK are generous and flexible. This includes offering 52 weeks of maternity leave, of which 39 are paid, which is more than three times the EU minimum requirement.

Employment legislation sets out minimum employment rights which employers must offer to their employees. Many employers choose to offer more generous contractual provisions for their staff because they recognise the benefits this brings to their business as well as to their employees.

In 2019, the Government consulted on high-level options and principles for reforming the parental leave and pay system. We are also carrying out an evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme. We intend to publish our response to the consultation and the findings of the evaluation later this year.

CABINET OFFICE**Business Appointments Advisory Committee: Finance****Daisy Cooper:**[\[57368\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments on the adequacy of its funding; and if he will make a statement.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Honourable member to [Written Statement HCWS185](#).

The Government is working with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments to improve the operation and efficacy of the Business Appointment Rules. The recommendations from Nigel Boardman's report into the development and use of supply chain finance in government, as well as the forthcoming Standards Matter 2

report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life will be considered as a part of this work, and an update to the Business Appointment Rules will be published this year.

■ Cabinet Office: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[56156\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to improve his Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Michael Ellis:

The Government recognises the importance of responding to members of the public in an effective and timely manner. To that end, 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.

In the Cabinet Office, we continue to prioritise timely responses to correspondence from members of the public - despite a significant increase in case volumes. We also keep our processes under continuous review to further improve the time taken to respond.

■ Census: Latin America

Theresa Villiers: [\[58320\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will add Latin American to the list of ethnic identities to be included in the next census.

Michael Ellis:

The UK Statistics Authority is responsible for delivering the census and the National Statistician will make recommendations in 2023 on the future of the census. Census 2021 questions were based on their recommendations following 3 years of extensive research, consultation and evidence gathering. Any future census would follow a similar process when deciding on the format of questions.

■ Parents: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols: [\[57430\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the number of additional children beyond the annual average who have lost a parent since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

Charlotte Nichols MP House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

20 October 2021

Dear Ms Nichols,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what assessment has been made of the number of additional children beyond the annual average who have lost a parent since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (57430).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes mortality statistics for England and Wales, compiled from information supplied when deaths are certified and registered as part of civil registration. Death registration figures for Northern Ireland and Scotland are available from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency ¹ and National Records of Scotland ², respectively.

An ONS report on 'Excess mortality and mortality displacement in England and Wales: 2020 to mid-2021' ³ showed that between 28 December 2019 and 2 July 2021, the number of deaths registered was 97,981 more than the five-year average for a similar calendar period, an excess of 11.9%.

The information collected at death registration does not include the number of children to whom the deceased was a parent. While family structure is recorded at the decennial census and could in principle throw some light on this question, information from the 2011 Census would be insufficient since it does not include children born since the 2011 census day, and corresponding data from the 2021 Census are not yet available.

It is therefore not possible at present to make any reliable estimate of the number or proportion of people who died who were parents, or of the number of children who sadly lost a parent.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

¹<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths>

²<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths>

³<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/excessmortalityandmortalitydisplacementinenglandandwales/2020tomid2021>

■ Procurement: Overseas Trade**Anna McMorrin:**[\[57261\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Supply Chain Advisory Group plan to report their recommendations to the Cabinet on resolving export/import supply chain issues.

Michael Ellis:

The Supply Chain Advisory Group will bring together experts in the field, including from outside of Government, to provide views on how to resolve live supply chain issues. The Group will look at issues across the supply chain holistically. Once its work is concluded, its recommendations will be reported to the appropriate fora.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Church of England: Assets****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[51619\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what recent estimate he has made of the value of investment and liquid assets of the Church of England (a) centrally and (b) by diocese and cathedral, including those of the Church Commissioners less the liability for pensions for which they are responsible.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 23 September 2021]: At the end of 2020 the total value of the Church Commissioners' assets, less the estimated value of future pensions obligations, was £7,573m.

The Commissioners have additional and ongoing statutory funding obligations over and above pension liabilities, including support for the work of bishops and cathedrals. The Commissioners also make grants to support the work of the Church across the country, with a focus on supporting the poorest communities.

The Commissioners plan their spending in three year cycles and estimated expenditure in 2020-22 is £930m including £383m for pensions.

Further information is available in the most recent annual report of the Church Commissioners: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/church-commissioners-england/how-we-are-governed/publications>

The year end balances for Dioceses in 2019 (the most recent information available) were £1,692m in investments (the majority restricted for particular purposes) and £184m in cash. For cathedrals this was £524m in investments and £50m in cash. The majority of investment assets are in property investments, which are less liquid than stock market investments. Typically around two-thirds of diocesan incomes come from parish share, the majority of which is funded by individuals' donations to

Parochial Church Councils. This funding stream has been impacted by the pandemic and resulted in a significant draw on diocesan reserves.

■ Church of England: Finance

Kerry McCarthy:

[51620]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how much has been paid in (a) National Lottery Funds and (b) Government grants to Church of England bodies including (i) dioceses, (ii) parochial church councils, (iii) cathedrals, (iv) the Church Commissioners and (v) the Churches Conservation Trust in each of the last five years.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 23 September 2021]: Dioceses, parochial church councils and cathedrals:

The Church Commissioners do not hold figures broken down by Church of England diocese, parochial church council or cathedral, for National Lottery Heritage Fund or Government grants.

Grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to Church of England churches and cathedrals over the past five years are as follows. Brackets indicate the number of grants awarded:

2016 £ 49,292,200 (166)

2017 £ 25,264,900 (184)

2018 £12,458,450 (144)

2019 £11,652,300 (57)

2020 £3,376,200 (67)

Government (DCMS) figures for grants equal to the value of VAT for works to listed Church of England places of worship over the past five years are:

2016 £20,689,034

2017 £23,839,469

2018 £24,773,038

2019 £24,522,362

2020 £24,665,225

This website, maintained by DCMS, contains details of the Listed Places of Worship Scheme and recent total disbursement: <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

Grants to Church of England listed places of worship under the Government's Culture Recovery Fund in 2020-21 totalled £54,387,240, broken down as follows:

BUILDING TYPE	NUMBER OF GRANTS	TOTAL AMOUNT OF FUNDING
Cathedral	107	£29,424,529
Major Parish Church	154	£14,903,597
Parish Church	484	£9,889,114

Church Commissioners:

The Church Commissioners do not receive funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund or Government grants.

Churches Conservation Trust:

The Churches Conservation Trust is an independent charity reporting to both Parliament and the General Synod. It receives income from donations from individuals, trusts and foundations, and core funding from Government (DCMS) and the General Synod of the Church of England via the Church Commissioners. Funding for the last five years is as follows:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Lottery Grants	£1,325,882	£683,053	£537,795	£1,394,687	£2,193,611
Government Grant Funding	£2,749,000	£2,738,001	£2,604,000	£2,608,000	£4,533,451 of which £2,788,000 grant in aid
Church Grant Funding	£1,355,000	£1,355,000	£1,655,000	£1,430,000	£1,430,000

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust are laid before Parliament and are available at <https://www.visitchurches.org.uk/what-we-do/about-us/annual-report-accounts.html>

The National Churches Trust October 2020 report 'The House of Good', found that the total economic and social value that church buildings generate in the UK amounted to at least £12.4 billion per year, an average of around £300,000 per church. The report can be viewed here:

<https://www.houseofgood.nationalchurchestrust.org/>

■ Church of England: Taxation

Kerry McCarthy:

[51621]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how much has been paid in (a) tax rebates, including of VAT on repairs and (b) Gift Aid to Church of England bodies including (i) dioceses, (ii) parochial church

councils, (iii) cathedrals, (iv) the Church Commissioners and (v) the Churches Conservation Trust in each of the last five years.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 23 September 2021]: Dioceses, parochial church councils and cathedrals:

Government (DCMS) figures for grants equal to the value of VAT for works to listed places of worship over the past five years are below. These are grants to the value of VAT, not rebates. The Church Commissioners do not hold these figures broken down by Church of England diocese, parochial church council or cathedral:

2016 £20,689,034.00

2017 £23,839,469.00

2018 £24,773,038.00

2019 £24,522,362.00

2020 £24,665,225.00

This website, maintained by DCMS, contains details of the Listed Places of Worship Scheme and recent total disbursement: <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

Like all bodies that have charitable status, Gift Aid on donations can be claimed by parochial church councils, dioceses and cathedrals. The funding model of the Church of England means that the vast majority of donations from worshippers, visitors and other supporters are made to parochial church councils and to cathedral chapters. The Church Commissioners do not keep a record of Gift Aid receipts by dioceses, but the amount claimed will be modest.

Parochial Church Council Gift Aid receipts for the past five years are:

2016 £91.9m

2017 £94.5m

2018 £94.3m

2019 £96.4m

2020 £91.3m*

*The figure for 2020 is provisional and yet to be fully reviewed.

See also Parish Finance Statistics 2019, page 12:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Parish%20Finance%20Statistics%202019.pdf>

In 2018, the most recent year for which statistics are readily available, Church of England cathedrals reported in their accounts a total of £1.3m of Gift Aid from donations.

Church Commissioners:

The Church Commissioners have not received any Gift Aid on donations made by individuals.

Churches Conservation Trust:

The Churches Conservation Trust is an independent charity reporting to both Parliament and the General Synod. It receives income from donations from individuals, trusts and foundations, and core funding from Government (DCMS) and the General Synod of the Church of England via the Church Commissioners.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Tax Rebates / LPWGS*	£550,556	£239,520	£318,174	£289,460	£834,592
Gift Aid	£16,063	£22,756	£28,787	£19,824	£27,524

*figure includes grants from the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust are laid before Parliament and are available at <https://www.visitchurches.org.uk/what-we-do/about-us/annual-report-accounts.html> *figure includes grants from the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme

DEFENCE

■ Advanced short-range air-to-air missile: Procurement

John Healey:

[\[58298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has incurred any extra costs as a result of the delay to the in-service date of the ASRAAM Sustainment Programme.

John Healey:

[\[58299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the ASRAAM Sustainment programme has entered service on the (a) Typhoons and (b) F-35 IIs.

Jeremy Quin:

The ASRAAM sustainment programme continues to be delivered within Complex Weapons Portfolio contract price. On current plans, the resultant ASRAAM Block 6 standard is due to enter service on Typhoon in 2022 and F-35 Lightning II in 2024.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Dan Jarvis:

[\[58396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel were assigned to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy team as of 18 October 2021.

James Heappey:

On 18 October 2021, 59 personnel were working on the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) team at Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ).

Dan Jarvis:[\[58397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to provide Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants with a reference number where that number has not been generated on submission of their application.

James Heappey:

Applicants to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) are assigned a reference number when their case is progressed by a member of the ARAP casework team.

Once their eligibility is confirmed, the applicant is informed of this decision and at this point are provided with their reference number.

Dan Jarvis:[\[58398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many successful applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme have been relocated to the UK since the conclusion of Operation Pitting.

James Heappey:

Between the conclusion of Operation Pitting on 28 August and 19 October 2021, 91 individuals have been relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), including primary applicants and their dependants.

■ Air Force: Training**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[58312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the (a) Typhoon, (b) F-35B, (c) AH-64E Apache, (d) E-7 Wedgetail, (e) Land Ceptor/Sky Sabre SAM system will achieve formal linkage into the Gladiator training system.

Jeremy Quin:

Programme Gladiator, the RAF's contribution to the Defence Operational Training Capability (DOTC), will integrate the E-3D Rearcrew Trainer (RCT) from Mar 2022 to provide a transitional capability to E-7A Wedgetail, the Joint Fires Synthetic Trainer (JFST) in spring 2023, the Typhoon Future Synthetic Trainer (TFST) in autumn 2023 and UK F-35B Lightning in 2024.

Following our recent announcement of further investment in Gladiator, work is underway to formalise integration of additional training systems including E-7A Wedgetail, scheduled for spring 2026, as well as Airseeker, Poseidon, Protector, Crowsnest, Guardian and the Maritime Composite Training System (MTCS) over the 2023-2026 timeframe.

While AH-64E Apache and Land Ceptor/Sky Sabre will be computer-generated in the Gladiator Synthetic environment from Initial Operating Capability, there are no funded

plans to integrate their respective simulator synthetic training systems; however, options to further expand Gladiator continue to be explored.

■ **Ammunition: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[56830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date his Department last procured (a) CHARM 3 rounds of any nature and (b) CHARM 3 charge bags.

Jeremy Quin:

The CHARM 3 operational round (L27) was last procured in September 2001 and its associated propelling charge (L17) in November 2010. The CHARM 3 practice round (L29) was last procured in April 2009 and its associated propelling charge (L18) in February 2010.

■ **Armed Forces: Health Professions**

John Healey:

[\[58296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many medical and dental professionals were employed by the (a) British Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) RAF in each year since 2015.

Leo Docherty:

For the years requested, the tables below provide the number of trained and trade trained (Army) Medical and Dental Officers in the UK Regular Armed Forces.

MEDICAL OFFICERS	1 APRIL 2015	1 APRIL 2016	1 APRIL 2017	1 APRIL 2018	1 APRIL 2019	1 APRIL 2020	1 APRIL 2021
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	260	250	260	260	290	280	280
Army	560	540	560	540	520	550	560
RAF	230	200	210	200	210	200	210
Dental Officers	1 April 2015	1 April 2016	1 April 2017	1 April 2018	1 April 2019	1 April 2020	1 April 2021
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	50	50	40	40	40	40	40
Army	110	100	100	100	90	90	80
RAF	40	40	40	40	30	30	30

UK Regulars are full-time Service personnel, including Nursing Services, excluding Full Time Reserve Service personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guarding Service, Locally Engaged Personnel, and Non-Regular Permanent Service. Figures are comprised of Medical Officers and Dental Officers. They do not include Nursing Officers or Other Ranks in medical or dental trades.

Trained strength comprises military personnel who have completed Phase 1 and 2 training for Royal Navy/Royal Marines and the RAF. Following the change in definition of trained strength for the Army, from 1 October 2016, trained strength for the Army comprises of personnel who have completed Phase 1 training. Trade trained strength relates to the Army only and includes personnel who have passed Phase 2 training.

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards.

John Healey:

[\[58297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding was allocated to medical and dental services for the armed forces in each year since 2015.

Leo Docherty:

The Headquarters of the Defence Medical Services (HQ DMS) is responsible for healthcare to the Armed Forces. The HQ DMS Higher Level Budget allocation for Financial Years 2015-2016 to 2021-2022 is provided in the table below.

FINANCIAL YEAR	£ MILLION
2015-16	499.57
2016-17	505.54
2017-18	482.91
2018-19	473.94
2019-20	499.15
2020-21	501.52
2021-22	522.69

There is other expenditure on healthcare by the single Services that is not accounted for centrally. This information could not be provided in the time available so I will write to the hon. Member.

■ Armed Forces: Mental Health

Jamie Stone: [\[58475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of service personnel undertake the Annual Mental Fitness Brief each year.

Leo Docherty:

From 11 October 2021, the Annual Mental Fitness Brief has been mandated for all Armed Forces Personnel. The brief covers health and wellbeing, stress management, how to transform stress into mental resilience and where personnel can seek appropriate help.

■ Army Air Corps: Staff

Fleur Anderson: [\[57402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will reconsider the Army Air Corps' minimum height requirement for pilots of 5 feet 4 and a half inches in line with the US Air Force's decision to remove this height requirement last year.

Leo Docherty:

Army Air Corps (AAC) pilot selection is based upon an assessment of the British Army's principal aircraft (Wildcat and Apache). AAC policy is not comparable to that of the US Air Force, whose requirements will be based upon their individual aircraft fleet. The anthropometric standards for AAC pilots will be reviewed in line with any changes to the aircraft fleet to ensure the AAC can continue to recruit from the widest talent base, whilst ensuring pilots can operate the aircraft safely.

■ Artillery: Ammunition

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what his Department last procured (a) ammunition rounds for the 155mm AS90 self-propelled artillery system and (b) propellant charges.

Jeremy Quin:

The most recent procurements of 155mm ammunition were the L21 variant High Explosive training shell in April 2021, and the L18 propelling charge in December 2020.

■ Defence Equipment: Procurement

Owen Thompson: [\[56364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to help prevent potential halts in production of defence components in the defence supply chain sector owing to the impact of price rises in the UK energy markets.

Jeremy Quin:

We routinely monitor risk and fragility in the defence supply-chain, including those associated with rising commodity prices, and work closely with suppliers where consideration needs to be made of targeted intervention.

Islamic State: Armed Conflict

Kim Leadbeater: [\[56688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civilians have been killed by British airstrikes against ISIS-K as part of the US-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, including the number of (a) children and (b) identifying family groups.

Kim Leadbeater: [\[56690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civilians have been injured by British airstrikes against ISIS-K as part of the US-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, including the number of (a) children and (b) identifying family groups.

James Heapey:

The UK has not conducted any airstrikes against ISIS-K under Operation HERRICK or Operation TORAL.

Under Operation SHADER, the UK's contribution to the US-led Coalition, Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, the UK has conducted airstrikes against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. The UK has accepted responsibility for one Civilian Casualty that occurred during an airstrike on Daesh fighters in eastern Syria on the 26th March 2018. This incident was subject to a Written Ministerial Statement on 2 May 2018.

Lebanon: Military Aid

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much defence equipment has been (a) sold and (b) gifted to Lebanon in the last five years.

Jeremy Quin:

No defence equipment has been sold to Lebanon by the Ministry of Defence through the Defence Equipment Sales Authority in the last five years. A range of items including spares, communications and IT equipment, have however been gifted to Lebanon through the UK Conflict Security and Stability fund.

In addition, a total of 100 Revised Weapons Mounted Installation Kit Land Rovers were gifted to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in 2021. The donation of these vehicles demonstrates the UK's commitment to supporting the LAF and promoting security and stability in the region.

Military Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has plans to certify rotary aircraft to transport F135 engines to Carrier Strike Group.

James Heappey:

The Joint Air Delivery Test and Evaluation Unit has certified the F-35 engine to be carried as an external load beneath the Chinook helicopter, which can operate from the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

Royal Engineers: Location**Dave Doogan:**[\[58498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, at what stage plans are at to relocate a regiment of the Royal Engineers from Kinloss to England; and what consultation has taken place with stakeholders in Scotland on those plans.

James Heappey:

There are no plans to relocate 39 Engineer Regiment from Kinloss in Scotland to any other base.

Warships: Logistics**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[56827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 September 2021 to Question 51904, on Warships: Repairs and Maintenance, if he will outline the logistics supply chain responsible for transferring F-135 engines to Carrier Strike Group.

James Heappey:

The manufacturer is responsible for transporting the engines to suitable hubs around the globe. Defence Support Chain Operations & Movements are then responsible for transporting the engine from the hub to the Carrier Strike Group.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Broadband: Standards****Martyn Day:**[\[57186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that broadband providers deliver their advertised (a) service and (b) download speeds to consumers' homes.

Julia Lopez:

Ofcom's [Broadband Speeds Codes of Practice](#) requires that internet service providers (ISPs) provide consumers with information about the service they can expect, including download speeds, prior to purchase. ISPs who have signed up to the Code - and this includes, for example, BT, TalkTalk and Virgin Media - also commit to providing consumers with a minimum guaranteed download and upload speed, allowing them to cancel or leave their contract, without penalty, should the service fall below the agreed standard.

■ Channel 4: Hearing Impairment**Jonathan Edwards:** [\[58373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Channel 4 on the restoration of their subtitle service for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Julia Lopez:

The department has been in contact with both Channel 4 and Ofcom on this issue. It is important that television content is accessible for all UK audiences and as such all public service broadcasters are required to ensure adequate provision of access services, including subtitling, for their broadcast channels. Ofcom, as the independent regulator, is closely monitoring the situation, including the actions being taken to restore normal service as quickly as possible and to keep viewers informed.

■ Internet: Children**Ben Lake:** [\[58477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will bring forward proposals to strengthen online protections for children by requiring technology firms to tackle cross-platform risks as part of the Online Safety Bill which would place a duty on the companies to (a) assess cross-platform risks when designing their sites and (b) share information with other companies on (i) offender behaviour, (ii) threats to children's safety and (iii) new features which could lead to child abuse.

Chris Philp:

The Online Safety Bill will create a safer online ecosystem and address cross-platform harms to children. Companies in scope likely to be accessed by children will need to put in place appropriate systems and processes which protect children from encountering harmful content by means of their service. This could include protecting children from being directed to harmful content or activity on other sites.

The regulator will undertake research and horizon-scanning to identify cross-platform emerging issues, backed up by robust information-gathering powers. In addition, the super-complaints process will enable organisations to submit evidence of systemic issues that are causing harm to certain groups across more than one service.

■ Internet: Pornography**Ben Lake:** [\[58476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will bring forward proposals to (a) bring pornography sites which do not host user-uploaded content within the scope of the Online Safety Bill and (b) strengthen age verification processes for those sites.

Chris Philp:

The strongest protections in the draft Online Safety Bill, published in May 2021 for pre-legislative scrutiny, are for children. Where pornography sites host user

generated content or facilitate online user interactions, they are in scope of the Online Safety Bill.

The Online Safety Bill will capture the most visited pornography sites, social media platforms, video-sharing sites, forums and via image or video search engines. Companies will be required to protect children from harmful content such as online pornography or face tough enforcement action by the regulator.

The government recognises the concerns that have been raised about protecting children from online pornography on services which do not currently fall within the scope of the Bill. The government will use the draft Bill's pre-legislative scrutiny to explore ways to provide wider protections for children from online pornography.

■ **Planning Permission: Newspaper Press**

Robert Halfon: [\[58377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she plans to expand the requirement for (a) planning and (b) other statutory notices to be placed with news outlets to include digital-only news outlets.

Robert Halfon: [\[58378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to enable local authorities to place statutory notices with digital-only local news outlets.

Julia Lopez:

While policy responsibility for each specific type of statutory notice lies with other departments, my department is working closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure that the implications of any changes to publicity requirements relating to planning notices are understood before decisions are taken, as they consider next steps with regard to the Planning for the Future White Paper.

■ **Voluntary Work**

Anne Marie Morris: [\[58400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to encourage volunteering during the recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

DCMS is focusing its role as a steward of the sector, working collaboratively to improve access to volunteering by removing long-standing barriers, some of which have been exacerbated or exposed by COVID-19.

As part of our work to investigate how and the extent to which COVID-19 has impacted on volunteering in England, we produced a report to investigate what drives demand for volunteers and how this varies over a typical calendar year, as a means of identifying potential issues in the supply of volunteers. This also examined the effect of the pandemic on volunteer supply and demand. *

We are working with the voluntary and community sector to develop a Vision for Volunteering, which will be a clear and actionable 10 year plan to simplify access to and experiences of volunteering in England.

We are also planning to launch a new Volunteering Futures Fund, which will provide new volunteering opportunities for young people and others who experience barriers to volunteering, within DCMS sectors (arts, culture, museums and heritage) as well as in youth, tackling loneliness and place-based community initiatives.

*<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-report-on-the-drivers-in-demand-for-volunteers>

EDUCATION

■ Education: Equality

Robert Halfon:

[53873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure equal accessibility in education for children from all backgrounds.

Will Quince:

Our ambition is for every child, no matter what challenges they face, to have access to a world-class education that sets them up for life.

The government places mandatory requirements on school admission authorities through the School Admissions Code. Its purpose is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and academies are allocated and offered in an open and fair way. The School Admissions Code requires that admission arrangements do not unfairly disadvantage children from a particular social group. On 1 September 2021, the department introduced a new School Admissions Code which aims to improve the in-year admission of vulnerable children and help reduce to a minimum any time spent out of school.

Looked after and previously looked after children are among the most vulnerable in our society and so all schools are required to give highest priority in their admissions criteria to them. The School Admissions Code also gives admission authorities the freedom to choose to prioritise children eligible for the pupil premium or who have a social or medical need, according to their local circumstances.

Where a pupil is identified as having special educational needs, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. Schools also have a legal duty to produce an accessibility plan that sets out how, over time, they are going to increase access to the curriculum for disabled pupils, improve the physical environment of the school to increase access for disabled pupils, and make written information more accessible to disabled pupils by providing information in a range of different ways.

The department is investing £300 million in the 2021-22 financial year to support local authorities to deliver new places and improve existing provision for pupils with special

educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision. It is for local authorities to determine how to best use this funding to address their local priorities, such as investment in accessibility to improve or broaden access to existing provision.

■ School Meals

Navendu Mishra: [\[58541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on the impact of food shortages and supply chain issues on suppliers of school meals.

Navendu Mishra: [\[58542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that school meals are not affected by food shortages and supply chain issues.

Will Quince:

There is no evidence to suggest there are widespread supply issues for schools. Schools are responsible for the provision of school meals and have flexibility under the school food standards to substitute food products if particular ingredients or meals are not readily available. School food contracts are set and held at school, academy trust, or council level. Schools can, therefore, enter into individual contracts with suppliers and caterers to meet this duty.

The flexibility in the school food standards exists to ensure that menus can be modified for variety, and dietary choices or restrictions can be catered for more easily. Where items or menus are unavailable, we expect caterers to communicate this with schools. It does not mean that pupils are going without meals.

The department routinely considers contingency arrangements and expects schools and catering companies supplying them to do the same.

The Department for Education holds regular meetings with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs as well as food industry representatives covering a variety of issues. In the event of any disruption to supply, we will work with councils and the sector to ensure warm, nutritious meals can continue to be provided.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Dangerous Dogs

Kenny MacAskill: [\[57370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the research on responsible dog ownership commissioned by his Department from Middlesex University.

Jo Churchill:

Defra commissioned Middlesex University to examine measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership. The research considers different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures. The report will be published shortly and will provide the basis for the consideration of further reform in this area.

■ **Ivory****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[58459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating an ivory surrender scheme.

Rebecca Pow:

The Ivory Act will not affect the ownership of ivory items and as such we have no plans for a Government surrender scheme at this time. We recognise that for some low value items, owners may decide it is not cost-effective to register them for sale. This will be a decision for individual owners. Such items may of course be gifted, donated or bequeathed rather than discarded. We will explain to owners the options available to them as part of our awareness-raising campaign.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies****Anna McMorrin:**[\[57262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve the efficiency of export and import supply chains for UK-based food and drink business in the context of HGV driver shortages.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on access to a range of sources, including robust supply chains domestically, and from a diverse range of other stable countries.

On 20 July, the Government announced a package of measures to help the road haulage industry tackle the issues caused by the HGV driver shortage. These measures consist of support for the recruitment and retention of drivers, proposals to streamline the process to obtain a licence, increasing the number of driving test slots available, offering financial assistance for training, and backing industry-led initiatives to improve the working conditions for drivers and the image of the industry.

We announced further measures on 25 September. These include training up to 4,000 new HGV drivers through skills bootcamps and the adult education budget. Alongside this, 5,000 HGV drivers will be able to come to the UK in the run-up to Christmas, providing short-term relief for the fuel and food haulage sectors.

Nearly one million letters have been sent to drivers who currently hold an HGV driving licence, to thank them for their vital role supporting the economy, and to

encourage those who have left the industry to consider returning. We will continue to work closely with industry to address the HGV driver shortage and to explore all avenues which will help the sector recover and help the economy thrive.

The Government has launched a short consultation on 14 October setting out proposals to temporarily extend so-called “cabotage” rights. This would allow overseas haulage operators delivering goods to the UK to make further unlimited collections and deliveries within a 14 day period, as opposed to the current limit of two such trips within seven days.

Subject to the outcome of the one-week consultation, these temporary measures would come into force towards the end of this year for up to six months, helping secure supply chains in the medium term alongside the wider package of measures the Government has put in place to address the shortage of drivers more broadly.

■ **Meat: Ritual Slaughter**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[56354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the Jewish community's supply of kosher meat is uninterrupted.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to protecting the rights of the Jewish community to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. This is a fundamental issue of religious freedom and belief, which the Government upholds. As the global economy has rebounded from the pandemic, we have seen pressures placed on supply chains across sectors and across countries. The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain which has coped well in responding to unprecedented challenges and we have been taking decisive action to ease these pressures where immediate interventions have been required, including making available temporary visas in some sectors such as HGV drivers and the poultry sector. We have well-established ways of working with the food industry to address potential food supply chain disruptions and that hasn't changed. As such we are confident the supply of kosher meat will continue uninterrupted.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[56247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2021 to Question 50090, on Chevening Scholarships Programme: Afghanistan, what contact he has made with (a) Chevening and (b) former Chevening scholars in Afghanistan in (i) August and (ii) September 2021.

James Cleverly:

Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. Approximately 500 of these are special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, which includes Chevening scholars and their dependants. Throughout August and September, the Chevening Secretariat has been in regular contact with all Afghan Chevening scholars and their families in the UK, and has been liaising with universities, local authorities and the Home Office to help scholars access support.

■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[57228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £286 million allocated in aid to Afghanistan in 2021 has been dispersed as of 18 October 2021; and what her timetable is for remaining aid to be dispersed.

James Cleverly:

As of 18 October £35m has been disbursed. We expect to make an announcement on the next tranche of funding shortly and are working with partners to assess the situation on the ground and develop programmes. We plan to disburse funding by the end of this financial year.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees**Neale Hanvey:**[\[56207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on the clarity of advice issued to hon. Members and their staff about which Government department they should approach with enquiries from constituents who have relatives or friends in Afghanistan seeking (a) safe passage to or (b) refuge in the UK.

James Cleverly:

The Government continues to press the Taliban to allow safe passage and to respect human rights, and to work to enable Afghan nationals who were employed by the UK Government, or who were notified by the Government that they were called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, to come to the UK. Further guidance and helpline numbers for British and non-British nationals in Afghanistan are available on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-british-and-non-british-nationals-in-afghanistan>. This page will be updated when new information is available.

Hon. Members should approach the MoD with enquiries regarding Afghan nationals who might be eligible for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme. The eligibility criteria for the ARAP scheme are set out here, alongside details of how to apply: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>.

They should approach the Home Office regarding the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), information on which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

FCDO provides consular support to British nationals. We encourage all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to confirm their presence using this form: <https://www.register-afghanistan.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/afghanistan-20210828/confirm-your-presence-in-afghanistan-to-fcdo> to give us detailed information of those remaining. All British nationals who have correctly registered their details with the FCDO will receive important updates via email.

If constituents' relatives or friends in Afghanistan are not British nationals and are not otherwise eligible to come to the UK, then there is a limit to what the British Government can do for them as individuals. The Government is committed to supporting Afghanistan and we will use every diplomatic and economic lever at our disposal to restore stability to Afghanistan.

■ Afghanistan: Repatriation

Nadia Whittome:

[\[57488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to evacuate remaining British nationals in Afghanistan and their families who have a partner/child who is not a British national; and what support is being provided to fast-track biometrics and entry clearance applications for those individuals.

James Cleverly:

We continue to work closely with international partners on possible flight options to help British Nationals and their dependents to safely leave Afghanistan. Since the end of the evacuation, more than 100 British Nationals and dependents have been able to leave on seven Qatari Government charter flights. We hope more British nationals will be able to make use of this route out of Afghanistan. We will also facilitate relocation, from third countries if possible, for those British Nationals and their eligible dependents.

■ Belarus: Diplomatic Relations

Catherine West:

[\[58464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the decision by the Belarusian government to expel the French Ambassador; and if the Government will express its solidarity with the French government.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has expressed its solidarity with our French partners, following the Belarusian authorities' unilateral decision to withdraw the accreditation granted to the French Ambassador on 31 August 2020. This is the latest in a series of steps taken against the diplomatic community in Belarus. The UK will continue to work alongside

our international partners in support of the Belarusian people and of a lasting solution to the political crisis.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Detainees**

Layla Moran:

[57304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish an estimate of the number of British residents who (a) are being detained in countries outside the UK as at 18 October 2021 and (b) have been detained outside the UK in the last five years.

Amanda Milling:

Our Human Rights and Democracy reports from 2018 to 2020 state that we provided consular assistance to 2,335, 2,193 and 1,985 cases of British nationals who had been detained overseas. In 2017 the figure was not included in the report but was 2,338.

The Human Rights and Democracy reports are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/human-rights-and-democracy-reports>.

Data on new cases of detention is also available each month and for each year here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/consular-data>

■ **China: Uighurs**

Afzal Khan:

[56496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of recent reports of the alleged torture of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China; and what discussions she has had with her Chinese counterpart on those reports of alleged torture.

Amanda Milling:

The Government is deeply concerned about the systematic human rights violations being perpetrated in Xinjiang, including disturbing reports of torture of Uyghur Muslims. We have led international efforts to hold China to account for its actions, leading the first two statements on Xinjiang at the UN and utilising our diplomatic network to raise the issue up the international agenda. In March, the UK announced sanctions against four Chinese officials and an entity responsible for the egregious human rights violations taking place. In January, the Government also announced a series of measures to help ensure that British organisations are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in the region. We will continue to take robust action, including by raising our concerns directly with the Chinese authorities.

■ **Developing Countries: Coronavirus**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[57231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral evidence of the then Secretary of State and acting Permanent

Secretary of the Department for International Development to the International Development Committee on 6 July 2020 on Humanitarian crises monitoring: impact of coronavirus, HC 292, whether it remains Government policy that there will be (a) no reduction in the staff headcount in the (a) London and (b) East Kilbride departmental offices and (b) no compulsory staff redundancies.

Amanda Milling:

As the former Foreign Secretary said on 18 June 2020, there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger between FCO and DFID.

However, like all Government departments, the FCDO is currently reviewing its operating costs ahead of the next Spending Review to ensure we have the right capabilities to deliver on our international priorities as set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

■ **Land Mines: Bomb Disposal**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[56946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the humanitarian mine action budget will be for the next three years.

James Cleverly:

Over the next 3 years the UK's demining work will continue to save lives across the world. The Global Mine Action Programme 3 (GMAP3), due to begin in 2022, will involve landmine clearance and risk education to help affected communities keep safe and capacity development for national authorities to help them manage their landmine contamination.

As one of the founding signatories to the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and a leading supporter of mine action, the UK will also continue to work towards ending the use of landmines and cluster munitions. The UK has now taken on the Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and will use its leadership role to encourage more states to sign and implement this important treaty.

■ **Palestinians: Children**

Andy Slaughter:

[\[56681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will (a) raise with her Israeli counterpart (i) the fatal shooting of Mohammad Mo'ayyad Bahjat Abu Sara and (ii) the abduction and assault of a 15-year-old boy by Israeli settlers on 17 August 2021 and (b) seek assurances that there will be a criminal investigation into both incidents.

James Cleverly:

We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence, and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance to bring those responsible to justice. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate

protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

■ **Palestinians: Education**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[56858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to review the allocation of funding to the Palestinian education system following the publication of the Georg Eckert Institute's report on Palestinian textbooks in June 2021.

James Cleverly:

Following Official Development Assistance (ODA) prioritisation exercises undertaken in March 2021, the UK no longer provides direct funding to the Palestinian Authority to support the salaries of education workers and health professionals. This decision was not influenced by the publication of the Georg Eckert Institute's report on Palestinian textbooks published in June 2021. The UK remains firmly committed to ensuring a quality education for Palestinian children, demonstrated by our longstanding support to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and through the British Council.

■ **Palestinians: Textbooks**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[56857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the cost of educational materials with hateful content in the Palestinian education system that were recalled by the UN Relief and Works Agency.

James Cleverly:

We have not made this assessment. The UK will continue to monitor UNRWA's implementation of its curriculum framework to ensure UNRWA's educational materials, including those on the digital learning platform, are in line with UN values. We accompany our support for UNRWA with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to any educational materials.

■ **Russia: Non-governmental Organisations**

Catherine West: [\[58465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the treatment of NGOs in Russia following the storming of the office of Memorial; and whether she has plans to hold discussions with her Russian counterpart on the protection of NGOs.

Wendy Morton:

Russia is a FCDO human rights priority country and we remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation for civil society in Russia, including the treatment of NGOs. The UK stands by those who defend human rights, and we will continue to

make our concerns clear in bilateral interactions with the Russian government. I visited Memorial's offices in November 2020 to learn more about their important work preserving the memories of the victims of Soviet repression and promoting the role of civil society. We regularly call on Russia to uphold its international commitments on freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, including in the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

■ **Western Sahara: Armed Conflict**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[56789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his UN counterparts on the mitigation of violence in the Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

The UK fully supports UN-led efforts, as made clear in UNSCR 2548, to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We have regular discussions with the UN, both in New York and in the region, as well as with the parties regarding the situation in Western Sahara. We welcome the appointment of Staffan de Mistura as Personal Envoy to Western Sahara and encourage the parties to make the most of this opportunity for a renewed political process.

■ **Western Sahara: Human Rights**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[58323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of (a) the human rights situation and (b) the actions of the Moroccan Government in Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

The UK has consistently supported language in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions which encourages the parties to sustain their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf camps. We support UN-led efforts to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

■ **Western Sahara: Sovereignty**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[58324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her counterpart in the US Administration on the recognition of that country of claims by Morocco of sovereignty over Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

As the former Foreign Secretary stated on 11 December 2020, the UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We regularly discuss the situation in Western Sahara with international partners and with the parties, encouraging them to re-engage with the UN-led political process and the new UN Personal Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

Western Sahara: Trade Agreements**Kim Johnson:**[\[57453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 139167 on Western Sahara: Trade Agreements, whether the Saharawi people in (a) occupied Western Sahara and (b) the refugee camps were consulted on the inclusion of certain products from the non-self governing territory of Western Sahara being included in the UK-Morocco Association Agreement.

James Cleverly:

The UK is clear that the application of the UK-Morocco Association Agreement is without prejudice to our position on the status of Western Sahara, which we regard as undetermined. The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Cancer: Dental Services****Daisy Cooper:**[\[43675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 17 March 2020 to Question 27030 on Cancer: Dental Services, what progress NHS England has made on improving access to dentistry for cancer patients.

Maria Caulfield:

National Health Service dentists have been asked to maximise safe treatment to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focussing first on urgent care and vulnerable groups followed by overdue appointments. Patients undergoing treatment for cancer may have a depressed immune system and a higher need for dental care, so should be prioritised for treatment.

Coronavirus: Vaccination**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[53181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS software will be amended to allow multiple covid-19 vaccinations to be recorded and the appropriate

vaccinations required for domestic and international travel passes be displayed by the NHS app.

Maggie Throup:

Currently, the first and last vaccine doses are shown on the NHS COVID Pass for international travel, with a maximum of two doses in accordance with international standards. We are reviewing the implications of booster vaccines for international travel certification, including how these doses could be incorporated into the NHS COVID Pass for travel, subject to international guidelines.

Multiple vaccinations, or doses in addition to a full course of a COVID-19 vaccine and boosters, are not required for domestic certification and therefore do not impact the domestic NHS COVID Pass.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[58540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to supply covid-19 booster vaccinations to people who have received the Novavax vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

People who have received both doses of a vaccine as part of a clinical trial, including Novavax, will be offered a booster vaccination, if eligible in line with the advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). Doses of the booster vaccine are currently being offered to individuals who received their first vaccination in phase one of the programme in the JCVI's priority groups one to nine.

■ **General Practitioners**

Hilary Benn:

[\[56799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the number of GP appointments in England that are being carried out face-to-face with patients as of 1 October 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Appointment data for October 2021 is not yet available. However, from 1 to 31 August inclusive, which is the latest data available, there were an estimated 23.9 million appointments in general practice excluding COVID-19 vaccinations. Of these, 13.8 million were face to face appointments, representing 58% of all appointments that took place during that period.

■ **General Practitioners: Working Hours**

Kate Griffiths:

[\[51869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the Government is making on rolling out evening and weekend GP appointments.

Maria Caulfield:

General practice appointments in the evenings and weekends are available across the country. Patients can see a doctor, nurse or other member of a practice team at a time that is convenient to them, 365 days per year including on bank holidays.

■ **GP Surgeries: Abuse**

Nadia Whittome: [\[56608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will consider a public information campaign to help combat the abuse of staff and GPs in GP surgeries.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government has zero tolerance for abuse or violence directed at National Health Service staff. As announced in 'Our plan for improving access for patients and supporting general practice' on 14 October 2021, the Government and NHS England will work with the trades unions and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges to launch a zero-tolerance campaign. In addition, NHS England will immediately establish a £5 million fund to facilitate upgrades to practice security measures.

■ **Health Services: Females**

Sarah Champion: [\[53242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 33935, what steps his Department has taken to improve cohesion between the Women's Health Strategy and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

Officials are working closely across both strategies to share progress and best practice to ensure cohesion.

■ **Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments**

Chris Green: [\[53926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of aligning the treatment pathway for heart valve disease with the pathways indicated by recent international evidence.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement assess treatment pathways for heart valve disease using the best evidence available, including international evidence and advice from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

■ **Influenza: Mortality Rates**

Craig Mackinlay: [\[56456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the influenza infection fatality rate in the UK in each of the last 10 years.

Maggie Throup:

Influenza infection levels and related deaths are not routinely collected in the format requested, therefore this specific estimate has not been made. The number of influenza infections and deaths due to influenza-related complications varies with each flu season.

■ Lung Cancer**Derek Twigg:**[\[56803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle regional inequalities in respect of lung cancer and (b) improve (i) the timeliness of referrals for treatment, (ii) early diagnosis and (iii) mortality rates among populations at risk of that disease.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The National Lung Cancer Audit has been collecting data nationally since 2005 to ensure care meets standards and seeks to reduce unwarranted variation across the country. Targeted lung health check projects are now running in parts of the country with the highest rates of mortality from lung cancer, with 20 new locations recently confirmed for 2022/23.

To improve the timeliness of referrals, NHS England and NHS Improvement have introduced the Faster Diagnosis Standard, to measure the number of patients receiving a diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days of a referral. NHS England and NHS Improvement's 'Help us help you' campaign is encouraging people to come forward with symptoms, with a specific lung cancer campaign from August 2021.

Lung cancer patients in England will be the first in Europe to be offered Sotorasib, a revolutionary new drug to prevent the growth of tumours. All radiotherapy centres in England are now able to deliver stereotactic ablative radiotherapy for treating certain kinds of lung cancer without the need for surgery.

■ Maternity Services: Staff**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[56916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects the new maternity workforce planning tool that he commissioned from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to be ready.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department awarded a grant to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in July 2021 to develop a tool calculate the requirements for the number of obstetricians in maternity units in England. In early 2022, the College will provide detailed information on the number of obstetricians required with the tool to be developed by June 2022.

■ Medical Equipment: Manufacturing Industries

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[56848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review entitled First Do No Harm, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure greater transparency of the reporting of research and sponsorship payments made by medical device manufacturers to (a) doctors, (b) teaching hospitals, (c) research institutions and (d) charities; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government's response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review was published on 26 July 2021. The Government accepted in principle the recommendation on the 'mandatory reporting for the pharmaceutical and medical device industries of payments made to teaching hospitals, research institutions and individual clinicians'. The Department is exploring options in relation to expanding and reinforcing current industry schemes and making reporting mandatory through legislation. We aim to publish an update on progress in summer 2022.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2021 to Question 10377 on Medical Records: Data Protection, what proportion of the registered addresses for the organisations with which his Department shares NHS Digital data sets are overseas.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Data Access Request Service (DARS) provides clinicians, researchers and commissioners the data required to help improve NHS services. NHS Digital does this in line with the Data Access Service Process and holds Data Sharing Framework Contracts and Data Sharing Agreements. 1.1% of Data Controllers for the DARS have registered addresses outside of the United Kingdom.

■ Mental Health: Research

Patricia Gibson:

[\[58423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to increase funding for research on mental health.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is the largest funder of mental health research in the United Kingdom, through the Department. The NIHR spent £93.4 million on mental health research in 2019/20. While it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR's funding is available

through open competition and it encourages researchers to submit applications, including for mental health research.

■ Midwives and Obstetrics

Jeremy Hunt: [\[56913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) midwives and (b) obstetricians there are working in NHS England.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but excludes staff working in primary care, general practitioner surgeries, local authorities, and other providers.

As of the end of July 2021, there were 21,942 full time equivalent (FTE) midwives working in National Health Service trusts and CCGs. As of the end of June 2021, there were 6,305 FTE doctors working in the speciality of obstetrics and gynaecology in NHS trusts and CCGs. This includes 2,542 FTE consultants.

■ NHS: Agency Workers

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[56966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost to NHS hospitals has been of using (a) agency staff and (b) bank staff (i) in the financial year 2020-21 and (ii) since 1 April 2021.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not currently available as foundation trust accounts are not yet finalised.

■ Radioligand Therapy

Peter Dowd: [\[53380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of specialist centres required to ensure wide and equitable access to radioligand therapies and targeted treatments on the NHS in the next 12 months.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: Radioligand therapy has not been licensed and has yet to receive approval from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence, therefore no assessment has been made.

Recent advances in radiotherapy using cutting-edge imaging and computing technology have helped target radiation doses at cancer cells more precisely. This includes proton beam therapy and stereotactic ablative body radiotherapy (SABR), both of which are available on the National Health Service. The Government has committed £250 million capital investment into two proton beam therapy facilities for

the United Kingdom, at The Christie Hospital in Manchester and University College London Hospitals in London. SABR will be available as a treatment option through routine commissioning.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Kim Johnson:

[\[54029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to add Hong Kong to the list of countries whose Pfizer BioNtech vaccination will be recognised by the Government for incoming travellers.

Maggie Throup:

From 11 October, eligible travellers vaccinated in over 37 new countries and territories including Hong Kong, will be treated the same as returning fully vaccinated United Kingdom residents, if they have not visited a 'red list' country or territory in the 10 days before arriving in England.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Carol Monaghan:

[\[53937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to enable people in Afghanistan to be reunited with family members in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: Family members of British citizens and settled persons, including those with humanitarian protection in the UK, who were not called forward for evacuation as part of Op PITTING, will need to apply to come to the UK under the existing economic or family migration and reunion rules. They will be expected to meet the eligibility requirements of their chosen route, which may include paying relevant fees and charges, and providing their biometrics.

The British Embassy in Kabul has currently suspended in country operations and all UK diplomatic and consular staff have been temporarily withdrawn.

The UK is working with international partners to secure safe routes out of Afghanistan as soon as they become available, but while the security situation remains extremely volatile, we recommend people in Afghanistan do not make applications and pay application fees at this time as they will not be considered until biometrics are provided. Those Afghans who are outside of Afghanistan and able to get to a Visa Application Centre to provide their biometrics can make an application in the usual way.

A full policy statement on this matter published on 13 September 2021 can be found [here](#):

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

■ Asylum: Children

Neil Coyle: [58411]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to lift No Recourse to Public Funds conditions on unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

Kevin Foster:

Children are unable to apply for public funds themselves; therefore, the no recourse to public funds policy is not relevant to the consideration of support provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

■ Chevening Scholarships Programme: Afghanistan

Sarah Olney: [57224]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to include former Chevening scholars in the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We successfully evacuated the majority of Afghan Chevening scholars in this year's cohort and will continue to do all we can to support the small number who remain in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is not yet open. 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 [Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement).

■ Drugs: Misuse

Crispin Blunt: [R] [58293]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has for consultation in advance of its forthcoming long term drug strategy.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government published its initial response to Dame Carol Black's independent review of drugs on 27 July, and the upcoming drug strategy will set out our more detailed response to the review's recommendations. It will present our whole-of-government approach to combating drug misuse by supporting people through treatment and recovery and driving down drug supply and demand.

We are continuing to engage with external experts across a wide range of sectors in order to shape the approach and interventions set out in the strategy, building on the research undertaken as part of the independent review. Dame Carol is also working

with the Government on the development and delivery of the strategy in her new role as an independent advisor.

■ Home Office: Correspondence

Afzal Khan: [\[58495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of 24 September 2021 regarding Godwin Ojo.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office responded on 18 October 2021.

■ Police: Motor Vehicles

Navendu Mishra: [\[58536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of police vehicles in (a) the territorial police force of Greater Manchester and (b) police constabularies across the country.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office do not collect information on the number of police vehicles in a police force. Future requests should be directed to police forces.

■ Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes

Dan Carden: [\[56558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support organisations that assist victims of sexual violence.

Rachel Maclean:

We are committed to ensuring that victims and survivors of VAWG get the support they deserve. This year, the Government is providing approximately £300 million for victim and witness support services.

The Ministry of Justice alone has provided £150.5m for victim and witness support services. This funding includes £50m to increase support for rape and domestic abuse victims and recruitment of more Independent Sexual Violence Advisers to help victims feel informed and supported at every stage of their recovery journey.

This year, the Home Office is providing nearly £200k to the National Sexual Violence Support Fund to support victims and survivors of rape and sexual violence. The Home Office is also providing £120k to the Revenge Porn Helpline to support victims of non-consensual intimate image sharing, colloquially known as 'revenge porn'.

Also, the Government recognises the significant pressure that support services are under and are working closely with them to monitor levels of demand. The Ministry of Justice has increased core funding for rape support centres by 50%, from £8 million to £12 million per annum, and extended the Rape Support Fund until March 2023 to ensure support services have the funding stability they need.

It is hoped that the forthcoming Spending Review will provide long term funding certainty for departments and by extension, the organisations we support through funding.

■ **UK Border Force: Patrol Craft**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which other Department along with her Department will be responsible for the tender of four new cutters for Border Police.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on the Government's decision to put out to tender four new cutters for UK Border Force.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether cost savings from fuel savings and projected through life support will be included as a parameter for the tender for four new cutters for UK Border Force.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether social value specifications will be attached to the tender of the four new cutters for UK Border Force.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether WTO restrictions on shipbuilding will apply to the UK during the tendering process of the four new cutters for UK Border Force.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what UK content will be specified during the tendering phase of the four new cutters for UK Border Force.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the tendering process for the Border Force's four new cutters will take into account money returned to HM Treasury through income tax, national insurance contributions, VAT and supply chain investment.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Decisions regarding the procurement of vessels for Border Force remains subject to the strategic case for new investment, which will be developed further following the publication of the Spending Review outcome. The Home Office continues to engage with other relevant Government departments, notably within the context of the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSbS) refresh,

announced earlier this year. The Home Office remains responsible for conducting any procurement.

Consistent with [The Treasury Green Book](#) guidance, the assessment of different options will reflect fuel savings and other whole life costs.

Should a procurement proceed, social value would be included within tender evaluation criteria in line with Cabinet Office guidance (minimum of 10% weighting).

The NSbS refresh will outline the Government's plans for shipbuilding programmes and how it intends to create the conditions for a globally successful, innovative and sustainable national shipbuilding enterprise.

The procurement will be conducted in line with wider government policy, guidance and legal obligations, appropriately reflecting the nature of Border Force operations.

All procurement and contract activity undertaken by the Home Office reflects legislation and wider government policy intended to ensure best practice and value for money, in particular as reflected in [The Treasury Green Book](#). Other relevant guidance includes:

- (a) All Public Procurement Regulations
- (b) [Social Value Act 2012](#)
- (c) Public Sector Equality Duty, contained within the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- (d) [The Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)
- (e) [The Bribery Act 2010](#)
- (f) [Managing Public Money guidance](#)
- (g) [Cabinet Office and HMT controls](#) as set out on GOV.UK including the [Government Commercial Operating Standards](#) and the [Outsourcing Playbook](#)

Cabinet Office [Procurement Policy Notes](#) and best practice

■ UK Border Force: Shipping

Mr Kevan Jones: **[58313]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the annual fuel consumption costs are of Border Force's cutters.

Tom Pursglove:

During financial year 2020-21, the annual fuel cost across the BF cutter fleet was £388,000.

Mr Kevan Jones: **[58314]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of hours the cutters used by Border Force run on their main engines per annum.

Tom Pursglove:

On average in 2020, each vessel ran for 1112 hours.

Each Border Force Cutter is available at short notice for deployment in UK territorial waters and is deployed for 15 days at a time in 12-hour shifts before the necessary crew changes are made.

■ Veterans: Immigration

Dan Jarvis: [\[58395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to publish its response to the Immigration Fees Public Consultation.

Kevin Foster:

The Ministry of Defence and Home Office ran a joint public consultation from May to July 2021 on the issue of waiving settlement fees for certain non-UK members of the Armed Forces.

The Government is carefully considering responses and will publish its formal response to the consultation shortly.

■ Visas: Afghanistan

Peter Kyle: [\[52556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will authorise entry clearance without biometrics for visa applications from Afghan nationals in (a) Afghanistan and (b) countries bordering Afghanistan.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: A policy statement on Afghanistan resettlement and immigration was published on 13 September.

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

We do not comment on security matters, but security checks underpin the UK's immigration system and help identify against immigration and criminality records to prevent leave being granted to those who pose a harm to national security or are likely to breach our laws.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Agreements

Anne Marie Morris: [\[58401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to include supply chain security agreements for (a) medicines, (b) food, (c) gas and (d) other essential goods in future trade deals.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Free trade and free markets will be crucial to the global economic recovery as the coronavirus crisis passes, and more resilient supply chains in the future.

Our ambitious programme of free trade agreements will be an important part of the United Kingdom's post-COVID economic strategy, making it easier for businesses to access goods, services, and capital to fuel economic recovery, and growth.

Our work with other departments and with business to strengthen critical supply chains seeks to improve the United Kingdom's security and economic resilience through international trade. Our starting position when seeking to build resilience in critical supply chains is to take a market-first approach.

JUSTICE■ **Crime: Victims****Anna McMorris:**[\[57259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with external relevant stakeholders on the introduction of a consultation on a victims law.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is committed to consulting on a Victims' Bill to deliver a step-change in the support victims receive and how it is coordinated.

The Deputy Prime Minister is developing the consultation as one of his top priorities and is carefully considering the evidence to determine where legislation could be used most effectively. He is looking forward to discussing this with stakeholders in the coming weeks.

■ **Legal Aid Scheme****Neil Coyle:**[\[58412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has to extend access to legal aid.

James Cartlidge:

In the 2019 Legal Support Action Plan, we announced a comprehensive review of the legal aid means test. The review is assessing the effectiveness with which the means test protects access to justice, by bringing together data, evidence and expertise from across government, and engaging with legal practitioners, representative organisations and third sector bodies. A central issue is the income and capital thresholds, but we are also reviewing other areas, such as the passporting provisions for people receiving certain benefits and the level of contributions individuals are required to pay towards their legal costs. We hope to publish the review alongside a public consultation shortly.

We have also recently made changes to ensure that legal aid remains accessible to those who need it. In May 2020, we removed the mandatory element of the Civil

Legal Advice telephone gateway. In December 2020, we removed the £100,000 cap on the amount of mortgage debt which can be considered in the civil means test, which means an individual's whole mortgage debt is now deducted from their property's value when assessing eligibility for civil legal aid. This legislation also disregarded some compensation and ex-gratia payments for the purposes of assessing legal aid eligibility.

In September 2021, we announced that we will remove the legal aid means test for applicants for Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) in relation to legal representation at inquests. This change will extend access to legal aid for the bereaved and simplify the ECF process.

■ Prison Sentences

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[56811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make it his policy to facilitate the eventual termination of all imprisonment for public protection sentences in response to the recommendation of the Prison Reform Trust.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has no plans to legislate to terminate existing IPP sentences.

The focus is on ensuring, via a joint HMPPS/Parole Board action plan, that IPP prisoners have every opportunity to progress towards safe release. This approach is working, with high numbers of unreleased IPP prisoners achieving a release decision each year. Indeed, as of 30 June this year there were 1,722 offenders serving the IPP sentence in prison who have never been released, down from over 6,000 when the sentence was abolished for new offences in December 2012. All IPP prisoners are by law entitled to have their continued detention reviewed by the independent Parole Board at least once every two years.

■ Prisons: Staff

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[56390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prison staff who were absent from work as a result of inability to access fuel for travel to work during the week commencing 27 September 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

The information requested is not available. Fuel shortage is not an absence reason recorded centrally by the department. 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.

■ Young Offenders

Alex Cunningham:

[58391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to improve data collection on court proceedings involving defendants aged under 18 in youth courts, adult magistrates courts and Crown Courts since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; and what plans he has to publish disaggregated data on youth criminal cases.

James Cartlidge:

HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) published Management Information during the COVID-19 outbreak to help explain how we delivered critical public services, from June 2020 to June 2021 found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-outbreak>. In July 2021, we paused publication of this information while we conducted a review. Following this review, we stopped publishing data on a weekly basis as this is included in the monthly published data found here [HMCTS monthly management information](#). Management information reflects the data held on the relevant case-management systems on the date of extraction, which is subject to change, and can differ from the quality-assured MOJ official statistics, which form the agreed definitive position. The published criminal court statistics can be found here [Criminal court statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

At present there are no plans to disaggregate youth data in the published statistics.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith:

[56652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Government's voter ID plans, whether student IDs covered by the PASS scheme will be accepted as valid ID to vote.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: As set out in Schedule 1, Paragraph 15 of the Elections Bill, any identity card covered by the PASS scheme that shows a photograph of the bearer will be accepted as valid identification for the purpose of voting at a polling station.

■ High Rise Flats: Safety

Preet Kaur Gill:

[56555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of buildings that have commissioned more than one EWS1 survey and received different ratings; and what guidance he has provided on how building owners should manage a situation where a B2 rating has been superseded and discredited by a later survey with lenders.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The building owner is responsible for commissioning an EWS1 assessment and should therefore clarify which form is extant in the case of duplicate assessments, including if one is no longer required, referring to the professionals who conducted the assessments as necessary.

Land: Agriculture

Lucy Powell: [\[58403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the national average value is of land designated for agricultural use per hectare.

Lucy Powell: [\[58404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the (a) national and (b) regional average value is of land designated for agricultural use per hectare for the most recent period for which data is available.

Lucy Powell: [\[58405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the (a) national and (b) regional average value is of land designated for residential use per hectare, for the most recent period for which data is available.

Lucy Powell: [\[58406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the (a) national and (b) regional average value is of land designated for industrial use per hectare, for the most recent period for which data is available.

Christopher Pincher:

The latest estimates of land values published by the department and produced for it by the Valuation Office Agency can be found here;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-value-estimates-for-policy-appraisal-2019> .

Local Government: Energy

Patricia Gibson: [\[56539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the financial cost relating to the increase in energy prices will be for local authorities in England in financial years (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We have empowered local authorities to make decisions on a range of matters that shape what happens in their area. We believe that, for most local government responsibilities, the most effective way to fund them is through councils' Core Spending Power. Core Spending Power is flexible to ensure local areas can prioritise based on their own understanding of the needs of their local communities. On 10 February, the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021-

22 passed in Parliament unopposed. This year, we have made available an increase in councils' Core Spending Power of up to 4.6% in cash terms, from £49.0 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22. This in real terms builds on the largest year on year increase in spending power in a decade last year and recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain critical services

We are committed to ensuring the sector continues to get the support they need to maintain key services and build back better after the pandemic. The forthcoming Spending Review will be the opportunity to consider local government's future funding needs in the round, and we will seek to provide local authorities with longer-term clarity to enable their forward planning.

■ Local Government: Local Press

Robert Halfon: [\[58379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to enable local authorities to place statutory notices with digital-only local news outlets.

Kemi Badenoch:

Local authorities have to publish statutory notices that relate to a wide variety of topics in local newspapers. We currently have no plans to change the statutory duty.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Rosie Duffield: [\[57247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Local Authority Remote Meetings call for evidence.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department is reviewing the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course. Any permanent change would require legislation, and would depend upon Parliamentary time being available.

■ Local Government: National Insurance

Patricia Gibson: [\[56592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to Local Authorities of the increase in employer National Insurance.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: This Government intends to compensate public sector employers for the increased cost of the Levy.

■ Members: Correspondence

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[58357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to Question 50971 and the correspondence dated 23 July 2021 from the hon Member for Bolton South East regarding funding for the Remembering Srebrenica charity.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response to the letter was sent on 21 October.

■ Public Lavatories: Non-domestic Rates

Mr Richard Holden: [\[58547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much each local authority has saved as a direct result of the abolition of non-domestic rates on public lavatories.

Kemi Badenoch:

The value of the relief is estimated to be worth around £6 million p.a. to eligible public lavatories in England. This includes both privately or publicly occupied public lavatories, we do not hold data on the split of support between privately and publicly occupied public lavatories.

■ Recreation Spaces: Ministerial Responsibility

Liz Twist: [\[57248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which Minister has responsibility for parks and green spaces.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Parks and green spaces share joint responsibility between the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). DLUHC is responsible for urban parks and green spaces and I am the responsible minister. In DEFRA, the responsible minister for the domestic natural environment, is Rebecca Pow MP and Lord Benyon is responsible for landscape, including national parks.

■ Rented Housing

Jess Phillips: [\[58417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to deliver a new deal for renters.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government remains committed to building back fairer and delivering a better deal for renters. We will publish a White Paper setting out a package of reforms that create a fairer private rented sector that works for both tenants and landlords. We are undertaking robust and structured stakeholder engagement working with the sector to

inform this while also learning from the pandemic and its impact on the sector. We will bring forward legislation in due course and when parliamentary time allows.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

Jess Phillips: [\[58418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of social house building rates.

Eddie Hughes:

We recognise the need to build more social housing, and since 2010 we have delivered over 542,400 new affordable homes, including over 382,300 affordable homes for rent.

To increase this further we are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme (AHP), which will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

Approximately half of the homes delivered will be for sub-market rent, and we will deliver more than twice as many homes for social rent as the current programme, with around 32,000 social rent homes.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed: [\[56314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much and what proportion of the total funding has been allocated from the Towns Fund to date.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Through the Towns Fund all 101 Towns invited to submit proposals for a Town Deal have been provided with a Heads of Terms offer, worth a combined total of £2.4 billion; in addition, all 72 successful Future High Streets places have been allocated funding, worth a combined total of £830 million.

■ Urban Areas: Finance

Steve Reed: [\[56441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department plans to take to assess the impact of (a) The Towns Fund, (b) the Levelling Up Fund and (c) the Community Renewal Fund against previously implemented area-based initiatives.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We are committed to robust monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact of our funding, ensure value for money and learn from what works to inform the design of future initiatives.

The Towns Fund evaluation will examine the impact of its interventions, including on: employment, land values, resident incomes, business turnover and profits, investment, well-being and perception of place.

This is summarised in the Towns Fund Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy, which the Department will publish in due course.

■ Visual Impairment: Voting Methods

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[56610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 51854 on Visual Impairment: Voting Methods, what recourse would a blind or partially sighted person have in the event that a tactile voting device was not available in their polling station should a Returning Officer decide that the provision of that device was not reasonable.

Sir George Howarth:

[\[56627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Elections Bill on the ability of blind and partially sighted people to vote without assistance.

Sir George Howarth:

[\[56629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to provide information on (a) support for and (b) changes to voting in elections to blind and partially sighted people.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: It is integral to our democracy that everybody is able to make their voice heard and that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote.

This is why, for the first time in electoral law, through the Elections Bill, we are putting in place a requirement for Returning Officers to consider the needs of all disabled voters when providing equipment for polling stations.

This will allow Returning Officers to tailor the package of equipment they offer to their voters and to take into account developments in equipment and technology, in order to best meet the needs of people with disabilities including those who have sight loss.

Clear guidance will be issued to Returning Officers by the Electoral Commission, which will be produced in partnership with the Government's expert Accessibility of Elections Working Group, which includes a wide range of stakeholders including the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

We will also work with the group and wider stakeholder networks to publicise the support available and help ensure people get the right support for them.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Community Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland****Stephen Farry:**[\[53370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to announce allocations under the Community Renewal Fund for projects in Northern Ireland.

Conor Burns:

There has been significant interest in the Community Renewal Fund in Northern Ireland, with bids submitted by a wide range of applicants across all of the Fund's investment strands. Applications have been assessed for strategic fit, deliverability and value for money. Successful projects will be announced in due course by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The UK Government has an ambitious plan to level up across the UK and the £220m Community Renewal Fund will help achieve this in Northern Ireland. By focusing on investment in skills, employment, net zero initiatives, local business and community and place, we will be making positive changes to communities right across the United Kingdom. The UK Government will ensure this investment makes a significant impact across Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****John Lamont:**[\[57234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government to encourage a UK-wide covid-19 vaccine certification mobile app.

Mr Alister Jack:

I discuss a wide range of issues relating to the Coronavirus pandemic with both Cabinet colleagues and Scottish Government Ministers on a regular basis.

When domestic certification was first identified as a potential strategy to support the Covid-19 response, and in order to respond to other States' requirements for international travel, there were a number of discussions, both at Ministerial and official level with all of the devolved administrations to look at both the possibility of a UK-wide certification solution, but also should this not be feasible to ensure technical interoperability between individual certification solutions where necessary.

As public health is a devolved matter, the Scottish Government decided to develop its own vaccine certification mobile app, and to require its use in certain settings within Scotland. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has promoted the Scottish Government's app with governments internationally so that it is recognised at international borders.

The UK Government Secretary of State for Health and his officials in DHSC and NHSx (which leads on digital health) continue to have weekly discussions with all of

the devolved administrations to ensure alignment and interoperability on all elements of the Covid response.

Should the UK Government decide to introduce domestic certification, we will continue to work with the devolved administrations to ensure interoperability, so that no citizen is impacted adversely when they travel across the UK.

TRANSPORT

■ Driving Licences

Layla Moran: [\[58489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of outstanding (a) driving licence applications, (b) short-term medical driving licence applications and (c) applications to exchange a foreign driving licence from people in (i) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency, (ii) Oxfordshire and (iii) England.

Layla Moran: [\[58490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the average waiting time for (a) driving licence applications, (b) short-term medical driving licence applications and (c) applications to exchange a foreign driving licence for people in (i) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency, (ii) Oxfordshire and (iii) England in each of the last five years.

Layla Moran: [\[58491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with stakeholders on reducing the backlog of driving licence applications.

Trudy Harrison:

The information requested in questions 58489 and 58490 is not readily available and can only be provided at disproportionate cost as it would involve scrutinising each application that is awaiting processing. Paper driving licence applications are currently taking between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has a rapid response corporate services team to engage key stakeholders, including trade associations. Formal four-weekly review meetings take place where stakeholders can raise issues/concerns and provide feedback from members. The DVLA has regular contact with key stakeholders to resolve issues and address concerns quickly. This includes providing information on timescales for processing applications, working to prioritise urgent applications where they are business-critical or employment is at risk and also provided a dedicated contact point for fuel companies to progress vocational licence applications.

■ Driving Tests

Layla Moran: [\[58492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the waiting time for driving tests.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has a number of measures in place to increase the availability of practical driving tests. 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. To support this campaign, the agency is exploring options to temporarily contract in experienced driving assessors from other road safety organisations to become driving examiners.

After lockdown, the DVSA returned to six tests per day (rather than seven) to ease examiners back into the workplace and to allow additional time between tests for COVID-secure measures to be carried out. From the 14 June, and following discussion with Public Health England, the DVSA returned to seven practical car tests, per day, per examiner in England, Scotland and Wales.

Returning to seven tests a day per examiner will allow the DVSA to increase capacity across the national network by an average of 15,000 to 20,000 tests per month. The aim is to increase testing capacity as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners.

■ Driving Tests: North East

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[58499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by what date his Department expects the driving theory test backlog to be cleared in the North East of England.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[58500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving theory tests his Department expects to take place over the next year at (a) Hexham and (b) Bishop Auckland driving test centres.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[58501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the extra number of days of testing capacity the opening of Hexham and Bishop Auckland driving theory test centres will create per year.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many driving theory test appointments as possible. The transition of the theory test

service in September 2021, will improve access for people in the North East by increasing the number of test centres from four to seven. There are currently six test centres now open, including Hexham which opened on 15 October 2021. A further test centre at Bishop Auckland will be opening on 9 November 2021. These seven test centres will offer over 90,000 theory tests a year. The DVSA is working with its supplier to meet service levels to ensure local demand is met.

By opening additional theory test centres in the North East, the DVSA expects to offer 110 theory test appointments at Hexham and 330 at Bishop Auckland in the next 12 months. This may vary in response to local demand.

■ Driving: Qualifications

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[56327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to offer support towards the cost of obtaining a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence for those people interested in (a) returning to and (b) taking up driving a lorry, bus, or coach professionally.

Trudy Harrison:

Responsibility for planning and completing the necessary training in order to meet Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) requirements lies with individual drivers and their employers. In some circumstances, employers might decide to support the driver financially to undertake the training. The cost of periodic training courses charged to the driver is decided by approved centres and determined by commercial factors.

Many employers are currently offering training packages to support drivers whose Driver CPC has lapsed to update their training through classroom or online courses. Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) licence holders, who are currently unemployed or are in receipt of Universal Credit can, at the discretion of local Department for Work (DWP) advisors, access the DWP Flexible Support Fund to renew their Driver CPC.

The Department for Education is also investing up to £10 million pounds to create new 'Skills Bootcamps' to train up to 5,000 people to become HGV drivers. These free, intensive courses will train drivers to be road ready and gain a category C or category C+E licence, helping to tackle the current HGV driver shortage.

An additional 1,000 people are expected to be trained through courses accessed locally and funded by the government's adult education budget. To help make sure new drivers can be road ready as quickly as possible, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has also agreed to ensure that driving tests will be available for participants who have completed training courses as soon as possible.

■ Electric Scooters

Ben Lake:

[\[58478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to publish the interim report outlining the initial findings of the e-scooter trials.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department is currently considering and quality assuring the initial findings and will look to publish as soon as possible, once finalised.

■ **Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme**

John Lamont: [\[56673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many installations have been supported by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles as part of the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme in (a) the Scottish Borders, (b) Scotland and (c) the UK.

John Lamont: [\[56675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many plug-in car grants have been issued in (a) the Scottish Borders Unitary Authority, (b) Scotland and (c) the UK; and what is the financial value of those grants.

John Lamont: [\[56678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what engagement he has had with Scottish local authorities on the On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme.

Trudy Harrison:

Data on domestic charging devices funded by the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) are presented in the table. Figures are from 1 July 2021.

	EVHS FUNDED CHARGING DEVICES
Scottish Borders	352
Scotland	11,582
UK	157,652

The Department holds data on plug-in car grants but this database does not provide the geographic breakdown required.

The table below shows, up to the end of December 2020, the number of plug-in car grant eligible models registered for the first time in the respective geographies. The right hand column provides an estimate of the maximum financial value of the grant support for these vehicles. This was calculated from vehicle registration data by applying amount of available grant for eligible models at the time of registration. This estimate does not mean that every car registered received the grant or that other cars did not receive the grant before the end of December 2020 but had not registered the car yet.

AREA OF REGISTRATION	NUMBER OF REGISTRATIONS FOR ELIGIBLE MODELS	MAXIMUM POTENTIAL GRANT SUPPORT AWARDED ¹
Scotland Borders Unitary	308	£1.1 million

AREA OF REGISTRATION	NUMBER OF REGISTRATIONS FOR ELIGIBLE MODELS	MAXIMUM POTENTIAL GRANT SUPPORT AWARDED ¹
Authority		
Scotland	17,266	£61 million
UK	301,096	£1,066 million

7 Scottish local authorities have been awarded grants totalling £1,065,381 through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), up to July 2021. The Scheme is administered on the Department's behalf by Energy Saving Trust, who offer expert advice and support to local authorities throughout the application process. Energy Saving Trust, in partnership with the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, also hosts a library of webinars and guidance documents focussing on the challenges that authorities face when installing charging infrastructure, while promoting the available funding.

In early 2022, in collaboration with the Institution of Engineering and Technology, we will publish an EV infrastructure guide for local authority EV officers, to assist with the transition to ZEVs. This guide will cover the steps needed to take in order to deploy chargepoints for residents. Scottish local authorities were involved in the scoping of the document and will be asked to comment at consultation stage in due course.

The Government wants to ensure that drivers can benefit from the transition to zero emission vehicles. The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) is available to all UK local authorities to provide public chargepoints for their residents without access to private parking. £20 million is available in 2021-22 to UK local authorities through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme.

■ Electric Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Feryal Clark:

[\[56201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps his Department has taken to encourage investment in electric vehicle and battery manufacturing in the UK.

Trudy Harrison:

As part of the Government's Net Zero Strategy, we are allocating a further £350 million for the Automotive Transformation Fund, as part of our up to £1 billion commitment to build an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain including gigafactories. This is in addition to the £500m of funding announced as part of the 10 Point Plan. This will help ensure the UK maximises the benefits from the transition to a zero emission vehicle future and support tens of thousands of high-quality green jobs across the UK.

We continue to work closely with investors to progress plans for manufacturing the batteries that we will need for the next generation of electric vehicles here in the UK. The £1bn investment announced by Nissan and Envision AESC to create an electric

vehicle (EV) manufacturing hub is a major vote of confidence in the UK. We are delivering on our commitment to transition to a zero-carbon future, secure Gigafactories and ensure we continue our proud legacy of being one of the best locations for competitive, high-quality automotive manufacturing.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[53326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is his policy to deliver the eastern leg of HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is committed to ensuring the East Midlands, Yorkshire and North East reap the benefits of high-speed services. The Department will soon publish its Integrated Rail Plan which will confirm how we intend to take forward the HS2 Eastern Leg.

■ High Speed Two: Apprentices

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[53324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of apprentices currently employed by HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Ltd has confirmed that, as of September 2021, there are 65 apprentices in its workforce, and 550 apprentices in the HS2 supply chain.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[57474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on improving the range of services available to haulage drivers working in the UK.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the need to ensure hauliers have access to appropriate services and facilities. DfT and DLUHC Ministers and officials are in close contact to progress work in this area.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Owen Thompson: [\[57169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling people who hold a category DE driving licence to (a) automatically acquire a category C licence or (b) relax the requirements for obtaining that licence in the context of the shortage of HGV drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has no plans to allow drivers with a Category D licence for buses and coaches to drive large goods vehicles without obtaining a Category C licence. While these vehicles are similar in size, it is important to recognise that they are very different in their weight and their manoeuvrability.

Ensuring drivers have the right licence, and skills, needed to drive different types of vehicles is key to maintaining road safety.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Facilities**Holly Mumby-Croft:**[\[57473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) access to and (b) quality of service station facilities for haulage drivers in the UK.

Trudy Harrison:

We recognise the important contribution that hauliers make to the nation's economy and are aware of the concerns expressed by many drivers, operators and residents about the provision and quality of lorry parking in the UK. We are committed to looking at both established and new approaches to increase the provision for improved overnight lorry parking in England, along with developing innovative approaches to provide more capacity.

Through the Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 02/2013 "The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development", we ensure that Motorway Service Area operators provide, at a minimum, free short-term parking for up to two hours for all types of vehicle allowing people to take a break, use the facilities and or eat a meal as required.

Building on a 2020 review of lorry parking, the department continues to engage with key stakeholders to encourage the development of safe, secure and high-quality lorry parking. This includes the sharing of information and good practice, such as overcoming planning barriers to the development of lorry parks, improving standards of security and facilities to improve driver welfare, and exploring the benefits of innovation and new technology.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies**Feryal Clark:**[\[56203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the ongoing shortage of heavy goods vehicle drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

Cabinet Ministers attend regular meetings organised by the National Economic Recovery Taskforce (NERT) to agree measures and actions to address the heavy goods vehicle driver shortage. Cabinet Ministers also engage in informal discussions as and when required.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Working Hours

Feryal Clark:

[\[56205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the temporary increase to the maximum daily working hours for HGV drivers on road safety.

Trudy Harrison:

It is important to note that the relaxations made to the drivers' hours rules are limited in nature. No requirements of the rules, whether it be breaks during the day, daily & weekly rest periods, or weekly and fortnightly driving limits, have been removed. The rules have been relaxed in a controlled way.

The drivers' hours relaxation requires compensatory rest when the option to amend weekly rest patterns is taken. This is designed to combat cumulative fatigue and is very similar to a provision in force across the UK and EU permanently for some international driving.

There is published guidance about the circumstances in which the temporary relaxations can be used. There must be evidence of detriment to the wider community, that the relaxation leads to a significant improvement and that driver safety must not be compromised. In respect of detriment and safety there are specific benchmarks.

The rules are enforced by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) who also collect data on compliance.

■ Local Government: Snow and Ice

Emily Thornberry:

[\[58331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the stockpiles of rock salt held by local authorities in England; and how those figures compare to the stockpiles held by the authorities in each of the previous six winters from 2015 to 2020.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways holds a strategic reserve of salt on behalf of the Department under the provisions of the National Salt Reserve Protocol. This reserve is intended for use by English local highway authorities in the event of a national shortage of salt. In addition, National Highways holds a further reserve of salt for its own use.

As at 1 October 2021, the total amount of salt held in strategic stockpiles was 351,575 tonnes, comprising 259,021 tonnes in the reserve held by National Highways on behalf of the Department, and 92,554 tonnes held by National Highways in its own reserves. The totals for previous years, 2015-2020, are included in the table below.

YEAR	STRATEGIC RESERVE HELD BY NATIONAL HIGHWAYS FOR THE DEPARTMENT (TONNES)	NATIONAL HIGHWAYS STRATEGIC RESERVE (TONNES)	TOTAL STRATEGIC RESERVES HELD IN ENGLAND (TONNES)
2021	259,021	92,554	351,575
2020	264,591	92,554	357,145
2019	265,786	92,554	358,340
2018	266,149	92,554	358,703
2017	280,577	100,025	380,602
2016	282,235	100,864	383,099
2015	286,642	102,392	389,034

■ Motor Vehicles

Geraint Davies:

[\[56751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of supporting the use of powered light vehicles to (a) improve congestion, (b) improve air quality and (c) help consumer select the right vehicle for the right journey.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department gathered evidence on the potential benefits of micromobility vehicles in the Future of Transport Regulatory Review Call for Evidence in March 2020. These benefits are also being evaluated as part of our evidence gathering through ongoing national trials of e-scooters.

Early evidence may show that the use of micromobility vehicles such as e-scooters has the potential to ease and improve congestion, mainly as they are smaller than other road-going vehicles. Fewer parking spaces are also needed, allowing parking space to be reallocated.

Micromobility vehicles that use rechargeable electric batteries also offer a greener way to travel than taking a diesel or petrol fueled car which, depending on mode shift, could help reduce emissions and improve air quality in towns and cities.

With regard to helping the consumer select the right vehicle for the right journey, micromobility vehicles give consumers more options when it comes to vehicle type. They may also make public transport accessible to more people who would otherwise have to walk too far to local stations for example.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**Geraint Davies:** [\[56425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the consultation on the phase out of non-zero-emission L-Category vehicles will be published.

Trudy Harrison:

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan published in July set out the government's commitments and the actions needed to decarbonise transport in the UK. This includes consulting this year on a date of 2035, or earlier if a faster transition appears feasible, for ending of sale of new non-zero emission powered two and three wheelers (and other L category vehicles).

■ Motorway Service Areas: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[56270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of investing in additional facilities at motorway service stations, to improve working conditions for HGV drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

We recognise the important contribution that hauliers make to the nation's economy and are aware of the concerns expressed by many drivers, operators and residents about the provision and quality of lorry parking in the UK. We are committed to looking at both established and new approaches to increase the provision for improved overnight lorry parking in England, along with developing innovative approaches to provide more capacity.

Through the Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 02/2013 "The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development", we ensure that Motorway Service Area operators provide, at a minimum, free short-term parking for up to two hours for all types of vehicle allowing people to take a break, use the facilities and or eat a meal as required.

Building on a 2020 review of lorry parking, the Department continues to engage with key stakeholders to encourage the development of safe, secure and high-quality lorry parking. This includes the sharing of information and good practice, such as overcoming planning barriers to the development of lorry parks, improving standards of security and facilities to improve driver welfare, and exploring the benefits of innovation and new technology.

■ Ports: Staff**Alan Brown:** [\[56620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions has he had with operators of key freight ports on (a) staffing levels and (b) the subsequent impact on the movement of goods; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Department is in regular contact with key port operators at Ministerial and official level. Most recently this has been concerned with the wider global international shipping issues arising from increased disruption and demand, as well as the domestic supply chain matters. That engagement has not indicated port staffing to be a factor in those delays.

Railways: Snow and Ice**Emily Thornberry:**[\[58330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the stockpiles of rock salt held by (a) Network Rail, (b) Train Operating Companies and (c) other railway station operators and rail service providers in England; and how those figures compare to the stockpiles held by those bodies in each of the previous six winters from 2015 to 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department does not hold information on the levels of rock salt stockpiles used by the rail industry. As rock salt has a corrosive impact on some metals, it is only used on surfaces such as platforms and walkways. Industry use other anti-icing agents on tracks to mitigate problems caused by freezing. Network Rail and Train Operating Companies work together to ensure sufficient anti-icing agents are available, and follow well-established processes to manage their procurement, distribution and delivery.

Road Signs and Markings**Chris Grayling:**[\[56409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which road signs a local authority has to seek his approval prior to installation.

Trudy Harrison:

A local authority needs to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Transport for the use of any traffic signs that are not prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, 2016, as amended.

Roads: Snow and Ice**Emily Thornberry:**[\[58328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many tonnes of rock salt were held in the strategic stockpiles maintained by (a) his Department and (b) Highways England, as of 1 October 2021; and how those figures compare to the stockpiles available in each of the previous six winters from 2015 to 2020.

Trudy Harrison:

Under Section 41 (1a) of the Highways Act 1980, as amended, local highway authorities are required “to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice”. Government has no powers to intervene in these matters or with local highway winter service planning and the treatment of roads for which local highway authorities are responsible.

Every winter the Department monitors salt stocks held by local highway authorities in England. We will issue our first salt survey shortly.

It is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between different winter survey returns as they are invariably issued at different times and to make sense of the results we would need to know how much salt each authority holds, how much salt is on order and when delivery of that salt is expected. We would also need to know how much salt each highway authority needs to comply with Quarmby’s recommendations of being able to grit its Key Route Network 4 times a day for 12 days.

National Highways manage the national emergency salt reserve on the Department’s behalf. There are 259,021 tonnes of salt in the reserve.

Emily Thornberry:[\[58329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the stockpiles of rock salt held by the highways authorities in England; and how those figures compare to the stockpiles held by those authorities in each of the previous six winters from 2015 to 2020.

Trudy Harrison:

Under Section 41 (1a) of the Highways Act 1980, as amended, local highway authorities are required “to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice”. Government has no powers to intervene in these matters or with local highway winter service planning and the treatment of roads for which local highway authorities are responsible.

Every winter the Department monitors salt stocks held by local highway authorities in England. We will issue our first salt survey shortly.

It is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between different winter survey returns as they are invariably issued at different times and to make sense of the results we would need to know how much salt each authority holds, how much salt is on order and when delivery of that salt is expected. We would also need to know how much salt each highway authority needs to comply with Quarmby’s recommendations of being able to grit its Key Route Network 4 times a day for 12 days.

National Highways manage the national emergency salt reserve on the Department’s behalf. There are 259,021 tonnes of salt in the reserve.

■ Train Operating Companies

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[58482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to update the data on (a) Operating payments to Train Operating Companies under emergency agreements and (b) Emergency Measure Agreement performance score and fees on the Gov.uk website.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the 21st October the Department published operational support payments to Train Operating Companies along with the scores and fees determined through the evaluation of operator performance. This release on the Gov.uk website covered the period between September 2020 to March 2021 (performance and fees) and 1 April 2021 to 24 July 2021 (operational support). The Department is committed to providing periodic updates of this information on an ongoing basis.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions

Feryal Clark:

[\[56197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on ensuring that the Net Zero Strategy includes a pathway for decarbonising transport.

Trudy Harrison:

Our Transport Decarbonisation Plan, published in July 2021, set out a credible, deliverable pathway to net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector by 2050, as well as delivering the sector's contribution to demanding carbon budgets along the way. The Net Zero Strategy presents a pathway to net zero emissions across the whole economy, including the transport sector.

Feryal Clark:

[\[56199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues in the Treasury to help ensure that transport decarbonisation measures are adequately funded in the comprehensive spending review.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport is committed to decarbonising the UK's transport system. Our pathway to net zero was set out in our ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Plan earlier this year and reducing the environmental impacts of transport is one of our Departmental Priority Outcomes.

Department for Transport ministers have had positive and ongoing engagement with their HM Treasury counterparts throughout the Spending Review process. Ministers across Government are committed to achieving net zero by 2050 and we will continue to progress towards this goal over this coming Spending Review period.

The outcomes of Spending Review will be published at Autumn Budget on Wednesday 27th October.

Kerry McCarthy:[\[58315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish the datasets used for the mode by mode decarbonisation pathways contained in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport has no immediate plans to publish the mode-by-mode datasets underpinning the decarbonisation pathways contained in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP). Further data on decarbonisation pathways for different modes will be shared as and when required for the future development of policy, in line with consultations committed to in the TDP.

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[56766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Joint Biosecurity Centre's risk assessment in July 2021 found Germany to be a higher risk for international travel than Croatia.

Robert Courts:

Decisions on border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account Joint Biosecurity Centre risk assessments of countries and territories, alongside wider public health factors.

In July 2021, Germany was on the amber list. Croatia was removed from the amber list and added to the green list from 19 July 2021. The countries and territories on the green list in July 2021 were those that presented the lowest risk to the UK.

From Monday 4 October, the traffic light system was replaced with a single red list of countries and simplified travel measures for arrivals from the rest of the world, depending on vaccination status.

Travel Restrictions: South Africa**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[56413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason South Africa is on the red list for international covid-19 travel restrictions; and if he will publish the (a) data and (b) evidential basis on which South Africa has been retained on the red list for international covid-19 travel restrictions.

Robert Courts:

South Africa was removed from the red list at 4am on Monday 11 October.

Decisions on red list assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account Joint Biosecurity Centre risk assessments of countries and territories, alongside wider public health factors. A summary of the Joint Biosecurity Centre methodology is published on gov.uk, alongside key data that supports Ministers' decisions.

Key data used to support decision to remove South Africa from red list on 11 October has been published on gov.uk

Julian Sturdy: [\[57008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussion he has had with officials in South Africa on South Africa's covid-19 red travel list designation.

Robert Courts:

South Africa was removed from the red list at 4am on Monday 11 October.

The UK government regularly engages with countries affected by red listing including South Africa.

■ **Travel: Enfield North**

Feryal Clark: [\[56195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) decarbonise transport and (b) encourage active travel in Enfield North constituency.

Trudy Harrison:

London has been allocated over £150 million of active travel funding since the start of the pandemic to support the roll-out of safe cycling and walking routes across the capital. The allocation of funding to London Boroughs is a matter for Transport for London, and this is overseen by a steering group comprising senior representatives from TfL, DfT and Number 10.

TREASURY

■ **Energy: VAT**

Robert Halfon: [\[58381\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to reduce VAT on energy bills for families in the UK.

Lucy Frazer:

In recognition of the fact that families should not have to bear all the VAT costs they incur to meet their energy needs, the Government already maintains a reduced rate of 5 per cent VAT on the supply of domestic energy, at a cost of £5 billion per year to the public finances.

Going further would impose additional pressure on the public finances and that cost would have to be balanced by increased taxes elsewhere, or by reductions in Government spending.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Appeals

Owen Thompson:

[\[57167\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will reconsider the no right to appeal rule for those who are denied Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grants from HMRC.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has provided generous support to the self-employed during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). The SEISS has helped nearly 3 million self-employed individuals with claims totalling over £27 billion.

Customers can ask HMRC to review their SEISS claim. However, HMRC have limited discretion in operating the SEISS and this discretion can only be used in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances could include situations where HMRC have made an error that has affected an individual's eligibility for, or amount of, a SEISS grant.

There is no legal right of appeal against decisions made in relation to the SEISS, and there is also no legal provision for 'reasonable excuse' within the legal framework for the SEISS.

The fifth and final SEISS grant closed on 30th September 2021.

■ SME Brexit Support Fund

Sarah Olney:

[\[58473\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding has been provided in grants by the SME Brexit Support Fund to each region of the UK.

Lucy Frazer:

As of 6 October 2021, 5,352 businesses have been offered a grant by the SME Brexit Support Fund.

A regional breakdown of the figures shows that businesses in England have been offered £7,289,018, in Scotland £476,539, in Wales £230,159 and in Northern Ireland £434,234.

■ Taxation: Electronic Commerce

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[57036\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of online retailers on online sales taxes.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government published a Call for Evidence on 21 July 2020, as part of its Fundamental Review of Business Rates, to gather views from stakeholders on all elements of the Business Rates system and alternatives, including an Online Sales Tax.

Officials engaged with a broad range of stakeholders including online retailers as part of that process.

The Government provided a summary of responses to the Call for Evidence in March 2021. The review will conclude later this year.

■ UK Infrastructure Bank

Bridget Phillipson: [\[56271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many financing arrangements have been made by the National Infrastructure Bank (a) since it was set up and (b) in each month of its operation; and what is (i) the total amount of financing advanced (i) since it was set up and (ii) in each month of its operation.

Helen Whately:

The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) launched in June and is open for business. The UKIB is actively engaging with the private sector and local authorities and is in live conversations about a number of projects. UKIB has taken over management of the UK Guarantee Scheme, consisting of 9 guarantees totalling £1.8 billion of Treasury-backed infrastructure bonds and loans, supporting over £4 billion worth of investment. The Bank also operates the Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund and the Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund – previously managed by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

■ UK Infrastructure Bank: Staff

Bridget Phillipson: [\[56458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff on a (a) FTE and (b) headcount basis work for the National Infrastructure Bank (i) as at 1 October 2021 and (ii) for each month of its operation.

Helen Whately:

The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) formally launched on 17th June 2020. The UKIB will publish details of its headcount in the usual way in their first set of Annual Reports & Accounts, due to be published next year.

■ Waste Disposal: Taxation

Geraint Davies: [\[53162\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing tax incentives to encourage the (a) sorting and (b) biological treatment of waste before landfill for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Helen Whately:

The government is committed to reducing waste going to landfill. The Resources and Waste Strategy 2018 set out commitments to eliminate all avoidable waste to landfill by 2050 and to reduce the amount of municipal waste landfilled to 10% of total municipal waste by 2035.

Landfill Tax provides an incentive for waste to be diverted away from landfill and has contributed to a reduction in local authority waste sent to landfill in England of 90% since 2000.

The government is also introducing a world leading tax on plastic packaging from April 2022. The tax will encourage the use of recycled plastic instead of new plastic within packaging. It will create greater demand for recycled plastic, and in turn stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste, diverting it away from landfill or incineration.

While the government has no immediate plans to introduce further tax incentives for waste management, the government will review aspects of the Landfill Tax in England and Northern Ireland in due course, as announced in spring 2021. This will ensure the tax continues to support the government's ambitious environmental objectives.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Debt: Money and Pensions Service

Sarah Champion:

[\[56536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Money Advice and Pension Service debt advice tender process on local provision of debt advice.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Money and Pensions Service's (MaPS) debt advice recommissioning is expected to materially increase the amount of debt advice available to people in England and ensure services are built around customers' needs.

MaPS is taking proactive steps to ensure the debt advice tender process retains a set level of debt advice delivery at the regional and local level.

■ Equality: Europe

John Howell:

[\[56939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 28 September 2021 on socio-economic inequalities in Europe.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The UK is committed to the protection and promotion of social rights. The UK has ratified the 1961 European Social Charter (ESC), the European Code of Social Security and numerous other international social rights instruments. The UK is fully committed to all of the Council of Europe instruments it is Party to and engages constructively in work on socio-economic inequalities at the Council of Europe.

The UK Government is taking important steps to reduce inequalities and levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom, particularly as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have launched a suite of employment support schemes, significant investments in skills, training and apprenticeships, and Universal Credit has played a crucial and effective role in protecting the most vulnerable.

The Department for Work and Pensions is continuously reviewing its policies on socio-economic inequalities to ensure that no one and no community is left behind.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Sarah Olney:

[\[58470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of job placements made via the Kickstart scheme (a) to date, (b) in each of the last six months and (c) by region.

Mims Davies:

As of the 11th October, 86,000 young people have started a Kickstart job. Over 204,900 roles have been made available for young people to apply to through the scheme and over 307,500 jobs have been approved for funding.

The tables below list the number of starts per month over the last 6 months as well as the number of Kickstart jobs which have been made available and started by young people to date by geographical area of Great Britain. The figures used are correct as of the 11th October and these figures have been rounded according to departmental standards.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

Table 1- Jobs started on the Kickstart Scheme by month.

MONTH	MONTHLY STARTS
April	9,480
May	10,300
June	11,940
July	11,610
August	11,280
September	16,640

Table 2- Jobs made available and started on the Kickstart Scheme by Location.

LOCATION	JOBS MADE AVAILABLE	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
East Midlands	12,500	5,240
East of England	16,400	6,060
London	43,500	18,560
North East	8,300	4,000
North West	25,400	10,930
Scotland	15,200	7,420
South East	23,500	9,330
South West	14,700	5,610
Wales	11,100	4,190
West Midlands	18,500	7,870
Yorkshire and The Humber	15,800	6,760

*These numbers are rounded and so may not match provided totals. Jobs Made Available include 1,000 non-grant funded vacancies and Total Starts include around 900 starts to non-grant funded jobs

■ Local Housing Allowance

Lucy Powell:

[58402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households are in receipt of local housing allowance (LHA) in payment; how many of those households have rents which exceed the local housing allowance rate; and of the latter households, what the median gap is between the rent and the LHA, by the number of children in the household in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales, for the most recent period for which data is available.

David Rutley:

In May 2021 there were 1,896k households in receipt of LHA via Housing Benefit or Universal Credit in Great Britain. Of these, 982k had rents which exceeded the LHA and the median gap was £100/month. This breaks down as attached table.

In response to Covid-19 we increased LHA rates to the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2020. This significant investment of nearly £1 billion has provided 1.5 million claimants with an average £600 more housing support last year than they would otherwise have received. We have also maintained Local Housing Allowance rates at the same cash level for 2021/22.

For those who require additional housing support Discretionary Housing Payments are available. Since 2011 we have provided over £1 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments funding. We have allocated a further £140 million for Discretionary Housing Payments for 2021/22 in England and Wales.

Attachments:

1. 58402 attachment [Local Housing Allowance (LHA) table.xlsx]

■ New Enterprise Allowance**Hywel Williams:****[56815]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) people have been supported and (b) businesses established through the New Enterprise Allowance in I(i) Wales, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) England since 2014.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) is available across Great Britain only. NEA data for England, Scotland and Wales is published on Gov.uk (link attached) New Enterprise Allowance: April 2011 to December 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) .

The Data tables: New Enterprise Allowance official statistics: April 2011 to December 2020 give the total number of participants broken down by month and also the individuals and businesses started on NEA broken down by regions.

Jonathan Reynolds:**[57020]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason her Department has decided to end the New Enterprise Allowance scheme.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The contract for the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) was due to end in March 2021, but was extended by nine months to support claimants through the unprecedented challenges that arose due to the pandemic. As the economy opens up, it is right that we focus our resources on getting jobseekers into work and progressing with support underpinned by our Plan For Jobs. Furthermore, while referrals to the NEA end on 31 December 2021, participants on the programme will receive support until October 2023.

The NEA is just one form of provision available to the self-employed. Those self-employed or those wishing to become self-employed can access support from the Small Business Helpline in England, Business Wales and Fair Start Scotland. Additionally, the Start Up Loans scheme, run by the British Business Bank, delivers support to many people that may have otherwise struggled to obtain it through a commercial bank loan. The scheme provides mentoring to those starting their business, and offers support to women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs from ethnic minority backgrounds and the previously unemployed. Where Jobcentres identify claimants with additional support requirements not met elsewhere, they may use Flexible Support Fund to commission additional localised support.

Support for the self-employed is built into Universal Credit, so claimants can receive financial support to supplement their earnings and they can receive regular support from Self-Employment Work Coaches, who will signpost entrepreneurs to tools and resources to develop the skills and experience they need. Claimants on legacy benefits who become self-employed may migrate to Universal Credit and receive a start-up period of up to one year, which includes 1-2-1 Work Coach support to develop their business.

■ Pension Credit

Patricia Gibson:

[\[57112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to (a) raise awareness of Pension Credit and (b) make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the time period for claiming backdated Pension Credit from three months.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5 billion in Pension Credit which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

We continue to use every opportunity to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim. For example, on 16 June as part of a media day of action on Pension Credit, DWP joined forces with Age UK as well as the BBC to help reach, via national and local media, older people who may be reticent about claiming it. More recently, on 7 September, I met the BBC Director General to discuss other opportunities to work together to get information about Pension Credit to pensioners and their family members. We have also set up a working group including organisations such as Age UK, Independent Age, the BBC and British Telecom to explore innovative ways to reach eligible pensioners. The most recent meeting of the working group took place on 19 October.

Earlier this year, over 11 million pensioners in Great Britain received information about Pension Credit in the leaflet accompanying their annual State Pension up-rating letter. They will do so again next year.

There are no plans to review the existing Pension Credit backdating rules.

■ Pensioners: Fuel Poverty

Neale Hanvey:

[\[56414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the steps her Department could take to help pensioners avoid fuel poverty ahead of energy bill increases.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to tackling fuel poverty and protecting low income and vulnerable households.

The Winter Fuel Payment provides pensioners with support for their energy bills over winter. Government has committed to keeping the Winter Fuel Payment and will continue to pay £200 to eligible households with someone between State Pension age and 79, and £300 to a household with someone aged 80 or over. The payment is intended to give reassurance to pensioners that they can keep warm during the colder months.

Cold Weather Payments are also available for periods of extreme weather to those in receipt of Pension Credit, including those receiving the Savings Credit element. The Scottish Government will in due course replace Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments with its own provision under the terms of the Scotland Act 2016.

The Warm Home Discount scheme, worth £354 million this year, further provides eligible low-income and vulnerable households with £140 off their fuel bill over winter. Around one million low-income pensioner households – in receipt of the Guarantee Credit element of the Pension Credit – will receive a rebate this winter. Most eligible pensioners will receive their rebates automatically, without having to take any action. The scheme will be extended to 2026 and continue to support low-income pensioners with their energy bills.

We recognise that some people continue to require extra support, which is why we have introduced a £421 million Household Support Fund to help vulnerable people in England with essential household costs over the winter as the economy recovers. The Barnett Formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million.

This winter, the energy price cap will continue to protect around 15 million British households on default tariffs, saving them between £75 and £100 a year on dual fuel bills. In addition, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy reached a Voluntary Agreement with energy suppliers last year which remains in place this winter. Vulnerable people and those experiencing financial difficulty should contact their supplier to discuss support available under the agreement, including reassessing, reducing or pausing debt repayments.

■ Pensions and Unemployment: Portsmouth

Stephen Morgan: [\[56283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of the closure of Cosham Pension Centre on (a) her Department's ability to process pension claims and (b) levels of unemployment in Portsmouth; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

Work currently carried out at Cosham will be undertaken in other locations across the national network.

■ Social Security Benefits

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[57019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the eligibility criteria are for a claimant to receive their payments through her Department's Payment Exception Service when Post Office card accounts end.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Payment Exception Service has been designed for customers who cannot open or manage a basic bank or standard accounts and enables them to obtain cash payments via the PayPoint network or from their Post Office.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Justin Madders: [\[56256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the equalisation of the State Pension on the (a) incomes, (b) well-being and (c) health outcomes of people affected.

Guy Opperman:

Changes to State Pension age were made over a series of Acts by successive governments from 1995 onwards, following public consultations and extensive debates in both Houses of Parliament.

We do not hold any recorded information of an impact assessment that informed the rises in State Pension age of the Pensions Act 1995. However, the White Paper 'Equality in State Pension Age' 1993 contains some consideration of impacts. The document can be found here <http://qna.files.parliament.uk/qna-attachments/1084399/original/Equality%20in%20State%20Pension%20age%201993.pdf>

The 2006 impact assessment 'The Gender Impact of Pension Reform' considered a wide range of reforms to both state and private pension systems, including proposed State Pension age changes, and can be found here:

<https://wearchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111115164646/http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/genderimpactassessment.pdf>

The Department has carried out a number of impact assessments to consider how new regulatory legislation impact those affected by the changes. These include some mention of the impacts on income and health. Please see:

The 2007 Regulatory Impact Assessment can be found here:

<https://wearchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121204130650/http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pensions-bill-ria.pdf>

The Pensions Act 2011 Impact Assessment can be found here:

<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pensions-act-2011-impact-assessment>

The Pensions Act 2014 Impact Assessment can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pensions-act-2014-impact-assessments-may-2014>

Stephen Timms:

[56659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new claims for State Pension from (a) men and (bi) women were paid more than four weeks after the claimant's sixty-sixth birthday in each of the last twelve months.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: This information is not collated as a matter of normal business under this, or previous governments and is only available at disproportionate cost to The Department for Work & Pensions.

Caroline Lucas:

[56951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are facing delays in receiving their State Pension after sending in their application; how long people facing such delays are waiting on average; if he will make it his policy to (a) not suspend and (b) reinstate working age benefits whilst people wait for their State Pension; what payments are available to people who do not have enough to live on whilst their pension application is delayed; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We expect all claims received to-date, where a payment is due in October, to be processed by the end of October, with the exception of those claims where we need additional information, or there is a future entitlement date. Those cases which could not be processed through Get Your State Pension or received clerically will be prioritised if they are due payment by the end of the month.

Persons over pension age can make a claim for Pension Credit and further information is available online at: www.gov.uk/pension-credit

We are aware that there are small numbers of delayed State Pension Claims. All of these customers have been contacted by the department and we are awaiting further information so we can finalise their claims.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[58889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of new state pension claimants have experienced delays in processing their claim in (a) the UK, (b) Wales and (c) Aberavon.

Guy Opperman:

This information is not held and is only available at disproportionate cost to the Department.

Matt Rodda: [\[59018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether all those affected by the delays in new State Pension claims have had their claim resolved.

Guy Opperman:

We expect all State Pension claims received to-date, where a payment is due in October, to be processed by the end of October; with the exception of those claims where we need additional information, or there is a future entitlement date.

Matt Rodda: [\[59019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether people approaching State Pension age will face delays in receiving their State Pension.

Guy Opperman:

Over 50 per cent of claims made on line through Get Your State Pension are processed automatically. All other State Pension claims received to-date, where a payment is due in October, will be processed by the end of October; with the exception of those claims where we need additional information, or there is a future entitlement date.

We do not expect delays to State Pension claims in the future provided all relevant information has been received.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Owen Thompson:** [\[56687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints have been received by her Department on the communication of changes to women's State Pension retirement age as at 18 October 2021.

Guy Opperman:

As of 18 October 2021, DWP received 9822 complaints in the period from August 2016 to September 2021.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[57021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that when rectifying the underpayment of the State Pension, the

women affected are contacted by an appropriate means that caters to any disabilities or impairments they may have.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: DWP is committed to ensuring our services are accessible to all. This includes making reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of all our customers who have a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as supporting customers who may be deemed to need additional support.

DWP ensures that communications with anyone who has been underpaid State Pension meet an individual's requirements by using the information we have recorded on our systems at the claims stage. This includes the adoption of communications aids such as: Audio / British Sign Language, Induction Loop, Type-talk, Braille and large print letters.

Regular monitoring of telephone calls and written correspondence ensures that we maintain service standards and meet each individual's specific communication requirements.

Paul Girvan:

[\[57266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled, Women's State Pension age: our findings on the Department for Work and Pensions' communication of changes, published on 29 July 2021, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Ombudsman's findings and potential for compensation for claimants impacted by the changes to women's State Pension age.

Guy Opperman:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has not completed his investigation. This a multi staged process and the report published on 20 July 2021 concludes stage-one of the investigation.

It would not be appropriate to comment on the PHSO's report whilst the investigation is ongoing; and section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Forecasts**

Bill Esterson:

[\[57001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the extent of delays in responding to requests for State Pension forecasts for people who have deferred their State Pension.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Where customers have deferred making their State Pension claim, there is no delay to DWP responding to such requests for State Pension forecasts. All such requests are being processed.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Reform**Luke Pollard:** [\[56145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to reform the triple lock on the State Pension.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to reform the Triple Lock.

The legislation currently before Parliament is a one-year response to exceptional circumstances.

■ Winter Fuel Payments**Neale Hanvey:** [\[56416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take ahead of expected energy bill increases to help ensure that the Winter Fuel Payment is fit for purpose.

Neale Hanvey: [\[56419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to ensure that the Winter Fuel Payment will be uprated annually to keep pace with inflation.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has committed to keeping the winter fuel payment and will continue to pay £200 to eligible households with someone between state pension age and 79, and £300 to a household with someone aged 80 or over. The payment provides reassurance to pensioners that Government assistance is available and that they can keep warm during the colder months.

The Scottish Government will in due course replace these payments with its own provision under the terms of the Scotland Act 2016.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ BEIS Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):

[\[HCWS348\]](#)

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by AQUIND Limited for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the UK elements of a 2,000MW bi-directional subsea electrical power interconnector between Normandy in France and Lovedean in Hampshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The original deadline for the decision on the AQUIND Interconnector application was 8 September 2021. This deadline was previously extended to 21 October 2021.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 21 January 2022 for deciding this application. Following receipt of the report from the Examining Authority, I required clarification from the applicant on several issues. Interested parties were given the opportunity to comment on the applicant's response. I have decided that further work is necessary to consider the application in detail including whether further information is required, and this requires an extension to the deadline.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Public Appointments Data Report 2021

Minister of State (Nigel Adams):

[\[HCWS347\]](#)

My noble Friend, the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (Lord True CBE), has today made the following written statement:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the Public Appointments Data Report 2021 and will today be depositing a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Public Appointments Data Report provides a breakdown of the diversity of public appointees who were in roles covered by the Governance Code on Public Appointments on 31 March 2021, and those appointed to such roles between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. The latter data is a subset of the information published in the Commissioner for Public Appointments' annual report.

DEFENCE

■ **Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report 2020****The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Leo Docherty):**
[\[HCWS340\]](#)

The MOD's formal response to the Service Complaints Ombudsman's (SCO) annual report for 2020 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the service complaints system has today been placed in the Library of the House.

The Ombudsman's report assessed the fifth year of operation of the reformed Service complaints system which was implemented on 1 January 2016 and the work of her office in 2020. The response sets out MOD's comments and approach to each of the Ombudsman's observations that she has made and includes a summary of our position on recommendations made in previous annual reports.

The MOD values the strong independent oversight that the Ombudsman brings to the Service complaints process, and remains committed to having a system in which our personnel can have confidence. This will include progressing outstanding recommendations and observations, together with improvements identified in Air Marshal Wigston's Report in April 2019 on Inappropriate Behaviours.

■ **Sir Richard Henriques' Review****Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**[\[HCWS349\]](#)

It is vital for UK Defence that our Service Justice System has the most up to date framework, skills and processes in place to deal with all allegations of offending. At the heart of the Service Justice System must be robust, independent, and trusted investigation processes that have the confidence of service personnel and the international community. It is for this reason, that on 13 October 2020, I announced a review by Sir Richard Henriques to examine investigative and prosecutorial processes for dealing with allegations of offences on overseas operations and improve the quality of investigations and their outcomes.

The review was to build upon but not reopen the recommendations of the Service Justice System Review by HH Shaun Lyons and Sir Jon Murphy. The review was to be forward looking and, whilst drawing on insights from the handling of allegations from recent operations, was not to reconsider past investigative or prosecutorial decisions or reopen historical cases.

I am pleased today to publish that report. I am very grateful for the comprehensive and considered work Sir Richard has undertaken and I particularly welcome his recognition of the need for a separate system of military justice. With the improvements which will flow from his recommendations we can be confident it will be a more efficient and effective system for the accused and for victims.

Sir Richard's report contains 64 recommendations, approximately a third of which are focused on taking forward the establishment of a Defence Serious Crime Unit, which was originally proposed in the earlier Lyons/Murphy Review of the service justice system.

There are also operations-related recommendations (improved training, detention processes and record-keeping), recommendations for non-statutory protocols between the Service police, the Service Prosecuting Authority and the Judge Advocate General relating to the investigation of allegations against UK forces of unlawful killing and ill-treatment in the context of overseas operations, recommendations for improving the technical/IT systems supporting the service courts, and recommendations relating to summary hearings. I particularly welcome Sir Richard's support of the provisions in the current Armed Forces Bill to retain concurrent jurisdiction, and that the creation of the Defence Serious Crime Unit will help drive up conviction rates for serious offences.

We have considered Sir Richard's recommendations carefully, and will be taking forward the work in the following ways:

- The new Defence Serious Crime Unit is key to meeting our commitment to further strengthen the service justice system. The Defence Serious Crime Unit will brigade the investigative capability for serious offending of the existing three service police forces. Under the leadership of a new provost marshal for serious crime, it will be instrumental in ensuring our service police are fully capable of meeting the challenges faced by the service justice system now and in the years ahead. I have therefore prioritised this work. The Government will be bringing forward amendments to the Armed Forces Bill to implement the recommendations on this topic which require primary legislation at this stage. These amendments will ensure that the new provost marshal will have all of the legal powers and responsibilities of the existing provost marshals; and in particular, that the new provost marshal will be responsible for guaranteeing the independence of investigations conducted by the new Unit.
- In respect of the recommendations which draw on the work of former Judge Advocate General His Honour Jeffrey Blackett and Lord Thomas of Gresford for the creation of a non-statutory protocol about the handling of serious allegations arising in the context of overseas operations, the Government believes these are matters for the independent service police, the Service Prosecuting Authority and the Judge Advocate General to consider in the first instance.
- Work on implementing four other recommendations is also expected to be taken forward over the coming months. These will amend Standard Operating Procedures to ensure that Service police are informed with minimum delay of reportable offences, establish a Serious Incident Board within the Permanent Joint Headquarters, create or upgrade an Operational Record Keeping System, and adopt a uniform approach in respect of training of Service legal personnel prior to their posting to the Service Prosecuting Authority.
- The remaining recommendations including legal support to personnel, improved technology/IT for the service courts and improvements to the summary hearing process, raise wider implications relating to policy, legal and resourcing issues. Those will be considered further by the department over the coming months. The goal will be to ensure that the recommendations dovetail with our overarching intent to maintain operational effectiveness, including the swift delivery of fair and

efficient justice for victims and offenders. Where appropriate and necessary, legislation will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows. I will update the House in due course.

I am confident that this review – along with the earlier Service Justice System Review – sets out a template for the Service Justice System for the future. As I have set out above, where possible we are seeking to implement the most important of the recommendations as quickly as possible; and we are committing to progress the rest in the way I have described. The government believes that the recommendations by Sir Richard will significantly improve the quality of investigations, will be fully compliant with the requirements in the European Convention on Human Rights and will help improve service to victims of crime within the forces.

A copy of Sir Richard's report will be placed in the library of the House.

EDUCATION

■ Higher Education Student Finance

Minister of State for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan):

[\[HCWS339\]](#)

I am announcing details of student finance arrangements for higher education students undertaking a course of study in the 2022/23 academic year starting on 1 August 2022.

The Government announced in the 'Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding' in January that maximum tuition fees would be frozen for a further academic year to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of higher education under control.

I can confirm today that maximum tuition fees for the 2022/23 academic year in England will be maintained at the levels that apply in the 2021/22 academic year, the fifth year in succession that fees have been frozen. This means that the maximum level of tuition fees for a standard full-time course will remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year.

Maximum undergraduate loans for living costs will be increased by forecast inflation (2.3%) in 2022/23. And the same increase will apply to maximum disabled students' allowance for students with disabilities undertaking full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in 2022/23. Maximum grants for students with child or adult dependants who are attending full-time undergraduate courses will also increase by forecast inflation in 2022/23.

We are also increasing support for students undertaking postgraduate courses in 2022/23. Maximum loans for students starting master's degree and doctoral degree courses from 1 August 2022 onwards will be increased by forecast inflation (2.3%) in 2022/23. And the same increase will apply to the maximum disabled students' allowance for postgraduate students with disabilities in 2022/23.

I am confirming today that current and former employees of the UK Government and their family members that have been relocated from Afghanistan to the UK under the Home

Office's Relocation and Assistance Scheme will qualify for student support and home fee status in relation to new higher education courses from 1 August 2022 onwards if they have been resident in the UK and Islands since the grant of such leave. They will also qualify for advanced learner loans for further education courses. Students who are in this category will not need to demonstrate three years ordinary residence in the UK and Islands before the start of a course.

I am also confirming today that home fee status and tuition fee loans will be extended to the family members of all persons settled in the UK, subject to three years residence in the UK and Islands immediately before the start of the course. Currently only the family members of UK nationals are eligible under this residency category.

I am announcing today that persons who have settled status on arrival in the UK, who come to the UK from specified British Overseas Territories and who are starting full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in 2022/23 will be eligible for tuition fee loans. To qualify, persons resident in the British Overseas Territories will need to satisfy the three-year ordinary residence requirement in the UK, Islands or specified British Overseas Territories. Eligible persons in Gibraltar may continue to satisfy the three-year ordinary residence requirement in the UK, Gibraltar, the EEA or Switzerland to qualify for student support for courses starting on or before 31 December 2027.

UK nationals and their family members in the British Overseas Territories already benefit from access to home fee status if they meet the residency requirement of three years in the UK, Islands and British Overseas Territories immediately before the start of the course. Family members of all persons settled when in the UK will now have access to home fee status.

Corresponding changes will be made in respect of students in the above categories who are starting postgraduate master's degree courses and postgraduate doctoral degree courses in 2022/23 who will qualify for postgraduate loans and those starting further education courses in 2022/23 who will qualify for advanced learner loans.

The changes set out above demonstrate our commitment to supporting economic development in the British Overseas Territories and enabling those who wish to study at one of our world class education providers to be able to do so.

Further details of the student support package for 2022/23 are set out in the attached document.

I expect to lay regulations implementing changes to student finance for undergraduates and postgraduates for 2022/23 in November. These regulations will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny.

The Government continues to consider the recommendations made by the Augar Panel carefully. We plan to set out a full response to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding in due course.

Attachments:

1. Higher Education Student finance for 22-23 details [Higher Education Student Finance for 22-23 - Details.pdf]

HOME OFFICE**■ Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (1 June 2021 to 31 August 2021)**

The Minister of State for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): [\[HCWS343\]](#)

Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIM) Act 2011 (the Act) requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant three-month period on the exercise of her TPIM powers under the Act during that period.

The level of information provided will always be subject to slight variations based on operational advice.

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2021)	5
<hr/>	
Number of new TPIM notices served (during this period)	1
TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 31 August 2021)	5
TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period)	0
TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period)	1
TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period)	0
Variations made to measures specified in TPIM notices (during the reporting period)	4
Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM notices refused (during the reporting period)	1
The number of subjects relocated under TPIM legislation (during this the reporting period)	3

On 2nd June 2021 a former TPIM subject was sentenced to an eighteen month community order having pleaded guilty to a breach of the association measure of the TPIM notice.

The TPIM Review Group (TRG) keeps every TPIM notice under regular and formal review. Second quarter TRG meetings were held throughout September 2021.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Policy Update

Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): [\[HCWS338\]](#)

New Trade and Agriculture Commission announced alongside publication of the Government's response to the original Trade and Agriculture Commission's report. The Department for International Trade written statement.

In July 2020 the Government established a Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) to advise the Government on trade policies that will secure opportunities for UK farmers while ensuring the sector remains competitive and making sure that animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined. The TAC fulfilled its remit and reported in March 2021. Today, the Government has published a response to the TAC's advisory report, having carefully considered the recommendations detailed within it.

The Government recognises the key principles behind these recommendations which have been instrumental in establishing an ambitious framework for our trade policy development. Our bold approach will deliver world class trade deals whilst protecting our domestic interests.

The response outlines a commitment to maintaining high animal welfare and environmental standards for future trade agreements. The UK will continue to use its influence in the international sphere to push for improved environmental and animal welfare, food safety, human rights and labour standards.

The Government's response builds on the steps already taken to deliver for UK farmers, food producers and consumers as an independent trading nation. Earlier this year, the highly successful Open Doors campaign was launched to help the industry seize new opportunities through trade agreements with priority markets.

The Government is also pleased to announce the launch of the new Trade and Agriculture Commission, [Chaired by Professor Lorand Bartels]. As an international trade lawyer and academic, Professor Bartels will bring a wealth of expertise and experience to the role. The new Commission will fulfil a different purpose to that of the original TAC, in line with the provisions debated and agreed by Parliament during the passage of the Trade Act 2021. The new TAC will bring together experts in a number of relevant fields such as animal and plant health, animal welfare, the environment and trade policy. It will scrutinise the UK's new Free Trade Agreements and assess whether they are consistent with the maintenance of UK levels of statutory protection in relation to: animal and plant health; animal welfare; and the environment. Its reports will be published and will make a vital contribution to Parliament's understanding of the UK's new trade agreements, helping to ensure effective scrutiny and demonstrating the Government's commitment to transparency.

A copy of the Government's response to the original Trade and Agriculture Commission report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and has been published on GOV.UK

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Evaluation of the reformed annual electoral registration canvass**

Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch):
[\[HCWS341\]](#)

In 2020, the Government brought in changes to the way in which the annual electoral registration canvass is conducted, streamlining a previously outdated and cumbersome process. Reform of the annual canvass is part of the Government's drive to create a more efficient registration system; make the process clear and simple for citizens; and give Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) more discretion, whilst maintaining completeness and accuracy of the registers.

The success of the canvass reform is clearly demonstrated by research conducted by the Cabinet Office, which I have today published on GOV.UK and deposited in the Libraries of the House. As part of the Modern Electoral Registration Programme, the first stage of evaluation of the reformed annual canvass was conducted in 2020 and 2021 through surveys and interviews with EROs and electoral administrators. This research focused in particular on citizen and ERO experiences of the canvass, as well as giving some indication of the impact of canvass reform on completeness and accuracy of the register, and efficiencies in the registration system.

This research clearly shows a major improvement over the pre-reform canvass, with an increase across the board in satisfaction of EROs and administrators in the reformed system, and largely positive impressions from participants regarding the changed processes.

This improvement in satisfaction demonstrates how the Government successfully works with the electoral sector to develop effective policies, and also supports the sector with implementation of a programme of change.

The Government worked closely with stakeholders in the electoral sector during the development and implementation of this change, but whilst reform was welcomed by electoral administrators and the Electoral Commission, it also faced opposition, with some claiming the changes would disenfranchise some electors. These fears have proven to be unfounded, as is often the case with changes to electoral systems.

I note that concerns were previously expressed around the Government's introduction of individual electoral registration in 2014, and with the decision to hold polls earlier this year during the COVID-19 pandemic; both of which subsequently proved successful. Evidence has shown that the individual system drives up registration figures and enhances the accuracy of the registers, and the independent Electoral Commission's evaluation of the May 21 polls showed that people had high levels of satisfaction with the polls and the challenges of COVID-19 did not stop voters taking part.

Along with the previous introduction of individual electoral registration and the measures in the Elections Bill, this reform of the annual canvass is a further example of the improvements that the Government is making to registration and elections in the UK. This

Government is committed to ensuring our democracy is secure, fair, modern and transparent and our electoral system is kept up to date for our age.

■ **Quarterly report on intergovernmental relations**

Secretary of State for Levelling UP, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS342\]](#)

Today the UK Government published the second quarterly report of our engagement with the devolved administrations on the GOV.UK page for intergovernmental relations (IGR). This report has also been deposited in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

The report aims to be useful, accessible, and engaging to a broad audience, recognising the public interest in how the UK Government and the devolved administrations work together to deliver outcomes for all citizens across the UK. It reflects the government's continued commitment to increased transparency of IGR and effective scrutiny of the UK Government's role in intergovernmental meetings.

Our second quarterly report on IGR provides information on intergovernmental meetings across the UK Government with counterparts in the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive between 1 March and 30 June 2021. It covers an important period of ministerial engagement following the parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales, and continued joint working as we focus on the UK's COVID-19 response and recovery.

PRIME MINISTER

■ **Cabinet Committees**

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): [\[HCWS345\]](#)

Today I am publishing an updated Cabinet Committee list. I have placed a copy of the new list in the Libraries of both Houses.

TRANSPORT

■ **Planning Update**

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson): [\[HCWS344\]](#)

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This statement confirms that it has been necessary to extend the deadlines for decisions on the following two applications made under the Planning Act as indicated below to allow for further consideration of environmental matters:

- M25 Junction 10/A3 Wisley Interchange: for the proposed development by National Highways which would authorise a number of improvements to the junction between the M25 and the A3. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on 12 October 2020 and the current deadline for a

decision was 12 November, having been extended from 12 January 2021 to 12 May 2021 and then to 12 November 2021. The deadline is now extended to 12 May 2022;

- M54 to M6 Link Road: for the proposed development by National Highways which would authorise a link road between Junction 1 of the M54, Junction 11 of the M6 and the A460 to Cannock. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on 21 July 2020 and the current deadline for a decision was 21 October 2021. The deadline is now extended to 21 April 2022.

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 Department will also endeavour to issue decisions ahead of the deadlines above wherever possible.

The decision to set new deadlines is without prejudice to the decisions on whether to give development consent for the above applications.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ DWP – Expanding Our Services Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment (Mims Davies):
[\[HCWS346\]](#)

On 23 March 2021 I outlined how, as part of the Government's commitment to support people back into work, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was expanding its services by introducing additional temporary Jobcentres. This expansion of DWP estates is supporting our comprehensive £30 billion Plan for Jobs, helping people back into employment across Great Britain.

As of March 2021, DWP had secured 80 additional temporary Jobcentres. This number has now risen to 177. DWP has been opening these temporary Jobcentres to the public gradually over the past few months and I am pleased to announce, on 7 October, Maidstone became the 100th additional Jobcentre to open to the public .

These additional, temporary, Jobcentres enable DWP to continue to provide the tailored support that claimants need to get back into and progress in work. They also provide space for the 13,500+ new Work Coaches we have recruited since March 2020.

These new sites provide a high quality, modern, accessible and digitally enabled environment for both colleagues and customers. Furthermore, as part of our design requirements, we are aiming to reduce the environmental impact per site, for example, by increasing the Energy Performance Certificate rating across sites.

They will enable many more customers to be supported, with Work Coaches often working with employers directly and using the new premises to hold job fairs which local employers attend.

To highlight just one example, the temporary site in Barking opened in July 2021 and so far the site has hosted over 30 employer events attended by 173 employers conducting over 1000 interviews. This has resulted in 424 successful job outcomes to date, in a range of job sectors, changing the lives of some of our most vulnerable customers.

As the economy recovers we will look to close these temporary sites to ensure that we balance providing essential services for our customers with value for money for the taxpayer. If any of the new sites offer better, more suitable, accommodation than our existing offices we may look to retain them instead and I will update the house accordingly.

DWP continues to update the list of temporary Jobcentres regularly on Gov.uk and notified MPs of new openings and additional services which cover their constituencies including our new Youth Hubs.