



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 October 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:41 P.M., 25 October 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[56449\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps she is taking to improve her Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Alex Chalk:

This Government recognises the importance of responding to members of the public in an effective and timely manner, and the Cabinet Office published an updated Guide to Handling Correspondence for government departments and agencies on July 2021.

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance. The Attorney General's Office always aims to respond to public correspondence within 20 working days where it falls within our remit.

My department's timeliness in responding to MP letters and Freedom of Information requests is among the best in the civil service. Since January 1st 2018, 80% of MP and Lords letters my department received were responded to within our target of 20 working days, and 99% of Freedom of Information requests were responded to within the statutory time limit. I am confident that public correspondence is responded to by my office in a similarly timely fashion and that every effort is made by my officials to respond as promptly as possible.

■ Attorney General: Visits Abroad

Mark Garnier:

[\[57006\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what overseas visits have been made by (a) herself, her predecessor or senior officials in her Department, (b) the Director of Public Prosecutions or senior CPS officials and (c) the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or senior officers over the last 12 months; which countries were visited; what matters were discussed; and whether covid-19 quarantine rules were followed by all people making such visits.

Alex Chalk:

The Attorney General, Solicitor General and senior officials in the department have not undertaken any overseas visits in the last 12 months.

In June 2021, Lisa Osofsky (The Director of the Serious Fraud Office) and John Carroll (Chief Operating Officer of the Serious Fraud Office) visited the United States

of America (USA). The purpose of the visit was to meet strategic partners and discuss collaboration and cooperation in tackling serious and complex economic crime. They both followed Covid protocols throughout their time abroad and on returning to the UK.

In October 2021, on a visit to the USA, the Director attended a work meeting with DOJ Senior Officials. In this meeting, she met with American Operational partners and discussed collaboration and cooperation in tackling serious and complex economic crime. The Director followed Covid protocols in place for foreign travel.

No overseas visits have been undertaken by any other Senior SFO Officer over the past 12 months.

Over the past 12 months, the Director of Public Prosecutions completed two overseas business trips, to Poland and the United States. During both visits, the DPP met key stakeholders, including HMG officials. Both of these visits provided an important opportunity to demonstrate support for CPS Liaison Prosecutors based in these jurisdictions and to cement the importance of their role and our cooperation with our international partners.

On both occasions, there were no requirements to quarantine on entry into either country, or on return to the UK.

■ International Corruption Unit: Prosecutions

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[56493\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many cases referred by the National Crime Agency's International Corruption Unit the Crown Prosecution Service has reached charging decisions on for each year in the last five years.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[56741\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many referrals the Crown Prosecution Service has received from the National Crime Agency's International Corruption Unit for charging decisions for each year in the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

The CPS is committed to tackling economic crime, including where these crimes span multiple jurisdictions. The CPS works closely with the National Crime Agency (NCA) and other investigative agencies; this includes providing early investigative advice on cases, obtaining evidence from overseas using mutual legal assistance and proving support through its network of prosecutors deployed overseas.

The CPS does not breakdown referrals by individual departments within the NCA. The following data is available which shows the number of cases received by the CPS Specialist Fraud Division from the National Crime Agency for pre-charge decisions.

Pre-charge decision receipts

| 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 11 | 26 | 20 | 6 | 42 |

The following shows number of cases where charging decisions have been reached.

Pre-charge decision finalisations

| 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 0 | 2 | 26 | 42 | 34 |

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Banks**

Julian Knight:

[\[56322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of issuing a public policy exclusion order to regional mutual banks to allow them to scale up their business.

Paul Scully:

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

■ **British Standards Institution: Fees and Charges**

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[57212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of whether it is in the public interest that safety standards held by the British Standards Institution may not be accessed without payment; and what plans he has to make those standards freely available.

Paul Scully:

The British Standards Institution (BSI) is a private body appointed by Royal Charter. It is a non-profit distributing company with profits being re-invested back into the business. Like most private standards bodies, the cost of producing standards is recouped by the subsequent sales of those standards. However, many public libraries provide free access to the BSI standards catalogue.

■ Buildings: Energy

Dan Carden:

[\[59943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the role of building standards in improving the energy efficiency of the built environment, in the context of the Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy.

Greg Hands:

As set out in the recently published Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Government aims to ensure domestic and non-domestic buildings are constructed to be highly efficient, better for the environment, and fit for the future.

The UK has a strong track record in improving the energy performance of its homes, with 40% now above Energy Performance (EPC) Band C, up from just 9% in 2008.

The Government will look to bring in interim building standards Regulations Part L and F, in June 2022, to increase energy performance standards for domestic and non-domestic buildings ahead of the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard.

■ Business: Carbon Emissions

Stuart Anderson:

[\[57338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what incentives the Government has put in place to encourage businesses to contribute towards the Government's Net Zero by 2050 carbon emissions target.

Greg Hands:

Businesses have significant power to drive change towards achieving our domestic net zero goal both through reducing their own emissions is important, but also their role in designing the ground-breaking new technologies, world leading products and innovative approaches to reach net zero, with the private sector providing much of the investment needed.

The policies and spending brought forward in the *Net Zero Strategy* mean that since the Ten Point Plan, £26 billion of government capital investment for the green industrial revolution has been mobilised. The Strategy will leverage up to £90 billion of private investment by 2030.

The UK's industrial sector plays both an essential role in the economy and is a major source of CO₂ emission. The *Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy*, published in March 2021, and expanded in the *Net Zero Strategy*, sets out how industry can decarbonise in line with net zero, while transforming industrial regions by attracting inward investment, future-proofing businesses, and securing the long-term viability of jobs.

The Net Zero Strategy sets out the Government's intention to work with businesses to produce their own business specific plans, while also encouraging businesses to take action in the run up to COP by joining the global 'Race to Zero' campaign, which already includes over half of FTSE 100 companies.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Location

Kenny MacAskil:

[59071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria is used for the selection of carbon capture and storage sites.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The purpose of Phase-1 of the Cluster Sequencing process was to identify clusters which are best-suited to deployment in the mid-2020s window, these will be sequenced onto Track-1.

Clusters were selected through a transparent and objective assessment process. The details of this were published in May in the Phase 1 documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cluster-sequencing-for-carbon-capture-usage-and-storage-ccus-deployment-phase-1-expressions-of-interest>.

Clusters submitted a range of detailed information on their structure, estimated costs and benefits, and technical project plans. To be eligible clusters had to meet three eligibility criteria: that they could be operational by 2030, are located within the UK, and meet our definition of a CCUS cluster. These eligibility criteria were designed to reflect government targets and ambitions, to promote decarbonisation across the UK and to reflect the inherent interdependency of the CCUS chain.

Five clusters met the eligibility criteria and were taken forwards into the detailed assessment stage where they were scored against five criteria, as set out in the Phase-1 launch document: deliverability, emissions reduction potential, economic benefits, cost considerations, and learning and innovation. Scoring was informed by robust, specialist-led scrutiny of the cluster submissions. The clusters selected to be sequenced onto Track-1 were those with the highest combined weighted scores across the criteria.

Kenny MacAskil:

[59072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the basis is for the selection of the carbon capture and storage sites; and if he will publish any scoring mechanisms used.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The purpose of Phase-1 of the Cluster Sequencing process was to identify clusters which are best-suited to deployment in the mid-2020s window, these will be sequenced onto Track-1.

Clusters were selected through a transparent and objective assessment process. The details of this were published in May in the Phase 1 documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cluster-sequencing-for-carbon-capture-usage-and-storage-ccus-deployment-phase-1-expressions-of-interest>.

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and meet our definition of a CCUS cluster. These eligibility criteria were designed to reflect government targets and ambitions, to promote decarbonisation across the UK and to reflect the inherent interdependency of the CCUS chain.

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■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Scotland

Richard Thomson:

[\[57425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has held with the Scottish Government on developing export opportunities from the deployment of carbon capture, utilisation and storage in the UK.

Greg Hands:

Ministers and officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy hold regular meetings with counterparts in the devolved administrations to discuss energy and decarbonisation policy, including the significant opportunities presented by the deployment of carbon capture, utilisation and storage across the UK.

■ Carbon Emissions: Costs

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[59798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department made of the potential non-financial costs to society of achieving the Government's net zero emissions target.

Greg Hands:

The Department conducted cost-benefit analysis of our net zero ambition as part of the Impact Assessment for setting the sixth carbon budget. The net present value of meeting the sixth carbon budget and net zero target, compared to no further action, was estimated as a net benefit of £266 billion.

■ Clean Steel Fund

Jessica Morden:

[\[59746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the future of the Clean Steel Fund.

Lee Rowley:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regularly discusses a range of issues with Cabinet colleagues regarding Net Zero and levelling up, in which the UK steel industry will play a key role.

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

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

■ Climate Change: Fossil Fuels**Daisy Cooper:**[\[53346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to adopt the recommendations of #Wednesday4Women to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by ensuring that all fossil fuel projects at home and overseas are ended.

Greg Hands:

The Government remains strongly committed to the 1.5C target at COP26, and welcome initiatives to promote cleaner and renewable alternative to fossil fuel, to encourage development and energy security.

■ Consumer Goods: Safety**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[57057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his Department collects on product recalls and corresponding safety actions.

Paul Scully:

Businesses have a legal duty to notify their market surveillance authority where they have identified a safety issue with a product they have placed on the market and taken an action. In 2019, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) launched the UK's Product Safety Database which allows national and local authorities to notify unsafe products identified by businesses, in addition to other enforcement actions they have taken. Notifications include information on the product, its supply chain, the risks presented by the technical fault and the corrective action taken to reduce the risk to consumers. The database allows authorities to access and exchange data securely and effectively to ensure swift and appropriate action can be taken to protect consumers. In addition, OPSS publishes alerts on GOV.UK about unsafe products and recalls using information from the database.

■ Copyright

Ian Murray:

[\[56972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with the publishing industry on ensuring the strength of the UK's copyright laws following the UK's departure from the EU.

George Freeman:

The Government holds regular discussions with stakeholders about the copyright framework to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This includes engagement with representatives from the publishing industry.

Any change to UK copyright legislation following its exit from the EU would come only after detailed consideration and assessment, including consultation with stakeholders, and would need to be driven by the evidence. This approach will help ensure that the UK's IP and enforcement framework continues to be rated as one of the best in the world.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Caroline Lucas:

[\[56669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41806 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what the (a) minimum, (b) maximum and (c) average number of days is before the expiry dates of UK donated doses of covid-19 vaccinations; how many doses of covid-19 vaccine the UK has disposed of as a result of them not having been used before they passed their expiry date; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

UK vaccine supply continues to be an efficient distribution process, where vaccine is procured, supplied and deployed to meet UK requirements to offer all those eligible the opportunity to be vaccinated as soon as possible and as efficiently as possible. We have put in place robust mitigations throughout the vaccination programme to reduce wastage, manage expiry dates, and avoid vaccine destruction, including, where there is data to support it, looking at the extension of expiry dates. We have been assured by NHS England that unused stock which remains 'in date' should not be destroyed locally and that efforts should be made to vaccinate eligible patients.

John Lamont:

[\[56672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the cost to the Government of purchasing covid-19 vaccines for residents in Scotland.

George Freeman:

As announced at the Spending Review in 2020, the Government has made available more than £6 billion in total to develop and procure COVID-19 vaccines.

The UK Government has procured vaccines on behalf of all four nations of the country and Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. As a consequence, a

total of 8,169,061 vaccinations have been administered in Scotland as of 17 October 2021 with 81.1% of those aged 12 and over fully vaccinated.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[56949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2021 to Question 52466 and the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41806 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, for what reason he has not specified the date earlier this year that the approximately 0.5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine the UK procured through COVAX were delivered; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

Approximately 0.5 million Pfizer doses procured through COVAX were delivered on 30 June 2021. These doses helped the NHS deliver our vaccination programme as quickly as possible.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[56165\]](#)

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

George Freeman:

The department is committed to responding to all enquiries in a timely manner.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[56776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Paul Scully:

The Department has 10 funds allocated to local authorities through a process of competitive bidding.

The list of names those funds are:

- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF);
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS);
- Green Homes Grant - Local Authority Delivery (LAD);
- Homes Upgrade Grant (HUG);
- Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund;
- Heat Networks Investment Programme (HNIP);
- Green Heat Networks Fund Transition Scheme;

- Heat Networks Efficiency Scheme Demonstrator;
- Whole House Retrofit;
- Regulators' Pioneer Fund.

■ Digital Technology: Prices

Chi Onwurah:

[57029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to prevent price gouging by online bot activity which circumvents maximum purchase quantities for computers and games consoles, to then resell those products above the recommended retail price.

Paul Scully:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answers given by my Hon. Friend the Minister of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to the Hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife on 22 December 2020 to Question [129026](#) and on 27 January 2021 to Question [144646](#).

■ Employment Tribunals Service

Alex Cunningham:

[59782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2021 to Question 52489 on Employment Tribunals Service, and with reference to the minutes of the May 2021 meeting of the National Employment Tribunal User Group, published on 2 July 2021, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the Law Commission's April 2020 report on Employment Law Hearing Structures.

Paul Scully:

The Government welcomes the Law Commission's report on Employment Law Hearing Structures, and the detailed consideration the Commission has given to this important topic.

The Government is considering these recommendations and expect that the full responses will be available on the Law Commission website in due course.

■ Energy Supply: Prices

Paul Girvan:

[56178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to tackle the impact of rising energy prices for consumers.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to protecting customers, especially the most vulnerable. Despite the rising cost of wholesale energy, the price cap still saves 15 million households up to £100 a year. Low income and fuel poor households will continue to be supported with their energy bills through the Warm Home Discount, which provides eligible households with a £140 discount. Winter Fuel Payments and

Cold Weather Payments will also ensure that the most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes over the colder months.

Additionally, the Government has announced an extra £500 million for local authorities through the new Household Support Fund to help those most in need over winter.

Alan Brown:

[56218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the (a) scope and (b) timescales are for the holistic review of transmission charges; and whether (i) industry and (ii) wider stakeholders will be able to inform that review.

Greg Hands:

Transmission charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator. Ofgem published a call for evidence on possible transmission charging reforms on 1 October 2021, which is available at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/tnuos-reform-call-evidence>. The call for evidence provides all interested parties with an opportunity to submit views and evidence on: the extent to which reform is needed; priority areas that should be looked at; how any reform programme might be delivered; and timescales within which any change is needed. It runs until 12 November 2021.

Andrew Rosindell:

[56332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the effect of the energy price cap on energy companies in the UK.

Greg Hands:

An Impact Assessment was published alongside the Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Act when it started its passage through Parliament, and Ofgem published their final impact assessment before implementation of the price cap.

Ofgem regularly reviews and sets the level of the price cap so that it reflects the underlying costs of supplying energy and that efficient suppliers can finance their licenced activities. This protects around 15 million British households on default tariffs, saving them between £75 and £100 a year on dual fuel bills.

Justin Madders:

[56426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that people on pre-payment meters are supported to maintain energy supply in the event of an increase in gas prices.

Greg Hands:

Protecting the most vulnerable during this period of high gas prices has been our top priority. The Pre-payment Meter Price Cap came into force on 1 April 2017 and currently protects 4 million pre-payment meter households on default tariffs.

In December 2020 Ofgem introduced new licensing conditions, including an Ability to Pay Principle, and an obligation on suppliers to proactively identify self-disconnecting and self-rationing pre-payment meter customers. These new rules require energy

suppliers to offer emergency and friendly-hours credit to all pre-payment meter customers.

Mr Mark Harper:

[\[59739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help protect those consumers who are off the gas grid from increases in energy prices.

Greg Hands:

Customers who are off the gas grid will be protected by the energy price cap if they are on a default tariff with their electricity supplier.

The Government believes it is essential that consumers who are off the gas grid get a fair deal. There are open markets for the supply of heating oil and LPG in the UK as we believe this provides the best long-term guarantee of competitive prices. These markets are subject to UK competition law to ensure they operate efficiently for the consumer.

■ Environment Protection: Foreign Investment in UK

Emily Thornberry:

[\[58790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of the 56,000 jobs referenced in the news release published by the Government on 15 October 2021, entitled Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan kickstarts green investment boom, are (a) new jobs created between 18 November 2020 and 15 October 2021 and (b) new jobs forecast to be created between 15 October 2021 and 18 November 2030.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Around 56,000 high-quality green jobs have been secured and created across the UK since November 2020.

The policies and proposals announced in the Net Zero Strategy could also support up to 440,000 jobs in 2030 across power, fuel supply and hydrogen, industry, heat & buildings, transport, and natural resources.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[58791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of the 56,000 jobs referenced in the news release published by the Government on 15 October 2021, entitled, Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan kickstarts green investment boom, are (a) existing jobs retained between 18 November 2020 and 15 October 2021 and (b) existing jobs forecast to be retained between 15 October 2021 and 18 November 2030.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Around 56,000 high-quality green jobs have been secured and created across the UK since November 2020.

The policies and proposals announced in the Net Zero Strategy could also support up to 440,000 jobs in 2030 across power, fuel supply and hydrogen, industry, heat & buildings, transport, and natural resources.

■ Geothermal Power

Owen Thompson:

[56670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to develop a specific geothermal strategy to support and promote development of geothermal energy extraction projects across the UK.

Greg Hands:

The Government supports the development of geothermal projects provided it can be done at an acceptable cost to consumers. The most promising use of geothermal energy in the UK is for heat applications such as in district heating network schemes. The Government are supporting the development of low carbon heat networks and thereby building a capability to harness heat from sources such as geothermal energy. Electricity generated from geothermal heat is able to bid into the Contracts for Difference scheme.

■ Heating: Housing

Virginia Crosbie:

[59125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to enable the conversion of the 23 per cent of homes in Ynys Môn constituency which are heated by oil to the renewable liquid fuel HVO.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Government is consulting on new regulations to phase out the installation of heating systems using high carbon fossil fuels in homes, businesses and public buildings in England off the gas grid during the 2020s. As Building Regulations are an area of devolved competence it would be for the Welsh Government to consider steps to enable the decarbonisation of oil heated homes in Wales.

■ Help to Grow Scheme

Chi Onwurah:

[57028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the procurement process is for digital technology in the Help To Grow Digital programme; how the suppliers of that technology were selected; and what the price paid for the technology is relative to the market value.

Paul Scully:

Software vendors need to apply to be part of the Help to Grow Digital Scheme. The vendor eligibility criteria for wave 1 was published on 29 July and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-to-grow-digital-apply-to-become-a-vendor>. The eligibility criteria is designed to ensure that small and medium businesses benefit

from high-quality products. Eligible vendors must match the best market price available for their software and offer the same incentives such as trial periods and temporary discounts.

■ **Hydrogen: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Jim Shannon:

[\[53896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the role of blue hydrogen in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Greg Hands:

The Net Zero Strategy confirms the government's 'twin-track' approach to supporting both electrolytic 'green' and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS)-enabled 'blue' hydrogen production alongside multiple other production routes.

Support for blue hydrogen is part of the government's wider programme of long-term decarbonisation through CCUS. Expanding this infrastructure opens up the opportunity to benefit from negative emissions technology in the future, including hydrogen from biomass energy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS).

■ **Insolvency: Standards**

Julian Knight:

[\[56319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help identify failures in the insolvency profession; and whether he plans to introduce a single regulator and ombudsman to oversee that sector.

Paul Scully:

The Government is currently reviewing the arrangements for regulation of the insolvency profession and will shortly publish proposals for consultation.

■ **Intellectual Property: Digital Technology**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[56129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to protect the intellectual property of digital works.

George Freeman:

The UK's IP framework is consistently rated as one of the best in the world. A good IP framework alongside an effective enforcement regime provides the best environment for creators of digital works to thrive.

Officials from the Intellectual Property Office have been holding roundtable meetings with representatives from social media businesses, alongside the creative industries, to discuss the protection of digital works on their platforms. These roundtable discussions have further enhanced our ability to fight piracy on social media platforms.

■ Lighting: Housing

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[56829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the ban on the sale of halogen lightbulbs that came into effect on 1 September 2021, whether that ban extends to the sale of halogen bulbs for ovens containing specialist compact halogen bulbs with a G9 fitting.

Greg Hands:

New ecodesign and energy labelling requirements for lighting products came into force in Great Britain on 1st October 2021; equivalent regulations came into force in Northern Ireland on 1st September.

There are limited exemptions built into the regulations in order to ensure that certain lighting technologies remain viable whilst the market for lighting products achieves higher levels of energy efficiency. These exemptions include G9 halogen light sources intended for use in high temperature applications such as ovens, provided that these light sources also meet further conditions which are set out in Schedule 4 of The Ecodesign for Energy-Related Products and Energy Information (Lighting Products) Regulations 2021.

■ Mathematics: Research

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[56346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support mathematics research in universities.

George Freeman:

The UK is a world leader in mathematics. British mathematicians publish a large volume of highly regarded work. When compared to international colleagues, British mathematicians have the 5th largest share of publications in the world. When looking at the top 1% of most cited publications, UK mathematicians are responsible for the third largest share.

Since January 2020, UKRI has awarded £104 million of additional funding into mathematical sciences, over and above EPSRC's core Mathematical Sciences Theme budget. The additional funding has funded institutes, small and large research grants, fellowships, doctoral studentships, and postdoctoral awards.

Future funding for mathematical sciences will be decided as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review process.

■ Mobile Phones

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[57059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a common mobile phone charger.

Paul Scully:

The forthcoming Energy-related Products Policy Framework is due to be published by the Government shortly.

Motor Neurone Disease: Research**Drew Hendry:**[\[58437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a dedicated research and development funding allocation for a virtual motor neurone disease translational research institute.

George Freeman:

This Government is committed to supporting research into dementia and neurodegeneration, including motor neurone disease (MND). Last fiscal year, UKRI spent £15.9 million on MND research. This builds on wider funding for medical research charities including £204 million Research England funding in AY 20-21, the charity research support funding element of Quality-related Research, and UKRI's funding for the Crick Institute. The UK Dementia Research Institute, founded with £190 million of government funding through UKRI, already includes research on scientific understanding of motor neurone disease as a neurodegenerative condition.

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

Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions**Emily Thornberry:**[\[58334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of jobs that (a) have been or (b) will be created as a result of (i) UK private, (ii) Government and (iii) inward investment as part of the Government's plans to accelerate the shift to zero emissions vehicles between November 2020 and November 2030.

Emily Thornberry:[\[58335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of jobs that (a) have been or (b) will be retained as a result of (i) UK private, (ii) Government and (iii) inward investment as part of the Government's plans to accelerate the shift to zero emissions vehicles between November 2020 and November 2030.

Lee Rowley:

The automotive sector is an important part of the Government's plans for green growth, levelling up across our country and driving emissions to net zero by 2050.

The Government is committed to growing the 149,000 jobs in the automotive sector across the UK. Accelerating the transition to zero emission vehicles is estimated to support around 40,000 new jobs by 2030.

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 £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.

Recent investment announcements by Nissan, Stellantis and Ford will support thousands of highly skilled, green jobs in the UK, and many more across the supply chain.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Economic Situation

David Warburton:

[\[57221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential to replicate the economic benefits of Hinkley Point C to Somerton and Frome constituency in other areas of the country through the development of future gigawatt nuclear new builds.

Greg Hands:

The construction of Hinkley Point C shows that new gigawatt nuclear power stations can provide economic benefits to their local area, as well as to regions across the UK through the supply chain. EDF have reported that £3.5 billion has been spent with companies in the South-West during the construction period, with Hinkley Point C creating 12,786 job opportunities and 787 apprentices trained to date. The government expects future larger scale nuclear new build project to have similar benefits to Hinkley Point C, and we have committed to at least one more gigawatt power plant during this Parliament, subject to clear value for money for both consumers and taxpayers and all relevant approvals.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Ynys Môn

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[59127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made towards locating the National Thermal Hydraulics Facility (NTHF) on Anglesey following the commitment to site a NTHF in North Wales in the 2018 Nuclear Sector Deal.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Department is currently considering the business case for a National Thermal Hydraulic Facility in North Wales. Officials are in regular contact with key stakeholders, including with my Hon. Friend the member for Ynys Môn, to assess possible sites in North Wales.

■ Offshore Industry: North Sea

Richard Thomson:

[\[57426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has held with the Scottish Government on the delivery of the target of 50

per cent local UK content in the North Sea Transition Deal published by his Department in March 2021.

Greg Hands:

Through the landmark North Sea Transition Deal, the sector committed to voluntary, industry-led UK content targets for related new energy projects and decommissioning as well as for locally provided technology. The sector is considering how it will meet these targets and this month has appointed an Industry Supply Chain Champion, Sian Lloyd-Rees, to raise the profile of the UK's energy supply chain capability. BEIS regularly engages with the Scottish Government alongside industry and regulators through the Deal Delivery Group and North Sea Transition Forum to discuss all aspects of the delivery of the Deal. The Oil and Gas Authority, as the independent regulator, will monitor the voluntary supply chain targets utilising existing tools such as their Supply Chain Action Plans.

■ **Parental Leave: Fathers**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[57227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Table 7 in Shared Parental Leave and Pay Administration Consultation – Impact Assessment (BIS/13/651), published in February 2013, what recent estimate his Department has made of the maximum number of new fathers eligible to take statutory shared parental leave each year.

Paul Scully:

The Government is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme.

This evaluation will include an assessment of both the numbers of fathers who are eligible for Shared Parental Leave and the number of fathers who have taken Shared Parental Leave in recent years. We intend to publish our findings in due course.

■ **Personal Care Services: Registration**

John McNally:

[\[57100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has plans to (a) consider the hairdressing and barber industry for Mandatory Registration or (b) devolve that decision to the devolved Administrations; and if his Department will hold discussions with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the potential merits of devolving licensing of the hair and barber industry.

Paul Scully:

The Department regularly engages with the devolved administrations and officials on a variety of issues.

■ Post Office: Miscarriages of Justice

Gareth Thomas:

[\[56762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many postmasters were dismissed between April 2006 and March 2010 as a result of the failings associated with the Post Office Horizon system.

Paul Scully:

The Post Office has recently received an FOI request for the same information and that request is currently going through the appropriate process. As the information relates to data which is 10-15 years old, Post Office does not have immediately available information and so in responding to the FOI will seek to identify what, if any, information may be held.

■ Recovery Loan Scheme

Darren Jones:

[\[59923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many recovery loans have been agreed between companies and their lenders supported by Government guarantees since the launch of the Recovery Loan Scheme; and how much has been lent under that scheme to date.

Paul Scully:

The British Business Bank intends to publish data on usage of the scheme in due course.

■ Recycling

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[57058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on the circular economy and the safety of products.

Paul Scully:

In order to fully realise the significant benefits of a shift to a more circular economy, it is important that consumers can continue to have confidence in the safety of products as both supply chains and product design evolve. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is currently reviewing the UK's product safety framework and its recent Call for Evidence requested information from stakeholders on changes to product lifecycles, the circular economy and the impact on product safety. The review will seek to ensure that the product safety framework can adapt to any emerging risks and a Government Response to the Call for Evidence will be published in due course.

Alongside its Call for Evidence, OPSS has commissioned research to further build our evidence base, including on second-life batteries and on the use of recycled materials in consumer products. The OPSS research programme will continue to address issues related to the transition to a circular economy.

OPSS and Defra officials are in regular contact to ensure a coordinated approach to the development of a circular economy and consumer safety.

■ **Re-employment: Coronavirus**

Seema Malhotra:

[56259]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's policy is on giving covid-19 related grants and loans to businesses that engage in fire and rehire tactics.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government has provided an unprecedented package of support for UK businesses to help them survive the Covid-19 pandemic, including direct grants and government-backed loans. Grants and loans were offered to businesses in accordance with the eligibility criteria for those schemes

The Government has made clear to all employers that using threats to 'fire and rehire' as a tactic to pressure workers during negotiations on changes to terms and conditions is unacceptable. We expect employers to treat their employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership. There are laws around how negotiations must be done, and protections in place when firms are considering redundancies.

■ **Research: Chemistry**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[57274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of investing in a significant R&D programme in digital chemistry and materials innovation.

George Freeman:

The Government's long-term objectives for R&D are clear: to invest in the science and research that will deliver economic growth and societal benefits across the UK for decades to come, and to build the foundations for the new industries of tomorrow.

We are investing a record £14.9 billion in R&D in 2021/22 and remain committed to achieving our target of increasing total R&D investment to 2.4% by 2027.

In July 2021, the Government published the Innovation Strategy, which included an assessment of the seven technology families where the UK has globally competitive R&D and industrial strength. The families included Advanced Materials and the application of Artificial Intelligence (an AI specific strategy launched in September 2021). The Innovation strategy considered how the government could support the development of these technologies by de-risking industry activity through investment, prioritisation and the use of its convening power. The National Science and Technology Council, chaired by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister, will help identify and prioritise technologies that will make the UK a Science and Tech superpower.

■ Research: Finance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[57273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure future research funding allocations retain their real-terms value in line with inflation.

George Freeman:

In announcing the Spending Review 2021, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer reiterated the Government's commitment to cement the UK as a 'scientific superpower'.

All future funding decisions will be subject to the outcome of the Spending Review, and we are working with HM Treasury to agree an ambitious R&D package.

The Spending Review will conclude on 27 October. We will then undertake the Departmental allocations process.

■ Retail Trade: Assistance Animals

Thangam Debbonaire:

[56490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to provide guidance to retailers on accommodating the needs of customers who use assistance dogs.

Paul Scully:

The disability provisions in the Equality Act 2010 require providers of services and facilities to the public to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that disabled people are not placed at a "substantial disadvantage" compared to non-disabled people.

This means that people who provide goods, services and facilities to members of the public are expected to anticipate the requirements of disabled customers and the adjustments that may have to be made for them. The Equality and Human Rights Commission have published advice and guidance for [businesses selling products, such as shops and petrol stations](#).

■ Semiconductor Devices: Exports

Chi Onwurah:

[57030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on supporting the semiconductor industry to export.

Lee Rowley:

The policy lead for the semiconductor sector rests with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

■ Shipbuilding: Environment Protection

Stephen Morgan: [\[59013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he is providing to stakeholders to increase the UK's green shipbuilding capabilities.

Lee Rowley:

The Department is supporting the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, as well as a range of research and innovation programmes to develop technologies that will have spill-over benefits in various markets, including the shipbuilding sector.

The Department is also supporting several green shipping projects, including hydrogen ferry trials in Orkney and a hydrogen refuelling port on Teesside. Innovate UK is also facilitating the delivery of the Department for Transport's £20 million Clean Maritime Demonstration Programme to bring forward green propulsion solutions for the maritime sector.

In addition, the Department is working closely with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to ensure that UK shipyards are aware of the organisation's funded programmes and facilities, so that they have the opportunity to access these.

Ruth Jones: [\[59045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he is providing to increase the UK's green shipbuilding capabilities.

Lee Rowley:

The Department is supporting the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, as well as a range of research and innovation programmes to develop technologies that will have spill-over benefits in various markets, including the shipbuilding sector.

The Department is also supporting several green shipping projects, including hydrogen ferry trials in Orkney and a hydrogen refuelling port on Teesside. Innovate UK is also facilitating the delivery of the Department for Transport's £20 million Clean Maritime Demonstration Programme to bring forward green propulsion solutions for the maritime sector.

In addition, the Department is working closely with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to ensure that UK shipyards are aware of the organisation's funded programmes and facilities, so that they have the opportunity to access these.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[59733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he is providing to increase the UK's green shipbuilding capabilities.

Lee Rowley:

The Department is supporting the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, as well as a range of research and innovation programmes to develop

technologies that will have spill-over benefits in various markets, including the shipbuilding sector.

The Department is also supporting several green shipping projects, including hydrogen ferry trials in Orkney and a hydrogen refuelling port on Teesside,. Innovate UK is also facilitating the delivery of the Department for Transport's £20 million Clean Maritime Demonstration Programme to bring forward green propulsion solutions for the maritime sector.

In addition, the Department is working closely with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to ensure that UK shipyards are aware of the organisation's funded programmes and facilities, so that they have the opportunity to access these.

■ **Shipbuilding: Finance**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[59735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a home shipbuilding credit guarantee scheme to support the development of UK shipbuilding.

Lee Rowley:

The Department has consulted on the reintroduction of a Home Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme as a potential contribution to a refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy. The case for the scheme is under consideration at the current time and a final decision will be announced in due course.

The Government already offers a range of financial support instruments to businesses through the British Business Bank and through UK Export Finance.

■ **Shipbuilding: Grants**

Ruth Jones:

[\[59047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to introduce a Home shipbuilding credit guarantee scheme to support the development of UK shipbuilding.

Lee Rowley:

The Department has consulted upon the reintroduction of a Home Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme as a potential contribution to a refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy. The case for the scheme is under consideration at the current time and a final decision will be announced in due course.

The Government already offers a range of financial support instruments to businesses through the British Business Bank and through UK Export Finance.

■ **Sizewell C Power Station**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[57401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of (a) the effect of rising sea levels on the proposals for

Sizewell C in Suffolk and (b) the impact of the proposed site on (i) SSSI RSPB Nature Reserve and (ii) species in surrounding areas.

Greg Hands:

The examination of the application for development consent for the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station closed on 14 October 2021 and the Examining Authority is now writing its report which will set out its conclusions and recommendations on the proposals.

■ **Solar Events**

Owen Thompson: [\[56368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what effects the solar flare on 11 October 2021 had on UK infrastructure.

George Freeman:

There were no reported impacts to UK infrastructure caused by the solar flare and subsequent Geomagnetic Storm on the 11 October 2021.

Owen Thompson: [\[57176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help protect areas at higher altitudes from the effects of coronal mass ejections from the sun.

George Freeman:

On 27th September 2021, the Government published the Severe Space Weather Preparedness Strategy. This sets out a 5-year roadmap to enhance our understanding of severe space weather, its impacts and the UK's ability to forecast events and recover from them quickly.

Owen Thompson: [\[57177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what lessons have been learned on the United Kingdom's preparedness to coronal mass ejections from the sun from the solar flare on 11 October 2021.

George Freeman:

There were no reported impacts to UK infrastructure caused by the solar flare and subsequent Geomagnetic Storm on the 11 October 2021.

The Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre had forecast the event and issued accurate warnings. The impacts of this event were as expected, which helps strengthen the existing assessment, that this type of event would have negligible impacts on the UK.

■ Thomas Cook: Insolvency

Hilary Benn:

[\[56793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to bring forward the Thomas Cook Compensation Bill, as announced in the Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019.

Paul Scully:

The Government understands that an alternative route for Thomas Cook personal injury claimants is being pursued that would potentially be financially beneficial to them.

The Government is committed to introducing the legislation to establish the payment scheme for customers of Thomas Cook with serious and long-term injuries for which the company would have been liable but for its insolvency, if it is established that there are no alternative routes to compensation.

■ Tidal Power: Carbon Emissions

Dan Carden:

[\[59941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to add tidal range technology into the National Planning statements and make it part of the UK's net zero strategy.

Greg Hands:

As set out in the Net Zero Strategy: Building Back Greener published on 19 October 2021, we will continue to explore the role that marine energy technologies could play in achieving our net zero target.

■ Toys and Games: Safety

Martyn Day:

[\[57185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) National Trading Standards and (b) Trading Standards Scotland on tackling unsafe toys on online marketplaces.

Paul Scully:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) works closely with colleagues in local authority trading standards services to take action where products, including toys, are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements. This work includes sharing intelligence with the National Trading Standards regional intelligence network and Trading Standards Scotland, as well as working directly with the local authorities that have enforcement responsibilities for product safety, including at the ports.

OPSS is currently conducting a review of the UK's product safety framework to ensure consumers continue to be protected and that businesses are able to safely innovate and grow. As part of the review, officials have engaged with representatives from trading standards from across the UK, including Scotland. Representatives from

trading standards have recently taken part in six roundtable events, which included reporting their experience of enforcement issues with online marketplaces. We will continue to engage with them and a wide range of other stakeholders as the review progresses.

■ Trading Standards

Martyn Day: [\[57181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support Trading Standards Scotland.

Martyn Day: [\[57182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for the enforcement of trading standards.

Martyn Day: [\[57183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will provide additional funding to (a) National Trading Standards and (b) Trading Standards Scotland.

Martyn Day: [\[57184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to undertake a review of the enforcement powers of (a) National Trading Standards and (b) Trading Standards Scotland.

Paul Scully:

The Department provides funding to National Trading Standards (NTS) and Trading Standards Scotland (TSS), to enable local authorities to take coordinated action specifically on consumer harm issues that cross local authority boundaries; for instance, doorstep crime and mass-marketing scams. We have provided a single enforcement grant of £12,027,000 to National Trading Standards and £1,215,000 to Trading Standards Scotland for financial year 2021/22. We keep the funding needs of both organisations under constant review.

■ Universities: Chemistry

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[57275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to protect the long-term ability of university chemistry departments to develop the chemistry talent pipeline.

George Freeman:

The Government is committed to cementing the UK's status as a global science superpower, and recognises that great people are at the heart of great research and development (R&D).

In July, we published the R&D People and Culture Strategy which sets a long-term course for research talent development and underlines our goal to ensure the UK is the most exciting place in the world for top research and innovation talent.

The Strategy sets out the actions that government and the sector, including universities, will take to ensure the UK R&D workforce has the capability and capacity it needs both now and in the future - across all disciplines.

■ Utilities

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[56337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support energy companies in the UK.

Greg Hands:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have held a series of bilateral and roundtable events with a range of larger, smaller and challenger suppliers, and are continuing to engage with these stakeholders regularly to hear about the challenges they currently face.

It is Ofgem, the independent regulator's responsibility to engage with suppliers considering exiting the market.

In a competitive market, it is normal from time to time for energy suppliers who cannot finance their activities to exit the retail energy market.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Civil Servants

Feryal Clark:

[\[56215\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to increase the (a) number of civil servants from disadvantaged backgrounds and (b) socio-economic diversity of civil servants.

Michael Ellis:

The Declaration on Government Reform, announced in June, committed the Civil Service to draw on the broadest pool of talent possible. This means that the Civil Service should seek to hire people from varied social and career backgrounds and people from across every part of the UK; including citizens from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living with disabilities and those who have experienced disadvantage in their early lives. The Civil Service is committed to making sure all of these people can flourish in public service. The Civil Service is also looking beyond London - to all corners of the UK - to make sure that it is representative of the communities the Government serves.

A wide range of schemes, programmes and initiatives are aimed at fulfilling that commitment:

- The Places for Growth programme will bring the government closer to the people it serves, relocating 22,000 roles out of London by 2030 including 50% of Senior Civil Service roles. Over 1,000 roles are to be moved to Scotland, Birmingham and Darlington each, and by 2025, 550 roles will be moved to Stoke-on-Trent.
- Apprenticeships are a key mechanism for improving the diversity of the Civil Service, as set out in the Declaration on Government Reform. 40% of our apprenticeship intake is from a lower socio-economic background, which provides a more socially diverse talent pipeline into the Civil Service, and provides more opportunities for apprenticeships outside of London.
- We are extending our outreach and internship programmes. We are improving socio-economic diversity through the Early Diversity Internship programme, for those in their first year at university, providing work experience for people from underrepresented groups including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- The Fast Stream continues to seek out candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds and although the number of candidates appointed from lower socio-economic groups tripled between 2016 and 2021 to 12.8%, the Government recognises the need to do more. We have, therefore, developed a new 'target university list' to further boost applications from people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. And, the Summer Diversity Internship Programme for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic minorities and those with a disability, offers a fast pass to the final stage of the Fast Stream for successful participants giving them a greater chance of success.
- The Going Forward into Employment scheme is run by the Civil Service Commission, which is hosted by the Cabinet Office. There are 28 accredited life chance schemes in operation across the Civil Service. These help groups of people such as veterans, military partners/spouses and prison leavers find work placements and fixed-term opportunities across Civil Service departments. The programme helps those people overcome barriers associated with entering the Civil Service and supports them into roles. Not only does the scheme help improve their life chances, but it helps make the Civil Service more representative of the country it serves.

■ **Contracts: Coronavirus**

Feryal Clark:

[56213]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to recall public money from faulty products delivered by private suppliers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has worked closely with the private sector, procuring expertise and large volumes of goods and services with extreme urgency – including 22,000 ventilators for use by the NHS and 32 billion items of PPE to protect our frontline workers.

Where products have not met required standards then Departments will pursue recourse under the terms of the respective contracts as appropriate.

In particular, the Department of Health and Social Care is pursuing contractual recourse against a small number of companies where they supplied goods or services that did not meet contracted requirements. Cabinet Office is supporting these efforts where appropriate.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[57111\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the consequences of the choice of date for the covid-19 lockdown in autumn 2020 and how this compared with projected consequences based on the lockdown recommendations of SAGE at that time.

Michael Ellis:

Throughout the pandemic the Government has carefully balanced the economic and social implications of restrictions with the need to protect public health. This has required many difficult judgements.

The Government has always listened carefully to the views of the scientific community when making decisions; in particular, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups.

Advice published in SAGE 66 was that: 'if well-adhered to, the lockdown measures due to start in England on 5th November are likely to reduce R to less than 1. If this is sustained until 2nd December, the number of hospital admissions and deaths would be expected to fall until at least the second week of December.'

The subsequent data clearly shows that the national measures the Government put in place from 5 November until 2 December 2020 increased precautionary behaviours and reduced prevalence, which in turn reduced rates of hospitalisation and mortality.

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

Owen Thompson:

[\[58953\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which recommendations from the Review into the Development and Use of Supply Chain Finance (and Associated Schemes) in Government Part 2: Recommendations and Suggestions, published on 5 August 2021, the Government plans to implement.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Honourable member to the answer to [PQ56701](#).

The Government notes the work of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs and Treasury Committees, as well as the forthcoming Standards Matter 2 report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Once these reports have been

published, we will consider their work alongside Mr Boardman's recommendations and set out a substantive Government policy statement to Parliament in due course.

■ Imports: Customs

Alan Brown: [\[56622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with (a) port operators, (b) HMRC and (c) transport operators on methods to speed up offloading processes for imported goods; and if he will make a statement.

Michael Ellis:

Ports around the world are experiencing similar issues with container capacity and supply chains, so this is not unique to the UK.

We are working closely across government, and with the freight industry, including on HGV driver shortages, to work through the challenges some of our ports are facing at this important time of the year.

We are also in regular contact with key port and shipping operators, at Ministerial and official level, in relation to the wider global international shipping issues arising from increased disruption, demand, and supply chain matters that may be causing some delays to goods.

Alan Brown: [\[57153\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the quantity of goods held offshore as a result of delays in checking and approval processes for imported goods at ferry ports as at 18 October 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Michael Ellis:

There are currently no delays in Government checking and approval processes for goods being imported into the UK. Any delays in bringing goods into the UK are being caused by broader global supply chain issues.

■ Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts: [\[56773\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Michael Ellis:

Within the Cabinet Office, one fund is allocated to local authorities through a process of competitive bidding.

The One Public Estate programme is a partnership between the Office of Government Property in the Cabinet Office, the Local Government Association, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Through

better use of land and property, it aims to deliver efficiencies, local economic growth (jobs and homes) and better, more-integrated public services. The programme offers early-stage project funding, support and expertise to cross-public sector projects, led by local authorities.

The One Public Estate programme also delivers the Land Release Fund on behalf of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This capital fund enables local authorities to bring forward otherwise unviable land for housing development. Funding for the Land Release Fund is awarded to local authorities, through a competitive process, directly by DLUHC.

■ Queen's Consent

Charlotte Nichols: [\[56265\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions Queen's Consent has been sought by each Department since 2010.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[56268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions proposed legislation has been amended to ensure Queen's Consent since 2010.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[56495\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions Queen's Consent has been denied since 2010.

Michael Ellis:

Queen's consent is a very long-standing convention and a requirement of the Parliamentary process where proposed legislation may affect Crown interests, including personal property and personal interests of the Monarch.

It is for the House Authorities to determine whether a Bill requires Queen's consent. Where this is determined to be the case, consent is routinely sought by the Government and agreed by the Monarch as a matter of course.

Consent to Bills has never been refused by the Monarch in modern times and legislation is not amended in order to ensure Queen's Consent.

Once granted, Queen's Consent will be signified at Third Reading of the bill in each House. The hon. Member can ascertain such occasions from reviewing the Official Report.

■ Veterans: Suicide

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56821\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to place new duties on coroners to ensure that they accurately report on veteran suicide.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to provide (a) new codes of practice and (b) training to coroners for coroners to be able to discern whether the suicide of a veteran is attributable to their service.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56826\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's plans to collect new forms of data on veteran suicide, how coroners will be able to access information to confirm that the suicide victim was a former member of the UK's armed forces.

Leo Docherty:

The OVA has looked at how the frequency of suicide within the veteran community can best be measured and has identified a robust methodology which does not require the placing of new duties on coroners. The new approach utilises data collected through the 2021 England and Wales census to compare the health of the veteran population with the health of the general population, including looking at suicide related deaths of veterans.

This new approach does not prevent coroners from seeking information about veteran status where it is felt that this is relevant to the suicide being investigated and the coroner has previously been informed by family members that the person was a veteran. There is a single point of contact at the MOD for coroners to obtain information on whether the suicide victim was a former member of the UK's armed forces.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's plans to collect new forms of data on veteran suicide, whether retrospective studies will be undertaken by the Office for National Statistics to assess whether veteran suicides are attributable to their service.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's plans to collect new forms of data on veteran suicide, whether that data will include information on what engagement veterans had with mental health services prior to their suicide.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[56825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's plans to collect new forms of data on veteran suicide, what methodology the Government plans to use to collate those figures; and whether that will include a breakdown by service.

Leo Docherty:

The new methodology to measure the frequency of suicide within the veteran community will utilise data gathered through the 2021 England and Wales census to

compare the health of the veteran population with the health of the general population. This will include suicide related deaths of veterans and we intend to include a breakdown by service as part of this analysis. This analysis will be undertaken in 2023, and in the interim the OVA will be working with ONS and the MOD to conduct a 10 year look back at veteran deaths by suicide. This work will inform us how many veterans have died through suicide and other causes including drug and alcohol misuse from 2011-2021, and to estimate the number that died homeless. Through the new methodology and our broader research programme we will explore data linking opportunities to understand veterans' wider experiences, support needs and interaction with public services.

COP26

■ Children: Climate Change

Geraint Davies: [\[56746\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to help ensure that children's rights are advanced globally through the outcomes of COP26.

Geraint Davies: [\[56747\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, with reference to the report by Save the Children entitled Born Into The Climate Crisis, published on 27 September 2021, what assessment he has made of the analysis set out in that report of the potential impacts of climate change on children living in low income countries.

Geraint Davies: [\[56748\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to engage with children and listen to their views (a) ahead of and (b) during COP26.

Alok Sharma:

We have long recognised the threat that climate change and environmental degradation poses to the lives and wellbeing of individuals and communities across the world, including the most marginalised and vulnerable.

We share the concerns set out in the recent Save the Children report that climate and environmental threats are disrupting the education of nearly 40 million children each year and that the impacts of climate change will disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly those living in low income countries.

The UK is a global leader in girls' education and the largest donor to Education Cannot Wait – the global fund for education in emergencies. At COP26, the UK will use our unique position as host and as a leading international donor on girls' education to sound the alarm on the impact climate change is having on education, and advocate for the role of education in helping to tackle the crisis. This will include calling for action at both global and country levels and giving young people the opportunity to use their voices to call for the changes they think are needed. We will

also be supporting Education Cannot Wait's call for funding to ensure it can meet the needs of children in crisis.

The UK COP26 Presidency is committed to amplifying the voices of young people from across the world in the lead up to, and at, COP26 this November. I have committed to meeting with young people in every international visit over the last year and have established the COP26 Civil Society and Youth Advisory Council. At COP26, we will host a dedicated Youth & Public Empowerment Day to elevate youth voices and demonstrate the critical role of education and empowerment to drive climate action. We have been working closely with YOUNGO (the official children's and youth constituency to the UNFCCC) to co-create the events programme for the day.

■ Climate Change

Dr Andrew Murrison:

[\[56657\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether he plans to use COP26 as an opportunity to make representations to developed countries on meeting the Climate Vulnerable Forum to discuss the effective (a) implementation and (b) financing of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage recommendations and advice.

Alok Sharma:

I have clearly stated, including in my letter to all Parties ahead of the pre-COP meeting in Milan, that Agreement on the development of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage is a priority for the UK COP Presidency. I have encouraged and will continue to encourage all countries to work together to find a resolution to this issue at COP26.

■ Climate Change: Developing Countries

Owen Thompson:

[\[57173\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to help ensure that developed nations meet the commitment to create a \$100 billion annual fund for lower income countries to tackle climate change.

Alok Sharma:

COP26 needs to deliver for all countries, including the most climate vulnerable. This is why developed countries' commitment to jointly mobilise \$100 billion of climate finance a year is critically important; it helps developing countries raise their climate ambition and supports their transition.

Through the UK's COP26 and G7 Presidencies, we have been pushing developed countries to meet existing commitments and come forward with ambitious post-2020 climate finance pledges, to achieve the \$100 billion a year goal. We have seen progress. I have asked Germany and Canada to lead on the development of a Delivery Plan which sets out how donor countries will meet the goal; the intention is for this to be published ahead of the COP. I urge countries which have yet to commit, or who are looking to increase their existing commitments, to do so now.

■ Climate Change: Finance

Dr Andrew Murrison:

[\[56329\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if the Government will back UN Secretary-General's call for other countries and climate donors to set aside 50 per cent of their climate finance for climate adaptation.

Owen Thompson:

[\[56453\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the international communities that are worst affected by climate change are involved in designing the (a) mitigation and (b) adaptation solutions supported by the \$100 billion climate fund.

Alok Sharma:

The UK is ensuring a large majority of our own international climate finance is grant-based. We are pressing other donor countries for similarly ambitious commitments. Under our G7 Presidency, the G7 committed to scaling up adaptation finance, and we have seen concrete new individual pledges from Canada, Japan, the US, and Denmark in recent months to this effect.

The UK has committed to delivering a balance through our scaled up ICF and has launched - with other bilateral donors Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark - a Champions Group on Adaptation Finance, with a commitment to deliver a balance of adaptation in climate finance, in response to calls from developing countries. Since launching, Finland and Germany have joined.

Finance needs to be accessible, particularly for the most marginalised communities. Locally led adaptation is a central priority for the COP26 Presidency, amplifying the calls for greater support for locally led action, and also addressing the barriers that restrict and prevent finance flowing to the local level. Locally led adaptation means communities are directly involved in the design of the solutions.

■ Environment Protection: EU Action

John Howell:

[\[56938\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 29 September 2021 on climate change and the environment.

Alok Sharma:

The UK has long recognised the unequivocal threat that climate change and environmental degradation poses to the lives and wellbeing of individuals and communities across the world, including the most marginalised and vulnerable.

During the 48th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, the UK voted to recognise the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The UK Government will continue to monitor the implementation of this human right and make internal assessments of the implications from both the Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe.

■ UN Climate Change Conference 2021: Carbon Emissions**Daisy Cooper:** [\[57359\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what his policy is on recruiting staff to host at the COP26 venue who are local to that venue to reduce carbon miles.

Alok Sharma:

Our Blue Zone 'local staff' and General Liaison Officers have all been recruited from Glasgow and the surrounding area, and more than 40% of the Host City volunteers live in the City.

Furthermore, our production company's local crew supplier is engaging with local organisations to recruit a local workforce. Other subcontractors are committed to 70-85% local staff.

■ UN Climate Change Conference 2021: Passenger Ships**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[56650\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether any compensation or payment will be made to local authorities where cruise liners being used to house delegates to COP26 will be berthed.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[57371\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how many cruise liners will be berthed (a) in Glasgow and (b) on the Clyde for COP26.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[57372\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) delegates and (b) accredited visitors that will be staying on cruise liners berthed in Glasgow and on the Clyde while attending COP26.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[57373\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what estimate he has made of the amount of emissions that will be produced from cruise liners berthed on the River Clyde during COP26.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[57374\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what the estimated cost is of (a) berthing and (b) other incidental fees in respect of cruise liners used to host delegates and visitors to COP26.

Alok Sharma:

To bolster the available accommodation for some of our contractors supporting the operational delivery of COP26, we have procured two ferries which will be berthed on the outskirts of Glasgow.

There will be no delegates or accredited visitors staying on the vessels.

COP26 is targeting carbon neutral using the standard PAS206. The carbon footprint analysis for this will incorporate all emissions generated from activities that are integral to hosting the event, including those of the two cruise ships.

■ UN Climate Change Conference 2021: Religion

Stuart Anderson:

[\[56667\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to ensure that faith communities are effectively represented at COP26.

Alok Sharma:

Representing over 80% of the world's population, faith and spiritual groups have a unique perspective on climate change, in making the moral case to individuals, communities and states to protect the planet and support the most vulnerable in society. This is why the UK COP26 Presidency is working with faith leaders from across the globe to inspire a global response to climate change and drive real world action.

We have worked in collaboration with Italy and the Vatican to convene global faith leaders ahead of COP26. On 4 October 2021, I [travelled to the Vatican](#) where Pope Francis presented me with a signed joint Appeal from faith leaders calling on the international community to raise their climate ambition.

I have also established a dedicated civil society engagement team who work with faith communities. In April 2021, I met UK-based faith leaders to discuss how the UK Presidency can best work with faith leaders to deliver an inclusive and ambitious COP26. Officials worked with faith leaders in the UK and across the globe to produce the [COP26 faith toolkit](#). This contains guidance on how religious, faith and spiritual communities can support climate action in the run up to and beyond COP26.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Carbon Emissions

Daisy Cooper:

[\[56245\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if he will make an estimate of the number of carbon miles that will be incurred by staff employed by the Government to host COP26; and what plans he has to offset those carbon miles.

Alok Sharma:

COP26 will be carbon neutral, which is a requirement from the UNFCCC on the UK as Host Country. However, our main priority is to reduce the emissions from the Conference in the first instance. We are asking all of our staff and volunteers to use low-carbon travel options and will be offsetting the emissions associated with travel, including those in the run up to COP26, from the travel data collated once the event has been delivered.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Dan Jarvis:

[\[59793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme applications have been granted since the conclusion of Operation Pitting.

James Heappey:

103 applications to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) have been approved since the conclusion of Operation Pitting on 28 August.

These applications have been accepted under ARAP because the applicant fulfils the eligibility criteria of the scheme, however their relocation is not guaranteed until Home Office security checks have taken place and their visa is approved.

Dan Jarvis:[\[59794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recourse Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme applicants have to appeal a rejected application.

James Heappey:

When applicants for the ARAP scheme are rejected on grounds of eligibility, they are invited, if they believe the decision to be incorrect, to submit any additional evidence they consider to be relevant to the decision. Any applicant who does so will have their case reviewed.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme**Alan Brown:**[\[56241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average timescale is for a decision to be made on a claim under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Leo Docherty:

During the 2020 to 2021 financial year the average time for a decision to be made on a claim for injury/illness under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme was 83 days (median average). This was published in the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) bulletin as at 31 March 2021. The Supplementary Tables provide a break down by financial year which allows comparison across years. The bulletin can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-financial-year-202021>

Alan Brown:[\[57150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many claims under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are awaiting (a) a decision and (b) an offer.

Leo Docherty:

The information on cases awaiting decision is already published within the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme bulletin and Supplementary Tables (on Table 2) as at 31 March 2021, and can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-financial-year-202021>

The second part of the question cannot be answered in the format requested. The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is a one-step process and awards are made at

a specified tariff and financial amount upon a decision being made. Claims cannot be awaiting an offer.

■ **Army: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill: [59966]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the 77th Brigade has conducted operations against targets in Scotland.

James Heappey:

77th Brigade has not and does not conduct operations targeted at UK domestic audiences.

■ **Defence Equipment and Support: Consultants**

John Healey: [59709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much was spent by Defence Equipment and Support on consultants in each year since 2010.

Jeremy Quin:

Details of annual expenditure on consultants (covering such areas as project management, organisational design, finance and legal) by Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) have been set out in the DE&S Annual Report and Accounts (ARAC) since financial year 2014/15, when DE&S was established as a Bespoke Trading Entity. Prior to 2014/15, DE&S consultancy costs were not identified separately from the Equipment Plan.

The DE&S ARAC for the financial year 2020/21 will be published in due course, following completion of the approvals process. The DE&S ARAC index can be accessed on gov.uk via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-equipment-support-annual-report-and-accounts-index>.

■ **Falkland Islands: Devonport Dockyard**

Luke Pollard: [59033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to recognise the contribution of dockyard workers in Devonport from 1982 in the 40th anniversary of the liberation of the Falkland Islands in 2022.

Leo Docherty:

Her Majesty's Naval Base Devonport is working with organisations across the city of Plymouth on a series of events to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Falkland Islands conflict. Within Devonport Dockyard an event and commemorative plaque will mark the occasion of the departure of the first Task Force units from Plymouth, the people that made it possible, and the loved ones they left behind.

■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark

Luke Pollard: [\[59032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has to replace HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark.

Jeremy Quin:

On current plans, HMS ALBION and HMS BULWARK are due to retire from service by the end of 2034.

As part of the transformation of our Commando Forces, options for our future amphibious capability are being developed; these are currently at the concept stage.

■ Mali: Desertion

Kenny MacAskill: [\[59967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of defections from Malian security forces to insurgent groups.

James Heappey:

We continue to keep the security situation under regular review, including monitoring the risk to life to our forces from a range of threats. The role of the UK Armed Forces in Mali as part of the UN Mission is to protect civilians and build long-term peace and stability in Mali.

■ Military Aircraft: Training

Hywel Williams: [\[58742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to point 5 of his letter of 20 April 2021, reference MSU4.6.7.2, what progress has been made since on improvements to Texan trainer aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

Work continues with industry on the life raft and there has been significant progress on the Universal Water Activated Release System harness, with embodiment on all ten Texan aircraft due to be complete by the end of October.

It remains the case that Texan aircraft continues to routinely and safely operate over the sea. The modifications identified are to further enhance the protection for our aircrew, enabling training over the roughest of sea states. However, it also remains the case that we will always need to conduct essential training flights over land to ensure pilots receive training for all scenarios they may face when on operations and to ensure effective use of all available airspace and training sortie times.

■ Military Alliances

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[56590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help ensure that there is oversight and accountability of the UK's military partnerships and that key policies and processes governing those relationships involve Parliament.

James Heappey:

MOD Ministers are committed to their accountability responsibilities to Parliament on key policies and processes regarding our relationships with our international partners. The Department makes regular announcements on defence activity to ensure Parliament is kept up to date and we also ratify legally binding instruments through Parliament to ensure proper oversight and accountability of these agreements. Parliament holds the Department to account through monthly Defence questions, regular Parliamentary Questions, requests for information through Ministerial Correspondence, Ministerial Statements and announcements, and Select Committee inquiries.

Oversight and monitoring of the UK's military partnerships is managed within the Department through rigorous assessment processes underpinned by formal documentation. This includes regular updates to Ministers both on any new partnership agreements and on operational activity undertaken as part of existing ones.

■ Military Decorations: Reserve Forces

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[56210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the awarding of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal to serving members of the Territorial armed services, who had unbroken service for the immediate five years preceding the Jubilee, was dependant on eligible recipients being able to produce a certificate of efficiency for each of those qualifying years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[56851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there is an appeals process for former service men and women, serving in the Territorial armed forces, who missed out on receiving the 2002 Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal as a result of being unable to produce a certificate of efficiency for one or more of the five qualifying years that fell immediately before the awarding of the medal.

Leo Docherty:

The Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal was awarded to all personnel who were in effective military service with the Volunteer Reserve Forces on 6 February 2002 and had completed five annual bounty earning training years, for which a certificate of efficiency would have been received, and who were properly enlisted on, or prior to, 7 February 1997. The annual bounty training year 2001/2002 was required to be one of

the five years to count. The total of five annual bounty earning training years could be aggregated.

A former service person who believes that they may have been eligible to receive the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal is welcome to write to the Ministry of Defence to request a review of their circumstances. Medals enquiries may be made by post to: MOD Medal Office, Innsworth House, Imjin Barracks, Gloucester, GL3 1HW; or by e-mail to: dbs-medals@mod.gov.uk

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[56214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the range of medals and commendations that can be awarded to men and women serving in the Territorial armed services to increase recognition of their commitment and contribution to the service and protection of the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[56852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing recipients of the Territorial Efficiency Medal (TED) to place the award letters post nominally after their name, in line with recipients of the Territorial Decoration (TD); and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

Reserve forces personnel are fully eligible for all state honours, operational awards, and campaign medals, providing they are recommended and meet the associated eligibility criteria. In addition, they are eligible for the award of the Volunteer Reserve Services Medal (VRSM) when long service and conduct criteria is met - this award is similar in criteria to the award of the Long Service & Good Conduct Medal awarded to qualifying regular service personnel. There are currently no plans to widen the reserves specific medallic recognition and commendation eligibility criteria.

As the Territorial Efficiency Medal and Territorial Decoration are no longer awarded and were replaced in April 1999 by the VRSM, there are currently no plans to review the policy on post nominal recognition for the Territorial Efficiency Medal.

■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings

Luke Pollard:

[\[56123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many buildings across the defence estate have combustible cladding attached to them.

Jeremy Quin:

In the United Kingdom the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has 755 buildings with sleeping accommodation that are either fully or partially clad with combustible cladding. Of these 27 are high rise (defined as being six floors and over) on all of which the MOD are carrying out remedial work or investigating remedial options.

A programme of work to understand the extent of combustible materials in external wall systems is being completed for the remaining 728 low rise buildings.

■ Ministry of Defence: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[56169\]](#)

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

Leo Docherty:

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

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

■ Multi Role Ocean Surveillance Ship: Procurement

Luke Pollard:

[\[59026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the multi-role ocean surveillance ship will be (a) built in Britain or (b) an existing ship leased from the private sector.

Jeremy Quin:

The new Royal Navy Multi Role Ocean Surveillance vessel announced in the Defence Review is in its concept and assessment phase, and options for the procurement strategy are being explored but no firm decision has yet been made.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Afzal Khan:

[\[57316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2021 to Question 51826 on Refugees: Afghanistan, how many dependants of Afghan nationals were evacuated from Afghanistan during Operation Pitting.

James Heappey:

During Operation Pitting around 5,000 Afghan nationals were evacuated from Afghanistan under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This includes approximately 1,200 principals. The remainder were family members.

■ Shipbuilding

Stephen Morgan:

[\[59015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy will be published.

Ruth Jones:

[\[59049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy will be published.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Hon. Members to the answer I gave on Wednesday 8 September to Question 43387 to the hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (Mr John Healey).

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[59737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he will publish the new National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on Wednesday 8 September to Question 43387 to the Hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (Mr John Healey).

Attachments:

1. Hansard Extract [UIN 43387.docx]

■ Type 31 Frigates

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[56820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will provide a list of armaments that will be fitted onto the Type 31 frigate.

Jeremy Quin:

It is intended that the Type 31 frigate will be equipped with the Sea Ceptor missile system and will be equipped with one Bofors 57mm Mk3 and two Bofors 40mm naval guns, in addition to a range of highly advanced weapon and sensor systems. These include a sophisticated combat system with 4D air and surface surveillance, target indication radar and the capability to operate a Merlin or Wildcat helicopter.

■ Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[59809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what upgrades were made to the Type 45 destroyers by his Department's engineers after technical problems were uncovered in recent years.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 July 2020 to Question 66798 from the Rt Hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis).

Attachments:

1. Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance [UIN 66798.docx]

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

Justin Madders:

[\[56162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35709 on veterans: identity cards, when he plans to announce a delivery date for the introduction of the online verification tool for Veterans ID.

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[56295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress the Government has made on the roll out of veteran's ID cards.

Leo Docherty:

I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave on 20 September 2021 to Question 47041 to the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan).

Attachments:

1. Veterans: Identity Cards [UIN 47041.docx]

■ Veterans: Workplace Pensions

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[56418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that veterans are (a) supported in obtaining their military pension and (b) provided with adequate support where difficulties arise.

Leo Docherty:

Although it is the member's responsibility to claim their Armed Forces pension when it is due, the MOD actively traces members if the deferred pension has not been claimed and the age at which the pension is payable has passed.

The Armed Forces Pension Schemes (AFPS) have a wide range of easy to understand booklets and videos on the pension schemes which can be accessed on the gov.uk website and YouTube. Scheme booklets are also provided to members when they join, which provide advice on their AFPS pension and the steps they must take to make a claim for their deferred pension. Additionally, pension briefs and training are offered in service.

For serving personnel or veterans who need support or are experiencing difficulties, the Veterans Welfare Service provides free and confidential advice on a wide range of issues. Welfare Managers can provide welfare support and engage with the Joint Personnel Administration Centre (JPAC) or the Armed Forces Pension Scheme team on the individual's behalf. All members also have access to the JPAC Enquiry Centre who can provide personal pension information and can offer support where necessary.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **BBC****Zarah Sultana:**[\[59077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has made with the BBC on the trends in the size and share of its viewership and audiences.

Julia Lopez:

The BBC is editorially and operationally independent of the government, and trends relating to audience and viewership are a matter for the BBC.

The BBC's Royal Charter requires the BBC to represent, reflect and serve audiences, taking into account the needs of diverse communities of all the UK nations and regions. It is for Ofcom as the BBC's independent regulator to ensure the BBC complies with its Charter duties.

The BBC includes details on audience trends within their Annual Report and Trust Statement.

The Secretary of State and I have had constructive discussions with the BBC leadership, and have made it clear that the BBC needs to ensure it is more accessible, and representative of the people who pay the licence fee.

■ **Broadband: Standards****Chi Onwurah:**[\[59786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Ofcom's report entitled UK Home Broadband Performance, published on 9 September 2021, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the finding that average peak-time download speeds in urban areas were a third higher than those in rural areas in March 2021.

Julia Lopez:

The government is committed to delivering nationwide gigabit connectivity as soon as possible. Over half of premises across the UK can now access gigabit-capable networks, up from just one in ten in November 2019. We are also investing £5 billion in Project Gigabit so that hard-to-reach and rural communities are not left behind. In addition, nationwide superfast broadband coverage now stands at 97%, meaning the vast majority of the UK has access to speeds of 30Mbps or higher.

Furthermore, for communities not in line for either commercial or government-funded plans, we are providing more immediate support through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme and are investing up to £110 million to upgrade rural public buildings.

■ Charity Commission: Public Appointments

Rachael Maskell:

[\[56570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason there has been a delay in appointing a new permanent Chair of the Charity Commission.

Nigel Huddleston:

The campaign to appoint a Chair to the Charity Commission is a fair and open competition in line with the Cabinet Office Governance Code for Public Appointments, as regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Interviews for this role were rescheduled but have now taken place, and the preferred candidate will be announced in due course. They will be expected to attend a pre-appointment hearing in front of the DCMS Select Committee.

Further updates on the progress of the campaign will be made public in due course.

■ Culture Recovery Fund

Stephen Morgan:

[\[58488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to announce awards from the third tranche round of the Culture Recovery Fund.

Nigel Huddleston:

To date, a total of £1.2bn has been distributed through the Culture Recovery Fund, supporting around 5000 individual organisations and sites across England.

We will announce the organisations that will receive funding from the third round of the CRF in due course following the completion of Arm's-Length Bodies' application processes. Arm's-Length Bodies have published target time-frames within which they hope to inform applicants.

It is important that, in spending taxpayers money, we do our due diligence to ensure it is being spent correctly.

■ Defibrillators: Football

Sam Tarry:

[\[58556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the provision of defibrillators at grassroots football clubs.

Nigel Huddleston:

Events at both UEFA EURO 2020 earlier this year and more recently at Newcastle United have demonstrated the immense value of access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and first aid training for anyone involved in sport. Sports have a responsibility to make the safety and welfare of players their top priority, including through access to life-saving first aid equipment and relevant training and education.

At the grassroots level, all capital funding awards for sports venues made by Sport England, the Government's arm's length body for community sport, must include AED provision if it is not already available.

For football facilities, support over recent years has been provided by The Football Association (The FA) and the British Heart Foundation to help ensure AEDs are available. In June 2021 I welcomed the Premier League's announcement of their new Defibrillator Fund, which will fund AEDs at thousands of football clubs and facilities across the country. Each grant recipient will be required to have at least one person successfully complete The FA Education Sudden Cardiac Arrest free online course. Sport England is working with the Football Foundation in support of the Premier League initiative to put £3 million into providing AED equipment for grassroots football clubs.

The Defibrillator Fund will see AEDs provided to Football Foundation funded facilities which currently are without a device onsite. A second phase of the project will allow grassroots clubs that own their facilities to apply for funding for a defibrillator.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[56479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to improve her Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Julia Lopez:

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

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

DCMS has taken a number of steps to improve response times. These include increasing the size of its correspondence team and improving internal reporting measures.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[56782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Julia Lopez:

As part of its broader decentralisation agenda, the government has been intentionally reducing ring fenced funding streams. We believe that providing councils with the freedom to use funding in a way that responds to local needs and priorities is key to supporting financial sustainability and sound financial management.

DCMS currently administers five funds which are competitively allocated and which include local authorities as recipients. These are:

Cultural Investment Fund

Invests in cultural infrastructure, local museums and neighbourhood libraries to benefit communities across the country.

UK City of Culture

Invites places across the UK to set out their vision for culture-led regeneration and takes place every four years. Awards were made to local authorities to enable them to strengthen their final applications.

5G Testbeds and Trials Programme “Urban Connected Communities Project”

Trials new 5G services and applications to individuals and businesses.

5G Testbeds and Trials Programme “5G Create” scheme

Aims to explore and develop new use-cases and 5G technical capabilities.

Rural Connected Communities competition

Funds 5G research and development projects.

■ Exercise: Children and Young People**Feryal Clark:**[\[59097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps she has taken to tackle the gender gap in activity levels amongst Asian and Black children and young people set out in Sport England’s Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic Year 2019/20 Report, published in January 2021.

Feryal Clark:[\[59098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of Sport England’s Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic Year 2019/20 Report published in January 2021; and what steps she has taken to improve sport and activity levels of Black children and young people.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people have the best opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity. Our Sporting Future

strategy has diversity and inclusion at its heart, and sets out how important it is for all children to have a good experience of sport and physical activity.

Throughout the pandemic we provided an unprecedented £1 billion of financial support to ensure the survival of the sport and leisure sector. To tackle inequalities and support those most impacted by the restrictions, Sport England have launched a new £20m Together Fund that builds on the work of their £20m Tackling Inequalities Fund to help people stay active and provide guidance on how to find accessible activities. Initiatives such as the Studio You video platform, funded by Sport England and powered by This Girl Can, are also encouraging more teenage girls to be active. Sport England's recently launched Uniting the Movement strategy reinforces their commitment to tackling inequalities faced in sport by underrepresented groups.

A key driver of the government's School Sport and Activity Action Plan is to ensure that all children and young people have access to at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. This is supported by £320 million per year through the PE and sport premium.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Education

Sam Tarry:

[58555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans her Department has to increase awareness of sudden cardiac arrest training offered by the FA and other organisations which teach people how to recognise a sudden cardiac arrest and respond accordingly.

Nigel Huddleston:

The welfare and safety of everybody taking part in sport is of paramount importance. I welcome the work of The FA and other sports organisations in increasing access to first aid equipment and education.

Sport England, our arm's length body for community sport, has funded UK Coaching's free course for first responders to help them understand how to respond and act quickly to a sudden cardiac arrest:

<https://www.ukcoaching.org/resources/topics/tips/sudden-cardiac-arrest-tips-to-help-you-be-prepared>

■ Internet: Children

Emma Hardy:

[57293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to help ensure the safety of children online.

Chris Philp:

Protecting children online is at the heart of the Online Safety Bill, which the government published in draft in May 2021 for pre-legislative scrutiny. Sites in scope of the Bill which are likely to be accessed by children will need to deliver appropriate safety measures to protect children from inappropriate or harmful content online. If

sites fail in their duties under the Bill, they will be subject to tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global qualifying annual turnover.

The government is clear that tech companies should use their ingenuity now to improve child online safety. We have taken a number of steps to help companies and users improve online safety, including the publication of a One Stop Shop for child online safety, the Online Media Literacy Strategy, and Safety by Design guidance.

Chris Elmore:

[59913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of ensuring there is an effective child-use test to protect children from harmful content in the Online Safety Bill; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Online Safety Bill protects children from harmful and inappropriate content on any service in scope which children are likely to access. Such services will need to protect children from both illegal content and content which is harmful or inappropriate for children.

Services who do not consider they need to implement the higher level of protection for children will need to provide robust evidence to the regulator that children are not accessing their service, and keep this under review. Ofcom may take enforcement action where providers do not carry out an assessment on children's access and keep it up to date.

■ Internet: Radicalism

Luke Pollard:

[59025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what representations she has received on including measures to tackle incel culture online in the Online Harms Bill.

Chris Philp:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders and have received representations on a variety of issues, including online incel culture. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

■ Loneliness

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[59720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress his Department has made on tackling loneliness following the Let's Talk Loneliness campaign and the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department's response to the COVID-19 recognised the importance of social connection, and we are continuing to build on this as part of our strategy to tackle loneliness.

In addition to providing over £34 million to charities tackling loneliness through the £750 million Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) funding package, over recent months we have continued to deliver the £4 million Local Connections Fund. This funding is being delivered in partnership with the National Lottery Community Fund, and so far we have awarded over 1,300 microgrants to charities and community groups that help people to connect via the things they enjoy. For example, we've supported songwriting workshops in Devon, dance classes in Bedfordshire, and online chat services in Durham.

In September, we launched the Loneliness Engagement Fund to provide small grants to organisations that can reach the groups in England most affected by loneliness during COVID-19. Funding will be provided to support communications and engagement activity that will help reduce feelings of stigma, and encourage people to take steps to help themselves and others. We will inform organisations who have been successful in applying for funding in early November.

We are also preparing to deliver winter loneliness campaign activity as part of the Better Health: Every Mind Matters campaign. Building on the success of the Let's Talk Loneliness campaign, we will be reminding people that it is OK to feel lonely, and providing advice on how people can help themselves and others to tackle loneliness.

We continue to support organisations across sectors to take action on loneliness through our Tackling Loneliness Network. This year, we set up a digital platform to support members of the Network to connect and share resources and best practice. We are also working closely with stakeholders and experts through our new Social Connection Funders Group, and our Loneliness Evidence Group.

■ Mass Media: Misinformation

Munira Wilson:

[57381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans her Department has to help ensure that (a) TV news broadcasters and (b) print news outlets report responsibly to reduce the negative impact of panic-buying.

Julia Lopez:

The government is committed to a free and independent media. It is not appropriate for the government to arbitrate on what should or should not be published or broadcast.

Ofcom is the UK's independent regulator of television services. The Ofcom Broadcasting Code covers standards in programmes and has rules to ensure that broadcast news is reported with due accuracy and impartiality. The government does not interfere in broadcasters' editorial decisions and it is for content makers to decide what to include in their programmes, provided that they comply with the Broadcasting Code.

There is also an independent self regulatory regime to ensure that the press adheres to a wider set of clear and appropriate standards, and to offer individuals a means of

redress where these are not met. The regulators, IPSO and IMPRESS, enforce codes of conduct which provide guidelines on a range of areas, including discrimination, accuracy, privacy, and harassment. If they find that a newspaper has broken the code of conduct, they can order corrections. IPSO can also order critical adjudications and Impress can levy fines.

■ National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Permanent Secretary has asked for an instruction relating to the proposed National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41606 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, what plans the Government has to let all or part of Victoria Tower Gardens on a lease exceeding five years following the construction of the Holocaust Memorial.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41606 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, for what reason the Answer did not indicate the timetable for announcing the detailed arrangements for the management of Victoria Tower Gardens after the construction of the Holocaust Memorial.

Nigel Huddleston:

No Ministerial direction relating to the proposed National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been requested.

In regard to future management arrangements for Victoria Tower Gardens, the Government intends to let a long lease.

Detailed arrangements for the management of Victoria Tower Gardens will be announced in due course.

■ Offences against Children: Internet

Chris Elmore:

[\[56517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking in the draft Online Safety Bill to help tackle (a) online child abuse and (b) the cross-platform nature of risk; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

All companies in scope of the Online Safety Bill will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content, including child sexual exploitation and abuse material.

Services which are likely to be accessed by children will also be required to protect children from other harmful or inappropriate content.

In addition, companies will have duties to protect children from encountering harmful content by means of their service, which could include protecting them from being directed to harmful content or activity on other sites. The regulator will undertake research and horizon-scanning to identify any cross-platform emerging issues, backed up by robust information-gathering powers.

■ Public Lending Right

Drew Hendry: [\[57148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the remuneration rate paid to authors under the Public Lending Right as a result of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) authors' incomes and (b) publishing industries supply chains.

Nigel Huddleston:

Public Lending Right (PLR) is a legal right to authors for payment from a central fund for eligible book contributors when their books are borrowed from public libraries. It applies to physical books, e-books, and e-audiobooks. Illustrators, photographers, translators and editors are also compensated for the loan of their books from public libraries.

The British Library administers the PLR Scheme and recommends annually to the department the revised PLR rate per loan. The recommended PLR rate per loan is determined by the annual registered loans figure for the relevant year and the available PLR central fund.

The PLR rate per loan was increased in January 2021 from 9.03 pence per loan to 9.55 pence per loan and the department will shortly consult on a revised PLR rate per loan for the PLR Scheme year 2020/21, to be introduced in January 2022.

■ Public Lending Right: Finance

Caroline Lucas: [\[58362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to increase funding for the Public Lending Right.

Nigel Huddleston:

Public Lending Right (PLR) is a legal right to authors for payment from a central fund for eligible book contributors when their books are borrowed from public libraries. It applies to physical books, e-books, and e-audiobooks. Illustrators, photographers, translators and editors are also compensated for the loan of their books from public libraries.

The British Library administers the PLR Scheme and recommends annually to the department the revised PLR rate per loan. The recommended PLR rate per loan is

determined by the annual registered loans figure for the relevant year and the available PLR central fund.

The PLR rate per loan has increased annually from 6.20 pence per loan for the PLR Scheme year 2012/13 to 9.55 pence per loan for the PLR Scheme year 2019/20. The department will shortly consult on a revised PLR rate per loan for the PLR Scheme year 2020/21, to be introduced in January 2022.

■ Sports: Equality

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[59924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of to Question 56576, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the interview conducted by the Sports Councils Equality Group as part of the evaluation of Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport 2021, published September 2021, that revealed problems with (a) intimidation, (b) threats of non-selection and (c) sanctions aimed at individuals in UK sports organisations that support fair sport.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[59925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Sport England and UK Sport on the future funding of national governing bodies that do not follow the Sports Councils Equality Group Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport 2021 on how to review their policies.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government is clear that there is no place for discrimination or intimidation in any sport, at any level. The Sports Councils Equality Group (SCEG) transgender inclusion guidance is intended to help provide support and clarity for National Governing Bodies operating in a complex environment. The review was carried out in recognition that the previous guidance was outdated and that sport at every level required more practical advice and support.

With reference to the answer provided on 18th October 2021 to questions 56575-56576, the SCEG guidance provides a decision making framework and a variety of different approaches for the National Governing Bodies of each sport to define the best options for their sport, subject to their assessment of inclusion, fairness and safety.

Sports governing bodies each have their own rules on transgender issues and it is appropriate that they can determine the right position for their own sport.

The Sports Councils are not regulators of sport, and the SCEG document serves as guidance that is independent from funding. The expectations for sporting organisations that receive public funding are set out in the Code for Sport Governance.

The government will continue to work through our arm's length bodies, Sport England and UK Sport, to support National Governing Bodies in reviewing their policies for their sport.

■ Third Sector: Insurance**Rachael Maskell:**[\[56464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of civil society organisations on the explicit exclusion of (a) commutable diseases, (b) coronaviruses and (c) pandemics from insurance policies of civil society organisations; what assessment she has made of the impact that that omission will have on those organisations; and what representations she has made to the insurance industry on such exclusions.

Nigel Huddleston:

My department has monitored the impact of the pandemic on civil society throughout the crisis, and regularly discusses emerging issues with civil society representatives. To date discussions have not raised serious cross-sectoral concerns about the availability of insurance.

In specific cases, the government has taken action to address difficulties in accessing appropriate insurance products. For example in September the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme was launched. The scheme will support events - such as festivals, conferences and business events - at risk of being halted or delayed due to an inability to obtain COVID-19 cancellation insurance. This scheme will benefit civil society organisations that operate or benefit from live events.

The government will continue to work with sector representatives and listen to concerns raised regarding the impact of the pandemic.

■ Youth Centres: Hornsey and Wood Green**Catherine West:**[\[57216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will commit to allocating funding to youth centres in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Youth Investment Fund (YIF) is designed to achieve levelling up across the country. The YIF will invest in safe spaces for young people in the areas of greatest need, giving them access to support from youth workers and enabling them to engage in beneficial activities. Plans for the fund are subject to the 2021 Spending Review, following the DCMS review of its offer to young people.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Taxation****Emma Hardy:**[\[57288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on whether employers are using their levy funds to access high quality apprenticeship training and assessment.

Alex Burghart:

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our reforms to apprenticeships, supporting employers of all sizes to invest in high-quality apprenticeships.

Employers that pay the levy can spend the funds available to them in their apprenticeship service accounts on apprenticeship training and assessment. Employers have developed over 630 high-quality apprenticeship standards in a diverse range of occupations, allowing them to spend the levy on the training that works for them.

Our reforms to apprenticeships have made them longer and better, with more off-the-job training and an independent assessment at the end. Ofsted inspects the quality of apprenticeship training provision at all levels. Any provider that receives an 'inadequate' Ofsted assessment for apprenticeships will be removed from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. We are also taking a number of steps to improve the quality of apprenticeships further. This includes refreshing the Register with more stringent criteria, investing in a comprehensive package of professional workforce development for apprenticeship providers and providing tools, advice, and guidance to support employers to give their apprentices a high-quality experience.

We publish a wide range of information on apprenticeships through our monthly and quarterly statistical releases. Information on the number of apprenticeship starts, achievements, types of apprenticeships undertaken (for example standards and sector subject areas), as well as the number of starts supported by apprenticeship service account levy funds, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>.

Provisional data show that there have been 319,400 starts reported to date in the 2020/21 academic year. Final year data will be published in November here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr#latest-releases>.

In August 2020, we introduced incentive payments for employers taking on new apprentices as part of the Plan for Jobs. Latest figures show that over 101,000 apprentices have been supported through the apprenticeship incentives between August 2020 and September 2021, of which 76% of apprentices are under the age of 25. We have extended the £3,000 incentive payment for new apprentice hires of any age until 31 January 2022 to support employers to offer new apprenticeships.

Emma Hardy:**[57289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money raised from the Apprenticeship Levy remains un-spent as at 18 October 2021.

Alex Burghart:

The apprenticeship levy is collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs from all UK employers with a pay bill above £3 million. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland receive a share of levy funding and it is for the devolved administrations to decide how their allocations should be used. The Department for Education's annual

apprenticeship budget for England is set by Her Majesty's Treasury and, although closely linked, is distinct from the total levy income collected. The levy has been set at a level to fund demand for apprenticeships in employers of all sizes.

In the 2021-22 financial year, funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England is around £2.5 billion, double that spent in the 2010-11 financial year in cash terms. Details of the apprenticeship budget spend for each financial year are included in the Education & Skills Funding Agency's Annual Report and Accounts.

Employers in England are able to access their apprenticeship levy contributions, plus a 10% government top up, via their digital apprenticeship service accounts. Employers can use these funds to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment in their business, or they can transfer them to support apprenticeships in other businesses. Employers have 24 months to use their funds once they enter their apprenticeship service account before they begin to expire on a rolling, month-by-month basis.

As of 30 September 2021, the total balance of available funds in levy-paying employers' Apprenticeship Service accounts is £4.81 billion. This represents funds that employers have contributed and are able to spend over a two-year period.

We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds available to them, but they are able to if they wish. As well as funding new apprenticeships in levy-paying employers, income from the levy funds new apprenticeships in employers that do not pay the levy, existing apprentices that started in previous years, and additional payments to employers and providers.

■ ClassDojo: Data Protection

Daisy Cooper: [56634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the privacy of children's data held on US-based application, ClassDojo, that is in use in UK schools.

Daisy Cooper: [56635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what safeguards have been put in place to ensure the data held by ClassDojo complies with UK data protection and privacy law.

Daisy Cooper: [56638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what safeguards have been put in place to ensure the data held by ClassDojo is not shared with the third-party service providers with which it works.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department provides guidance to support schools with data protection activity via the General Data Protection Regulation toolkit for schools. The toolkit is available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-toolkit-for-schools>. Schools are data controllers and are ultimately responsible for their own data protection procedures and compliance with legislation.

It is a school's individual responsibility to assess the digital resources it uses from a data protection and privacy perspective. Further information on GDPR compliance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation>.

■ Clinical Psychologists: Training

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[56422]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that those studying clinical psychology qualifications are able to provide feedback on how their courses are (a) structured and (b) weighted.

Michelle Donelan:

English higher education (HE) providers are autonomous institutions, which means that they have the freedom to determine the way their courses are taught, supervised, and assessed. However, all registered providers must continue to meet the Office for Students (OfS) registration conditions in relation to the quality of HE.

These registration conditions make clear the need to ensure that courses are high-quality, and that students are properly supported to achieve good outcomes. Registered HE providers must deliver well-designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed. Providers must also meet the requirements of the professional bodies, where the course delivers professional recognition as well as a degree. As set out in the OfS' Regulatory Framework, behaviours that may indicate compliance include actively engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. Details of the Framework are available here: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1406/ofs2018_01.pdf.

■ Coronavirus Catch-up Premium: Stockport

Navendu Mishra:

[58539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the financial allocation from the catch-up premium to schools in Stockport was during the academic year 2020-21.

Mr Robin Walker:

Allocations for the 2020/21 academic year for the COVID-19 catch up premium for Stockport and all other local authorities in England are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-catch-up-premium-provisional-allocations>.

■ Department for Education: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[56451]

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

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises the importance of responding to members of the public in an effective and timely manner, and the Cabinet Office published an updated 'Guide to Handling Correspondence' for government departments and agencies in July 2021, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-government-correspondence-guidance>.

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 the publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, this department had an unprecedented increase in the volume of customer contact. As a result timeliness for the despatch of correspondence to the public has unfortunately been affected. Additional resources have now been made available to the correspondence team and there has been a steady and sustained improvement in timeliness. During September 2021, 90% of correspondence was answered within the 20 day target and the expectation is that this will continue to improve. In order to provide the public with rapid access to advice the department placed an emphasis on answering phone calls throughout this calendar year, with over 94% of telephone enquiries presented to the National Helpline being answered every month during 2021.

■ Department for Education: Local Government Finance**Mr Clive Betts:****[56778]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Michelle Donelan:

The department is currently collating 2020-21 grant award data which we expect to be available in the new year following accuracy and completeness checks. The data is due to be published by Cabinet Office in March 2022 but may not contain the recipient category.

The 2019-20 scheme and award grant data is available on the link below in the DfE sheet. The 2019-20 scheme data does not contain the recipient category, but the recipient names are available in the awards data as is the allocation methodology and the grant scheme.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1013784/Government_grants_register_2019_to_2020_-_scheme_and_award_data.ods

■ Education: Sexual Harassment

Gareth Thomas:

[\[56221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the reporting to education professionals of sexual harassment via (a) social media and (b) other means is fit for purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

Following Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, the department considered the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. Amended statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), came into force on 1 September 2021, alongside revised departmental advice on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges. The guidance has been strengthened and updated following a public consultation and considering the findings from the Ofsted Review.

KCSIE provides detailed advice on how schools and colleges, generally led by their designated safeguarding lead, should respond to any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. It sets out the importance of reporting systems that are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. KCSIE and the departmental advice remain under constant review.

Ofsted inspectors will always report on whether arrangements for safeguarding children are effective.

The 'Reporting Abuse in Education' helpline was set up on 1 April and is available for those who may not be comfortable reporting abuse via their school or college.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[56553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the indicative thresholds for numbers of infection set by his Department in its contingency framework, in the context of the latest data on transmission of covid-19 in schools and other educational settings.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has worked with the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) to develop the thresholds outlined in the contingency framework. These are designed to help schools identify when it might be sensible to seek public health advice. It is not mandatory to seek public health advice when these thresholds are reached, and the thresholds alone do not guarantee that there is an 'outbreak' in the school. They are intended as a guide to indicate where there may be a substantial increase in transmission within the school.

Schools should continue to use their reasonable judgement when it appears that COVID-19 might be spreading between people who closely mix and seek advice from the department's helpline or through locally agreed support if they have any

concerns. We believe that the protective measures in place in schools continues to strike the right balance between managing the transmission risk and reducing disruption to education.

The department remains prepared to step measures up or down in response to the latest epidemiological data. The department will continue to monitor it closely and will not hesitate to amend or update policy and guidance if it is necessary to help protect people's health and support maximising face-to-face education.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[56554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the removal of the Government's recommendation for students, staff and visitors in schools and other educational settings to (a) socially distance or stay in bubbles and (b) wear face coverings on transmission of covid-19 in those settings.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department's priority is for all nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils and students and to minimise disruption to education. We have worked closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) throughout our response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including to revise our guidance from step 4 when the government relaxed most restrictions across all parts of society.

At step 4, the Department removed the recommendation for schools and colleges to keep pupils and students in consistent groups ('bubbles'). Face coverings are also no longer recommended in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities. The control measures that remain in place in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities aim to strike a balance between managing transmission risk and reducing disruption to education. These include maintaining good hygiene, keeping spaces well ventilated, and following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managed confirmed cases.

All nurseries, schools, colleges and universities should have contingency plans in place describing what they would do if children, pupils, students, or staff test positive for COVID-19, or how they would operate if they were advised to reintroduce any additional measures. The contingency framework sets out the measures that all nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities should be prepared for if they were advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission. It also sets out thresholds for managing COVID-19 cases and when nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities should consider seeking public health advice. The contingency framework can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings>.

There has been an increase in case rates amongst children since the return of schools, but evidence continues to show that children and young people remain at a very low risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Following the success of the vaccine

rollout amongst older and more vulnerable populations, the department is now focusing on maximising the number of children and young people in face-to-face education and minimising the disruption that control measures can cause.

The department continues to closely review data, analysis, and advice from a number of different sources, including UKSHA, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, and the Office for National Statistics. We also continue to work closely with local authorities and their Directors of Public Health to inform our planning and response. The department will continue to keep all measures under review in partnership with health experts and informed by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

Mick Whitley:

[57347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will introduce new and proportionate mitigation measures to schools and other compulsory education settings to curb the transmission of covid-19.

Mr Robin Walker:

Our priority is for all nurseries, schools and colleges to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to pupils and students and to minimise disruption to education. The department has worked closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) throughout our response to the COVID-19 outbreak and to revise our guidance from Step 4 of the roadmap when the government relaxed most restrictions across all parts of society.

The department continues to closely review data, analysis, and advice from a number of different sources including UKSHA, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, and the Office for National Statistics. We also continue to work closely with local authorities and their Directors of Public Health to inform our planning and response. We will continue to keep all measures under review in partnership with health experts and informed by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

As our guidance outlines, nurseries, schools and colleges should continue to keep good hygiene measures in place, keep spaces well ventilated, and follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The contingency framework describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in nurseries, schools and colleges, and sets out the measures that all settings should be prepared for if they were advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission. It also sets out thresholds for managing COVID-19 cases and when settings should consider seeking public health advice. The contingency framework can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings>.

All education providers should have contingency plans in place describing what they would do if children, pupils, students, or staff test positive for COVID-19 or how they

would operate if they were advised to reintroduce any additional measures. If a provider is concerned because they have reached the thresholds outlined in the contingency framework, or if they are concerned about transmission within the setting, they can seek public health advice via the department's helpline.

Mick Whitley:

[57349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of covid-19 in (a) schools and (b) other compulsory education settings.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) leads in conducting the national Coronavirus Infection Survey and publishes weekly prevalence estimates of COVID-19 in school-age children. A link to the latest ONS report is here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveysurvey/15october2021#age-analysis-of-the-number-of-people-who-had-covid-19>.

■ Foster Care: Offences against Children

Rachael Maskell:

[56633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help support adoptive parents of children who have been subject to neglect while under the care of foster parents; and if he will take steps to ensure that (a) local authorities are encouraged to investigate allegations of neglect by foster carers and (b) children with long-term behavioural difficulties which result from such neglect are provided with the support they need.

Will Quince:

Local authorities have a duty to assess the support needs of anyone who is affected by an adoption placement. The adoption support fund provides support for essential therapeutic services for eligible adoptive and special guardianship order families, on the basis of assessed need.

As addressed in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the fostering service must put in place and implement a written policy to safeguard children placed with foster carers from abuse or neglect, that includes the procedures to be followed in the event of such an allegation (regulation 12 and standard 22). Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is the government's statutory guidance that provides the framework within which agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

As with all children with behavioural needs, local authorities work with schools and other agencies to ensure that they can access the support for their specific requirements.

■ Languages: GCE A-level and GCSE

Taiwo Owatemi:

[56526]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to increase the (a) number of students taking and (b) funding for foreign language subjects at A-Level and GCSE.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department's focus is on increasing the uptake of languages at GCSE, which is why GCSEs in all modern and ancient languages are part of the English Baccalaureate performance measure for secondary schools. There are no specific plans to increase the number of pupils entered for language A levels, although an increase in GCSE uptake in languages is expected to lead to an increase in A level uptake in the longer-term.

The total number of pupils in state-funded schools in England entered for examinations in at least one language GCSE has increased from 231,224 in 2010 to 253,379 in 2019. This amounted to an increase among all key stage 4 pupils of 7 percentage points from 40% in 2010 to 47% in 2019. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the GCSE examinations are due to re-commence for summer 2022, and we will return to publishing, as far as possible, our usual range of English Baccalaureate entry and attainment measures.

The department also carried out a consultation earlier this year on proposed changes to the subject content for French, German and Spanish GCSEs. The intention is that more pupils will want to study languages at GCSE level and encourage them to continue with this study to post-16 and beyond. The department plans to respond to the consultation later this year.

There is no ring-fenced funding for schools and colleges for the teaching of languages at GCSE and A level. Schools are expected to use their core funding to teach pupils a broad and balanced curriculum to the end of key stage 4, while 16 to 19 core funding is used to cover the teaching and related costs for post-16 students in schools and colleges whatever their study programme. Core school funding increased by £2.6 billion in 2020-21 and is increasing by £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively, compared to 2019-20. The government has recently made significant increases in 16 to 19 funding, with an extra £400 million for 2020-21 awarded in the 2019 spending review, and a further £291 million on top of this in 2021-22. This enabled an increase in total programme funding per 16-19 student of nearly 10% between 2019/20 allocations and 2020/21 allocations and the increased funding rates have been maintained for 2021/22.

The Department also provides funding for a number of specific language education programmes to improve teaching quality and take-up in specific languages. These are:

- The Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Pilot led by the National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy (NCELP) at the University of York. Since 2018,

the £4.8 million programme has delivered fully resourced schemes of work for Key Stage 3 in French, German and Spanish, and provided training and support across 45 pilot schools. In the fourth year, NCELP will deliver free professional development to over 1,350 teachers nationally and develop fully resourced schemes of work for Key Stage 4.

- The Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) led by University College London Institute of Education in partnership with the British Council. The £10 million MEP has grown from 14 schools in 2016 to 75 schools in 2021, with around 7,000 pupils being taught Chinese from age 11 to 16. The department recently announced an additional £16.4 million for a new phase of the MEP for at least the next three years.

■ Mathematics: Teachers

Peter Kyle:

[56279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to improve the retention rate of mathematics teachers.

Mr Robin Walker:

There are more than 461,000 full-time equivalent classroom teachers, which is 20,000 more than in 2010. 41,472 new trainee teachers were recruited to start training in 2020/21, which is 23% more than in 2019/20, while just over two thirds of teachers who started teaching five years ago are still teaching.

However, the department recognises that some schools face challenges recruiting mathematics teachers, and that there is more to do to ensure that teaching remains a well-rewarded and prestigious profession. That is why we have announced a levelling up premium, worth up to £3,000 tax-free, for mathematics teachers in years 1 to 5 of their careers. This will support the recruitment and retention of maths teachers in the schools and areas that need them most. We will confirm the full eligibility details, including the eligible schools and areas, in due course. This is in addition to our tax-free bursaries worth up to £24,000 to encourage talented trainees into subjects such as mathematics.

As part of the education recovery plan, the department has announced that we are investing over £250 million of additional funding to help provide 500,000 teacher training opportunities to teachers so that they can access world-leading training appropriate for whatever point they are at in their career, from new teachers to headteachers. This includes £184 million of funding for new National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). Three new specialist NPQs have been launched to best address the broad range of responsibilities of current and aspiring middle leaders, including the NPQ for Leading Teaching. This aims to develop teachers who are subject leads or responsible for improving teaching practice in a subject or phase, including subjects such as mathematics.

Finally, we are taking action to reduce workload and improve wellbeing, which we know is crucial to teacher retention. The department has created an Education Staff

Wellbeing Charter which sets out a range of commitments on the government and employers in schools and colleges on wellbeing. Furthermore, the Department for Education school workload reduction toolkit, developed alongside school leaders, is a helpful resource that is being used by schools to review and reduce workload in their unique context. We are working with the sector on an update to be published in the coming months.

■ Public Sector: Pay

Feryal Clark:

[57442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 15 September 2021 to Question 44466 on Schools and Pay, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of public sector pay freezes for 2021-22 on the (a) public sector's ability to recruit and retain the workers it needs to deliver education and (b) delivery and quality of public services.

Mr Robin Walker:

The pause to headline pay rises for the majority of public sector workforces this academic year (2021/22) is in order to ensure fairness between public and private sector wage growth. The department will reassess the pay policy ahead of the 2022 pay round, taking into account the wider labour market.

Teaching remains an attractive and fulfilling profession. Recent pay awards have helped to increase the competitiveness of teacher pay in the wider labour market. The average pay award for teachers was 2.4% in the 2018/19 academic year, 2.75% in 2019/20, and 3.1% in 2020/21, meaning that the cumulative average pay award for teachers is 8.5% since 2018/19.

The department understands that high-performing teachers drive up pupil attainment and we want schools to be able to reward the best teachers and attract the best graduates into the profession. As a result of the flexible performance-based pay system the department has introduced, schools are able to choose to give teachers or head teachers a higher pay rise where this is appropriate to their particular local context and budget.

The department is committed to providing world-class training and development for teachers. In June, over £250 million of additional funding was announced to help provide 500,000 teacher training opportunities so teachers can access world-leading training appropriate for whatever point they are at in their career, from new teachers to head teachers.

In October, we announced a £129 million investment in recruitment incentives for those starting initial teacher training in the 2022/23 academic year, including tax-free bursaries of up to £24,000 in the highest priority subjects.

■ Pupil Exclusions: Enfield North**Feryal Clark:** [57435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many permanent exclusions per 100 pupils there have been in (a) academies, (b) community schools and (c) private schools in Enfield North constituency in each of last 10 years.

Mr Robin Walker:

The number of permanent exclusions per 100 pupils there have been in (a) academies and (b) community schools in Enfield North constituency in each of last 10 years is provided in the attached table.

Data on permanent exclusions from private schools is not collected by the department.

Attachments:

1. Table showing exclusions per 100 pupil
[57435_table_showing_exclusions_in_Enfield_North.xlsx]

■ Pupil Premium: Greater London**Feryal Clark:** [57437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to Answer of 15 September to Question 44463, in reference to the pupil premium allocation, if he will publish a breakdown of the £405 million figure for each London Council for the 2021-22 financial year.

Mr Robin Walker:

Pupil premium allocations for each local authority, including those in Inner and Outer London, are published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2021-to-2022>. Please click on the spreadsheet entitled 'Pupil premium allocations 2021 to 2022: national, local authority, parliamentary constituency level (updated September 2021)'.

■ Pupils: Birmingham**Liam Byrne:** [56812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the state school spending per capita is for (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) sixth forms in the local authority area of Birmingham.

Mr Robin Walker:

Primary school pupils in Birmingham local authority are attracting £4,844 on average via the National Funding Formula (NFF) in financial year 2021-22. Secondary school pupils in Birmingham local authority are attracting £6,379 on average via the NFF in 2021-22. Primary and secondary schools also receive additional funding through other grants, such as the pupil premium.

Based on the most recent published allocations for academic year 2020/21, the average total 16-19 programme funding per student at school sixth forms in Birmingham local authority is £5,049 ^[1].

[1] The calculation only includes institutions that have students receiving total programme funding. Some institutions receive only high needs funding and their students are not included in the calculation. Data source:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-allocation-data-2020-to-2021-academic-year>.

■ Pupils: Hyperactivity

Kim Leadbeater:

[58576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2021 to Question 54037, how many hours of initial teacher training is dedicated to (a) special educational needs and (b) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Mr Robin Walker:

All teachers are teachers of special education needs and disabilities (SEND), and high-quality teaching is central to ensuring that pupils with SEND are given the best possible opportunity to achieve at school.

Since September 2020, all new teachers are benefitting from at least three years of evidence based professional development and support, starting with Initial Teacher Training (ITT) based on the new ITT Core Content Framework (CCF), and followed by a new two-year induction underpinned by the Early Career Framework.

The CCF sets out a minimum entitlement of knowledge, skills and experiences that trainees need to enter the profession in the best position possible to teach and support all pupils to succeed, including those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND code of practice.

The department does not mandate a particular number of hours for SEND or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) training, but all ITT providers of courses leading to qualified teacher status must design their courses to incorporate the knowledge, skills and experiences detailed in the CCF into a coherent, well-sequenced curriculum to support trainees to develop their expertise. Courses must be designed so that trainee teachers can demonstrate that they meet the Teachers' Standards at the appropriate level. This includes the requirement in Standard 5, that all teachers must have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with ADHD or other special educational needs.

■ Pupils: Long Covid

Kim Leadbeater:

[56448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) assistance and (b) support his Department plans to make available to pupils sitting GCSE's who have been diagnosed with Long Covid.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department recognises that those taking examinations and assessments in 2022 have had considerable disruption to their education. In response to this, we have consulted on and announced a range of adaptations to examinations. Full details of these adaptations are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022/outcome/decisions-proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022>.

Reflecting that we are in a COVID-19 recovery period, Ofqual have also announced that 2022 will be a transition year for grading, setting out its plans for a mid-point between 2021 and pre-COVID grades. The department is confident that despite the disruption they have faced, students taking GCSEs and other qualifications next year will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills fairly to progress to the next stage of their lives.

We have also committed to an ambitious education recovery plan, including announcing investment of over £3 billion, which includes our ambitious tutoring programme, to support children and young people make up for disruption to their learning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The department understands that examinations and assessments might be particularly challenging for pupils who have been diagnosed with long COVID, and long COVID should be treated in line with other medium to long term health conditions. Alongside the above arrangements for 2022 and in accordance with normal years, reasonable adjustments to examinations should be put in place, where appropriate, for pupils with long-term illnesses. Parents and pupils should discuss whether any reasonable adjustments would be appropriate with their school or college. Further information about reasonable adjustments and the roles of exam boards, schools and colleges are available here: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration>. The NHS have also published guidance to those recovering from long COVID at: <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/what-is-covid-19/long-covid/>.

Schools should also refer to the guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions, which aims to ensure that all pupils with physical and mental health conditions, are properly supported in schools so they can play a full and active role in school life and achieve their academic potential. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

■ Remote Education: Computers**Dr Rupa Huq:****[57210]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing laptops to all disadvantaged secondary school pupils in England.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department recognises the importance of the availability of laptops and other technology, in particular for disadvantaged children and young people who may not have access to a device of their own. This is why we have already provided over 1.35 million devices, via schools, colleges and local authorities, which are responsible for allocating them to those pupils who need them most.

On Friday 22 October, the department announced that a further 500,000 devices will be provided this academic year, which brings the total investment to over £520 million.

Schools: Coronavirus**Janet Daby:**[\[57329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating additional funding to schools to strengthen health and safety measures against infection from covid-19.

Mr Robin Walker:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has balanced education and public health considerations, weighing the impact of these measures on teaching, educational attainment, the health and wellbeing of children, pupils, students and staff and the functioning of nurseries, schools and colleges, against the risks posed by COVID-19. The situation has now fundamentally changed due to the success of the vaccination programme.

The 2019 Spending Round committed to significant additional investment in schools of £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. At the same time, schools are benefitting from a substantial recovery package to tackle the impact of lost teaching time, including over £3 billion in additional support. Decisions on future funding will be made as part of this year's Spending Review.

Schools have the flexibility to make their own decisions on how to prioritise their spending to invest in a range of resources that will best support their staff and pupils. Schools continue to be able to access existing support for financial issues, including a wide range of school resource management tools, and, in serious circumstances, additional funding or advances from local authorities for maintained schools, or the Education and Skills Funding Agency for academy trusts.

All schools have a range of measures in place to manage COVID-19 transmission day to day. This includes ventilation and hygiene measures for schools and testing for pupils in Year 7 and above.

Schools must continue to comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures, such as keeping occupied spaces well ventilated. Schools must regularly review, update and monitor their risk assessments, outlining what they would do if children or staff test positive and how they would operate if measures needed to be stepped back up to break chains of transmission.

The government is committed to ensuring the safety of all pupils, which is why CO2 monitors have begun to be provided to state-funded early years, schools and further education providers. This has been backed by £25 million in government funding.

A director of public health or a local health protection team may give schools and colleges advice reflecting the local situation. In areas where rates are high, this may include advice that local circumstances mean that the thresholds for extra action can be higher. If they judge that additional action should be taken, they might advise the school or college to take some, or all, of the measures described in the contingency framework guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings#other-measures>.

Mick Whitley:

[57348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the existing covid-19 infection mitigation measures in place in schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

The current COVID-19 operational guidance for schools sets out the best way to deliver face-to-face high-quality education to all pupils while also helping reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. The contingency framework describes the types of measures that nurseries, schools and colleges should be prepared for, who can recommend them and where, when measures should be lifted and how decisions are made. The department has worked with the UK Health Security Agency to develop the thresholds outlined in the contingency framework. The thresholds are designed as a guide to differentiate between isolated cases as a result of community transmission and transmission occurring within the school, and to help the school identify when it might be sensible to seek public health advice.

Alongside Step 4 of the government's roadmap in July 2021, the department published a summary of the evidence regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and children, young people, and in nurseries, schools and colleges:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-covid-19-children-young-people-and-education-settings>.

■ Schools: Discipline

Christian Wakeford:

[57495]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on pupil behaviour (a) in schools and (b) at home.

Christian Wakeford:

[57496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of the survey by Team Teach on the Hidden Education Challenges during the Pandemic, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of new behaviours and the emergence of new behaviour trends on (a) pupils' and teachers' mental health and (b) teaching.

Christian Wakeford:

[57497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the provision of pastoral and behaviour support available to (a) pupils, (b) education staff and (c) parents.

Christian Wakeford:

[57498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of the survey by Team Teach on the Hidden Education Challenges during the Pandemic, whether he is taking steps to tackle behavioural matters arising in schools as a result of the measures taken to combat the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

Attending school or college in person plays a central role in promoting well-being for pupils. The department is pursuing an ambitious programme of work to improve behaviour in schools and to improve the mental health and well-being of pupils and teachers.

The department's £10 million behaviour hubs programme, launched in April, is projected to support more than 500 schools over 3 years. It will support schools to learn from the best in developing excellent behaviour cultures. In June 2021, the department also launched a call for evidence on managing good behaviour and how schools' behaviour policies have changed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This evidence will be considered alongside a public consultation later this year on the Behaviour and Discipline in Schools guidance. The guidance will provide practical advice to schools about how to encourage good behaviour and respond effectively to incidents of poor behaviour in and out of the classroom and support staff in tackling behavioural issues that have arisen from COVID-19.

The department's mental health and behaviour guidance for schools includes specific information about supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools-2>. This is in addition to the £79 million to boost children and young people's mental health support announced in March 2021, which will include increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges to around 400, covering an estimated 3 million children and young people by 2023.

To provide further support for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year, including trauma, anxiety, or grief, the government announced the £7 million additional funding for local authorities to deliver Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme in May 2021. Alongside this, we are providing £9.5 million to train a Senior Mental Health lead in up to 7,800

schools and colleges in England in this academic year; and funding an adapted 'Link' programme which is designed to improve partnerships between health and education leaders in local areas.

■ Schools: Discrimination

Gareth Thomas:

[\[56513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to ensure that schools and other relevant agencies are working with all children and young people to ensure that (a) misogyny and sexism are challenged and (b) such attitudes, actions and behaviours are not normalised or trivialised within schools; what steps his Department is taking to ensure that progress in both those areas is monitored; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The new statutory guidance for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which came into force in September 2020, emphasises that schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes, and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. The guidance states that schools should make clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up.

Following Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, the department has committed to developing additional support to help teachers deliver statutory RSHE effectively and confidently. The government's October 2021 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy' emphasises the importance of educational interventions to change harmful attitudes. To ensure consistency of approach, the department will develop non-statutory guidance, monitor and evaluate teacher confidence to deliver these difficult topics, and continue to build a programme of support that meets teachers' needs.

The department has also recently published revised statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', which has been strengthened to better support schools and colleges to prevent abuse, identify abuse, and respond appropriately where abuse is reported. The department will be launching a consultation later this year on the non-statutory behaviour and discipline guidance which will provide more practical advice to schools about how to encourage good behaviour and respond effectively to incidents of poor behaviour, including advice on how to create a safe and respectful school culture in which sexual harassment and violence are not tolerated.

■ Schools: Enfield North

Feryal Clark:

[\[56643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 20 September 2021 to Question 44463, on Schools: Standards, what the total amount of funding is for each school in Enfield North based on the figure provided of £5,283 per pupil.

Mr Robin Walker:

Enfield local authority is receiving £5,640 per pupil this financial year (2021-22). This is above the national average in per pupil funding of £5,228.

The average funding per pupil in Enfield North constituency is £5,730 this year. To see individual schools' notional funding allocations under the national funding formula, please follow this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2021-to-2022> and click on the spreadsheet entitled 'Impact of the schools NFF, 2021 to 2022'.

Please also see the attached spreadsheet, which shows notional funding allocations for each school in Enfield North constituency for financial year 2021-22.

Under the current funding system, schools' actual allocations are determined by each local authority's own funding formulae rather than directly through the national funding formula. Actual allocations, at both national and school level, are published on the following link: <https://skillsfunding.service.gov.uk/view-latest-funding>.

Attachments:

1. 56643_table
[56643_table_showing_Enfield_North_schools_notional_NFF_allocations.xlsx]

Feryal Clark:**[57436]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 20 September 2021 to Question 44463, what amount of the £250 million in teacher quality funding will schools in Enfield North receive.

Mr Robin Walker:

As part of the education recovery plan, in June 2021 the department announced over £250 million of additional funding to provide 500,000 world-leading training opportunities for teachers and head teachers, at every stage of their career. This additional funding was allocated as follows:

- £69 million to extend the rollout of the Early Career Framework (ECF) reforms to meet far higher than expected demand for the programme
- £138 million for National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) to offer all teachers and head teachers access to qualifications to support career development

Of this £250 million in teacher quality funding, calculations are made based on participant numbers, as opposed to being calculated on a per-schools basis, which means funding amounts in each area will depend on schools' choices of ECF programme and level of NPQ uptake.. This applies to both the ECF funding for early career teachers and mentors, and to participants undertaking a NPQ. Funding for both the ECF and NPQs is calculated per participant and is paid directly to the providers, to reduce the burden on schools.

■ Schools: Festivals and Special Occasions

Catherine West:

[\[57217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on (a) non-Christian festivals such as Eid and Diwali being recognised more in state schools and (b) allowing non-Christian students to get a legal holiday for their religious festivals.

Mr Robin Walker:

Schools play an important role in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. This involves supporting pupils to understand the society in which they grow up and teaching about respect for other people and for difference. All schools are required to actively promote fundamental British values, including mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs.

The government does not specify how schools should teach religious education or the topics that religious education must cover. State funded schools either follow a locally agreed syllabus for religious education or design and deliver their own curriculum. This leaves them free to recognise or teach about non-Christian festivals if they choose to.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, sets out that schools should treat a pupil's absence as authorised if it is on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.

The department does not define which specific days schools should authorise for religious observance, though generally, it may be a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their workplace in order to mark the occasion. We advise schools to seek advice from the relevant religious body if they are in doubt.

■ Schools: Heating

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[59056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of increased heating costs for schools in (a) City of Durham and (b) England as a result of opening windows and doors to adequately ventilate classrooms.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[59057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to provide schools in (a) City of Durham and (b) England with extra funding to meet increased heating costs during the 2021-22 academic year.

Mr Robin Walker:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance to nurseries, schools and colleges on ventilation requirements. It is important to ensure that nurseries, schools and colleges are well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

The department recognises that schools may be facing pressures this winter, particularly where energy prices have increased. However, these cost increases should be seen in the wider context of funding for schools: at the 2019 Spending Round, the government committed to significant additional investment in schools of £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. This year, mainstream school funding is increasing by 3.5% overall, and all schools are receiving at least a 2% increase to pupil-led per pupil funding.

Durham is receiving an extra £10.5 million for schools this year, an increase of 3.3% per pupil. This takes total funding for 2021-22 in Durham to over £344.5 million, including additional funding to meet increased costs of teachers' pay and pensions.

School leaders have the flexibility to make their own decisions on how to prioritise their spending to invest in a range of resources that will best support their staff and pupils. The department does not have detailed information on how cost pressures will vary for individual schools, as these will depend on individual circumstances and local decision making.

Schools continue to be able to access existing support for financial issues, including a wide range of school resource management tools, and, in serious circumstances, additional funding or advances from local authorities for maintained schools, or the Education and Skills Funding Agency for academy trusts.

School funding remains one of the department's key priorities and any decisions on future funding will be made as part of this year's Spending Review. We expect the outcome of the 2021 Spending Review to be announced on 27 October.

■ Schools: Sutton Coldfield

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[56533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has had with Birmingham City Council on increasing the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school places in Sutton Coldfield constituency.

Mr Robin Walker:

Supporting local authorities to create sufficient school places is one of the government's top priorities. Local authorities are responsible for providing enough school places for children in their area. Birmingham was allocated £23,208,348 of basic need funding earlier this year for places needed by September 2023.

Officials are in close liaison with Birmingham City Council and all other local authorities with regard to the sufficiency of local school provision. The department engages regularly to discuss local intelligence and offer advice and support to ensure sufficiency requirements are addressed.

In Birmingham, at a citywide level, a reduction in demand at primary phase is expected and, as a consequence, the department does not anticipate any local expansion plans in the primary phase in the short term. In contrast, during recent

engagement with Birmingham City Council, it was identified that the local authority plans to uplift secondary phase capacity in Sutton Coldfield. We anticipate further engagement with Birmingham City Council about the detail of these expansion plans.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Mike Amesbury: [\[58494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to introduce new guidance on the cost of school uniforms.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department plans to publish the statutory guidance in autumn 2021.

Schools do not need to make any changes before the guidance is released. We want schools to implement changes in a timely and considered manner to ensure that parents do not incur additional costs from sudden uniform changes.

Once the guidance is published, all schools will need to review their uniform policies and make necessary changes as soon as possible to ensure that parents see the benefits of the guidance.

■ Science: Teachers

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[57276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support subject-specific professional development for science teachers.

Mr Robin Walker:

We are committed to ensuring that all schools have access to highly skilled teachers. The department funds a package of programmes to support subject-specific professional development for science teachers. These include the network of Science Learning Partnerships delivering local continuous professional development (CPD) and support to increase the take up of triple science, Project Enthuse which provides bursaries for teachers to participate in CPD, the Isaac Physics programme which offers support and activities in physics problem-solving to teachers and students studying GCSE and A level physics, and the Stimulating Physics Network to improve the take up of physics. In addition, we also recently announced our levelling-up premium which offers incentives of up to £3,000 to recruit the best teachers across the country.

The department is providing every early career teacher access to free, high-quality training and support underpinned by the Early Career Framework (ECF). The ECF was designed in consultation with the education sector and is designed to work for all early career teachers regardless of their subject, phase or context.

The training providers delivering these programmes will build on the curriculum knowledge embedded in the Initial Teacher Training core content framework and have ensured that content includes materials and exemplification that is applicable to all teachers to help them deliver high quality curriculum content.

Building on this, National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) are designed to help the teaching profession hone and develop the skills they already have, helping them to become more effective teachers and leaders inside and outside the classroom. The department is committed to ensuring that NPQs offer the best possible support to teachers and leaders wanting to expand their knowledge and skills.

The department will be introducing a reformed suite of NPQs from Autumn 2021. All teachers and school leaders in state funded schools and 16-19 organisations are able to access this new fully funded suite of qualifications. Each qualification continues to build on embedding excellence in curriculum design and delivery.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[57277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support early career science teachers whose training was disrupted by the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is creating a world-class teacher development system by transforming the training and support teachers and head teachers receive at every stage of their career. We are investing an unprecedented amount of funding to improve the quality and delivery of professional development for teachers giving us a significant opportunity to impact pupil outcomes.

The department acknowledges the disruption to teacher training for early career science teachers, indeed for all teachers, during the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why we ensured that Initial Teacher Training (ITT) trainees and their tutors were designated as critical workers at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak. We encouraged schools to host ITT trainees throughout the national lockdowns and beyond to provide as many trainees as possible with a varied training experience in schools.

The sector coordinated examples from ITT providers of flexible and innovative approaches to placements, which were shared through sector channels. Those trainees whose courses were severely disrupted and needed extra time to qualify were given government funded course extensions, allowing them the opportunity to achieve Qualified Teacher Status.

As part of the education recovery plan announced in June 2021, we secured over £250 million of additional funding to provide 500,000 world-leading training opportunities for teachers and leaders, wherever they are in their career. The package includes £69 million to extend the rollout of the Early Career Framework (ECF) reforms to meet far higher than expected demand for the programme. The ECF reforms are transforming support for early career teachers, introducing the most significant reform to teaching since it became a graduate only profession.

The department is investing over £130 million a year to ensure that all new teachers have access to a fully funded entitlement to an extended two-year induction to the profession. The structured package of support is linked to the best available research

evidence, alongside funded time off timetable in the second year of teaching and support for mentors.

The ECF was designed in consultation with the education sector and covers five core areas: behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours, and is designed to work for all early career teachers regardless of their subject, phase or school. The lead providers delivering the programme have ensured that there are materials and exemplification to cover a range of subjects, including science.

More widely we are committed to gathering evidence about the implementation and impact of the ECF, to ensure that it continues to provide the best support for new teachers entering the profession. Therefore, we are working with the Education Endowment Foundation to design a comprehensive package of evaluation activity which will ensure the reforms remain relevant, up to date and open to all.

We are committed to ensuring that all schools have access to highly skilled teachers. The department funds a package of programmes to support subject-specific professional development for science teachers. These include the network of Science Learning Partnerships delivering local continuing professional development (CPD) and support to increase the take up of triple science and Project Enthuse which provides bursaries for teachers to participate in CPD.

■ Sign Language: GCSE

Fabian Hamilton: [\[56252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans for the public consultation to be held on the content of the proposed GCSE in British Sign Language.

Fabian Hamilton: [\[56487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the timescale is for subject experts and Ofqual to develop draft subject content for the proposed GCSE in British Sign Language.

Fabian Hamilton: [\[56527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) Ofqual and (b) other parties on the introduction date for the proposed GCSE in British Sign Language.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is continuing to work closely with subject experts to develop draft subject content for a British Sign Language GCSE. We are also working with Ofqual to ensure the subject content can be assessed appropriately. We are aiming to consult publicly on the draft subject content in early 2022.

Once final subject content is published, it will be for individual exam boards to decide whether to develop a GCSE in British Sign Language, which would then need to be accredited by Ofqual. It is not possible at this stage to know how long that process might take and, therefore, when a new GCSE might be introduced.

■ Sixth Form Education: Finance

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for sixth form students.

Alex Burghart:

We forecast future 16-19 year old student numbers and take into account population forecasts when considering the future need for education funding for 16-19 year olds. Future budgets for this education provision are being considered in the current Spending Review.

We have invested an extra £291 million in 16-19 education in the 2021-22 financial year. This is in addition to the £400 million awarded in the 2019 Spending Review, which was the biggest injection of funding into 16-19 education in a single year since 2010. This has allowed us to raise the base rate of funding for all providers of 16-19 education, including school sixth forms and sixth form colleges, from £4,000 in the 2019/20 academic year to £4,188 in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years, as well as to make further funding increases targeted on high value and high cost programmes.

This year, we have also made £83 million in capital funding available through the Post-16 Capacity Fund to support eligible post-16 providers to accommodate the upcoming increase in 16-19 year olds. Bids are currently being assessed and the outcome will be announced in due course.

■ Special Educational Needs

Helen Hayes:

[56380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children and young people have been in receipt of an Education Health and Care plan in each year since 2010 in (a) London and (b) England.

Helen Hayes:

[57207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department made of the increase in demand for Education Health and Care plans since 2011.

Will Quince:

The department monitors the number of requests for education, health and care plans each year. The number of requests for assessment for an education, health and care plan since 2016 are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/8ad13393-78c4-44e2-864b-1d2d589febf8>.

The number of education, health and care plans (and, previously, the number of statements of special educational needs) in (a) London and (b) England since 2010 are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/a1445150-f090-4891-8684-583e75e4b9e9>.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[59784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) improve the support offered to families whose children have additional learning needs, disability or special educational needs within education and (b) ensure that eligible children receive consistent and joined-up SEND support.

Will Quince:

The department is providing over £42 million in the 2021-22 financial year to continue funding projects to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This investment enables specialist organisations around the country to continue to provide practical support to schools and colleges, support families, ensure that they have a voice in the development of SEND services and help strengthen local area performance.

This includes £27.3 million to the Family Fund to support over 60,000 low-income families with children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses; £2 million funding to the Whole School SEND consortium through our contract with the National Association for Special Educational Needs, to equip the school workforce to deliver high quality teaching to children and young with SEND; and £600,000 funding to the Autism Education Trust to provide a hub of guidance and resources to support families, teachers and other professionals.

In addition, since June 2020, we have announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery, which includes support for children with SEND, schools, 16-19 providers and early years settings to help pupils make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Our recovery programmes have the flexibility to support those pupils most in need, including children and young people with SEND, with additional funding provided for those interventions that the evidence tells us will have a significant impact.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[\[57339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the additional needs of children with special educational needs in the recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

Since June 2020, we have announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery in schools which includes support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), 16-19 providers and in early years settings to help pupils make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Our recovery programmes have the flexibility to support those pupils most in need, including children with SEND, with additional funding provided for those interventions that the evidence tells us will have a significant impact, high quality tutoring and great teaching.

We have consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts both in the 2020 Catch-up Premium and in the 2021 Recovery Premium and providing the flexibility to deliver provision based on pupils' need. Additionally, specialist settings received an uplift to deliver the summer schools programme.

We have also ensured that settings have the flexibility to target this to meet the needs of their pupils and students. In addition, we continue to work hard to ensure children and young people are given access to therapies and equipment so that the right support is in place for all children and families, including addressing the backlog in assessments, we are providing over £42 million in 2021-22 to continue funding projects to support children with SEND. This investment will ensure that specialist organisations around the country can continue to help strengthen local area performance, support families, and provide practical support to schools and colleges. This includes £27.3 million to the Family Fund in 2021-22 to support over 60,000 families on low incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses.

■ Special Educational Needs: Expenditure

Helen Hayes:

[\[57208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's funding was for Education Health and Care plans (a) per student and (b) in total for each year since 2011.

Will Quince:

Most of the funding for pupils with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans is allocated through the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for local authorities.

The high needs funding block within the Dedicated Schools Grant was created in 2013. Therefore, the department is unable to provide comparable figures before the 2013-14 financial year. The high needs funding allocations for all local authorities since the 2013-14 financial year are as follows:

| YEAR | TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING (£ MILLION) |
|---------|--|
| 2013-14 | 4,966.9 |
| 2014-15 | 5,183.9 |
| 2015-16 | 5,246.5 |
| 2016-17 | 5,299.9 |
| 2017-18 | 5,826.8 |
| 2018-19 | 6,114.9 |
| 2019-20 | 6,279.1 |

| YEAR | TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING (£ MILLION) |
|-----------------------|--|
| 2020-21 | 7,063.2 |
| 2021-22 | 7,905.5 |
| 2022-23 (provisional) | 8,604.6 |

EHC plans were introduced in the 2014/15 academic year. However, there are no comparable figures before 2015, since eligibility for the previous statements of special educational needs was more limited, and the data is not directly comparable. The number of EHC plans maintained by local authorities per-year since 2015 can be seen below:

| YEAR | TOTAL EHC PLANS (FIGURE TAKEN EACH JANUARY) |
|------|---|
| 2016 | 74,209 |
| 2017 | 175,233 |
| 2018 | 285,722 |
| 2019 | 353,995 |
| 2020 | 390,109 |
| 2021 | 430,697 |

The department does not prescribe in detail how local authorities should allocate their high needs funding. The level of funding that a child or young person with an EHC plan attracts to a school or college is an individual matter, decided by the local authority in consultation with schools, colleges, parents, and young people themselves. The department is, therefore, unable to provide specific per student levels of high needs funding. In addition, because of various adjustments between years in the funding allocated, the gradual introduction of EHC plans from 2014, and the different periods covered by the above data, it is not possible to show the average funding per student with an EHC plan on a like-for-like basis.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

Helen Hayes:

[57209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for Education Health and Care Plans; and what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that funding ahead of the upcoming Spending Review.

Will Quince:

We are aware that some local authorities have found it difficult to meet the increasing costs of provision for children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans. High needs funding, which is allocated to local authorities for the education of children and young people with high needs (including, but not limited to, those pupils with EHC plans) will increase by £780 million, or 9.6%, in the 2022-23 financial year. This will bring the total high needs budget to £8.9 billion, an increase of over £2.3 billion since the 2019-20 financial year. This vital extra resource will help local authorities to manage their cost pressures in this area.

We are working with HM Treasury, as part of the ongoing Spending Review, to agree funding levels beyond the 2022-23 financial year, and up to 2024-25 financial year. We expect the outcome of the Spending Review to be announced on 27 October.

■ Students: Finance**Emma Hardy:**[\[57294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to allow people whose higher education has been disrupted as a result of international conflict to apply for funding with student finance.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has a longstanding and proud tradition of providing a safe haven to those who have no choice but to leave their home country because of endangerment to their lives or to those of their families. Student support for higher education courses is available to persons granted international protection by the Home Office, including those recognised as refugees or who have been granted humanitarian protection, stateless leave, Calais leave or section 67 leave. Such persons are exempt from the three-year ordinary residence requirement.

■ Students: Long Covid**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[56624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that students who are diagnosed with Long Covid receive the support they require.

Michelle Donelan:

Higher education (HE) providers are autonomous institutions and have a duty of care to students when delivering services, including the provision of pastoral support, and taking steps to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of students.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak universities have bolstered their support services to students and we expect this to continue.

Long COVID should be treated in line with other medium to long term health conditions. This means that setting, including HE providers, should within reason, be making allowances for staff and students with this condition where it is affecting their ability to perform and undertake their studies. The NHS has published guidance to

those recovering from long COVID at: <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/what-is-covid-19/long-covid/>

If students have concerns about the support they are receiving, they should first raise them with their HE provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

The Office for Students (OfS) does not get involved in individual student complaints, that is for the relevant HE provider and possibly the OIA. However, students can notify the OfS of issues that may be of regulatory interest to it. These are called 'notifications'. The OfS uses this information as part of its regulatory monitoring activity and keep higher education providers under review to ensure that they comply with the ongoing conditions of registration. The OfS has produced a guide for students to support them in this process, which is available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/ofs-and-students/notifications/>.

■ Teachers: Pay

Dr Rupa Huq:

[58970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of awarding (a) teachers and (b) all other school staff in England a pay rise.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government is grateful to all teachers, leaders and other staff in schools who have worked incredibly hard throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, including the dedication they have shown in enabling schools to remain open and working in new ways to support pupils with remote education.

In the September 2020 pay award, teachers received an average award of 3.1%, with starting salaries receiving a generous uplift of 5.5%, helping to increase the competitiveness of teacher pay in the wider labour market. The department recognises the decision to pause pay rises in 2021/22 is disappointing, but it ensures we can get the public finances back onto a sustainable path after unprecedented government spending on the response to COVID-19. The government is reassessing the public sector pay policy ahead of the 2022 pay round, once the economic recovery is established and the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the wider labour market is clearer.

The department does not set pay for non-teaching staff in schools. Employers have the freedom to set pay and conditions to suit their circumstances. Most schools use the local government pay scales and employers are required to pay at least the statutory minimum wage. Data published in the School Workforce Census in 2020 shows that the average salary for full-time general teaching assistants has increased year on year since 2017.

■ Teachers: Retirement

Daisy Cooper: [58505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of teachers who have retired in each of the last five years.

Daisy Cooper: [58506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of teachers leaving the profession in each of the last five years.

Mr Robin Walker:

Information on the number of teachers who have retired and the number who have left the profession in each of the last five years is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2020>.

■ University and College Union: Workplace Pensions

Chi Onwurah: [59783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with Universities UK on the ongoing absence of an agreed deal on pensions with the University and College Union.

Michelle Donelan:

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is a private pension scheme. The government has no direct role in relation to the USS, beyond legislation that applies to all work-based pension schemes as regulated by the Pensions Regulator.

The Pensions Regulator is currently working with the USS, Universities UK and a range of other stakeholders as they work to find a long-term solution to the funding challenges faced by the USS.

Higher education providers that offer the USS are responsible for the pension provision offered to their staff.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Carbon Emissions

Philip Dunne: [56291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what are the projected resulting emissions for Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use over the period of the 4th, 5th and 6th carbon budget periods.

Neil Parish: [57004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what are the projected resulting emissions for Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use over the period of the 4th, 5th and 6th carbon budget periods.

Luke Pollard:

[\[57323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the projected resulting emissions for Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use are over the period of the (a) fourth, (b) fifth and (c) sixth carbon budget periods.

Jo Churchill:

The Government's Net Zero Strategy sets the UK on the path to deliver on its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The Net Zero Strategy sets out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy and covers a wide range of actions across different sectors.

Sectoral emissions for Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) over forthcoming carbon budget periods are set out in Table 8 of the technical annex to the Net Zero Strategy. These are Carbon Budget (CB) 4; 51-57 MtCO₂e; Nationally Determined Contribution 44-52 MtCO₂e and CB6 38-48 MtCO₂e.

■ Air Pollution

Daisy Cooper:

[\[56692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to reduce the UK limits on air pollution in line with those set out by the World Health Organisation.

Jo Churchill:

Improving air quality is a priority for the government and we are committed to tackling a diversity of pollutants which harm human health and the environment. The UK has ambitious targets in place to reduce emissions of five damaging air pollutants by 2020 and 2030.

Our landmark Environment Bill will improve air quality by establishing a duty to set a legally binding target to reduce fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). In addition, through the wider environmental target framework, we propose a long-term population exposure reduction target for PM_{2.5}. This dual target approach to reducing PM_{2.5} is supported by expert groups the Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG) and the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP).

Government is committed to evidence-based policy making and we will consider the World Health Organization guideline level for PM_{2.5} alongside independent expert advice and evidence and analysis considering a diversity of factors when setting these targets.

We expect to publish a public consultation on proposed targets in early 2022 and these statutory targets to be laid in Parliament in October 2022.

■ Biodiverse Landscapes Fund

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[56511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, how many activities have been started under the Biodiverse Landscapes Fund as at 14 of October 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The Biodiverse Landscapes Fund is still in development and so there have been no funded activities as of 14th October 2021. Procurement of a Fund Manager, whose duties will include administration of the Fund globally, is underway. For the single-country landscape, Madagascar, a grant competition has been conducted and funded activities are expected to start before the end of the year. For the five transboundary landscapes, programming is being finalised with open grant competitions due to be launched in early 2022 and funded activities expected to start by late Summer 2022. Recruitment of a member of in-country staff to work in each transboundary landscape has been undertaken.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Alex Sobel:

[\[56603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies on badger culling of its review of the government's 25 Year Bovine TB Strategy.

Victoria Prentis:

Intensive badger culls were only ever envisaged as a phase of the TB eradication strategy. As set out in the Government response to Professor Sir Charles Godfray's review of the strategy[1] [2], the next phase of the strategy focuses on developing a deployable cattle vaccine, wider rollout of badger vaccination and improvements to TB testing. The Government will retain the ability to introduce culling where local epidemiological evidence points to an ongoing role of badgers in the disease.

Badger culling will not be halted immediately – as set out in the Government's response to the January 2021 consultation[3], no new intensive cull licences will be issued after 2022 and supplementary badger culling will end in 2025.

Routine and targeted TB testing of cattle herds, movement restrictions on infected herds, and rapid detection and removal of cattle testing positive, remain the foundations of the Government's strategy, supported by statutory pre- and post-movement testing of cattle and slaughterhouse surveillance.

As part of our move towards wider badger vaccination, we are introducing several schemes and initiatives. Training courses have been streamlined to make these less time-consuming, more accessible and affordable. A new 'Train the Trainer' (TtT) scheme, which allows experienced cage-trappers and lay vaccinators to qualify as trainers and form their own local training hubs, will enable more people to be trained as vaccinators than ever before. In East Sussex, we are funding a five-year

vaccination scheme, where deployment of large-scale vaccination delivered by the local farming community commenced in August. The scheme will help refine delivery models and approaches, ensuring future badger vaccination is deployable at scale.

We are continuing to bolster government capability to deploy badger vaccination in areas where intensive culling has ended, building on those gains achieved through culling to create resilience to future infection. As well as financially supporting vaccination in the edge area through the Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme (BEVS), we are exploring new ways and opportunities to incentivise more targeted approaches to vaccinate badgers to deliver greater disease control benefits. We are also reviewing the licensing system, taking steps to make it more straightforward and less administratively burdensome for those who are suitably trained to vaccinate badgers.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england-2018-review>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england-2018-review-government-response>

[3] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bovine-tuberculosis-proposals-to-help-eradicate-disease-in-england>

■ Dangerous Dogs

Apsana Begum: [57415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish the research undertaken in collaboration with Middlesex University on dog attacks.

Victoria Prentis:

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.

Apsana Begum: [57416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote responsible dog ownership.

Apsana Begum: [57417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to identify dog owners with control challenges; and what early interventions his Department is encouraging local authorities and Police forces to take to tackle that matter.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government takes the issue of dog attacks extremely seriously and is determined to crack down on irresponsible dog ownership.

Under section 3 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, it is an offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in any place. Section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871 also allows for a complaint to be made to a magistrates' court by any individual or authority that a dog is "dangerous and not kept under proper control". Additionally, the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 includes specific measures to enable the police and local authorities to tackle irresponsible dog ownership before a dog attack occurs. The main tool to tackle irresponsible dog ownership is the Community Protection Notice (CPN). These notices can be issued by local authority officers or the police on dog owners, or anyone temporarily in charge of the dog at the time, whose dogs are behaving in an unruly way. To breach a CPN is a criminal offence and could lead to a significant penalty. To that end we are encouraging police forces across the country to use these tools.

Defra has also commissioned research in collaboration with Middlesex University into ways to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership amongst dog owners. The research considers different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures. The report, which will be published shortly, identifies the police Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs (LEAD) initiative as a model of preventative best practice for low level dog control issues and early intervention. The Government supports these local preventative approaches to encourage responsible ownership of all breeds of dog. Defra is giving careful consideration to the report and its recommendations, which will provide the basis for potential further reform in this area.

■ Dangerous Dogs: Tower Hamlets**Apsana Begum:**[\[56352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what communication his Department has had with Tower Hamlets Police following the dog attack in Bartlett Park on 26 August 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra officials are in regular contact with the police to discuss issues relating to dog attacks, including seeking information on specific incidents. I can confirm that officials have been in contact with the Metropolitan Police seeking further information on this tragic incident. I cannot comment further on this incident as it is the subject of an ongoing police investigation.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Carbon Emissions**Philip Dunne:**[\[56296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has an emissions reductions plan.

Neil Parish: [\[57005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has an emissions reduction plan.

Luke Pollard: [\[57325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has set an emissions reductions plan.

Jo Churchill:

On 19 October, the Government's Net Zero Strategy was published, setting the UK on the path to deliver on its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The Net Zero Strategy sets out Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy and covers a wide range of actions across different sectors. The Natural Resources, Waste and Fluorinated-Gases (F-Gases) chapter covers Defra related sectors and their emission reductions including agriculture, peat and tree planting.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Ruth Jones: [\[57333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on carton recycling rates of including carton packages in the Government's proposed Deposit Return Scheme.

Ruth Jones: [\[57334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will use the postponement of the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme until 2024 as an opportunity to include a wider range of materials in that scheme, including carton packages.

Ruth Jones: [\[57335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of limiting the materials included in the proposed Deposit Return Scheme on the UK's ability to achieve its net zero emissions targets.

Jo Churchill:

We have now consulted twice on introducing a DRS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and are analysing the responses to the second consultation, including those on scope and materials.

In developing proposals, the government have considered the inclusion of cartons in the scheme. However, the recent consultation proposed that cartons would not be captured by DRS and instead could be collected through kerbside collections. Cartons could be included in the core list of materials to be collected in the dry recyclable waste streams, and producers could pay for disposal of the packaging through the reformed packaging producer responsibility regime.

Final details of the scope of the DRS will be presented in a government response which will be published in due course. An impact assessment to support final

proposals for the introduction of the scheme will also be published alongside the government response.

■ **Dogs: Artificial Insemination**

Justin Madders:

[\[57090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people carrying out the artificial insemination of canines have been found by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to not be suitably competent to carry out the procedure, in the latest period for which data is available.

Victoria Prentis:

Anyone performing artificial insemination of canines and not considered competent would be operating outside of the regulatory framework. As a result, Defra or the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons do not hold information on instances of people who are not suitably competent carrying out this activity.

Justin Madders:

[\[57091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with stakeholders on the potential merits of regulating the procedure of artificial insemination of canines.

Victoria Prentis:

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has recently submitted its recommendations for future veterinary legislation to Defra. These recommendations include wide ranging proposals for the regulation of procedures that could be considered for delegation to non-vets, including canine insemination, and regulated as such. Defra officials are currently considering the full package of recommendations before discussing with stakeholders in due course.

■ **Dogs: Imports**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[53368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) increasing the age at which puppies can be imported into the UK to six months and (b) reintroducing the requirement for dogs to have a rabies blood test and wait period equivalent to the incubation period of rabies before entry into the UK.

Jo Churchill:

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 8 June. The Bill allows us to protect the welfare of pets by introducing restrictions to crack down on the low welfare movements of pets into Great Britain and includes powers to introduce new restrictions on pet travel and on the commercial import of pets on welfare grounds, via secondary legislation.

The Government launched a consultation on 21 August on our proposed restrictions to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain, including

our proposal to ban the commercial and non-commercial movement of puppies under the age of six months into Great Britain. We will take into account the views of the public and will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that our final measures are well considered and are guided by the latest evidence.

Defra has no immediate plans to change the import health requirements in relation to rabies for pets entering Great Britain. Recent quantitative risk assessments have concluded that the risk of a pet animal with rabies entering the UK under the pet travel rules is very low. Defra continues to monitor the disease situation carefully and our future policy will be guided by risk assessment.

■ Fishing Vessels: Marine Environment

Peter Aldous:

[\[56306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason an environmental impact assessment has not been conducted on the use of fly shooting equipment in the southern North Sea and English Channel prior to licenses for that activity being issued by the UK Single Issuing Authority.

Victoria Prentis:

Licences are issued to all vessels that have eligibility to fish in UK waters and have no history of illegal fishing. As a newly independent Coastal State we will be considering the impacts of various fishing activities when we undertake our programme of domestic fisheries management reform.

■ Flood Control: Lowdham

Robert Jenrick:

[\[57054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when work will commence on the flood alleviation and mitigation scheme in Lowdham, Nottinghamshire.

Rebecca Pow:

The Lowdham Flood Alleviation Scheme will be submitting a planning application to the Local Planning Authority this month, October 2021. Subject to approval of that application, construction work is anticipated to start in March 2022 and is currently programmed to continue until summer 2023. The upstream reservoir will provide significant flood risk reduction to almost 200 properties in the village of Lowdham, as well as local businesses and infrastructure.

■ Floods: Urban Areas

Ruth Jones:

[\[57332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the recent flash flooding on urban communities.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State and Defra Ministers regularly meet with colleagues and stakeholders to discuss flooding and coastal erosion.

I want to praise the work of the Environment Agency, local authorities, and our blue light services for the response they provided to all the areas which experienced flooding in the summer, and earlier this month.

Policy and funding for flood and coastal erosion is a devolved matter. In England, this Government has doubled investment to £5.2 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes between now and 2027. This will better protect 336,000 properties, benefiting urban areas as well as coastal and rural communities.

Surface water is one of the sources of flooding in urban areas and the Government is taking action to tackle this. In July we published our update and progress report on our surface water management action plan.

We have already changed our flood defence partnership funding rules to enable more surface water schemes and launched a £200 million innovation fund which includes actions to support surface water flood risk actions. We are putting water company Drainage and Wastewater Plans on a statutory footing through the Environment Bill, to ensure drainage and sewerage systems are resilient to withstand the current and future pressures on them.

In England, Lead Local Flood Authorities (county and unitary authorities) have the leadership role on surface water flood risk management, and are working with those impacted by the recent flooding to help them return to their homes and businesses as quickly as possible.

■ Food: Charities**Feryal Clark:**[\[56476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that fresh, nutritious, unsold food is diverted to charities supporting vulnerable families.

Jo Churchill:

The safe and speedy redistribution of surplus food is a priority, be it from retail, manufacture or the hospitality and food service sector, which all may have their own issues and challenges in their supply chains. Defra supports a range of action to overcome these challenges, reduce food waste and help get more surplus food to charities.

Since 2017 Defra has made a series of grants available to help the redistribution sector. In total nearly £12m has been awarded to over 250 large and small redistribution organisations across the country for the provision of for example warehousing, vehicles, fridges and freezers.

We continue to support WRAP and the Courtauld 2030 redistribution working group that seeks to overcome barriers to redistribution. The most recent outputs from the

group is the publication of new guidance on storing surplus food; best practice on redistributing own brand products and the tool *Framework for Effective Redistribution*.

We remain committed to the WRAP led Food Waste Reduction Roadmap which supports business to target, measure and specifically act on reducing food waste for instance by making sure food surplus is redistributed.

The amount of surplus food redistributed in 2020, over 92,000 tonnes, was worth £280 million and was the equivalent of 220 million meals. Since UK-level data was first reported in 2015, overall levels of redistribution have increased three-fold.

■ Food: Waste

Feryal Clark:

[\[56474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the (a) quantity of food produced in the UK that was wasted in each of the last five years and (b) environmental and economic cost of that waste.

Jo Churchill:

Defra funds the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to produce periodic estimates of UK food waste levels post-farm-gate. Whilst the next report is not due until 2022, previous reports show significant reductions:

- 2007 - 11.2 million tonnes
- 2015 - 10 million tonnes
- 2018 - 9.5 million tonnes

WRAP estimate that this waste has an economic value of £19 billion.

Drew Hendry:

[\[58932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the agricultural industry to minimise food waste.

Jo Churchill:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Government funds the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to administer the Courtauld Commitment 2030 voluntary agreement, including the Food Waste Reduction Roadmap (FWRR), which aims to reduce food waste from farm to fork through collaboration with businesses.

Included in the FWRR is a practical model for how farmers and growers can be supported to measure on-farm food surplus and waste and take action to reduce it. WRAP estimates that around 50 farm businesses have undertaken measurements to date, with most of those in the last two years. The aim is to provide support for another 30 farmers and growers.

We are also supporting WRAP's and the Institute of Grocery Distribution's Whole Chain Food Waste Reduction Plans (WCP). A toolkit is available to help businesses

across the supply chain work together to understand waste hotspots for a food product and to identify ways to reduce these. The Roadmap has a target of at least 50 active WCPs in place by 2022.

WRAP has also supported farmer-led pilots to understand how food waste measurement and reduction can be best implemented in primary production as well as resources for farm advisers to deliver similar projects with their clients.

Since 2017, Defra has provided around £12 million of grants to the redistribution sector to increase the diversion of surplus food for human consumption from waste destinations. Some of these grants were used to harvest and collect surplus from farms, minimising food waste.

Furthermore, the Government's Food Strategy White Paper will cover the entire food system from farm to fork, building on work already underway in the Agriculture Act, Fisheries Act, and Environment Bill as well as docking into wider Government priorities, including Net Zero, the 25 Year Environment Plan, and Build Back Greener. As part of this, Defra is exploring options to reduce carbon emissions from food production including food waste, as well as to incentivise land use change to sequester more carbon and restore nature, and preserve natural resources.

■ Food: Waste Disposal

Andrew Bridgen:

[57034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department is providing to local authorities to implement food waste collections.

Jo Churchill:

The Environment Bill will require all local authorities in England to arrange for the collection of food waste for recycling. This must always be collected separately from residual waste and dry recyclable materials so that it can be recycled.

On 7 May 2021 we published a second consultation on recycling consistency. This consultation closed on 4 July 2021 and sought views on the implementation of separate food waste collections, among other policies. The consultation included questions on the materials in scope of collection and delivery dates. We are currently analysing responses to the consultation and intend to publish our Government response in due course.

Given the additional costs involved in separate food waste collection, the Government will ensure that local authorities are resourced to meet any net new burdens costs arising from this policy. We will continue to engage with local authorities on the cost estimates that we provided in the impact assessment accompanying the second consultation, as well as the appropriate timing for funding to be provided to authorities, to enable sufficient lead-in time ahead of implementation.

■ Grasslands: Climate Change

Caroline Lucas:

[\[56953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the IPBES-IPCC Co-Sponsored Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Climate Change on the role of grasslands in supporting climate resilience, biodiversity and sustainable farming and research demonstrating that a third of the world's terrestrial carbon is stored in permanent grasslands, if he will make it his policy to seek international recognition and protections for grasslands as a nature-based solution to climate change at the forthcoming UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP26.

Jo Churchill:

Recognising and protecting the vital role of nature in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change is a top priority of our COP26 Presidency. It will not be possible to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees without radical action on nature and land-use. That is why we are working with countries to showcase the potential of nature-based solutions across many ecosystems to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss at COP26.

The UK is advocating for the protection of at least 30% of the land and at least 30% of the ocean globally by 2030. Effective protection, management, and restoration of protected areas, such as grasslands, can serve as a good example of a nature-based solution.

We also recognise the value of our own grasslands. In England, our Sites of Special Scientific Interest protect our most important grasslands, which will also form an important part of our domestic 30x30 commitment. We are supporting grassland creation and restoration, including through our Green Recovery Challenge Fund. In addition, as part of our new Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme pilots, three grassland standards will be piloted before the roll out of the scheme's core elements begins in 2022.

■ Horticulture

Tim Loughton:

[\[59703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group report, Growing a Green Economy: The importance of ornamental horticulture and landscaping to the UK, and accompanying action plan, Unlocking Green Growth: A plan for the ornamental horticulture and landscaping industry.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra recognises the crucial role that the domestic ornamental horticulture industry plays in both promoting people's well-being and to the economy. The Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group (OHRG) report identifies how barriers to the sector's growth can be unlocked through a collaborative approach between Government and industry. This collaboration reflects our shared ambition for a truly vibrant and sustainable ornamental sector. We are working with the OHRG and the sector to

build on current good work already happening within the industry, and will ensure that where the Government can help, it will support the opportunities outlined in the report and its associated action plan.

■ International Biodiversity Fund

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[57232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's announcement of the launch of the International Biodiversity Fund on the 23 September 2019, how much of the £220 million that was announced for the first investment in that Fund has been dispersed as at 14 October 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The International Biodiversity Fund is comprised of three main programmes spending from FY21/22. This fund includes:

- The new £100 million Biodiverse Landscapes Fund
- A scale up of Defra's flagship Darwin Initiative
- A scale up of our work to counter the Illegal Wildlife Trade

Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has awarded over £168 million to more than 1,162 projects across 159 countries. So far in FY21/22 (from 1st April 2021 to 14th October 2021) we have disbursed £5.23 million for Darwin Initiative projects.

We are investing over £46 million between 2014 and 2022 to counter the illegal wildlife trade by reducing demand, strengthening enforcement, ensuring effective legal frameworks and developing sustainable livelihoods. So far in FY21/22 (from 1st April 2021 to 14th October 2021) we have disbursed £2.46 million for activities including supporting projects through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

The Biodiverse Landscapes Fund is still in development and so there have been no funded activities as of 14th October 2021. Funded activities are expected to start before the end of the financial year.

■ Ivory Act 2018

Luke Pollard:

[\[56140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many powers have been (a) implemented or commenced and (b) used by prosecuting authorities under the Ivory Act 2018.

Catherine West:

[\[57218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to implement the Ivory Act 2018.

Jo Churchill:

Once commenced, the Ivory Act will introduce one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world by banning the dealing in items made of or containing

elephant ivory, regardless of their age, unless they fall within one of the narrow and carefully defined exemptions.

We plan to implement the Ivory Act this winter and for the ban to come into force in spring 2022.

Tommy Sheppard: [\[59835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he expects to complete the implementation of the Ivory Act 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

Once commenced, the Ivory Act will introduce one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world by banning the dealing in items made of or containing elephant ivory, regardless of their age, unless they fall within one of the narrow and carefully defined exemptions.

We plan to implement the Ivory Act this winter and for the ban to come into force in spring 2022.

■ Ivory: Sales

Tommy Sheppard: [\[59836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance they provide to owners of legacy ivory artefacts who wish to dispose of them but are unable to sell due to the provisions of the Ivory Act 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

The Ivory Act will not affect the ownership of ivory items, but where an owner no longer wants to own an item, they may gift, donate, or bequeath the item. We will explain to owners what options are available to them as part of our awareness raising campaign.

■ Ivory: Smuggling

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[56429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help prevent illegal ivory entering UK markets.

Rebecca Pow:

Since 2016, Defra and the Home Office have contributed £300K per year to the running of the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU). The NWCU helps prevent and detect wildlife crime, including illegal imports of ivory, by obtaining and disseminating intelligence, undertaking analysis which highlights local or national threats and directly assisting law enforcers in their investigations.

In addition to this, once commenced, the Ivory Act will introduce one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world by banning the dealing in items made of or containing elephant ivory, regardless of their age, unless they fall within one of the

narrow and carefully defined exemptions. We intend the ban to come into force in spring 2022.

■ Landfill

Aaron Bell:

[\[57456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the cost to the Environment Agency of regulating (a) Walley's Quarry landfill and (b) all other landfill sites regulated by the Environment Agency in 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The Environment Agency charges an annual subsistence charge to landfill sites to fund their regulation. Landfill sites of the same type as Walleys Quarry are charged £18,221.00.

Poorly performing sites pay higher charges and this year Walleys Quarry was charged £22,776.25 – an additional 25%. The current performance of Walleys Quarry would lead to an additional charge of 50% in 2022.

The Environment Agency can also charge the operators for time and materials to recover the costs of additional regulation. Up to 13 August 2021, the operator of Walleys Quarry has been charged £98,622.20 for the additional costs of regulation and communications. The Environment Agency will continue to charge Walleys Quarry the recoverable costs of additional regulation and expects further recharges to be made throughout the rest of the year.

■ Oak Processionary Moth

Robert Halfon:

[\[55784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many reports of oak processionary moth there have been in each of the last five years, broken down by local authority area.

Rebecca Pow:

The table below shows the number of sites reported as infested with oak processionary moth and which were served a statutory plant health notice between 2017 and 2021, using data provided up until 5 October 2021.

Number of sites infested with oak processionary moth, 2017-2021:

| LOCAL AUTHORITY | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Barking and Dagenham | 3 | 5 | 1 | | |
| Barnet | 27 | 61 | 13 | 31 | 23 |
| Basildon | 4 | 6 | | | |
| Basingstoke and Deane | 1 | | | | |

| LOCAL AUTHORITY | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Bexley | 9 | 18 | 19 | 45 | 34 |
| Bracknell Forest | 2 | 3 | 4 | 13 | 21 |
| Brent | 34 | 30 | 16 | 9 | 3 |
| Brentwood | 1 | 7 | 13 | | |
| Bromley | 25 | 36 | 6 | 31 | 13 |
| Broxbourne | 3 | 12 | 19 | | |
| Buckinghamshire | 6 | 6 | 7 | 28 | 27 |
| Camden | 14 | 23 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Castle Point | 3 | | | | |
| Central Bedfordshire | 1 | | | | |
| Chelmsford | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Cheshire West and Chester | 1 | | | | |
| City of London | 1 | | | | |
| City of Westminster | 1 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| Crawley | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Croydon | 4 | 11 | 4 | 11 | 6 |
| Dacorum | 3 | 2 | 4 | | |
| Dartford | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | |
| Ealing | 43 | 32 | 51 | 7 | 13 |
| East Hertfordshire | 3 | 10 | 15 | 16 | |
| Elmbridge | 37 | 118 | 102 | 219 | 133 |
| Enfield | 2 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| Epping Forest | 1 | 6 | 12 | 40 | 48 |
| Epsom and Ewell | 17 | 51 | 21 | 59 | 25 |
| Gravesham | 1 | | | | |
| Greenwich | 7 | 25 | 31 | 42 | 19 |

| LOCAL AUTHORITY | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Guildford | 34 | 87 | 62 | 80 | 111 |
| Hackney | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 16 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| Haringey | 5 | 19 | 9 | 21 | 6 |
| Harlow | 3 | | | | |
| Harrow | 3 | 15 | 4 | 14 | 15 |
| Hart | 1 | | | | |
| Havering | 1 | 3 | 11 | 21 | 34 |
| Hertsmere | 1 | 4 | 36 | 39 | |
| Hillingdon | 9 | 29 | 19 | 60 | 35 |
| Horsham | 1 | | | | |
| Hounslow | 28 | 26 | 14 | 4 | 10 |
| Islington | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | |
| Kingston upon Thames | 68 | 27 | 59 | 7 | 20 |
| Lambeth | 7 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| Lewisham | 4 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 1 |
| Luton | 1 | | | | |
| Medway | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Merton | 47 | 14 | 28 | 12 | 12 |
| Mid Sussex | 1 | | | | |
| Mole Valley | 18 | 53 | 80 | 106 | 45 |
| Newham | 3 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 2 |
| Reading | 1 | | | | |
| Redbridge | 1 | 5 | 8 | 25 | 15 |
| Reigate and Banstead | 1 | 4 | 3 | 21 | 21 |

| LOCAL AUTHORITY | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Richmond upon Thames | 69 | 15 | 41 | 6 | 24 |
| Runnymede | 9 | 26 | 25 | 94 | 80 |
| Rushmoor | 4 | 12 | 12 | | |
| Sevenoaks | 5 | 4 | 12 | 12 | |
| Slough | 4 | 10 | 2 | 12 | 2 |
| Southend-on-Sea | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Southwark | 30 | 7 | 4 | 14 | 6 |
| Spelthorne | 10 | 21 | 17 | 48 | 12 |
| St. Albans | 6 | 13 | 22 | | |
| Surrey Heath | 5 | 17 | 22 | | |
| Sutton | 23 | 28 | 9 | 65 | 2 |
| Tandridge | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| Three Rivers | 3 | 18 | 10 | | |
| Thurrock | 3 | 3 | 5 | 17 | 20 |
| Tower Hamlets | 4 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| Waltham Forest | 3 | 8 | 5 | 13 | 9 |
| Wandsworth | 38 | 9 | 23 | 12 | 10 |
| Watford | 1 | 2 | 2 | | |
| Waverley | 1 | 7 | 9 | 6 | |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 2 | 5 | 12 | | |
| West Oxfordshire | 3 | | | | |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 1 | 5 | 12 | 40 | 53 |
| Woking | 10 | 11 | 109 | 90 | |
| Wokingham | 2 | 8 | 11 | | |
| Total | 676 | 908 | 845 | 1587 | 1252 |

Robert Halfon:

[\[56979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage cooperation between local authorities and the Forestry Commission to help prevent the spread of oak processionary moth.

Rebecca Pow:

The annual OPM management programme is delivered in partnership between the Forestry Commission, landowners and Local Authorities, and is designed to slow the rate of spread, reduce pest prevalence and protect uninfected areas. To further support the work of Local Authorities on OPM, we will shortly be launching a toolkit for Local Authorities which has been co-designed with Local Authorities, and led by the Tree Council in collaboration with Forestry Commission.

Robert Halfon:

[\[56980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will support the proactive reporting of oak processionary moth infestations to neighbouring local authorities.

Rebecca Pow:

The annual OPM management programme involves a comprehensive package of surveillance activities, including pheromone trapping and visual ground surveying. At present the data from the surveys is shared on an annual basis. To further support the work of landowners and Local Authorities on OPM, we will shortly be publishing a new OPM hub to help with raising awareness and preparedness, the OPM hub will include an interactive map to help landowners and local authorities track OPM infestations.

■ Ofwat: Environment Protection

Luke Pollard:

[\[56685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that Ofwat's strategic decisions align with the Government's 25 year environment plan.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has consulted on the draft strategic policy statement (SPS) for Ofwat, the independent economic regulator. Government expects to publish the final strategic policy statement in early 2022.

The draft SPS includes a strategic priority on 'Protecting and enhancing the environment':

- Ofwat should drive water companies to be more ambitious in their environmental planning and delivery to contribute towards the priorities set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Ofwat should drive water companies to improve their day to day environmental performance to enhance quality of the water environment.

■ Ofwat: Standards

Luke Pollard: [\[57328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with industry representatives on the potential merits of strengthening Parliamentary oversight of Ofwat and its performance.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State has not had any recent discussions with industry representatives on strengthening Parliamentary oversight of Ofwat and its performance.

Ofwat is directly accountable to Parliament for the performance of its functions and duties through the Water Industry Act 1991.

In the National Infrastructure Strategy published in November 2020, the Government committed to produce a cross-sectoral review of economic regulation.

■ Pets: Theft

Jane Hunt: [\[57458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what animals will be included in the proposed pet abduction offence recommended by the Pet Theft Taskforce report.

Jo Churchill:

We are currently developing the new 'Pet Abduction' offence and the details of this new offence are subject to further consideration. The scope of the offence should include dogs, and the applicability to other types of animal will be explored during the development of the policy.

■ Pigs: Slaughterhouses

Simon Jupp: [\[56250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle labour shortages in the pig processing industry.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has announced a package of measures to support the pig industry. These measures come in recognition of the unique temporary circumstances farmers are facing, brought about by the global economy responding to the impacts of the pandemic, the loss of the Chinese export market for some processors and the global pressures facing supply chains worldwide.

From November 2021, these measures include allowing up to 800 temporary pig butchers to enter the UK to work for six months. This temporary adjustment is in addition to foreign butchers already being eligible to apply to come to the UK through the Skilled Worker Route as part of the point-based immigration system.

The temporary visas are not a long-term solution and businesses must make long term investments in the UK domestic workforce to build a high-wage, high-skill economy, instead of relying on overseas labour. The Government expects the pork sector to encourage better training offers, career options and wage increases to ensure that the sector draws on the large domestic labour pool in the UK, as well as investing in technology across the industry.

To support these efforts, Defra is working with industry and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to raise awareness of career opportunities within the food and farming sectors among UK workers. All pig farming and processing businesses are encouraged to advertise roles through DWP's Find A Job website, where they can upload and manage their vacancies. The DWP does not charge for this service and it is available across the United Kingdom.

In 2021 and beyond, the pig industry will continue to be able to rely on EU nationals living in the UK with settled or pre-settled status. Over 5.3 million EU citizens and their families have been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme and EU nationals who have settled status can continue to travel to the UK to do seasonal work in the pig processing sector in 2021.

Defra is also working closely with the Home Office to ensure there is a long-term strategy for the food and farming workforce beyond 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

[59810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many healthy pigs have been culled on farms in each week during the last three months.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra does not collect data on the number of pigs culled on farms. Producers, who are responsible for the welfare of animals on farm, are also not required to submit such data to us. However, from our engagement with the pig sector, we understand that around 6000 pigs have been culled on farms in the last three months. This is largely due to the backlog of pigs on farm caused by a unique combination of factors including shortages of labour in the processing sector, disruption to the export market and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Defra has been working closely with pig producers and the processing sector in recent months. We are very conscious of the impact that the culling of animals on farm has on individual pig farmers. We announced a series of measures on 14 October that will support the pig sector and help address the current challenges it is facing. These include allowing up to 800 pork butchers to apply for a 6-month working visa to the UK, a pork levy holiday for pig farmers and producers during November 2021, and a private storage aid scheme which will enable meat processors to store slaughtered pigs for 3-6 months so that they can be preserved safely and processed at a later date.

■ Plastics: Waste

Helen Hayes:

[59885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce plastic waste by supporting investment in bio-wraps such as corn starch.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to tackling plastic pollution and will explore all options to reduce the impact of plastic on our environment.

In April we published our response to the call for evidence on the need for standards for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics. Responses were mixed regarding the contribution of bio-based plastics to a more circular economy, with positive views about potential carbon contrasting with more cautious views about their potential impacts on land-use and waste management.

Further research is required to better understand the trade-offs and environmental impacts associated with generating the feedstocks for bio-based plastics. A key area of interest for the Government is bio-based plastics derived from materials that would otherwise have been waste. We welcome further research on the full environmental impacts of bio-based plastics. You can find out more information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/standards-for-biodegradable-compostable-and-bio-based-plastics-call-for-evidence>

■ Plastics: Waste Disposal

Drew Hendry:

[56387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce household plastic waste and (b) prevent plastic waste from being shipped overseas.

Jo Churchill:

A) Our 25 Year Environment Plan set out the Government's ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042. In 2018, we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this. For the most problematic plastics we are going faster - which is why we are working towards all plastic packaging being recyclable or reusable by 2025.

Our Environment Bill will enable us to take forward a number of key proposals including Extended Producer Responsibility, a Deposit Return Scheme, greater consistency in the recycling system, better control of the export of plastic waste and powers to set new charges for single-use plastic items. We have already introduced measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds. We will consult shortly on banning a range of other single-use plastic items, including plates, cutlery and polystyrene cups. The single use carrier bag charge, which has led to a 95% reduction in their use at main supermarkets, has been doubled to 10p, and extended to all retailers. Going further still, from April 2022, plastic packaging without

at least 30% recycled content will be taxed at £200/tonne. Taken together, these amount to one of the most comprehensive programmes of any major economy in tackling this issue.

B) The Government recognises the difficulties some importing countries have in dealing with plastic waste and that is why we have committed to banning the export of plastic waste to countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); we plan to consult before the end of 2022 on options to deliver the ban.

■ Recycling

Caroline Lucas:

[56954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to place a duty on all local authorities to report on both the (a) amount of waste collected for recycling and (b) proportion of the amount of waste collected for recycling that is recycled; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities already have statutory duties to arrange for the collection and disposal of household waste in their area. There is a legal requirement under section 4 of The Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 to report tonnages of waste they collect and tonnages sent to each disposal facility.

Local authorities report this information via the WasteDataFlow web portal and Defra publishes annual statistics using this data. The latest available annual Household waste recycling rates for [England are for 2019/20](#). Table 3b of the datasets shows household recycling rates, the tonnage of materials recycled and the tonnage of material rejected from recycling streams.

■ Sewage: Water Treatment

Luke Pollard:

[R] [56611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the likely date of exhaustion of sewage treatment chemical stockpiles in the event that they are not replenished.

Rebecca Pow:

There is currently an adequate supply of water and wastewater treatment chemicals throughout the UK. A temporary Regulatory Position Statement (RPS) was introduced to enable water and wastewater treatment sites to apply to the Environment Agency (EA) to reduce chemical dosing levels and mitigate any delays resulting the shortage of haulier drivers. This will expire at the end of the year unless the EA chooses to extend it. It has not been necessary for any wastewater companies to use the RPS.

Luke Pollard:

[R] [\[56612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of using military drivers to deliver sewage treatment chemicals that are stuck in transit as a result of driver shortages.

Rebecca Pow:

There is currently an adequate supply of water and wastewater treatment chemicals throughout the UK. The Government and industry have worked together to put in place effective mitigations to increase driver numbers. It has not been necessary to use military drivers to transport wastewater treatment chemicals.

Luke Pollard:

[R] [\[56614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, in the context of the Environment Agency permitting the removal of the third stage of sewage treatment in the event that the appropriate chemicals are not available as a result of supply chain challenges or the lorry driver shortages, if he will take steps to ensure that people in England do not experience environmental and public health ill-effects from that activity.

Rebecca Pow:

A temporary Regulatory Position Statement (RPS) was introduced to enable water and wastewater treatment sites to apply to the Environment Agency (EA) to reduce chemical dosing levels and mitigate any delays resulting from the shortage of haulier drivers. This will expire at the end of the year unless the EA chooses to extend it. It has not been necessary for any water or wastewater company to use the RPS.

Any company planning to make use of this short-term measure must first agree its use with the EA, which will thoroughly check compliance. The EA will continue to monitor discharges and water quality as normal. Compliance with permit limits will also continue to be assessed.

Luke Pollard:

[R] [\[56615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to prioritise the distribution of sewage treatment chemicals to waste water treatment works in England.

Rebecca Pow:

There is currently no disruption to the supply of chemicals used in the treatment of wastewater.

Luke Pollard:

[R] [\[57326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential to stockpile sewage treatment chemicals at regional centres in an emergency.

Rebecca Pow:

There is currently an adequate supply of wastewater treatment chemicals throughout the UK. Water companies have robust plans in place to deal with a variety of

emergencies that may arise. Companies retain stockpiles of critical chemicals as a contingency measure.

Luke Pollard:

[R] [\[57327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing extra funds to water companies for the purposes of mitigating the risks posed by the sewage treatment chemical supply challenges.

Rebecca Pow:

There is currently no disruption to the supply of water, its treatment, or the treatment of wastewater.

The Government continues to work closely with water companies and regulators to reduce the likelihood and mitigate any future supply challenges.

■ Waste Disposal

Caroline Lucas:

[\[56955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data he holds on the names and number of local authorities in England who have their main waste and recycling collection services provided (a) in-house and (b) via private contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

In 2019 Local Partnerships, who work with Defra to support local authorities, conducted an assessment of waste collection contracts in England. This indicated that 57% of recycling collection contracts, covering roughly 11.7 million of the 19.9 million households in England, are delivered either in-house or through an in-house company. The remaining 43% of local authority recycling collection contracts in England, covering 8.2 million households, are delivered by private sector providers. 82% of these contracts are held with six companies, covering 6.7 million households.

■ Water: Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

Emma Hardy:

[\[56237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the prevalence of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in the UK's water supply; and whether he plans to make the results of such monitoring public information.

Rebecca Pow:

Water companies are responsible for identifying risks and sampling the drinking water supply for anything that may cause the supply not to be wholesome. This includes the detection of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). Although standards for PFAS are not specified in the drinking water regulations, the Drinking Water Inspectorate has provided guidance on concentrations of PFAS in drinking water since 2009 and has recently written to water companies, introducing additional

requirements for sampling, testing and monitoring for PFAS in raw water sources from which abstractions are used for drinking water.

Results are shared with the Inspectorate who will assess and decide if further action is necessary. The Inspectorate publishes information on the quality of drinking water where significant and in the public interest here:

<https://www.dwi.gov.uk/what-we-do/annual-report/>.

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

■ Water: Plastics

Alberto Costa:

[57120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the water industry on implementing an environmental quality standard on plastics in water.

Rebecca Pow:

Addressing plastic pollution in our waterways is a priority for the Government, and water infrastructure is recognised as a key pathway for microplastics entering the wider environment. However, there are currently no established methodologies for measuring microplastics in the water environment, which means that implementing an environmental quality standard at this time is not practicable.

Defra is therefore working with the Environment Agency, academics and the UK water industry to establish consistent methods to identify, quantify and characterise the types of microplastics entering wastewater treatment plants. Defra and the Environment Agency are also working with the water industry to evaluate the efficiency of treatment processes for the removal of microplastics from domestic wastewaters, and to assess the fate and biological effects of microplastics in receiving rivers.

The UK is already making great strides to tackle plastic pollution. Our world-leading ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products has helped stop billions of tiny pieces of plastic from potentially entering the aquatic environment every year.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Diplomatic Service

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[56229]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress her Department has made on the resumption of consular services in Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

British nationals who remain in Afghanistan are strongly encouraged to register their presence to receive important updates. The FCDO continues to provide remote consular assistance to British nationals and eligible dependents in Afghanistan, supporting more than 110 British nationals to leave via land or air routes since 9 September 2021.

■ Afghanistan: Females**Daisy Cooper:**[\[57367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to HC Deb, 6 September 2021, c58, what progress her Department has made to protect and preserve the gains in relation to girls' (a) education, (b) wider social activity, and (c) music, in Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

Women and girls already faced restrictions on their freedom of movement. The Taliban have re-imposed further restrictions in society, including a ban on music in the media. We continue to work with the international community to secure womens' and girls' rights, including the right to education and jobs and to participate in public life. Before making any funding decisions we will look carefully at how we might support girls' equal access to schooling.

■ Afghanistan: Foreign Relations**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[56808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's press release, UK officials travel to Afghanistan, published on 5 October 2021, what further discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of the authorities in Afghanistan since 5 October 2021; and what further meetings officials in her Department plan to have with those representatives.

James Cleverly:

On 5 October, Sir Simon Gass (the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Afghan Transition) and Dr Martin Longden (Chargé d'Affaires of the UK Mission to Afghanistan in Doha) visited Kabul where they met senior members of the Taliban. Further, on 12 October a senior-level Taliban delegation met with Dr Longden and other international partners in Doha. During these conversations the UK underlined the importance of safe passage to the UK for British Nationals and eligible Afghans, as well as the UK's key interests on counterterrorism, humanitarian issues, and human rights (including girls' education). The UK remains committed to a pragmatic and exploratory dialogue with the Taliban, and will continue to engage the authorities in Kabul, and their representatives in Doha, in support of the Afghan people, including on freedom of movement. We have no immediate plans to visit Kabul at present.

■ Afghanistan: Pakistan**Afzal Khan:** [\[56190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she and her Department have had with her counterparts and officials in the Pakistani Government on ensuring the Afghanistan/Pakistan border remains open to (a) Afghan or (b) British nationals looking to leave Afghanistan and reach the UK.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary discussed Afghanistan with Pakistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi, including border issues, on 28 September. The High Commissioner and other UK officials in Islamabad are in daily contact with Pakistani officials to ensure both British nationals and eligible Afghan nationals are able to cross the border. We are very grateful for the assistance Pakistan has offered to date and look forward to continuing to work closely with them to get British nationals and vulnerable Afghan citizens to safety.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[56232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent negotiations officials in her Department have undertaken with their counterparts in neighbouring countries of Afghanistan to allow for the entry to those countries of Afghan nationals seeking to escape the Taliban.

James Cleverly:

We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans have options for safe passage. We have been clear that the Taliban must stand by their assurances that these people can have safe passage and leave, which was also emphasised in the UN Security Council Resolution of 30 August.

Catherine West: [\[58461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance she is proving to countries neighbouring Afghanistan to host vulnerable Afghan nationals hoping to resettle in the UK while the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme is closed.

James Cleverly:

The Prime Minister has announced that UK aid to Afghanistan this year will double to £286 million, one of our largest bilateral programmes. The first tranche of this funding announced £30 million of life-saving aid to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries to help those who choose to leave Afghanistan as part of the Government's efforts to support refugees and safeguard regional stability. The UK's total aid contribution to the country since 2001 is now around £3.5 billion.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[58974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether information provided to her Department through the (a) public hotline and (b)

emergency email address provided to vulnerable Afghans, including the Afghan special cases, is being used for referrals and prioritisation for the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme.

James Cleverly:

In its first year, the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK who have been forced to flee the country, with up to a total of 20,000 over a five-year period. The ACRS will provide protection for people at risk identified as in need. The Government will use available information and knowledge, including relevant information provided to emergency public numbers and email mailboxes, and will work with international partners and NGOs in the region, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to implement a fair referral process.

■ **Afghanistan: Repatriation**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[56809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's press release, UK officials travel to Afghanistan, published on 5 October 2021, what further discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of the authorities in Afghanistan since 5 October 2021 on the safe passage from Afghanistan of (a) British nationals and (b) people at risk in that country to (i) the UK and (ii) third countries; and what further meetings officials in her Department plan to have with those representatives.

James Cleverly:

On 5 October, Sir Simon Gass (the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Afghan Transition) and Dr Martin Longden (Chargé d'Affaires of the UK Mission to Afghanistan in Doha) visited Kabul where they met senior members of the Taliban. Further, on 12 October a senior-level Taliban delegation met with Dr Longden and other international partners in Doha. During these conversations the UK underlined the importance of safe passage to the UK for British Nationals and eligible Afghans, as well as the UK's key interests on counterterrorism, humanitarian issues, and human rights (including girls' education). The UK remains committed to a pragmatic and exploratory dialogue with the Taliban, and will continue to engage the authorities in Kabul, and their representatives in Doha, in support of the Afghan people, including on freedom of movement. We have no immediate plans to visit Kabul at present.

■ **Africa and Caribbean: Coronavirus**

Ruth Jones:

[\[56702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support her Department is providing nations in (a) Africa and (b) the Caribbean to meet the World Health Organisation's target for 10 per cent of populations to be fully vaccinated against covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

The UK welcomes WHO's recently launched strategy for global COVID-19 Vaccination and is working with them and other international partners to support its goals. This includes our £548 million support for COVAX's Advance Market Commitment, which will aim to supply up to 1.8 billion doses to up to 92 low and middle income countries by early 2022. The UK has also committed to share 100 million doses by mid-2022. Over 10 million of these doses have been donated so far.

In Africa, 46 countries are eligible for the Advance Market Commitment and as of 15 October, COVAX has delivered more than 81 million doses to Africa. Over 5.6 million doses have been donated by the UK to 14 African countries. The UK has also provided £20 million in support of the Africa Union's COVID-19 response fund, which includes funding for vaccine supplies. In the Caribbean, 6 countries are eligible for the Advance Market Commitment and as of 15 October, COVAX has delivered more than 2 million doses of vaccines to the Caribbean. Around 500,000 doses have been donated by the UK to the most vulnerable countries in the Caribbean. The UK has also shared lessons on tackling vaccine hesitancy to boost take up in the region.

■ Armed Conflict: Children**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[56588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of the number of children (a) killed and (b) injured in conflict zones over the last 10 years.

Vicky Ford:

The FCDO does not routinely collect this data, however the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) monitors, and verifies information and reports to the Security Council on six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict situations by armed forces and groups, including the killing and maiming of children. Every year, the UN Secretary-General produces an annual report on Children and Armed Conflict, which is based on the MRM. These reports can be found online and detail the number of violations that take place each year.

■ Armed Forces: Children**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[56589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to implement the Paris Principles on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is committed to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as outlined by the Paris Principles. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), we are using our membership to ensure that conflict related child-protection issues remain a key part of the Council discussions and to ensure that UN operations retain the necessary capacity to address all child protection issues, including the continued

use of child soldiers in conflict zones. This also includes pressing those parties to conflict listed in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on CAAC to enter into concrete action plans with the UN to verify and release any child soldiers associated with armed groups and forces and to prevent re-recruitment. We apply diplomatic pressure to listed governments and armed groups to prevent the unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict.

■ **British Virgin Islands: Tax Avoidance**

Owen Thompson:

[\[56361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Premier of the British Virgin Islands on closing potential tax loopholes as a result of revelations in the Pandora Papers.

Amanda Milling:

The British Virgin Islands (BVI) regularly share confidential information on beneficial ownership and tax with UK law enforcement and tax authorities. They provided information that made the UK's first Unexplained Wealth Order possible. The BVI have committed to work towards introducing a publicly accessible register of company beneficial ownership, along with the other Overseas Territories.

The BVI participate in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Common Reporting Standard, which is an agreement to automatically exchange financial account information with other jurisdictions. This means that they supply information on account holders who are foreign tax residents. This reciprocal, automatic exchange of financial information addresses the secrecy that facilitates offshore tax evasion and provides evidence of tax non-compliance. The BVI are a member of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), signalling their commitment to fighting BEPS risks by implementing the BEPS minimum standards. They have also committed to implementing the OECD's two pillar solution to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy. The UK is providing assistance and support ahead of BVI's evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force.

■ **Business: Human Rights**

Stephen Farry:

[\[58571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development, with reference to the Government's commitment to implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, what steps the Government is taking to support a UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government has consistently supported the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on business and human rights, which are widely regarded as the authoritative international framework to steer practical action by Governments and businesses worldwide on this important and pressing agenda. Implementation of the

UNGPs will support access to justice and remedy for victims of business-related human rights abuses, wherever these occur, and encourage businesses to voluntarily adopt 'due diligence' approaches to respecting human rights.

We have engaged with the UN Working Group looking at proposals for a new international treaty on business and human rights since 2015, through to the sixth session last October. The UK will continue to engage with the proposal at the upcoming seventh session, which will take place 25-29 October 2021.

The Government is clear that it expects all UK businesses to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UNGPs. In response to the Guidelines, the UK was the first State to produce a National Action Plan (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522805/Good_Business_Implementing_the_UN_Guiding_Principles_on_Business_and_Human_Rights_updated_May_2016.pdf). A progress report on the implementation of the National Action Plan was published in May 2020. We continue to develop our approach in line with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

■ Central America: Carbon Emissions

Catherine West:

[59909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Central American counterparts on UK support for those countries in achieving net zero emissions.

Wendy Morton:

Central America is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and extreme weather. Since August 2021, COP President-designate Alok Sharma, Minister Trevelyan and the UK Government's Regional COP26 Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean have between them visited every country in the region to understand their concerns and encourage each of their governments to commit to and publish ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions. Though several Central American countries are already world-leaders when it comes to mitigation and adaptation efforts - 89% of the region's energy is renewable - a number complain of the lack of available finance to implement further measures to reduce carbon emissions. One of our key objectives as COP President is to mobilise finance: developed countries must deliver on their promise to raise at least \$100 billion every year in climate finance to support developing countries and help them implement strategies which bring them closer to net zero.

■ Central America: Rule of Law

Catherine West:

[59902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support and strengthen the rule of law in Central America.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is concerned by the degradation of democratic institutions and the rule of law across several Central American countries. The UK Government is particularly concerned by events in Nicaragua and the steps being taken by the Ortega-Murillo regime to reduce the democratic space and misuse its law enforcement powers in advance of the presidential election in November. In addition to Ministerial and FCDO statements condemning the unwarranted arrests of political opponents, we have raised our concerns at the UN Human Rights Council and the Organisation of American States (OAS). UK sanctions targeting individuals are an important tool in challenging corruption around the world and promoting fair and open societies. On 31 December 2020, the Nicaragua (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 came into force. This sanctions regime targets six individuals in Nicaragua involved in serious human rights violations and abuses. The Regulations were followed with the launch of the UK Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions regime in April 2021, under which individuals were designated from Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras. I have also publicly raised my concerns on several occasions regarding rule of law issues elsewhere in Central America, including concerns over the removal of the head of the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Impunity in Guatemala, and over the process by which the Attorney General and Constitutional Court judges were removed in El Salvador. Her Majesty's Ambassadors to Guatemala and El Salvador both made representations to their respective host governments regarding these issues.

■ Colombia: Environment Protection**Christian Matheson:**[\[56331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she is taking to help protect environmental defenders in Colombia who are being threatened by international companies as a result of their lawful and legitimate protest against illicit activities on their land.

Christian Matheson:[\[57070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she is taking to help protect environmental defenders in Colombia who face potential threats and attacks for protecting their lands from corporate activity.

Wendy Morton:

UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues, as well as specific cases of concern, with the Colombian Government. The UK's Minister for the Environment, Lord Goldsmith, raised our concerns around violence and threats toward environmental defenders on a visit to Colombia from 5-8 October.

Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country' and we consistently raise our concerns regarding violence against human rights defenders and social leaders at the UN Security Council, as we did at meetings in July and on 14 October. We will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia.

Through our Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF) programme, which has provided £63 million in support of peace agreement implementation, security, and stability in Colombia since 2015, we will continue to prioritise funding interventions to protect human rights defenders, including environmental activists, and social leaders.

Christian Matheson:

[\[57069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made for the implications of her policies of companies domiciled or listed in the UK threatening environmental defenders in Colombia with legal action, following lawful or legitimate protests on their land.

Wendy Morton:

As set out in the FCDO Annual Human Rights Report, we expect British businesses to respect local and international law wherever they operate.

The UK was the first country to create a National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This plan sets out what is expected of the conduct of UK businesses, including compliance with relevant laws and respect for human rights; treating the risk of causing human rights abuses as a legal compliance issue; adopting appropriate due diligence policies; and consulting those who could potentially be affected.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Ruth Jones:

[\[56700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of countries that have failed to meet the World Health Organisation's target for 10 per cent of their populations to be fully vaccinated against covid-19 as at 18 October 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported on 30 September 2021 that 56 countries had not yet meet the target of vaccinating 10% of their population. The UK welcomes WHO's recently launched strategy for global COVID-19 vaccination and is working with them and other international partners to support its goals. This includes our £548 million support for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which will aim to supply up to 1.8 billion doses to low and middle income countries by early 2022, as well as our commitment to share 100 million doses by mid-2022.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[59008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of the 5.1 million covid-19 vaccine doses the UK has donated to COVAX have been successfully administered as at 19 October 2021.

Wendy Morton:

All 6.2 million vaccines donated by the UK through COVAX have been delivered to developing countries. COVAX works with governments to ensure robust and transparent distribution and reporting plans are in place to monitor equitable

distribution and allocation to priority groups in line with National Deployment and Vaccination Plans.

■ **Developing Countries: Coronavirus**

Owen Thompson:

[\[57179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that the delivery of 100 million COVAX vaccines overseas by June 2022 is on target following the Government's donation of 9 million COVAX vaccines in July 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office is working closely with the Cabinet Office and UK Vaccines Task Force to ensure we meet our commitment to donate 100 million doses by June 2022. To date, we have donated 10.5m doses. At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021 the Prime Minister announced that we will be donating a further 20 million doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccines before the end of the year in order to meet our 30 million target by the end of 2021. 80% of all our donations will go through COVAX.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[57240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of covid-19 on the number of children expected to experience stunted growth as a result of malnutrition.

Wendy Morton:

We have worked to strengthen monitoring of the impacts of COVID-19 on nutrition. This includes compiling evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on nutrition outcomes and interventions, including on disruptions of key services and food consumption patterns. Research shows that by the end of 2022, COVID-19 and related economic impacts could result in an estimated additional 9.3 million wasted and 2.6 million stunted children. Prevention and treatment of malnutrition is part of FCDO's response to address the indirect impacts of COVID-19 in countries such as Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[58367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the total cost of supplying enough vaccines to inoculate all poor nations against covid-19; whether there is a gap between his latest estimate and the international plans in place to meet that cost; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has led in supporting global access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines from the outset of the pandemic. We are working with the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) and the Multilateral Leaders Taskforce (the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization and World Trade Organization) to assess the financing needed to supply and deliver vaccines to low-

and middle-income countries. These costs are dependent on a variety of uncertainties, including the potential need for booster doses and in-country delivery costs. The ACT-A investment case will shortly publish the estimated costs required to meet global vaccination targets in 2022 and how these can be met.

The UK is among the largest donors to the COVAX AMC, committing £548 million. Over 378 million vaccines have been delivered globally through COVAX to 144 participants. The UK's G7 Presidency secured agreement from leaders to support vaccinating the world in 2022 and to share and finance an additional 1 billion doses over the next year to accelerate vaccine roll-out. The UK committed to share 100 million doses, with 80% going to COVAX. Over 10 million doses have been delivered, with over 6 million doses shared through COVAX. The UK is committed to work with International Financial Institutions who have a central role in sustainably financing the supply and delivery of vaccines.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services

Fleur Anderson:

[\[56143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance her Department plans to spend on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities in 2021-22.

Wendy Morton:

UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend is recorded in line with OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) codes which do not specifically record spend on water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH) in Healthcare Facilities. The most recent UK bilateral ODA spend data shows that spend on WASH was £110 million in 2020-2021. The next publication of the statistics on international development in autumn 2022 will identify ODA spend for 2021 - 2022, which you can see here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>.

The UK Government recognises the importance of WASH in health care facilities. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is a member of the global taskforce on WASH in Healthcare Facilities; we support the Sanitation and Water for All partnership to help governments increase access to WASH services in healthcare facilities; and through our COVID-19 hygiene partnership with Unilever, we have jointly provided 2.6 million WASH products and services to over 10,000 health care facilities to strengthen their hygiene and infection prevention and control practices.

Chris Law:

[\[56286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to use the Climate Resilient Health Systems Initiative under the Adaptation Action Coalition to strengthen the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities globally.

Wendy Morton:

Water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH) are crucial to making health systems more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Building on the important Climate Resilient Health Systems Initiative through the Adaptation Action Coalition, the UK has developed the COP26 Health Programme. This programme contains four primary initiatives to promote: climate resilient health systems, low-carbon sustainable health systems, the voice of health professionals on climate and health policy, and action orientated adaptation research. WASH will be an important factor in developing health systems to be climate resilient and sustainable.

In May 2021, the UK led the launch of the Adaptation Action Coalition water workstream, which includes the development and financing of a water tracker, to enhance water resilience in national climate plans. UK support to such initiatives, which will be discussed at COP26, will enable governments to make better use of climate funding and leverage new funding from investors for water, sanitation and hygiene.

■ Developing Countries: HIV Infection**Sarah Champion:**[\[58885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she is having with her international counterparts to ensure that displaced members of the LGBT+ community have access to HIV services.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is fully committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of LGBT+ individuals in all circumstances. The UK Government recognises that we are not going to achieve an AIDS-free generation and ensure 'no-one is left behind' unless we tackle the wider issues such as criminalisation, stigma and violence against the LGBT+ community. That is why the UK was proud to play a strong role with our international partners in shaping both the progressive new Global AIDS Strategy "Ending Inequalities" 2021-26 and an ambitious UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS in June, to help encourage reform of relevant legislation that criminalise people living with and affected by HIV, so the world has the best chance of meeting the 2030 goal to end AIDS.

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

■ Developing Countries: Homosexuality

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[56767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she is making to her counterparts in the 11 jurisdictions in which the death penalty is imposed or at least a possibility for private, consensual same-sex sexual activity on repealing those laws.

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[56768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she is making to her counterparts in the 15 jurisdictions that criminalise the gender identity and/or expression of transgender people, using cross-dressing, impersonation and disguise laws, on repealing those laws.

Wendy Morton:

UK Government ministers and our overseas missions continue to urge countries that criminalise LGBT+ individuals, and same sex conduct to uphold the universality of human rights, to decriminalise same-sex relations and to pass laws to protect their LGBT+ people from violence and discrimination. We remain committed to funding £3 million of LGBT+ rights projects this year, including project work with a focus on tackling discriminatory legislation.

Caroline Lucas: [\[56958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she is having with her international counterparts in the 43 jurisdictions that criminalise private (a) consensual sexual activity between women using laws against lesbianism, (b) sexual relations with a person of the same sex and (c) gross indecency on the repeal of those laws.

Wendy Morton:

UK Government ministers and our overseas missions continue to urge countries that criminalise LGBT+ individuals, and same sex conduct to uphold the universality of human rights, to decriminalise same-sex relations and to pass laws to protect their LGBT+ people from violence and discrimination. We remain committed to funding £3 million of LGBT+ rights projects this year, including project work with a focus on tackling discriminatory legislation.

■ Developing Countries: Malnutrition

Bambos Charalambous: [\[57242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government's ending preventable deaths plan will include indicators on nutrition-specific interventions such as support for breastfeeding, vitamin supplementation and treatment for child wasting.

Wendy Morton:

We plan to launch the Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan later this year. Ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn and children requires work across

sectors to address the complex pathways leading to mortality. The plan includes an approach to integrate nutrition-specific services into a health system strengthening approach and influence others to do the same. Indicators for monitoring progress against the plan are still to be decided.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[57243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to support the Nutrition for Growth summit 2021.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO is working closely with the Government of Japan to make sure the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit supports meaningful action by governments, donors, businesses, the UN and civil society.

The Government is actively considering its approach to the N4G summit, including any new nutrition commitment, and will set its approach following the conclusion of the Spending Review.

■ Developing Countries: Nutrition

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[57239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of her Department's nutrition-specific programmes, including (a) treatment for child wasting, (b) micro-nutrient supplementation, (c) malnutrition screening services and (d) support for breastfeeding.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO undertakes reviews of all its programmes on an annual basis, including whether intended outcomes and impacts are being achieved. We also invest in evaluating our programmes to enable us to learn what works and to adapt our approaches accordingly.

In 2020 the Independent Commission for Aid Impact conducted a review of DFID's work on nutrition. This scored a green/amber rating and provided important insights into how we can further strengthen the work we do.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[57241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the funding estimates are for her Department's nutrition-specific programmes for the year 2021-22.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO is focusing its Official Development Assistance (ODA) investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money.

Information about our nutrition spend in financial year 2021-22 will be publicly available through Development Tracker in due course.

■ Developing Countries: Poverty**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[59920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor about where the remainder of the Special Drawing Rights the UK has received should be used since the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the G7 Finance Ministers that the UK would lend £1 billion to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust.

Amanda Milling:

The Chancellor has committed to channel around 20% of the UK's new allocation of SDRs, including a new loan of SDR 1bn to the IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust. The Chancellor also expressed support, along with other G20 Finance Ministers, for the proposed IMF Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) and for exploring options to channel SDRs through the Multilateral Development Banks.

■ Developing Countries: Water**Fleur Anderson:**[\[56146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which multilateral organisations will receive Official Development Assistance for water, sanitation and hygiene in the financial year 2021-22.

Wendy Morton:

The UK supports the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership to help national governments increase access to water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH); we fund the WHO-UNICEF hosted Joint Monitoring Programme which tracks progress against water and sanitation global targets; and we support the Global Water Partnership to promote climate resilient WASH and water governance.

In addition, we have incorporated our direct WASH funding to the World Health Organisation into the new flexible core voluntary contribution package, which supports a number of important global health objectives including WASH. UK contributions to multilateral development banks (including the World Bank and Asia and Africa regional development banks) also supports the water, sanitation, and hygiene work of these multilateral organisations.

Fleur Anderson:[\[56152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance her Department plans to spend (a) bilaterally and (b) multilaterally on water, sanitation and hygiene in 2021-22.

Fleur Anderson:[\[56177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of Official Development Assistance the UK has been allocated (a) bilaterally and (b) multilaterally to water, sanitation and hygiene in each of the last five years.

Wendy Morton:

Yearly UK bilateral ODA spend on Water Supply and Sanitation can be found in the respective annual Statistics on International Development publications:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>.

The statistics for 2020-2021 were published at the end of September 2021 and the figures for 2021 - 2022 will be released in the same publication next autumn.

Additionally, the UK government is undertaking a three-year spending review which is expected to be announced at the Autumn budget at the end of October 2021. This should provide more clarity on future sectoral spend for the next three years.

UK Multilateral ODA spend is not published by sector because the funding is often provided flexibly to finance a wide range of policy objectives, or it is pooled with funding from other donors and therefore difficult to attribute to one country. The link above breaks down ODA funding to multilateral agencies up to 2020.

■ Diplomatic Service**Mark Garnier:****[57007]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has given consular assistance to the (a) Director of Public Prosecutions or senior CPS officials and (b) Director of the Serious Fraud Office or senior SFO officials in support of any investigations being undertaken by those offices in the last 12 months.

Amanda Milling:

The FCDO provides consular assistance to British Nationals overseas on a case by case basis. We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. We cooperate with other government departments and public authorities - including the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) - in relation to those cases where necessary and may release information to them in accordance with relevant exemptions. More information on consular assistance can be found in the publicly available document "Support for British Nationals Abroad - A Guide" (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>) and on how personal data is stored and processed in our consular privacy notice: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-privacy-notice-consular-services-in-the-uk-and-at-british-embassies-high-commissions-and-consulates-overseas>).

■ Faroe Islands: Dolphins**Andrew Rosindell:****[56235]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with officials in the Faroe Islands government on the recent killing of over 1400 dolphins.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is strongly opposed to the hunting of any cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), other than some limited activities by indigenous people for clearly defined purposes. Minister for Pacific and the Environment The Rt. Hon Lord Goldsmith has written to the Faroese fisheries minister to express the UK's opposition to the hunt that took place on the 12th September and the continued hunting of cetaceans in the Faroe Islands on both animal welfare and conservation grounds.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Correspondence**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[56159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to improve her Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Amanda Milling:

The Government recognises the importance of responding to members of the public in an effective and timely manner, and the Cabinet Office published an updated Guide to Handling Correspondence for government departments and agencies in July 2021. The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

In 2020 the FCDO received 43% more correspondence (former FCO and former DFID combined) from members of the public compared to 2019. The FCDO is now recruiting additional employees to help manage the increased volume of public correspondence in the central correspondence team, investigating how to make better use of technology, including automation, in managing all correspondence and actively monitoring performance across the FCDO to drive up the timeliness of answers to the 20 day deadline.

France: Travel Restrictions**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[56556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterpart on facilitating easier non-essential travel access to France for UK citizens.

Wendy Morton:

We continue to work closely with international partners, including France, on red-listing, Vaccine Certification and other issues relating to COVID-19 and reopening international travel. Ultimately it is for France to make decisions with regards to COVID-19 border controls, just as it is for the UK to determine our border controls.

France is currently not on the UK's Red List. France accepts the UK's vaccination record and the UK has approved France's vaccine certification. Both countries continue to engage where appropriate.

■ HIV Infection and LGBT People

Caroline Lucas:

[\[56960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to advocate for a global common standard for (a) HIV and (b) LGBTIQ+ data collection and reporting.

Wendy Morton:

The global shortage of data on LGBT+ experiences is widely acknowledged. The UK's 2017 national LGBT+ survey response from over 108,000 people was unprecedented, and remains the largest in the world to date. The UK Government, in its role as co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) in partnership with Argentina, delivered the ERC's first Strategy in July this year that includes encouraging the national collection and reporting of incidents of violence, discrimination and abuse based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The UK was proud to play a strong role with our international partners in shaping the progressive new UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy "Ending Inequalities" 2021-26 and an ambitious UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS in June which both commit to strengthen and enhance the use of data collection to monitor and report against the shared targets to end AIDS by 2030.

■ Iraq: Kurds

Henry Smith:

[\[56969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal government of Iraq; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK is encouraging cooperation between the Kurdistan Regional of Iraq (KRI) and Federal Government of Iraq to resolve outstanding issues, including around the budget. We continue to press the Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Governments for more progress on security and services in the liberated areas of Iraq and to solve disputed internal boundaries. We are supporting Iraq to address humanitarian, economic, security and Covid-19 challenges and we continue to follow the situation there closely. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary met the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, President Nechirvan Barzani, during his visit to London on 15-17 September and discussed the stability of Iraq and the KRI.

■ Land Mines

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[59921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to ensure adequate overseas development assistance funding for mine action.

James Cleverly:

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. We are working towards finalising funding and country allocation for GMAP3 as part of a broader effort to prioritise our aid to be more strategic and remain a force for good across the world. But the FCDO is committed to ensuring that over the next 3 years the UK's demining work will continue to save lives across the world, supporting those most in need and delivering our treaty commitments.

■ LGBT People: Education

Caroline Lucas: [\[56959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans she has to promote LGBTQ+ inclusive education around the world.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is fully committed to the promotion and projection of LGBT+ human rights globally and sponsors the British Council who promote LGBT+ inclusion through education and UK culture.

■ Members: Correspondence

Feryal Clark: [\[56402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she plans to respond to the correspondence addressed to her predecessor dated 5 August 2021 from the Hon. Member for Enfield North on wildfires that have seared through the Mediterranean and Aegean regions over the summer months, reference FC9933.

Wendy Morton:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence. The Foreign Secretary responded on 21 October.

Feryal Clark: [\[57445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she plans to respond to the correspondence addressed to her predecessor dated 12 August 2021 from the Hon. Member for Enfield North on the ongoing climate of repression and arbitrary detention against opposition politicians, ethnic and faith minorities, and human rights activists in Turkey, reference FC10013.

Wendy Morton:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence. The Minister for Europe and Americas responded on 20 October.

Alyn Smith:[\[59960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Stirling of the 23 September 2020 on the the arbitrary detention of journalists, activists and protesters in Kurdistan, Iraq.

James Cleverly:

The reply to your letter was issued on the 25 October.

■ Myanmar: Armed Conflict**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[59806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to convene the UN Security Council as the UN penholder on Myanmar and in the context of the Burmese military build-up and increased attacks in north western Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is deeply concerned about the situation in Chin and Sagaing States, particularly the significant troop movements by the Myanmar Armed Forces and reports of multiple civilian casualties. Current clashes have created mass displacement, with thousands of people now fleeing across the Indian border into Manipur and Mizoram state. This not only exacerbates the crisis in Myanmar but causes further regional instability. On 15 October the British Embassy in Yangon released a statement urging the military to end their campaign of violence and flagging our concern for communities, their livelihoods, property and places of worship. We are monitoring developments closely and are in discussion with our international partners in the UN Security Council.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government**Ronnie Cowan:**[\[56573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support the people of Myanmar in respect of the political and humanitarian situation in that country.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is clear in its condemnation of the coup and the appalling violence by the military, which has left over 1000 people dead. We are deeply concerned at the worsening political, Covid and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. The military continues to imprison opposition figures, journalists and foreign nationals and they have maintained their brutal crackdown on dissent. The UK is calling for a peaceful and inclusive resolution to the crisis. We continue to call publicly for a return to democracy and the release of all those in arbitrary detention. We have used our role on the UN

Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council and our G7 Presidency to secure strong statements on the coup. We have also imposed seven tranches of sanctions on the regime and are working to prevent the flow of arms to Myanmar.

The humanitarian situation in Myanmar is extremely serious. Displacement and humanitarian needs are increasing, with insecurity and the military junta blocking humanitarian access across the country. We are working through small scale local civil society organisations which are able to mobilise community support and reach places the UN and international humanitarian community cannot access. Through our humanitarian mechanism we provide the most vulnerable populations in Myanmar with access to essential services: water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, food, healthcare and shelter materials.

Ronnie Cowan:

[56574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions her Department has had with representatives of the Myanmar Government regarding the political situation in that country.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has had no high level engagement with the military regime in Myanmar since the 1 February coup. The UK Government condemns the military coup in Myanmar, the violence against the people of Myanmar and the detention of members of the civilian government and civil society, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. To this end, the UK has sanctioned the State Administration Council (SAC) and military members of the SAC to send a clear message that we oppose their activities. We are engaging with the junta only where necessary.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[59747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will convene an urgent UN Security Council meeting on recent humanitarian and political developments in North-Western Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is deeply concerned about the situation in Chin and Sagaing States, particularly the significant troop movements by the Myanmar Armed Forces and reports of multiple civilian casualties. Current clashes have created mass displacement, with thousands of people now fleeing across the Indian border into Manipur and Mizoram state. This not only exacerbates the crisis in Myanmar but causes further regional instability. On 15 October the British Embassy in Yangon released a statement urging the military to end their campaign of violence and flagging our concern for communities, their livelihoods, property and places of worship. We are monitoring developments closely and are in discussion with our international partners in the UN Security Council.

■ Offshore Funds

Owen Thompson:

[\[57174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is planning to take in respect of foreign leaders and officials found guilty of bribery, corruption or tax violations as a result of revelations in the Pandora Papers.

Amanda Milling:

Through the network of overseas Posts, the FCDO is monitoring the consequences of several of the stories associated with the recent Pandora Papers leaks. We understand some investigations are being considered in some countries, but it is too early to say who, if anyone, might ultimately be found guilty of bribery, corruption or tax violations. Irrespective of this, the FCDO remains committed to fighting global corruption and illicit finance. Under our Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions regime established in April this year, the UK has so far imposed travel bans and asset freezes on 27 individuals from 10 countries for their involvement in serious corruption. We continue to fund the vital work of the National Crime Agency's International Corruption Unit, which has restrained, confiscated, or returned over £1.1 billion of assets stolen from developing countries since 2006. And we continue to encourage countries everywhere, including through our ongoing Presidency of the G7, to take steps to improve beneficial ownership transparency, so that we can limit the role of anonymous shell companies, as highlighted by the Pandora Papers, in enabling international illicit finance.

■ Pakistan: Human Rights

Stephen Morgan:

[\[56630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to (a) identify and (b) prevent human rights violations in the Balochistan province of Pakistan; and if she will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[57303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the extent of human rights abuses in the Balochistan province of Pakistan; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK is concerned about reports of human rights abuses and violations in the Balochistan province of Pakistan. We follow the human rights situation in Pakistan closely. We regularly raise our concerns about human rights at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan. During a visit to Pakistan on 23 and 24 June, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the FCDO Minister responsible for human rights, raised our concerns with Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, as well as other senior government ministers including Foreign Minister Qureshi and Human Rights Minister Mazari. Lord Ahmad also met minority communities during the visit to understand better their concerns and the challenges they face.

■ South Africa: Travel Restrictions

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[56421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has plans to ease covid-19 restrictions on travel between the UK and South Africa.

Vicky Ford:

Following the UK Government's announcement on 7 October, 47 countries and territories, including South Africa, were removed from the red list on 11 October. The UK is also accepting South Africa's vaccine certification. These steps will enable people to travel more freely again between the UK and South Africa, in a safe and sustainable way, while protecting public health.

■ Syria: Christianity

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[57073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Government of Turkey on the treatment of Christians in the Khabur Valley of north-east Syria by members of the Turkish armed forces.

James Cleverly:

The UK is firmly committed to supporting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Syria who have suffered as a result of conflict and persecution, particularly by Daesh. Turkey remains a close friend and a NATO ally; however, the UK made clear its opposition to Turkey's military operation in north east Syria in October 2019.

FCDO Ministers and officials maintain regular contact with the Turkish Government and frequently discuss the situation in Syria, including to urge them, as with all parties to the conflict, to adhere fully to the ceasefire in north east Syria. The UK also calls on all parties to the conflict in Syria to respect international law.

■ Taiwan: Politics and Government

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[59700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with allies on the future security of Taiwan.

Amanda Milling:

Her Majesty's Government considers the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue. We are concerned by any activity which raises tensions and risks destabilising the status quo, and underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait alongside partners in the recent G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' and Leaders' communiques.

■ Taiwan: Sustainable Development

Rosie Cooper:

[56423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that Taiwan can work with the international community effectively to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and recover from the covid-19 pandemic.

Amanda Milling:

Taiwan plays a valuable but voluntarily role in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, despite not being a member state of the UN. The UK Government welcomes Taiwan's contribution and continues to work closely with Taiwan on this and other matters, including the fight against Covid-19. More broadly, the UK support's Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations where statehood is not a prerequisite. The UK believes that the people of Taiwan have a valuable contribution to make on issues of global concern and this includes on sustainable development and their effective fight against the pandemic.

■ Tunisia: Politics and Government

Andrew Rosindell:

[58749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the current political situation in Tunisia.

Andrew Rosindell:

[58750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the safeguarding of human rights and democratic progress in Tunisia.

James Cleverly:

The UK is closely monitoring the situation in Tunisia. We believe that the solution to Tunisia's challenges can only be achieved through the principles of democracy, transparency, human rights, and free speech. We call on all parties to uphold Tunisia's reputation as a tolerant and open society and to protect the democratic gains of the 2011 revolution. I [Minister Cleverly] spoke to Tunisian Foreign Minister Jerandi on 11 August and on 23 October - confirmation required from desk. G7 Ambassadors in Tunis, led by the UK, issued a joint statement on 6 September setting out our joint position - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/g7-ambassadors-in-tunisia-issue-joint-statement-6-september-2021#:~:text=Foreign%20affairs-,G7%20Ambassadors%20in%20Tunisia%20issue%20joint%20statement%3A%206%20September%202021,remain%20central%20to%20our%20relationships>.

■ Vaccination: Coronavirus**Caroline Lucas:**[\[58369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of the vaccines that the UK has promised to poorer nations have been delivered as at 18 October 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

As of 18 October the UK has donated and delivered over 10 million AstraZeneca doses to different 30 countries. The Prime Minister has committed the UK to donate 100 million vaccines by June 2022, of which 30 million will be donated by the end of 2021. We exceeded our target to donate 5 million vaccines by the end of September and remain on track to deliver on our target by the end of the year.

■ Western Sahara: Human Rights**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[58325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department plans to request that a mandate to monitor the human rights situation in the Western Sahara region is included in the renewal of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in October 2021.

James Cleverly:

The UK supported UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2548 on 30 October 2020, which renewed the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for 12 months. We have consistently supported language in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions which encourages the parties to continue their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara.

■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty**Kim Johnson:**[\[57454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 144869 on Western Sahara; Politics and Government, whether it is Government policy to support the UN's position that the status of Western Sahara is that it is a non-self-governing territory as set out on its website.

James Cleverly:

As the then Foreign Secretary stated on 11 December 2020, (and as referenced in previous answers) the UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. We note the UN's position on the status of Western Sahara, which is set out on its website: <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsqt/western-sahara>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Advertising****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[57376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of alcohol advertising on public transport on (a) children, (b) people in recovery and (c) other vulnerable populations.

Christian Wakeford:[\[57499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact alcohol advertising on public transport has on (a) children and (b) vulnerable populations such as people in recovery from dependency on alcohol.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: No specific assessment has been made.

There is some evidence that exposure to alcohol marketing can increase the risk that children will start to drink alcohol or, if they already drink, that it can increase the risk that they will consume greater quantities of alcohol. This includes any alcohol advertising that children are exposed to on public transport. There is evidence to show exposure to alcohol advertising can induce physiological cravings to drink, but not necessarily relapse, among ex-dependent drinkers. However, this evidence comes from a single study and more research is needed to fully understand the impact.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Children**Ronnie Cowan:**[\[56549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on how to protect children from alcohol marketing to support their health and wellbeing in the short and long term.

Maggie Throup:

The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on a range of issues. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people are suitably protected from irresponsible promotions, advertising and marketing of alcohol.

■ Ambulance Services**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[56238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to Ambulance Services on prioritising call outs; and on what basis the priority of call outs is determined.

Edward Argar:

The Department has issued no such guidance. The prioritisation of responses to 999 calls is an operational matter for National Health Service ambulance services. The

following table shows the ambulance service's categories for evaluating 999 incidents, with corresponding response time standards.

| CATEGORY | HEADLINE DESCRIPTION | SUB DESCRIPTION | MEAN RESPONSE TIME STANDARD | 90 TH PERCENTILE RESPONSE TIME STANDARD |
|----------|-------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Life Threatening | A time critical life-threatening event requiring immediate intervention or resuscitation. | 7 minutes | 15 minutes |
| 2 | Emergency | Potentially serious conditions that may require rapid assessment and urgent on-scene intervention and/or urgent transport. | 18 minutes | 40 minutes |
| 3 | Urgent | An urgent problem (not immediately life threatening) that needs treatment to relieve suffering and transport or assessment and management at the scene with referral where needed within a clinically appropriate timeframe. | None | 2 hours |

| CATEGORY | HEADLINE DESCRIPTION | SUB DESCRIPTION | MEAN RESPONSE TIME STANDARD | 90 TH PERCENTILE RESPONSE TIME STANDARD |
|----------|----------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| 4 | Less-Urgent | Problems that are less urgent but require assessment and possibly transport within a clinically appropriate timeframe. | None | 3 hours |

■ Cancer: Drugs

Elliot Colburn:

[\[56486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria is for interim access arrangements for oncology products licensed through Project Orbis.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[56488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that an interim access arrangement is agreed for Trodelvy.

Edward Argar:

In view of the rapid approval of Project Orbis medicines, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have developed an interim process to support patient access to medicines between Project Orbis licensing approval and publication of NICE guidance. It is anticipated that this will only be required in the short term. Consideration is given to:

- whether there is expected to be three months or longer between regulatory approval by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and publication by NICE of its final draft guidance;
- if there are any direct competitors expected to go through the NICE technology appraisal process within the next six months;
- if the treatment will make a fundamental, positive change to the existing treatment pathway; and
- whether the company will offer the medicine or treatment on a cost neutral basis.

NHS England and NHS Improvement and NICE are continuing to work with the manufacturer to explore options for interim access to Trodelvy.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Exercise

Alex Sobel: [\[59949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to ensure that NICE publishes the ME/CFS Guidelines in their current form to help prevent harm from Graded Exercise Therapy.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for publishing its final guidance. NICE issued a statement on 20 October stating that it will publish its updated guideline on myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome following a meeting of its guidance executive on 26 October.

■ Contraceptives: Waiting Lists

Justin Madders: [\[57087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the waiting time is for an expired contraceptive intrauterine device to be removed.

Justin Madders: [\[57088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the waiting time is for a contraceptive intrauterine device to be fitted.

Maggie Throup:

Waiting times are not currently collected on a national level for the fitting and removal of contraceptive intrauterine devices, as individual local authorities manage their service waiting lists. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is undertaking a programme to improve reproductive health surveillance data, including the development of a new indicator that will aim to capture information on Long-acting Reversible Contraception method waiting lists at a national level.

■ Coronavirus

Alex Sobel: [\[57308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review and update the list of symptoms associated with covid-19 given on the NHS website as more people receive vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

We keep the symptoms under review as our understanding of the virus and new variants develops and we will update our guidance if necessary.

■ Coronavirus: Ivermectin

Gavin Robinson:

[\[56628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 154803 on Coronavirus: Ivermectin, if he will publish an update on the larger scale studies on the use of ivermectin to treat covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department continues to closely monitor the evidence on ivermectin as a treatment for COVID-19 from clinical trials taking place worldwide. On 23 June 2021, ivermectin was entered into the University of Oxford's United Kingdom PRINCIPLE clinical trial as a potential treatment for COVID-19 in the community. We await the outcome from this trial early next year.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Caroline Lucas:

[\[59757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to make face coverings mandatory with exemptions for those who cannot wear them in shops to reduce transmission of covid-19; by what means he is assessing the extent to which the Government's expectation and recommendation to continue wearing a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where people come into contact with others whom they do not usually meet is being adhered to; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The 'COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021', published on 14 September, set out that if the data suggests the National Health Service is likely to come under unsustainable pressure, the Government will implement its prepared 'Plan B' for England. This will include measures to control transmission of the virus, such as requiring people to wear face coverings in some settings. The exact settings will be announced if 'Plan B' is implemented and it is likely that indoor settings would be included. The Department receives regular information and data on face covering usage and we continue to encourage people to wear face coverings.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Sarah Owen:

[\[57388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Government plans to conduct genomic sequencing of cases of covid-19 to identify variants found in arrivals from overseas when the requirement of a PCR test on day 2 after arrival is removed.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Genomic sequencing will continue to be part of our border measures to identify new variants. From 24 October anyone fully vaccinated who tests positive on an lateral flow test must self-isolate and take a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, which will be sent for genomic sequencing. Those who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or whose vaccines are not recognised by the United Kingdom must continue to take PCR tests following

arrival in England. All arrivals from 'red list' countries will continue to take PCR tests following arrival in England, regardless of vaccination status.

■ **Coronavirus: Testing**

Neale Hanvey:

[\[56547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the cost of covid-19 tests for people who are obligated to take those tests frequently as a result of their employment requiring rotational posts overseas.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We have expanded the inbound vaccination policy to recognise vaccinations from over 100 countries and territories. We have removed the pre-departure testing requirement for fully vaccinated passengers travelling from non- 'red list' countries and territories. From 24 October, eligible vaccinated passengers arriving from rest of world countries can take a cheaper lateral flow test on or before day two after their arrival.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[56550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the cost of day two and day eight NHS covid-19 test packages used during the covid-19 outbreak was formulated.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The cost of the testing packages was formulated to ensure public sector pricing was at the approximate mid-point of the private sector market. Since the requirements were introduced for international travel testing, the costs have fallen significantly. We have now made tests available around the market mid-point to ensure testing is available at an appropriate cost.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Hilary Benn:

[\[40599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of British citizens vaccinated against covid-19 in the USA who will be able to demonstrate their vaccination status once they return to the UK.

Hilary Benn:

[\[40600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether UK citizens double vaccinated in the USA with the Moderna vaccine are able to obtain a covid-19 digital vaccine passport on their return to the UK.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[41229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) UK nationals and (b) non-UK nationals who have received covid-

19 vaccinations overseas will be able to be certified as vaccinated by the NHS Covid Pass.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: No such estimate has been made. Since 30 September, a pilot process has been in place for overseas vaccinations to be recorded in NIMS and for some of these to be surfaced through the COVID Pass. This process is a proactive outreach model run by the Vaccine Data Resolution Service who contact patients with overseas vaccinations in their health records. They are invited to book a slot in a regional vaccination centre to present evidence of their vaccination, and to receive any additional vaccinations they may need. By the end of October there will be one vaccination site in every region in England offering this service. The vaccination site creates a NIMS record for the overseas vaccinations. Currently any Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Janssen or Moderna vaccinations administered by the EMA, FDA or Swissmedic will then be inputted into the NHS COVID Pass.

Paul Howell:

[\[53361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to ensure that people with underlying health conditions who took part in the Novavax trial can receive a third dose of a covid-19 vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

Novavax trial participants who are part of a priority group, such as health and social care workers, older people and people with certain medical conditions, are able to receive a booster vaccine on top of their trial doses. Individuals will be offered a booster dose by either their clinical trial team or via the National Health Service.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[56853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that people taking part in the Valneva covid-19 vaccine trial can obtain certification to show that they have been double vaccinated, even if only one of their two doses was the Valneva vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: All clinical trial participants can now gain access to a NHS COVID Pass for domestic purposes. Valneva clinical trial sites now have access to upload their trial data and have begun doing so in line with their unblinding schedule. Once complete, all Valneva clinical trialists will be able to access a NHS COVID Pass for international purposes.

Owen Thompson:

[\[57168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government will recognise as valid in England the EU Digital COVID Certificates of people resident in the UK who have been vaccinated in an EU member state in the event that proof of covid-19 vaccination is required.

Maggie Throup:

The United Kingdom already accepts the EU Digital COVID Certificate as proof of vaccination for international travel.

Sir Desmond Swayne:[\[58712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allow patients who received two covid-19 AstraZeneca vaccinations and who are concerned about mRNA vaccines to choose to have an RPV vaccine, including a further AstraZeneca vaccination, as a booster.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Data from the COV-BOOST trial indicate that booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines are generally well tolerated and provide a substantial increase in vaccine-induced immune responses. In particular, mRNA vaccines provide a strong booster effect, regardless of whether the primary course was with the Pfizer/BioNTech or the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that those eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccine should be offered a booster dose of either the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or the Moderna vaccine. Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered, vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received that vaccine in the primary course.

Catherine West:[\[58977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2021 to Question 50116, what progress has been made on establishing a vaccine data sharing process with Northern Ireland.

Maggie Throup:

We expect that these data streams will be live within the next few weeks.

Zarah Sultana:[\[59078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that undocumented migrants who are not registered with a GP are able to provide proof of covid-19 vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Individuals who do not have a National Health Service number or are not registered with a general practitioner (GP) are entitled to free COVID-19 vaccinations. A NHS number is required to access proof of vaccination through the NHS COVID Pass or via NHS.uk. Temporary NHS numbers can be created by the administering centre on receiving COVID-19 vaccinations and the site can assist in identifying a temporary NHS number. Individuals can also find their NHS number through the online 'Find Your NHS Number' service.

■ Dementia: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[58846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make the UK the world leader in dementia research.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The United Kingdom has a number of world leading organisations focused on dementia research including the UK Dementia Research Institute, which focuses on basic and translation science, the National Institute for Health Research's Dementia Translational Research Collaboration which delivers world-leading research translating advances in discovery science into the clinic and Join Dementia Research, to increase participation in research. The Department is a founding partner of the international Dementia Discovery Fund, supported by £250 million of venture capital backing commercial ventures trying innovative new approaches to dementia. We will be setting out our plans for dementia research in England in future years in due course.

■ Dengue Fever: Death

Navendu Mishra:

[\[58537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many deaths of British nationals are caused by Dengue fever on average each year.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[58545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of deaths of British nationals caused by Dengue fever in each of the last three years.

Maggie Throup:

In 2019, there were 827 Dengue cases in the United Kingdom. The UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) plans to publish reports of cases in the future. Surveillance of Dengue infections in England, Wales and Northern Ireland comprise laboratory reports from the UKHSA Rare and Imported Pathogens Laboratory, includes demographic information for patients and their travel history. However, outcome data including deaths are not collected.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Martyn Day:

[\[47018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 33279, tabled by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk on 14 July 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon Member to the answer of 20 October to Question [33279](#).

■ Doctors: Recruitment

Zarah Sultana: [\[58532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Medical Support Worker scheme beyond March 2022.

Edward Argar:

The Department is discussing the future of the Medical Support Worker Scheme beyond March 2022 with NHS England and NHS Improvement. We have made available £15 million to National Health Service trusts to provide additional clinical support for the short-term recruitment of Medical Support Workers.

■ Drugs: Misuse

John Lamont: [\[57233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the rate of drug related deaths in Scotland.

Maggie Throup:

Discussions on the rate of drug related deaths in Scotland have taken place at two United Kingdom Drugs Ministerial meetings held on 17 September 2020 and 11 October 2021.

■ Endometriosis: Health Services

Marsha De Cordova: [\[57321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure women living with endometriosis are supported mentally and physically while they are on the waiting list for treatment.

Maria Caulfield:

To support women with endometriosis, all obstetricians and gynaecologists have been trained in the diagnosis, investigation, and management of the condition, which is within the core curriculum for obstetrics and gynaecology. Women with endometriosis or suspected endometriosis should receive good care in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Endometriosis: diagnosis and management'. Within the guideline, clinicians are advised to direct women to local support groups, online forums and national charities and how to access them and if the woman agrees, to involve people important to them in discussions.

■ Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Research

Sir Mike Penning: [\[58779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase research into (a) slowing the symptoms of and (b) finding a cure for fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[58780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what level of funding his Department is providing for research into (a) slowing the symptoms of and (b) finding a cure for fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Department funds research into rare diseases such as Fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva (FOP) via the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). In the past five years, the Department has provided funding to support eight studies into FOP through the NIHR. Within the NIHR, for all disease areas, the amount of funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity and the usual practice is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics.

The United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework, published in January 2021, outlined a vision for improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as FOP.

Further details on research into rare diseases will be provided in action plans, which will be published by each of the four UK nations within two years.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Finance

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[56204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to fully fund sexual health services in England in the upcoming Spending Review.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[56863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding of the Health Foundation's Paper entitled Why greater investment in the public health grant should be a priority, published on 5 October 2021, that there has been a 14 per cent reduction in sexual health funding between 2015 to 2020, if he will make it his policy to increase funding for sexual health services.

Maggie Throup:

We have allocated more than £3 billion to local authorities in England to fund public health services in 2021/22, including sexual and reproductive health. The forthcoming Spending Review will set out funding for these services in future years.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Mr David Davis:

[\[48136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were treated by private sector providers contracted by the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak in each month since March 2020, by hospital trust in England.

Mr David Davis:

[\[48138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a breakdown of the types of services and treatments provided by private sector providers to NHS patients during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr David Davis:

[\[48139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many private hospital beds have been (a) booked by NHS providers, (b) used by NHS providers and (c) unused since the start of March 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: The information on the number of patients treated by private sector providers is not collected in the format requested. The following services and diagnostic tests were carried out by private sector providers:

- Cardiology;
- Cardiothoracic surgery;
- Dermatology;
- Ear, nose and throat;
- Gastroenterology;
- General medicine;
- General surgery;
- Gynaecology;
- Neurology;
- Neurosurgery;
- Ophthalmology;
- Oral surgery;
- Plastic surgery;
- Rheumatology;
- Thoracic medicine;
- Trauma and orthopaedics;
- Urology;
- Magnetic resonance imaging;
- Computed tomography; and
- Endoscopy.

Information on the number of private hospital beds which were booked, used or unused by National Health Service providers is not held centrally.

■ HIV Infection: Disease Control

Sarah Owen:

[\[56272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement on 30 January 2019 by the Government of its commitment to end new HIV transmissions in England by 2030, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the provision of funding to meet that commitment.

Maggie Throup:

The forthcoming Spending Review will set out funding for health and social care, including for the new HIV Action Plan, for future years.

Sarah Owen:

[\[56275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the funding allocated to his Department will be allocated to tackling rates of HIV.

Sarah Owen:

[\[56294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding to reduce rates of HIV after the allocation of the additional funding for the NHS.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[56420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that support for people living with HIV/AIDS is adequately funded.

Sarah Owen:

[\[57386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding is being made available to help eradicate HIV transmission in England by 2030.

Sarah Owen:

[\[57387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the additional funding for the NHS announced on 6 September 2021 will be made available to meet the Government's commitment to end new cases of HIV by 2030.

Maggie Throup:

HIV testing and prevention is funded by local government through the ringfenced Public Health Grant. We have provided £3.324 billion to local authorities in England to fund public health services in 2021/22, including sexual health and HIV services. We have invested in the successful deployment of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in England and the Public Health Grant in 2021/22 includes £23.4 million to cover local authorities' costs of routine commissioning of PrEP.

Funding for HIV treatment and care services is provided by NHS England and NHS Improvement through specialised commissioning. Decisions on future funding for are being taken as part of the forthcoming Spending Review. It is for individual local authorities to decide their spending priorities based on an assessment of local need, including the need for HIV prevention services Funding for PrEP in 2021/22 has been

allocated using a specific formula which recognises that the level of risk of acquiring HIV is distributed differently to the approach taken for the Public Health Grant.

■ HIV Infection: Health Education

Kirsten Oswald: [\[56157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to (a) inform and educate on HIV and (b) reduce the stigma in relation to HIV including undetectable-untransmissible messaging.

Maggie Throup:

The Department is currently developing a new Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and an HIV Action Plan. Which will set out our plans on informing and educating on HIV and reducing stigma. In addition, there are existing programmes including HIV Prevention England, our national HIV prevention campaign and the Sexual Health, Reproductive Health and HIV Innovation Fund which focus on informing and educating those groups where there is a higher or emerging burden of infection and tackling stigma.

■ HIV Infection: Screening

Kirsten Oswald: [\[56654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to (a) assess the need for HIV testing in different settings and (b) deliver HIV testing where it is needed.

Maggie Throup:

We plan to publish the HIV Action Plan later this year to coincide with World AIDS Day on 1 December which will set out clear actions to achieve the interim target of reaching an 80% reduction in HIV transmissions in England by 2025 and will set out our plans in relation to assessing the need for testing in different settings and delivering testing where it is needed.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Jane Stevenson: [\[59964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ease covid-19 visiting restrictions in NHS hospitals over the Christmas and New Year period.

Edward Argar:

We recognise the importance of being able to visit family, friends and loved ones in hospital, including over the Christmas and New Year period. Since the end of the national restrictions, hospital visiting is subject to local discretion by trusts and other National Health Service bodies, taking into account the local prevalence of COVID-19 and the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, communities and staff.

■ Mental Health Services: Schools

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[56578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to expand the (a) provision and (b) resourcing of health and wellbeing practitioners within schools.

Maggie Throup:

In March 2021, the Government announced an additional £79 million of funding to expand children's mental health services in 2021/22. A portion of this funding will be used to accelerate the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges, with the aim of 400 teams being operational, covering an estimated three million children and young people by 2023. We have published updated guidance on the commissioning and provision of public health support for children, alongside a new service model for school nursing.

■ Mental Health: Research

Chris Stephens:

[\[59840\]](#)

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

Edward Argar:

The Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is the largest funder of mental health research in the United Kingdom. In 2019-20, the NIHR spent £93.4 million on mental health research, which is a significant year on year increase in investment. 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 we encourage researchers to submit applications in this area.

■ Miscarriage: Research

Munira Wilson:

[\[56560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides for research into the (a) causes of and (b) treatment for miscarriage prevention.

Munira Wilson:

[\[56561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) total cost and (b) cost to the public purse as a proportion of his Department's research budget is of departmental research into miscarriages in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) which funds a range of research in maternal and neonatal health. In 2020/21, the NIHR's programmes invested £2.8 million on research into miscarriage, including prevention. This includes a trial which aims to examine the effectiveness of progesterone to prevent miscarriage in women with early pregnancy bleeding. In

2020/21 the NIHR invested £39.7 million in research on reproductive health and childbirth, which includes miscarriage research. This accounts for 5% of the NIHR's total research budget. Additionally, the NIHR's Policy Research Programme funds a Policy Research Unit dedicated to maternal and neonatal health and care research, which has a research theme to address pregnancy loss, and perinatal morbidity and mortality.

■ Nabiximols

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[56738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions of Sativex have been made on the NHS in England since November 2019.

Edward Argar:

There have been 5,818 items for Sativex prescribed on a National Health Service prescription and dispensed in the community in England and submitted to the NHS Business Services Authority for reimbursement for the period November 2019 to July 2021, the latest data available. There have been 11,897 items of Sativex issued to patients in secondary care in England between November 2019 and June 2021, the latest data available.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[56739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the geographical differences that exist across England in the prescription of Sativex, which is used to treat moderate to severe spasticity in MS.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[56740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to help encourage prescriptions of Sativex on the NHS in England, following the recommendation of NICE on the use of that drug for patients with MS.

Edward Argar:

The latest guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) recommend Sativex to treat moderate to severe spasticity in adults with multiple sclerosis, if other pharmacological treatments for spasticity are not effective. The decision on whether to prescribe must be taken by a specialist clinician on a case by case basis and funding of this medicine is subject to local National Health Service decisions. On 6 September, NHS England issued a reminder to clinical commissioning groups of the NICE guidance relating to Sativex and their responsibilities and will be monitoring uptake.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Consultants

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[57050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the NHS Test and Trace workforce was made up of consultants on 1 September 2021.

Maggie Throup:

As of 1 September 2021, the proportion of management consultants in the NHS Test and Trace workforce was 34%.

■ **NHS Test and Trace: Cost Effectiveness****John Redwood:**[\[56711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has conducted a value for money study of the NHS Test and Trace system; and what assessment he has made of the (a) efficiency and (b) quality of that system.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency has commenced analysis examining the historical value for money of Test, Trace and Isolate from June 2020 to April 2021 with input from senior academic health economists and a cross- Departmental working group. We are expecting initial findings by late autumn.

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[59005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of non-UK nationals employed by the NHS in each year between 2016 and 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups in England, but not staff working in primary care, local authorities or other providers. The following table shows the number of non-United Kingdom nationals employed in the HCHS sector in each year from 2016 to 2021, headcount.

| SEPTEMBER 2016 | SEPTEMBER 2017 | SEPTEMBER 2018 | SEPTEMBER 2019 | SEPTEMBER 2020 | JUNE 2021 |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 133,093 | 139,019 | 146,309 | 161,173 | 176,794 | 194,317 |

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS workforce statistics.

■ **NHS: Waiting Lists****John Redwood:**[\[56369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide details of how the NHS plans to reduce waiting lists.

Edward Argar:

We intend to publish the elective recovery delivery plan in November 2021.

We have committed further £1 billion this year to the existing £1 billion Elective Recovery Fund, with more than £8 billion in 2022/23 to 2024/2025. This could deliver the equivalent of nine million more checks, scans and procedures and allow the National Health Service to deliver the equivalent of 30% more elective activity by 2024-25, compared to pre-pandemic levels.

We will also establish a new £700 million Targeted Investment Fund, which includes £250 million to enable cutting edge technologies and £250 million to increase operating theatre capacity and improve productivity in hospitals.

■ Oral Tobacco: Regulation

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[56261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to help ensure that the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 are future-proofed to include emerging smokeless tobacco and nicotine products.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department is currently undertaking a post implementation review of the Tobacco and Related Product Regulations 2016 which will include measures related to emerging products. The Department is aiming to publish its response by the end of the year.

■ Perinatal Mortality

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[59719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he estimates publication will be of the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch examination of the reported recent increase in the number of stillbirths.

Maria Caulfield:

The Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch's national learning report, 'Intrapartum Stillbirth: learning from maternity safety investigations that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 April to 30 June 2020' was published on 16 September 2021.

■ Smoking

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[58745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of smoking prevalence among adults, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering a smoke-free country by 2030.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We are committed to reducing the harms caused by tobacco and smoking rates amongst adults are currently at 13.9%, the lowest on record. The Department is currently preparing a new Tobacco Control Plan which will deliver our ambition to be smoke-free by 2030.

■ Suicide: Antidepressants

Cat Smith:

[\[57116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information he holds on the effect of antidepressant use on suicidal ideation and behaviour.

Edward Argar:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) holds details of the suspected side effects of antidepressants, such as suicidal ideation and behaviour reported through the Yellow Card scheme. The MHRA also has access to information from clinical studies and published literature as well as periodic safety update reports produced by the licence holders.

This is used to monitor the safety of these medicines and ensure the product information provides appropriate guidance to prescribers and patients. The guidance currently includes advice about the risk of suicide and the need for close supervision of patients and advises that patients and their caregivers should be alerted to monitor any changes in mood or behaviour and to seek medical advice immediately.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson:

[\[56325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential (a) risks and (b) merits of allowing travellers with proof of recovery from covid-19 to be subject to the same rules for testing and isolation as vaccinated arrivals to the UK.

Maggie Throup:

Our current assessment remains that the available evidence does not support recognising natural immunity as a substitute for vaccination. Whilst natural infection may provide some protection against reinfection, it cannot be relied upon to protect unvaccinated people from reinfection by variants of concern (VOCs) or to prevent the further mutation of VOCs. We will continue to review any emerging evidence to inform future decisions.

■ Whipps Cross University Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

Wes Streeting:

[\[58956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to refurbish Whipps Cross Hospital as part of the Government's hospital building programme.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Whipps Cross Hospital will be delivered as part of the Government's commitment to deliver 40 new hospitals by 2030. The new hospital at Whipps Cross will provide a range of patient services including emergency and maternity.

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work closely with the hospital trust on the development of the plans for the new hospital. It is

currently anticipated to start construction in the period 2023-2024 and complete in the period 2026-2028, subject to ongoing review.

■ **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control**

Andrew Lewer:

[56703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will (a) advocate for a contemporary approach to tobacco harm reduction and (b) propose an inclusive and contemporary approach to harm reduction be developed through a dedicated working group being established at the forthcoming ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in November 2021 (COP9).

Maggie Throup:

The United Kingdom is fully committed to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and we are clear that all tobacco products are harmful to health. At the Ninth Conference of Parties, the UK will not advocate for a contemporary approach nor a working group on tobacco harm reduction products such as novel tobacco products. However, we will set out our approach to e-cigarettes which is pragmatic and evidence based.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[58880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications of Philip Morris International's takeover of Vectura on the implementation of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, in particular article 5.3.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The proposed transaction is primarily a commercial matter for the parties concerned although officials will continue to monitor the situation. The United Kingdom is a signatory to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and will continue to uphold our duties in protecting public health policy in accordance with the treaty.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[58881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to ensure that all branches of Government bound by article 5.3 of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control are aware of their resulting obligations.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We expect all departments to comply with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat's guidance on Article 5.3 and we regularly provide guidance and assistance across Government.

HOME OFFICE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Drugs****Anna McMorris:**[\[58999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) businesses in the hospitality sector to help tackle the spiking of drinks within nightclubs and hospitality venues.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The reports of the spiking of drinks with illegal substances, and of other attacks on individuals in night time venues, are of course concerning. This is an ongoing matter which the police are investigating. The Home Secretary has asked the police for an urgent update on the issues reported, including what steps they are taking to prevent the offences and apprehend the perpetrators. We would encourage anyone who is a victim or a witness of the offences to report the information to the police.

■ Animal Experiments: Antidepressants**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[58316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Animals in Science Regulation Unit and other stakeholders on granting licences for the use of the forced swim test for screening of antidepressant drugs or as a model of human depression in response to the recommendations of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency and the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research, published 29 July 2021.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: The Animals in Science Regulation Unit were involved in contributing to and reviewing the paper cited and it thus aligns to the regulatory approach taken by the Unit.

The Home Office through the Animals in Science Regulation Unit assures that, in every research proposal animals are replaced with non-animal alternatives wherever possible; the number of animals are reduced to the minimum necessary to achieve the result sought; and that, for those animals which must be used, procedures are refined as much as possible to minimise their suffering.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Crime Prevention**Matt Vickers:**[\[57460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that ASB has on both individuals and communities.

We have provided the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to all forms of ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. These powers are deliberately local in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

In January of this year, the Home Office updated [statutory guidance](#) to support local agencies to make effective use of these powers. In July the [Beating Crime Plan](#) laid out the Government's plan for tackling crime and its commitment to working with local agencies and partners to drive down anti-social behaviour using the full range of powers and tools in the 2014 Act.

■ Asylum

Peter Gibson:

[\[56631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department are taking to help asylum seekers to (a) integrate with local communities and (b) rebuild their lives.

Kevin Foster:

Our accommodation providers (ClearSprings, Mears and Serco) work closely with Local Authorities to ensure asylum seekers are accommodated where shops, hospitals, places of worship and other facilities are within manageable travelling distance.

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help. Here asylum seekers can raise any concerns regarding accommodation or support services, and they can get information about how to obtain further support.

Positive Move On advice is designed to help Service Users to integrate in the UK. It will assist with organising important issues like accommodation, finances and employment for when someone leaves the Home Office support and/or accommodation. Migrant Help offer both telephone and face to face appointments to help service users understand their circumstances and signpost to relevant organisations.

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Ruth Jones:

[\[57331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to provide asylum to Afghan musicians.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 25 October 2021]: The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

All asylum and human rights claims, including those from Afghan nationals, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Protection is normally granted where a claimant has a well-founded fear of persecution under the Refugee Convention or their circumstances engage our obligations under Article 3 (ECHR). Those who qualify are granted five years' limited leave and have access to the labour market and welfare support.

We have reviewed the country situation in Afghanistan and have updated our country policy and information notes for Afghanistan, which reflect revised assessments of risk of persecution.

We can now confirm have now resumed decision making in regards asylum claims from Afghanistan and have ensured our decision makers are considering claimants' protection needs in the light of relevant and up-to date country information.

■ Asylum: Employment

Andy McDonald:

[\[58410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Government's review of the restrictions on asylum seekers' right to work will be completed; and when she plans to publish the findings of that review.

Kevin Foster:

Potentially granting Asylum seekers the right to work is a complex issue.

We are considering the evidence put forward on the issue. The findings of the review will be announced in due course.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[58852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing asylum seekers to apply for employment in sectors which are experiencing labour shortages.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Our New Plan for Immigration works in the interests of the whole of the UK, by attracting the skills we need, whilst supporting the domestic labour market. Recognising the extraordinary circumstances business are currently facing, the Government is providing visas as a time-limited, temporary measure for the food and fuel sector.

We allow asylum seekers to work if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

But it is important to distinguish between those who need protection and those seeking to work here, who can apply for a skilled work visa under the Immigration Rules. Our wider policy would be undermined if people could bypass work visa Rules simply by lodging unfounded asylum claims here and working whilst they are dealt with. It would also act as an incentive for more to travel into the UK via unsafe and dangerous journeys, rather than claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

■ Asylum: Napier Barracks**Tim Farron:**[\[56928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people accommodated in Napier Barracks as at 18 October 2021 have tested positive for covid-19.

Kevin Foster:

253 people have tested positive for coronavirus whilst accommodated at Napier Barracks since September 2020.

■ Asylum: Scotland and Northern Ireland**Emma Hardy:**[\[56348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to notify asylum seekers in (a) Scotland and (b) Northern Ireland of the decisions on their applications.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations. All asylum claims are considered on a case by case basis and in line with published policy, which applies across the UK.

The Home Office is committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay. We have already made significant progress in prioritising claims with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Additionally, we are prioritising older claims and those where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

The Home Office are pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives which will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes almost doubling decision makers number to c.1,000 and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid retention of staff. This investment in our people will speed up processing times and increase the throughput of asylum decisions.

Once a decision has been reached on an asylum application, the Home Office will endeavour to serve the decision as soon as possible, either in person where there is a need to safeguard, via the legal representatives or to the applicant themselves.

■ Asylum: Standards**Emma Hardy:**[\[56330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to process the backlog of asylum applications.

Emma Hardy:

[\[56335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that decisions on asylum claims are made within 12 months of the date of the application.

Emma Hardy:

[\[56341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that decisions are taken on asylum applications that were made over 12 months ago.

Emma Hardy:

[\[56345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of staff in her Department processing asylum applications.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay. We have already made significant progress in prioritising claims with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Additionally, we are prioritising older claims and those where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

The Home Office are pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives which will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes almost doubling decision makers number to c.1,000 and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid retention of staff. This investment in our people will speed up processing times and increase the throughput of asylum decisions.

We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements such as digital interviewing and move away from a paper-based system. We have three key areas of focus in the short to medium term to reduce the number of outstanding asylum cases by improving efficiency and productivity, reducing the number of outstanding claims and building high performing teams.

We are streamlining and digitalising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making. We have recently appointed a new lead who is responsible for creating a new enhanced and enlarged workflow function for Asylum Operations. This will allow Asylum Operations a greater degree of management and control over the flow of cases to our decision-making units.

■ Crimes Against the Person: Gender

Caroline Nokes:

[\[56999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether police forces collect data in the event that a victim of a violent crime against the person perceives that the motivation for that crime was their gender.

Rachel Maclean:

The Home Office have asked police forces, on an experimental basis, to record and identify any crimes of violence against the person, including stalking and harassment, and sexual offences where the victim perceives it to have been motivated by a hostility based on their sex (not gender).

Each new data requirement incurs an administrative burden on the police and needs close engagement with forces to ensure data recording is accurate and consistent.

We are in consultation with the National Police Chiefs' Council and forces on how to take this forward.

■ Cybercrime: International Cooperation

Conor McGinn:

[\[58436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with her international counterparts to strengthen the UK's national resilience against (a) ransomware and (b) wider cyber crime.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: The Government's priority, working alongside law enforcement and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), is to do all we can to mitigate any harm to the UK from ransomware and other cyber crimes.

We co-ordinate closely with a wide range of international partners, from our operational relationships with foreign law enforcement and intelligence agencies through to the use of our diplomatic network to build global resilience. We share our analysis of the threat and our criminal justice expertise to increase the capabilities and commitment of countries around the world to respond and deter malicious cyber activity. We have a global network of cyber attachés who work with international partners to raise awareness and build capacity to defend against cyberattacks, including coordinating on our approaches to attributing malicious cyber activity.

Our commitment to strengthening international action on cyber crime was demonstrated at the G7 summit in June; G7 partners committed to work together to urgently address the escalating shared threats from cyber criminal networks. We continue to engage with G7 partners on this. Furthermore, the UK recently met with over 30 international partners to discuss the growing threat of ransomware, focusing on a range of options to better coordinate our activity to improve the resilience of our networks and systems.

More widely, the Government strongly supports the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime as the leading international treaty on cybercrime, and we welcome the

work of the Council of Europe to develop the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention, to ensure that the Convention remains effective in the face of changing threats in cyberspace, and that it continues to provide an effective legal basis for international cooperation to tackle these threats. In addition, the UK will play an active role in the development of the proposed UN treaty on cybercrime.

■ **Cycling: Fixed Penalties**

Alex Sobel:

[59950]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many fixed penalty notices have been issued to cyclists in each year since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) on an annual basis as part of the 'Police Powers and Procedures' statistical publication, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales>

However, data is not collected on the type of vehicle (including bicycles) for which the FPN is issued.

■ **Cycling: Greater London**

Andrew Rosindell:

[56842]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that in London the police enforce the rules for cyclists in The Highway Code to the same standard applied to motorised vehicles.

Kit Malthouse:

It is important that cyclists know that the rules of the Highway Code and that road traffic law applies equally to them as to other road users. Enforcement of road traffic laws in Greater London, including cycling offences, is an operational matter for the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in conjunction with local policing plans.

■ **Drugs: Misuse**

Christian Wakeford:

[56173]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of drug safety testing for (a) festivals and (b) events in the night-time economy.

Christian Wakeford:

[57494]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of drug safety testing facilities in city centres to prevent drug-related harm in the night-time economy.

Kit Malthouse:

No recent assessment has been made of the potential merits or risks of drug testing facilities at festivals, events or in city centres.

No illicit drug can be assumed to be safe and there is no safe way to take illicit drugs. The possession, supply or production of a controlled drug without a licence - where one is needed - is a criminal offence. Tackling drug misuse requires a system wide approach, and a need to work closely with local partners.

■ Employment: Inspections**Clive Lewis:**[\[57188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a firewall between labour inspection teams and immigration enforcement.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is committed to tackling modern slavery, including labour exploitation and ensuring that victims are identified early and provided with the support they need to rebuild their lives.

The safety of victims is paramount and is fully considered before any enforcement action is taken by Immigration Enforcement. All law enforcement officers, including immigration officers, receive training as part of their induction on spotting the signs of labour exploitation and modern slavery. Law enforcement bodies also work together to tackle the unscrupulous employers behind these cruel crimes. Immigration Enforcement is a key partner in taking action against employers who do not play by the rules.

■ Firearms: Crime Prevention**Zarah Sultana:**[\[57398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle firearm offences crime across (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) the UK.

Zarah Sultana:[\[57399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle gun smuggling across (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) the UK.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to tackling the threat posed by trafficking and the misuse of illicit firearms. The UK has some of the toughest firearms controls in the world. We are continuing to reduce the supply and availability of illegal firearms to prevent their use by criminal or terrorist groups in the UK. The Government works closely with law enforcement to protect the public by tackling criminal use of firearms and disrupting illegal supply routes. Our approach is centred around partnership working, securing and enhancing capabilities at the border and reducing diversion from the legal to the illegal market.

For example, the NCA-led Operation Venetic, a sophisticated clampdown on organised criminals which saw international law enforcement agencies working together to infiltrate encrypted messaging platform EncroChat, has seen over 700 arrests for drugs and firearms offences across the UK, including in the West Midlands.

■ Frontex

David Simmonds: [\[57501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the UK still participates in (a) formal and (b) informal cooperation with Frontex.

David Simmonds: [\[57502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the UK contributes financially to Frontex.

David Simmonds: [\[57503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the status of the relationship is between the UK and Frontex as at 18 October 2021.

Kevin Foster:

As at 18 October 2021, the UK is not currently participating in any formal or informal cooperation with Frontex and has no relationship with Frontex.

Furthermore, the UK does not make any financial contribution to Frontex.

■ Hate Crime

Elliot Colburn: [\[56584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the number of reported incidents of hate crime that progress through the courts.

Elliot Colburn: [\[56585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to plan for the upcoming release of the Law Commission's final report on the Hate Crime Review.

Elliot Colburn: [\[56586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is engaging with the Ministry of Justice in preparation for the Law Commission's final report on the Hate Crime Review.

Elliot Colburn: [\[56587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Law Commission's Consultation Paper, Hate crime laws, published on 23 September 2021, whether her Department supports the creation of a hate crime commissioner.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: In 2018, the Government asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of current hate crime legislation, including whether additional protected characteristics, such as sex, gender and age, should be included.

The Law Commission's review is also looking at the adequacy and parity of protection offered by the law relating to hate crime and the current range of offences and aggravating factors in sentencing. The Law Commission aims to make recommendations on the most appropriate models to ensure that the criminal law provides consistent and effective protection from conduct motivated by hatred towards protected groups or characteristics.

Publication of the final report is a matter for the Law Commission, which is independent. However, I understand that the Law Commission intends to publish its recommendations later this year, following which the Government will formally respond. Given the complex issues that the Law Commission identified in its consultation, it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the conclusions of its review.

Data on hate crime convictions and cases which proceeded through the criminal justice system can be found here: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-quarterly-data-summaries>

■ Hate Crime: LGBT People**Elliot Colburn:****[56583]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle the increase in hate crimes towards LGBTQ+ people; and whether her Department plans to undertake further research into the increase in those hate crime reports.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable.

Whilst the biggest driver for the increase in recorded crime is general improvements in police recording, along with increased victim willingness to come forward, we cannot be complacent. That is why we have committed to publishing a new Hate Crime Strategy later this year.

The Government has commissioned a Law Commission review of the adequacy of current hate crime legislation. The review will report this year and we will respond to it when it is complete.

Government action to tackle broader discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people includes:

- A commitment to holding an international conference on LGBT rights; the "Safe To Be Me" conference will be held in 2022.

- The September 2020 announcement of a further £3.2 million of UK-funded projects to help Commonwealth governments and civil society groups reform outdated laws and end the legacy of discrimination and violence.
- Bringing forward legislation to ban conversion therapy as soon as Parliamentary time allows and making new funds available to ensure that victims have better access to the support they need.

The Government will continue to work with the police, stakeholders including Galop and others to understand the concerns of LGBTQ+ communities and what more can be done to address those concerns.

Kim Johnson:

[57452]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking in response to the recent increase in reported violent hate crimes towards LGBTQ+ people.

Rachel Maclean:

All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable.

Whilst the biggest driver for the increase in recorded crime is general improvements in police recording, along with increased victim willingness to come forward, we cannot be complacent. That is why we have committed to publishing a new Hate Crime Strategy later this year.

The Government has commissioned a Law Commission review of the adequacy of current hate crime legislation. The review will report this year and we will respond to it when it is complete.

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- Bringing forward legislation to ban conversion therapy as soon as Parliamentary time allows and making new funds available to ensure that victims have better access to the support they need.

The Government will continue to work with the police, stakeholders including Galop and others to understand the concerns of LGBTQ+ communities and what more can be done to address those concerns.

■ Home Office: Applications

Carol Monaghan:

[58928]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to introduce target timeframes for the determination of all applications to her Department.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics regarding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These include how many Potential Victim of Trafficking cases have been received each year. The latest published NRM statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

Statistics prior to Q2 2019 were produced by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and can be found here: [Publications - National Crime Agency](#)

There is no target timeframe in which to make conclusive grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). A decision can only be made fairly and reasonably once sufficient information has been made available to the competent authority for it to complete the decision. When the competent authority has received sufficient information for it to complete a decision it should seek to do so.

This is done as soon as possible once a potential victim has been provided with a minimum of 45 calendar days of the recovery period they are eligible for, during which they may access the support and protections of the NRM. Timescales on individual decisions can vary according to the relative complexity of each case and on sufficient information being made available to the competent authority by the parties involved.

In the course of the last year the Single Competent Authority has been recruiting a significant number of new decision makers across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and bring down decision making timescales.

■ Home Office: Correspondence**Mr Alistair Carmichael:****[56482]**

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

Kevin Foster:

Correspondence within the Home Office is subject to a 20-day service level agreement. Yet there has been a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence following COVID lockdown periods and also more recently following the Afghanistan crisis.

To address these increases in operational/casework correspondence an action plan has been implemented, which includes recruiting additional staff, to clear backlogs and drive up performance.

■ Home Office: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[56772]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by her Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if she will publish the names of those funds.

Kevin Foster:

Four (4) funds have been allocated to local authorities through a process of competitive bidding in 2021.

Details have been published in the public domain for 3 of these funds

- Safer Street Fund (Round 2)

[Millions more funding for projects to make our streets safer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-more-funding-for-projects-to-make-our-streets-safer)

- Safer Street Fund (Round 3)

[Police and local authorities given extra £23.5 million for safer streets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/police-and-local-authorities-given-extra-23-5-million-for-safer-streets)

- Trusted Relationships Fund

[Trusted Relationships Fund: local areas and project descriptions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/trusted-relationships-fund-local-areas-and-project-descriptions)

Details of the 4th fund (Child National Referral Mechanism pilot) have not yet been published but will be published by the Cabinet Office, as part of their annual Grants data publication (which can be found [here](#))

■ Human Trafficking: Prosecutions

Carol Monaghan:

[58924]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Potential Victim of Trafficking cases have been received by her Department in each of the last 5 years.

Carol Monaghan:

[58925]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the average length of time taken to assess Potential Victim of Trafficking cases received by her Department over the last 5 years.

Carol Monaghan:

[58926]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of Potential Victim of Trafficking applications being handled by her Department that are yet to be resolved and were made over (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four and (e) five years ago.

Carol Monaghan:

[58927]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to introduce a target timeframe for the determination of Potential Victim of Trafficking cases.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics regarding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These include how many Potential Victim of Trafficking cases have been received each year. The latest published NRM statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

Statistics prior to Q2 2019 were produced by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and can be found here: [Publications - National Crime Agency](#)

There is no target timeframe in which to make conclusive grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). A decision can only be made fairly and reasonably once sufficient information has been made available to the competent authority for it to complete the decision. When the competent authority has received sufficient information for it to complete a decision it should seek to do so.

This is done as soon as possible once a potential victim has been provided with a minimum of 45 calendar days of the recovery period they are eligible for, during which they may access the support and protections of the NRM. Timescales on individual decisions can vary according to the relative complexity of each case and on sufficient information being made available to the competent authority by the parties involved.

In the course of the last year the Single Competent Authority has been recruiting a significant number of new decision makers across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and bring down decision making timescales.

■ Immigration Controls: Cairnryan Port

Kenny MacAskill:

[59073]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government has provided any additional (a) resources or (b) financial assistance to provide for security and potential immigration breaches to port and ferry operators at Cairnryan.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Government has not provided any additional (a) resources or (b) financial assistance to provide for security and potential immigration breaches to port and ferry operators at Cairnryan.

The Home Office does not conduct immigration and nationality monitoring at the port of Cairnryan. Immigration Enforcement officers regularly conduct intelligence led operations at Cairnryan and Loch Ryan in order to identify those seeking to circumvent the UK's immigration controls by travelling to the UK via Ireland, focusing on those who have no right to be in the UK and/or those who may do harm in the UK.

Kenny MacAskill:

[59074]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what immigration and nationality monitoring her Department undertakes at the port of Cairnryan; and which officials undertake that monitoring.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Government has not provided any additional (a) resources or (b) financial assistance to provide for security and potential immigration breaches to port and ferry operators at Cairnryan.

The Home Office does not conduct immigration and nationality monitoring at the port of Cairnryan. Immigration Enforcement officers regularly conduct intelligence led operations at Cairnryan and Loch Ryan in order to identify those seeking to circumvent the UK's immigration controls by travelling to the UK via Ireland, focusing on those who have no right to be in the UK and/or those who may do harm in the UK.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Tim Farron:

[56158]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's process is for considering leave beyond six months for Afghan people (a) whose visa requirements were waived to facilitate evacuation from Afghanistan and (b) who are also part of a family unit where one person is a British national.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 25 October 2021]: We will be offering indefinite leave to remain in the UK to those Afghan nationals and their close family members, and the Afghan close family members of British citizens, who were evacuated, called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, by the Government during Operation PITTING. This will apply to those who have already arrived in the UK or arrive after the evacuation. This will give them certainty about their status and the right to work and contribute to society.

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>

Janet Daby:

[56528]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of relaxing immigration rules for skilled archaeologists fleeing Afghanistan.

Kevin Foster:

Those brought to the UK under the Afghan Resettlement Assistance Programme and Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme will have the right to work in the UK.

It is also open for archaeologists to apply for permission under the Skilled Worker route provided they are sponsored by a licenced sponsor. Archaeologists are also one of the occupations on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

■ Immigration: Appeals

Tim Farron:

[56927]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of immigration cases being overturned at tribunal following the publication of the Windrush Comprehensive Improvement Plan.

Priti Patel:

Regular analysis of appeal data and Judicial determinations is undertaken by both decision makers and appeals staff, with regular meetings and discussions to identify themes or areas for action to inform learning and improve decision making.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Stephen Farry:

[56477]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the EU Settlement Scheme Policy Equality Statement (PES) dated 22 May 2019, published on 7 September 2021, and the section on page 27 on Evidence of abuse by non-EEA nationals, detailing the National Risk Assessment approach towards undocumented non-EEA family members, for what reason that section was redacted from the updated version of the statement; on what date that redaction was made; whether her Department has issued internal guidance to caseworkers on decision making on (a) EEA Family Permits or (b) EUSS applications that reflects the substance of that approach; and whether it is her policy to continue to apply the outcomes of a National Risk Assessment to all EUSS applications.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office released on 7 September 2021 an outdated version of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) Policy Equality Statement (PES) dated 22 May 2019, with redactions, following a Freedom of Information Act request and in compliance with a 9 August 2021 decision of the First-tier Tribunal on Information Rights.

The redactions implement the Tribunal's finding the publication of the relevant information would, or would be likely to, prejudice international relations and effective law enforcement and would therefore be detrimental to the public interest.

The May 2019 PES is an outdated version of the comprehensive PES for the EUSS published in November 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-policy-equality-statement/policy-equality-statement-eu-settlement-scheme>

Neither the published PES nor the EUSS or family permit guidance for caseworkers places any reliance on the National Risk Assessment, which is not routinely used in connection with all EUSS applications.

Paul Blomfield:

[58821]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the administrative requirements on EU citizens with Settled Status to prove their status without physical documentation when accessing essential services.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We are enabling other government departments and public authorities to be able to automatically access immigration status information. Currently, this includes the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and NHS England and Wales.

The data made available is specific to the need of each department and contains only the necessary information to inform their decision making. By making data available in this way, we are reducing the number of occasions on which an individual has to prove their status in the UK. The Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Privacy Notice provides information about how we share data with other government departments.

When applying for banking services, all individuals are required to provide proof of their identity as part of anti-money laundering, regulatory 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) checks.

We have produced guidance for financial providers to help them understand the documents we issue, including eVisas, and how they can be used as proof of identity for the purposes of KYC checks. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biometric-residence-documents-information-for-financial-providers>

As detailed in this guidance, financial institutions can check someone's identity, using the online 'View and Prove' service at:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-immigration-status>.

This enables checks to be conducted without physical documents changing hands or the checker having to assess the authenticity of the documents and whether the person presenting it is the rightful holder.

Paul Blomfield:

[58822]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department is providing to (a) banks and (b) mortgage lenders on (i) EU Settled Status and (ii) accepting digital proof of that status.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We are enabling other government departments and public authorities to be able to automatically access immigration status information. Currently, this includes the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and NHS England and Wales.

The data made available is specific to the need of each department and contains only the necessary information to inform their decision making. By making data available in this way, we are reducing the number of occasions on which an individual has to

prove their status in the UK. The Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Privacy Notice provides information about how we share data with other government departments.

When applying for banking services, all individuals are required to provide proof of their identity as part of anti-money laundering, regulatory 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) checks.

We have produced guidance for financial providers to help them understand the documents we issue, including eVisas, and how they can be used as proof of identity for the purposes of KYC checks. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biometric-residence-documents-information-for-financial-providers>

As detailed in this guidance, financial institutions can check someone's identity, using the online 'View and Prove' service at:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-immigration-status>.

This enables checks to be conducted without physical documents changing hands or the checker having to assess the authenticity of the documents and whether the person presenting it is the rightful holder.

■ Immigration: Fees and Charges

Peter Kyle:

[57192]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 September 2021 to Question 51784, for what reason her Department does not hold a record of the number of overseas fee waiver applications her Department has received since March 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office Migration Statistics do not currently capture the number of applications for overseas fee waivers received or placed on hold since the previous policy was suspended.

This will be revisited very shortly.

Peter Kyle:

[57193]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 September 2021 to Question 45845, if she will publish the guidance used by caseworkers to determine whether an applicant for an overseas fee waiver has an urgent need to travel to the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The overseas fee waiver policy is being revised to include an assessment of affordability for specified applications on the human rights route.

The revised policy is expected to be published by the end of 2021.

■ Immigration: Standards

Shabana Mahmood:

[56350]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the average length of time it takes to process an application for (a) refugee status, (b) indefinite leave to remain, (c) citizenship and (d) for settled status as of 15 October 2021.

Shabana Mahmood:

[56945]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that all immigration applicants understand the immigration application process, including processing times and what happens after the receipt of a decision.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is committed to ensuring all applications are considered without unnecessary delay. Information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data, at:

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

If an application is deemed complex and expected to take longer than the standard processing timescale, UKVI will write to the customer within the standard processing time and explain what will happen next. The published information on processing times for complex/ non straightforward visa applications is published as part of the Migration Transparency data, at the above link.

All asylum claims are carefully considered on their individual merits on the evidence available to the decision maker. Although we concentrate on oldest cases there may be reasons where some applications may be prioritised due to several factors such as vulnerability. Delays may also occur where we require further information/investigations before a decision can be made on the application.

The Home Office issues an information leaflet to asylum claimants at the point of claim which outlines the asylum process and the claimant's responsibilities within the process. This information leaflet is periodically reviewed. Independent guidance and advice are also available to asylum claimants provided by Migrant Help.

Migrant Help are present in initial accommodation where destitute asylum seekers are initially housed and their services can also be accessed via their website or by phone. Their website is available in multiple languages, and the helpline is free and accessible in multiple languages.

UKVI work closely with our key partners and stakeholders to seek and share feedback to identify ways in which we can improve the quality of experience of people seeking asylum in the UK. Our Customer Experience Management Team, based across the UK, work closely on a local level with stakeholders, to identify key areas to improve the overall experience for people seeking asylum in the UK.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[57391]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timetable is for restoring pre-covid-19 service standards for (a) asylum applications and (b) other UK Visas and Immigration services.

Kevin Foster:

Information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

We have already made significant progress in prioritising asylum claims with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Additionally, we are prioritising older claims and those where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

The Home Office are pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives which will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes almost doubling decision makers number to c.1,000 and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid retention of staff. We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements such as digital interviewing and move away from a paper-based system.

We have three key areas of focus in the short to medium term to reduce the number of outstanding asylum cases by improving efficiency and productivity, reducing the number of outstanding claims and building high performing teams. We are streamlining and digitalising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making. Asylum Operations are working to reintroduce a service standard and will be looking towards aligning potentially with changes being brought about by the New Plan for Immigration.

■ Members: Correspondence

Helen Hayes:

[57204]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve its response times in replying to correspondence from hon. Members.

Kevin Foster:

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of MPs written correspondence within 20 working days. Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received following the Afghanistan crisis.

The Department recognises it has not been able to meet its service standard in some cases, but has implemented an action plan, which includes recruiting additional staff, to clear backlogs and drive up performance.

■ Migrant Workers: Clothing

John McNally:

[\[57099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to add the garment industry to the Shortage Occupation List.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Skilled Worker route already contains several eligible occupations from this sector, such as weavers, upholsterers, tailors and dressmakers subject to salary and language requirements being met. An occupation at RQF3 or above does not need to be on the Shortage Occupation List to qualify for recruitment under the Skilled Worker Route.

In their last call for evidence the independent Migration Advisory Committee received evidence from several stakeholders from the garment industry, but they concluded this evidence did not warrant occupations from this sector being added onto the SOL. We will also not be creating more general routes allowing recruitment at or near the minimum wage into this sector via immigration as an alternative to investing in UK based staff and offering them rewarding packages of terms and conditions.

More generally those business facing recruitment issues should, in the first instance, engage with the Department for Work and Pensions about the support they can offer in seeking recruits and supporting training.

■ Migrant Workers: Food

Deidre Brock:

[\[57076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allocating more temporary visas to workers in the food and drink supply chain to ensure sufficient food supplies at Christmas 2021 and beyond.

Kevin Foster:

Recognising the extraordinary circumstances facing businesses currently, Government is providing visas as a time-limited, temporary measure for the food sector until longer term measures to improve the supply of skills domestically start to have an impact. This includes visas for up to:

- Up to 4,700 HGV food drivers who will be able to arrive from late October and leave by 28 February 2022;
- Up to 5,500 poultry workers can arrive from late October and stay up until 31 December 2021; and
- Up to 800 pork butchers who will be able to arrive from early November until 31 December 2021 and stay for up to 6 months.

It will be for the sectors and companies concerned to make use of these opportunities to recruit labour over this period.

However, we must see long-term solutions delivered by employers through improved training and hiring, with better pay and working conditions, as immigration routes do not provide a guarantee of being able to recruit in a competitive global market for skilled workers. Therefore, we have no further plans to provide more temporary visas in this sector.

The Points Based System already provides for a range of roles in the food and drink sector, including roles such as Butchers, to be recruited on a global basis subject to the rules and requirements of the system being met, including on salary.

■ Migrant Workers: Home Office

Karl Turner: [58819]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many employers have utilised the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 to date.

Kevin Foster:

We do not collect information on employers using the concession. The Government has no plans to publish information on individual companies which is consistent with the wider immigration system.

The information about the concession is published online at:

[Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017: July 2021 update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017-july-2021-update).

■ Migrant Workers: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Deidre Brock: [57077]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the validity of temporary visas for HGV drivers from three to twelve months.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government is working with the haulage sector to promote jobs, training and a range of other initiatives to get more people into HGV driving.

Like other sectors the focus should be on training and recruiting from the UK based workforce in the first instance, especially given the impact of the pandemic resulting in more UK based workers looking for new employment. Reported shortages of HGV drivers across the EU and much of the developed world also indicate the ability to recruit abroad is no guarantee of being able to do so.

The temporary visa provision for HGV drivers was introduced in response to potential reduced availability of some food products in the run up to Christmas, enabling drivers to work in the UK until 28 February 2022. There are no plans to extend the validity of these visas beyond this date.

Anna McMorris:

[\[57263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on extending the additional HGV driver visas beyond Christmas 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government is working with the haulage sector to promote jobs, training and a range of other initiatives to get more people into HGV driving.

Like other sectors the focus should be on training and recruiting from the UK based workforce in the first instance, especially given the impact of the pandemic resulting in more looking for secure new employment.

The temporary visa provision for HGV drivers was introduced in response to potential reduced availability of some food products in the run up to Christmas, enabling drivers to work in the UK until 28 February 2022. There are no plans to extend the validity of these visas beyond this date.

■ **Nitrous Oxide: Misuse**

Matt Vickers:

[\[57459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to further tackle the misuse of nitrous oxide.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government takes the supply of substances for their psychoactive effect very seriously. There are legitimate uses for nitrous oxide, such as in medicine, dentistry and as a propellant for whipped cream canisters, but those who supply nitrous oxide who know, or who are reckless as to whether, it will be used for its psychoactive effect may be subject to a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. On 3 September, the Government asked the independent statutory advisory body, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, to provide an updated assessment of the harms of nitrous oxide and the adequacy of controls.

■ **Perinatal Mortality: Registration**

Hilary Benn:

[\[58736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for parents of children who were stillborn to register the death of their baby in England; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Delivery of registration services falls to local authorities who monitor demand and manage requests within their respective geographical areas.

Hilary Benn:

[\[58737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will ask registrars to prioritise appointments for the parents of babies who were stillborn so that they can register both the birth and death of their baby at the same appointment, prior to organising a funeral.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Still-birth registration appointments are prioritised alongside death registrations. Provisions within the Coronavirus Act 2020 allow these events to be registered by telephone at present.

Only one registration appointment is required, with details solely recorded in the still-birth register.

■ **Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners: Disciplinary Proceedings**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[58952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of recall processes available for (a) Police and Crime Commissioners and (b) Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: There is currently no recall mechanism for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs).

In July this year we announced part two of the PCC review, which will assess the merits and demerits of a trigger mechanism for the recall of PCCs and PFCCs.

Part two of the Review is an internal piece of work that will report directly to the Home Secretary. Recommendations made will be published via a Written Ministerial Statement in due course.

■ **Police: Employment**

Feryal Clark:

[\[57451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of police (a) constables and (b) community support officers funded directly by her Department (i) retired and (ii) were recruited for each year since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

Around two-thirds of funding for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) comes directly from Government grants, with around a third coming from a share of council tax – known as police precept. Council tax levels are a local decision and elected PCCs rightly consider what they are asking people to pay to fulfil their strong desire to keep our streets safe.

■ Police: Enfield North

Feryal Clark:

[57450]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of police (a) constables and (b) community support officers are funded directly by her Department and deployed in Enfield North constituency for each year since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

Around two-thirds of funding for PCCs comes directly from Government grants, with around a third coming from a share of council tax – known as police precept. Council tax levels are a local decision and elected PCCs rightly consider what they are asking people to pay to fulfil their strong desire to keep our streets safe.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[56807]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme is not yet live.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 25 October 2021]: The first to be resettled through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk – including women's rights activists, prosecutors and journalists.

The ACRS is not yet open. Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the scheme, amid the complex and changing picture.

The Government will continue to work closely with other government departments, non-governmental organisations, charities, local authorities and other partners and relevant organisations in the development and implementation of the ACRS.

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

Stella Creasy:

[58383]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme will open for applications; and when initial decisions on applications to that scheme will be made.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, amid the complex and changing picture.

The Home Office will continue to work closely with other government departments, non-governmental organisations, charities, local authorities and other partners and relevant organisations in the development and implementation of the ACRS.

Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement.

Dan Jarvis:

[58399]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what advice her Department has provided to hon. Members on how to support Afghan nationals who are eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is not yet open. Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the scheme, amid the complex and changing international context.

There will not be a formal application process for the ACRS. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred to the UK. Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at:

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

Honourable members should refer individuals who contact their offices to the relevant scheme information available on gov.uk rather than seek information or updates on their behalf.

■ Resettlement: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas:

[53225]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the international joint statement on assurances on travel from Afghanistan, released on 29 August 2021, how many travel documents have been issued to designated Afghans by the UK since that date.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Home Office Migration Statistics do not capture the number of travel documents issued to Afghan nationals since 29 August. This would require a manual trawl of data and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Seasonal Workers: Butchers

Daniel Zeichner:

[59812]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many skilled butchers have (a) been granted a temporary visa and (b) arrived in the UK under the extension to the seasonal workers scheme announced on 14 October 2021.

Kevin Foster:

We are working to implement the decision taken on 14th October to make available temporary visas for pork butchers.

This requires changes to the Immigration Rules and operational processes across both the Home Office and Defra. Further details will be provided in due course.

Butchers can also be recruited under the Skilled Worker Route.

■ Seasonal Workers: Pilot Schemes**Clive Lewis:**[\[56377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department will publish its evaluation of the Seasonal Workers Pilot scheme.

Clive Lewis:[\[56381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a full evaluation of the Seasonal Workers Pilot scheme before taking any steps to further extending that scheme.

Clive Lewis:[\[56384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions workers employed as part of the Seasonal Worker Pilot scheme have requested transfer to a different employer.

Clive Lewis:[\[56386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what financial penalties have been levied against providers of the Seasonal Worker Pilot relating to failure to fulfil the terms of the contract; and what was the level of those penalties.

Clive Lewis:[\[56388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of the budget for the Seasonal Worker Pilot is allocated to international agents working with the providers of that scheme.

Clive Lewis:[\[57190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps are taken when a worker employed under the Seasonal Worker Pilot scheme requests a transfer to a different employer.

Kevin Foster:

The Seasonal Worker pilot scheme is managed by four operators which are not engaged on a contractual basis but are chosen by requests for information managed by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Those organisations selected through the DEFRA process are licensed by the Home Office under its sponsorship regime. The Government does not allocate a budget to their overseas agents.

Each operator manages changes of employment for the workers they sponsor. We monitor this information closely, but it is not directly held on Home Office systems.

The Seasonal Worker pilot scheme is subject to ongoing review activity and we will make an assessment of it prior to a decision whether to extend its provisions into future years. We will publish the 2019 evaluation shortly.

■ Sexual Offences

Helen Hayes: [\[56217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that all police forces in England have a specialist Rape and Serious Sexual Offences unit.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to ensuring that victims and survivors of rape and other sexual offences have their cases investigated in a thorough and timely manner. Every victim should have their case treated seriously from the point of disclosure.

The structuring of individual police forces is an operational matter for Chief Constables.

In June 2021, we published our findings and action plan following an end-to-end review of how the criminal justice system handles rape cases. Among the actions we are taking forward is Operation Soteria, through which we are investing in a programme of work to drive improvements in the handling of rape cases by the police and CPS. Academics working with Policing and CPS partners across five pathfinder forces will make targeted recommendations across a range of themes.

Ellie Reeves: [\[58994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have reported street flashing as part of the recorded crime statistics for exposure and voyeurism for each year since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Home Office collects information on the number of Exposure and Voyeurism offences recorded by the police in England and Wales. However whether or not these offences involved street flashing is not separately identifiable.

■ UK Trade with EU

Emily Thornberry: [\[56309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has taken of the effectiveness of the Government's ability to tackle the trade in illicit goods being contingent on the introduction of safety and security declarations on goods traded between the UK and EU.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[56437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Government being able to tackle the trade in illicit goods being contingent on the introduction of safety and security declarations on goods traded between the UK and EU.

Damian Hinds:

Advance goods data is fundamental to our approach to securing the UK border against goods of concern. It enables us to target our interventions against those consignments most likely to be harmful, while facilitating the flow of legitimate goods, and is typically made available in the form of safety and security declarations. In the absence of advance goods data, Border Force officers use a combination of intelligence, expertise and professional judgement to select goods for inspection.

From 1 July 2022 we will receive advance data on EU goods as we currently receive for goods from the Rest of the World.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[56438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that the effective enforcement of controls on the trade in illicit goods is maintained pending the full implementation of safety and security declarations on goods traded between the UK and EU.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Government has robust anti-smuggling controls and dynamic intelligence capabilities which will continue to prevent, deter, and detect illegal movements of goods enable us to enforce criminal and civil sanctions against those responsible for those movements. When Safety and Security declarations become mandatory for EU imports, they will provide an extra tool in our security processes.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[56475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government has taken to ensure that the effective enforcement of controls on the trade in illicit goods is maintained pending the full implementation of safety and security declarations on goods traded between the UK and EU.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Government has robust anti-smuggling controls and dynamic intelligence capabilities which will continue to prevent, deter, and detect illegal movements of goods enable us to enforce criminal and civil sanctions against those responsible for those movements. When Safety and Security declarations become mandatory for EU imports, they will provide an extra tool in our security processes.

■ Visas: Afghanistan**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[53881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to permit an automatic extension of stay for with Leave to Remain visas if they are unable to return from Afghanistan.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: If an Afghan national holds a valid visa, or permission to stay, and is able to travel safely they will be able to return to the UK during the period covered by their visa.

If they have not yet travelled, they can reapply for a visa vignette, and will be able to make a further application in the UK on return on a route for which they meet the requirements, and which permits them to switch.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability****Caroline Lucas:**[\[56965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of the UK joining the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Following extensive engagement, the United Kingdom is not seeking to join the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS) negotiations. We continue to work closely with international partners, including the members of ACCTS, to advance trade and environmental matters, through multilateral and plurilateral fora such as the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) group at the World Trade Organisation, and through our bilateral dialogues.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Japan**Emily Thornberry:**[\[59745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 20 October to Question 56292, on what date her Department received notification from the Japanese authorities informing them of the completion of domestic procedures required to designate the seven names listed as having protected geographical indication status, in accordance with Chapter 14, Section B, Sub-Section 3 and Footnote 2 of Annex 14-B of the UK-Japan CEPA.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government of Japan informed the Department of International Trade on 23 December 2020 that domestic procedures were complete for the protection of the

seven geographical indications listed in the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

■ **Department for International Trade: Correspondence**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[56136]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to improve her Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Penny Mordaunt:

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

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

■ **Department for International Trade: Departmental Responsibilities**

Caroline Lucas:

[56962]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proportion of her time is allocated to her role as (a) COP26 Adaptation and Resilience Champion and (b) Secretary of State for International Trade.

Penny Mordaunt:

My Rt. Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade dedicates a significant proportion of her time to her roles as COP26 Adaptation and Resilience Champion and Secretary of State for International Trade. Her time is spent flexibly depending on the relative need of each role.

Recently, she has been heavily engaged with the G20, Global Investment Summit and the G7 in her capacity as Trade Secretary – at which she raised the importance of tackling climate change. In the approach to the COP26 Summit, she is increasing the proportion of her time dedicated to COP26 priorities, including participation in key events, meetings with key stakeholders, and bilateral partners whilst maintaining support for core DIT ministerial engagement.

■ **Fossil Fuels: Overseas Investment**

Layla Moran:

[59947]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2021 to Question 5534, what the exceptional circumstances are in which the

Government would provide direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas.

Mike Freer:

The limited exemptions available to the Government's policy on support for new fossil fuel projects overseas are set out online at:

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

■ **Sheep Meat: USA**

David Duguid: [58988]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the economic value of the lifting of the ban on British lamb imports to the US for (a) Scotland and (b) Banff and Buchan.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We are pleased that US Department of Agriculture is looking to remove their import restrictions on sheep meat. Restoring access to the US will provide a great opportunity for British producers, including those in Banff and Buchan, to export their high-quality product to a valuable new market that will increase in value as trade becomes more established.

■ **Trade Agreements: Australia**

Caroline Lucas: [56334]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the independently verified impact assessment of the Australia Free Trade Agreement due to be published by her Department before the end of the year will include a comprehensive assessment of its impact on the UK achieving its (a) climate and (b) environmental goals.

Caroline Lucas: [56336]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department plans to conduct and publish an independently verified impact assessment of any prospective trade deal with New Zealand, including its impact on the UK achieving its (a) climate and (b) environmental goals.

Penny Mordaunt:

Following the conclusion of negotiations with Australia and those with New Zealand, full impact assessments will be published prior to scrutiny by Parliament. These independently scrutinised impact assessments will cover the economic and environmental impacts of the deals.

Caroline Lucas: [56963]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the independently verified impact assessment of the Australia Free Trade Agreement due to be published by her Department before the end of the year will include a comprehensive assessment of its

impact on farming and agriculture in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

Following the conclusion of negotiations, a full impact assessment will be published prior to scrutiny by Parliament. This will present the results of economic impacts of the agreement, including on UK sectoral output and employment. It will provide an assessment of the potential implications for the UK nations and English regions.

Drew Hendry:

[\[59841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what (a) advice or (b) role has Tony Abbott played in the UK's discussions with Australia on a possible free trade deal.

Drew Hendry:

[\[59842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what advice Tony Abbott provided to her Department on the removal of climate change-related clauses that had formed part of the proposed UK-Australia free trade deal.

Penny Mordaunt:

Tony Abbott does not negotiate trade deals on behalf of the UK. He is a voluntary, unpaid advisor to the Board of Trade. Advisers to the Board of Trade have been appointed because of their expertise in trade and economic matters and to help inform our future thinking on international trade. Our ambitious trade deal with Australia will include a substantive article which reaffirms both parties' commitments to address climate change. Both Australia and the UK make clear their commitment to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement and achieving all of its goals, which includes the temperature goals.

■ **Trade Agreements: Environment Protection**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[57379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that environmental safeguards are upheld when brokering trade agreements.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government shares the public's high regard for our nation's environmental protections and has made clear that more trade need not come at the expense of our values.

In our trade agreements, we will seek to maintain the United Kingdom's strong environmental protection, sovereign right to regulate in pursuit of net zero by 2050, and affirm our commitments to multilateral environment agreements, including the Paris Agreement. We will pursue mechanisms to enhance cooperation on environmental sustainability, including in biodiversity, forestry and sustainable supply chains, in the months and years ahead.

Geraint Davies:

[\[58724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her policy is on (a) the prioritisation of (i) economic growth and (ii) environmental protections and (b) conceding environmental safeguards in the event that the other country demands it when negotiating trade agreements.

Penny Mordaunt:

HM Government is clear that more trade doesn't have to come at the expense of the environment. Future trade agreements must work for UK consumers and businesses while maintaining our high environmental standards – and we will not compromise on this.

Therefore, we have agreed ambitious environmental chapters with both Australia, and now New Zealand, which preserve our right to regulate to meet net zero, affirm our shared commitment to the Paris Agreement and seek to cooperate on a range of environmental issues.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[56328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps officials in her Department are taking with officials in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to support the development of the floating wind sector in the UK.

Mike Freer:

This year both departments have worked together successfully on the Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Support scheme. The scheme has brought in new investment to the sector which will deliver 2 new ports on the Humber and on Teesside to build the next generation of offshore wind projects. Investors have already announced the creation or protection of over 2000 jobs and over £300m of investment. With a Government target of 1GW in Floating Offshore Wind, the departments will continue to work together to ensure we deliver this objective.

■ Wool: Exports

Ben Lake:

[\[57249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps she has taken to promote British wool exports overseas.

Ben Lake:

[\[57250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans her Department has to increase British wool exports.

Ben Lake:

[\[57251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has identified potential growth markets for British wool exports; and what steps she is taking to increase British wool exports to those markets.

Mike Freer:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is developing a UK-wide, cross-government Export Strategy, driving economic recovery and the levelling-up agenda. On the 1st October, DIT launched the Export Support Service, allowing UK businesses to get answers to practical questions about exporting to Europe. DIT also has expert trade advisers locally and overseas, which support both wool and textile exporters, providing access to UK Export Finance and a range of online services unlocking opportunities globally.

JUSTICE**■ Attorney General: Judges****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[59070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the spouse of the Attorney General is permitted to be a serving judge.

James Cartlidge:

There is no legislative restriction on the spouse of the Attorney General being a serving judge. The Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals set out the requirements for Judicial Conduct in the [Guide to Judicial Conduct](#), this applies to all judges in courts and tribunals, whether salaried or fee-paid, legal or nonlegal.

■ Belfast Agreement: Human Rights**Andy Slaughter:**[\[R\] \[56865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to make any amendment to the Human Rights Act which will require changes to the Good Friday Agreement.

Andy Slaughter:[\[R\] \[56866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in the (a) Republic of Ireland and (b) US Administration on plans to review the Human Rights Act 1998 and the potential effect those plans might have on the Good Friday Agreement.

James Cartlidge:

In the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the UK committed to completing incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into Northern Ireland law. We remain a signatory of the ECHR, and in carrying out our programme of reforms we will continue to ensure that our obligations under the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement are being met.

■ Berwyn Prison: Repairs and Maintenance**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[56921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Berwyn, published on 28 September 2021, what

steps he is taking to ensure that remedial work to serious paint defects and ineffective heating systems is carried out in a timely manner; and when he expects that those defects will be resolved.

Victoria Atkins:

A trial recently began in three cells at the prison to test different types and specification of paint. The pilot, which will run until April 2022, will identify the best solution to resolve the defective paint issues which will then be used to decorate the rest of the accommodation blocks.

Exploratory works have begun to look at the existing distribution system and work on the distribution pipework system will commence in January 2022 and is expected to be completed by the end of August 2022.

The CHP system is running effectively and being switched off during evening hours to ensure there is no over capacity in the system. We will shortly be making an application to connect the CHP boilers to the national grid so that they are able to run correctly with excess power to be exported to the grid when required. Approval is anticipated early in the New Year.

■ **Berwyn Prison: Standards**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[56922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Berwyn, published on 28 September 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that defects in the heating system reliability and poor quality plastering at HMP Berwyn are not replicated at planned prison buildings.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[56923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Berwyn, published on 28 September 2021, what assessment he has made of the impact on (a) prison efficiency, (b) prison safety and (c) rehabilitation of the decision to design 70 per cent of cells at HMP Berwyn as double occupancy; and what lessons he has learnt from the experience of that design model at HMP Berwyn for the design of future prison buildings.

Victoria Atkins:

The perceived plastering problems at HMP Berwyn are the result of a painting defect. We are currently trialling different types and specifications of paint to identify the best solution to resolve the defective paint issues. The results from this trial will inform how we could avoid and tackle such issues should they occur in future builds.

Current and future prison builds will use a different heating system from that in use at HMP Berwyn, reflecting improvements in heating system technology and a more ambitious approach to sustainability.

Our new prison designs have incorporated the learning from HMP Berwyn and a wide range of other sources of evidence on what works to create secure, safe, and rehabilitative environments. The houseblocks are divided into smaller units rather

than the large, galleried wings common in older prisons. Around 90% of prisoners in the new prisons will be held in single occupancy cells. Some double occupancy cells will be included due to the benefits that they provide for some prisoners.

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Judges

Kenny MacAskill:

[59069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the spouse of the Director of Public Prosecutions is permitted to be a serving judge.

James Cartlidge:

There is no legislative restriction on the spouse of the Director of Public Prosecutions being a serving judge, nor on the spouse of a serving judge being the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals set out the requirements for Judicial Conduct in the [Guide to Judicial Conduct](#), this which applies to all judges in courts and tribunals, whether salaried or fee-paid, legal or nonlegal.

■ Frankland Prison: Telephone Services

Mary Kelly Foy:

[59055]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, by what date will in-cell telephony be fully installed in HMP Frankland.

Victoria Atkins:

BT conducted a site survey at HMP Frankland on 14th October 2021 and we expect to receive an estimated cost from them in the coming weeks. This is the initial stage in the delivery of in-cell telephony, however, we will not be able to proceed until funding is made available. That position is expected to be known by the end of the financial year and if favourable the project team will engage in more detailed discussion with the prison on a detailed installation plan.

■ Human Rights

Andy Slaughter:

[R] [56867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to review the Human Rights Act 1998 in lieu of the Independent Human Rights Act Review Panel publishing its conclusions.

James Cartlidge:

As the Deputy Prime Minister has set out, we will overhaul the Human Rights Act (HRA) to make sure it meets the needs of the society it serves and commands public support. The Government has established the Independent Human Rights Act Review to examine the framework of the HRA, how it is operating in practice and whether any change is required. We look forward to receiving the Panel's report, and will be carefully considering the Panel's conclusions as part of any wider reform programme. We will publish the Panel's report and have already committed to consulting on proposed changes to the Act.

■ Judges and Legal Profession: Recruitment

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[56134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on encouraging the recruitment of more (a) women and (b) ethnic minority (i) judges and (ii) lawyers.

James Cartlidge:

The Secretary of State regularly discusses a wide range of issues with Cabinet colleagues.

The Ministry of Justice recognises the importance of encouraging diversity in the judiciary and legal professional bodies. The Lord Chancellor is a member of the Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF) and works closely with the Lord Chief Justice, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission and other members of the JDF, including the three relevant legal professional bodies, to address barriers to achieving greater diversity in the judiciary. In September 2020, JDF members published a summary of a wide range of actions they are undertaking at different career stages, collectively or individually, to help increase diversity in the judiciary. The JDF will publish a one-year update to the action plan this Autumn.

Statutory responsibility for encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession sits with the approved regulators, overseen by the oversight regulator, the Legal Services Board. The Government is committed to supporting a diverse legal profession and working closely with the professional bodies, regulators and key stakeholders to encourage greater diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Domestic Abuse

Ellie Reeves:

[58993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, to how many and what proportion of magistrates courts the domestic abuse best practice framework applies; and how many courts have dedicated sitting days for domestic abuse, broken down by region.

James Cartlidge:

The domestic abuse best practice framework applies to all magistrates' courts. The domestic abuse work in some HMCTS regions is listed together where possible into courts to make sure that the specialist provision envisaged by the framework is in place.

The information on how many courts have dedicated sitting days is not held centrally as each court has different processes for recording the use of court time.

■ Ministry of Justice: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[56774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

James Cartlidge:

The Department has not allocated any funding in 2020-21 to local authorities through a process of competitive bidding.

■ NHS: Negligence

Stuart Anderson:

[57337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment on the adequacy of the three-year time limit for medical negligence cases.

James Cartlidge:

The Government believes the current 3 year time limit for bringing a medical negligence claim is fair and proportionate given the flexibility built into the legislation. This provides for the 3 year limitation period for personal injury claims to be waived by judges in appropriate cases using their discretion under section 33 of the Limitation Act 1980. Judges have guidance on what should be taken into consideration when considering applications for an extension.

In addition, the 3 year limitation period can apply in appropriate cases from the 'date of knowledge' of an injury (for example in the case of a delayed diagnosis) which can be later than the date of the alleged negligence.

■ Offenders: Electronic Tagging

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's press release entitled, Tens of thousands more criminals to be tagged to cut crime and protect victims, published on 5 October 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on (a) probation service workloads and (b) recall numbers of planned increases in the use of electronic monitoring.

Kit Malthouse:

The targeted expansion of electronic monitoring will allow us to assess the impact of specific electronic monitoring measures to inform ongoing and future use. Published alongside the legislation for the Acquisitive Crime project that imposes electronic monitoring on burglars, robbers and thieves is the Impact Assessment in which we have estimated the impact on probation and recall:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/999/impacts> This project is being evaluated and findings will be published.

■ Offenders: Insurance

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[56395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact on rehabilitation and reoffending of constraints on the ability of former offenders to obtain insurance cover.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[56397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that constraints on the ability of former offenders to obtain insurance cover are (a) specific and (b) proportionate to the (i) level and (ii) type of potential risk.

Victoria Atkins:

Insurers use their experience to undertake an assessment of risk to set the terms and price at which they will offer insurance cover, based on the likelihood of the individual making a claim and the potential cost of that claim. An 'unspent' conviction can be an indicator of risk that some, but not all, insurers use as a rating factor. The Government does not intend to intervene in these commercial decisions by insurers.

However, the Government is working to improve the rehabilitation of offenders to cut crime. In the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill the government is reforming the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to reduce the time a conviction needs to be disclosed. This action will both reduce the barriers to individuals with previous convictions gaining employment and reduce the numbers that have to declare convictions to insurance companies.

■ Perinatal Mortality: Coroners

Hilary Benn: [\[58738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will ask coroners to prioritise post-mortems and the holding of inquests for babies that have died.

Tom Pursglove:

Whilst mindful of how tragic and disturbing the loss of a child is, coroners are independent judicial office holders and therefore it would be inappropriate for Ministers to advise them on how they should make their judicial decisions.

The Chief Coroner, who provides leadership, guidance and support to coroners, has issued Guidance No. 28 to coroners on decision making and expedited decisions.

■ Prison Officers: Pay

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[58805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Service Pay Review Body 2021 report on England and Wales, published on 19 October 2021, what plans he has to increase pay in the Band 3 Prison Officer scale to ensure that it is competitive with (a) comparator occupations and (b) median earnings in all regions of England and Wales.

Victoria Atkins:

I have noted the findings of the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) report for 2021/22 pay, including those in relation to Band 3 Prison Officer pay.

Our future pay strategy, including proposals for any pay increases across grades, will be set out in future submissions to the PSPRB in accordance with the pay round process.

■ Prison Officers: Retention and Recruitment**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[58802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Service Pay Review Body 2021 report on England and Wales, published on 19 October 2021, what assessment he has made of the impact on prison officer (a) morale, (b) retention, and (c) recruitment of his decision not to respond to Recommendations (i) one and (ii) five.

Victoria Atkins:

As announced in 2020 by the former Chancellor, the Government imposed a temporary pay pause for the majority of the public sector for the 2021/22 pay round. This has assisted Government in protecting public sector jobs and investment in public services as Covid-19 continues to have an impact. The Prison Service Pay Review Body's (PSPRB) remit for the 2021/22 pay round was restricted in line with the pay pause.

The Government response to the PSPRB was announced on 19 October, stating that recommendations made by the review body for implementation in this financial year have been accepted in full. For clarity, these are recommendations 2, 3 and 4.

Recommendations 1 and 5 concern matters which were considered to be outside of the PSPRB's remit for the 2021/22 pay round, and therefore there is no obligation on Government to formally respond.

I value the independence and contribution of the PSPRB and will consider the totality of their expert advice as we move into the next pay round.

■ Prison Service: Pay**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[58803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to recommendation one of the Prison Service Pay Review Body 2021 report on England and Wales, published on 19 October 2021, if he will provide the Prison Service Pay Review Body with a comprehensive pay strategy, including short-, medium- and long-term objectives, for the 2022-23 pay round, to tackle the structural issues in the pay system.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government will be writing shortly to the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) to commence the 2022-23 pay round. As part of the Government's evidence to the PSPRB, we will set out pay proposals for the coming year alongside our pay and reward strategy.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[58806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the statement in the Prison Service Pay Review Body 2021 report on England and Wales, published on 19 October 2021, that we consider this restriction to be incompatible with the role of an independent Pay Review Body and a compensatory mechanism, which is to make evidence-based recommendations, and as such prevents us from performing that role, what assessment he has made of the impact on the (a) independence and (b) functioning of the Prison Service Pay Review Body of the restrictions placed on that Body.

Victoria Atkins:

The Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) is appointed under the Prison Service (Pay Review Body) Regulations 2001. Under the regulations it is within the power of the Secretary of State to seek recommendations from the PSPRB only on specific matters.

As announced in 2020 by the former Chancellor, the Government imposed a temporary pay pause for the majority of the public sector for the 2021/22 pay round. This has assisted Government in protecting public sector jobs and investment in public services as Covid-19 continues to have an impact. The PSPRB's remit was restricted accordingly for that year.

The Government values the independent advice of the PSPRB. It does not consider this restriction of the PSPRB's remit to be incompatible with the role of an independent Pay Review Body and nor with the role it plays as a compensatory mechanism in light of the restrictions on the ability of prison officers to take strike action.

■ Prisoners' Release: Homelessness

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the recommendations in the final report of The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, published on 23 September 2021, what progress his Department has made on reducing the proportion of prison releases that take place on a Friday.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the recommendations in the final report of The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, published on 23 September 2021, if he will make an assessment of the progress that has been made on ensuring that prison releases on a Friday take place early in the day.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Final Report of The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, published on 23 September 2021, what discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues in (a) HM Treasury and (b) the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the (i) continuation and (ii) expansion of Housing First.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Final Report of The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, published on 23 September 2021, what discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues in (a) HM Treasury and (b) the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on funding for programmes that increase the supply of accommodation suitable for prison leavers at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[56408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Final Report of The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, published on 23 September 2021, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings and recommendations of that report.

Kit Malthouse:

We recognise that offenders face significant barriers to securing suitable accommodation, often linked to their lack of access to necessary funds, availability of local authority housing supply and affordability/access to private rented sector. However, overcoming these barriers is something that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) cannot do in isolation and we work together with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Welsh Government and Other Government Departments, to address this issue.

We welcome the publication of the Kerslake report and will carefully consider the commission's findings, in collaboration with Other Government Departments and the Welsh Government. We are pleased the report reflects the action the Government took during the pandemic to protect health and reoffending by providing temporary accommodation through both HMPPS' Covid Emergency Scheme and DLUHC's Everyone In. This led to the levels of rough sleeping reducing by 37% in the last year and rates of prison leavers released to homelessness reduced by 28% from 2019/20 to 2020/21.

We are committed to focusing efforts on making sure that individuals turn their backs on crime when leaving prison and know having stable accommodation helps rehabilitation and reduces the likelihood of rough sleeping. We understand the concern about the challenges some prisoners can face in accessing services and support in the community upon release, especially when being released on a Friday. That is why we continue to explore how to improve services for those being released. To support this, £20m was invested in the Prison Leavers Project which will test new and innovative ways to reduce reoffending, by addressing the challenges people face when they are leaving prison. This includes a specific focus on day of release to better understand how we can deliver improved outcomes for people leaving prison.

DLUHC Housing First pilots are currently in their 4th year of delivery and their latest figures show that over 1,050 of the most entrenched rough sleepers are being supported on the programme. The combined authorities have adopted a collaborative approach towards delivery, including liaising with agencies such as the probation

service. Each client has access to critical wrap-around care, including drugs and alcohol misuse and mental health support. As the pilots continue to progress, they anticipate seeing increasing numbers of vulnerable people with complex needs, including potentially prison leavers, moving into safe and secure homes.

Working together, DLUHC and MoJ have launched two schemes which will help prisons leavers find a settled place to live, through access to MoJ's temporary Community Accommodation Service (CAS3) in five probation regions and a move into private rented sector accommodation through DLUHC's £13m Accommodation for Ex-Offender scheme (AfEO).

■ Prisoners: Pregnancy

Feryal Clark:

[\[56267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent representations he has made to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the (a) health and wellbeing of pregnant women in prison, (b) need to treat all pregnancies in prison as high risk and (c) adequacy of the model of maternity care in prisons.

Victoria Atkins:

Women in prison should have access to the same range and quality of healthcare services compared to that which they would find in the community, including midwifery, obstetric and health visiting services. These services are commissioned by NHS England & NHS Improvement. The role of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is to work in partnership with local healthcare providers to secure access to these services.

HMPPS undertook extensive consultation with the health sector during the recent review of policy on pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units and maternal separation from children up to the age of two in women's prisons. The new policy was published on 20 September.

I am due to meet with the Minister of State for Care and Mental Health (DHSC) in the coming week to discuss our ongoing partnership approach to care for pregnant women in prison.

For information on clinical provisions for pregnant women in prison, please refer to the DHSC, the responsible department.

■ Prisons: Construction

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[56411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to The New Prisons Programme: New Prisons in Wethersfield, Braintree District Public Consultation, published on 27 September 2021, if he will make a statement on the performance of the New Prisons Programme against the (a) Apprenticeships and (b) SME Spend Key Performance Indicators as at 18 October 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

Both apprenticeships and spending with small and medium enterprises (SME) are important key performance indicators in new prison construction. The only new prisons under construction are HMP Five Wells (Northamptonshire) and the new prison in Glen Parva (Leicestershire). Future new build prisons will be subject to similar key performance indicators.

At HMP Five Wells, completion of the build is expected in November 2021. As of September 2021 (the latest available data), 60 apprentices have been used during the build, exceeding the target of 50. As of September 2021, 45% of the project spend has been with SMEs, against a target of 30% by the end of the build programme.

At Glen Parva, completion of the build is expected in early 2023. As of September 2021, 9 apprentices had been appointed with a target of 50 by the end of the build programme. As of September 2021, 7% of the project spend had been with SMEs, against a target of 30% by the end of the build programme.

■ Prisons: Contracts**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[56925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2021 to Question 52449, whether the resource impact assessment identified under-utilised resources or unused capacity in contracted out prisons that were not present in public sector prisons; and what steps he is taking to ensure that contracted out prisons fully utilise the resources available to them to meet policy objectives.

Victoria Atkins:

The providers at HMP Bronzefield and Peterborough were consulted during the development of the Pregnancy, MBUs and Maternal Separation in Women's Prisons Policy Framework. As part of this consultation for the development of the new Policy Framework requirements, the providers were asked to carry out impact assessments. Commercial discussions have not yet been finalised although we expect the policy to be implemented in full while commercial activity continues. HMPPS will continue to provide assurance that these contracts are being delivered in accordance with agreed contractual delivery indicators and that the prisons provide safe, decent and secure services.

■ Public Service: Misconduct**Dan Carden:**[\[57296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 10 December 2020 to Question 126115 on Public Service: Misconduct, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Law Commission's report into Misconduct in Public Office, published on 4 December 2020.

James Cartlidge:

We are carefully considering the Law Commission's report on Misconduct in Public Office, published in December last year. It is right that we look at this issue in a considered way.

The Government's response, together with confirmation of any next steps, will be issued within the timeframes outlined in the Joint Protocol between the Law Commission and the Government.

■ Sexual Offences: Sentencing**Ellie Reeves:****[58995]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been sentenced for street flashing as part of the statistics for exposure and voyeurism for each year since 2010.

James Cartlidge:

Information on exposure offences held by the Ministry of Justice does not identify whether an offence involved 'street flashing', specifically.

The Ministry of Justice has published information on sentences for exposure offences, up to December 2020, available in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data tool', available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987731/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2020.xlsx

Use the 'Offence code' filter in the above data tool to select the following offence:

- 088/09 – Exposure (Contrary to section 66 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003)

Figures for the number of individuals sentenced will display in Row 34.

■ Sexual Offences: Trials**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[56567]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will take steps to help ensure that jury members in trials involving rape and sexual assault (a) are aware of issues around sexual consent and (b) do not hold views on what constitutes consensual sexual contact which differ from legislation.

Victoria Atkins:

Jurors are directed on the law by the trial judge who reminds them of their role and, importantly, of the relevant points of law.

Judges sitting on serious sex offence cases are required to have specialist training and are provided with guidance in the Crown Court Compendium (a publicly available document). This includes guidance on how to advise juries in serious sexual offence cases.

In addition, as part of the End-to-End Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions, published in June 2021, the Government announced that the Law Commission will be

examining the law, guidance and practice relating to the use of evidence in prosecutions of serious sexual offences and consider the need for reform. The project will consider issues including the way rape myths around consent are tackled as part of the court process.

■ Youth Custody: Staff

Anna McMorris:

[\[56180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to (a) recruit and (b) retain prison officers and support staff in youth custody settings.

Victoria Atkins:

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) has bespoke recruitment material that aligns with our vision of delivering outstanding children's services in secure settings and further professionalising the workforce. Over 150 new entrant youth justice workers (YJW) in a young adult setting have commenced employment in the YCS so far this year, with a further 70 to start prior to April 2022.

Since introducing the youth justice specialist role, we have provided funding for every prison officer in the youth secure estate to take up a qualification in youth justice. As of August, there were 249 youth justice specialist officers already in post, having completed the qualification. A further 260 staff are signed up or undertaking the learning, with the next cohort due to start in October 2022, with up to 110 more frontline staff participating. We have continuously reviewed this development offer and have recently introduced a new apprenticeship for our newly recruited YJW officers.

We have reviewed staff turnover in public sites in the youth secure estate, focussing on frontline positions from entry grade YJWs to custodial managers, with an emphasis on resignations. Improvements to inductions and support for new entrants is now in place to help ensure a supported, resilient, and effective workforce.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Affordable Housing

Kate Osamor:

[\[903791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to increasing the supply of affordable homes and are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing. This is the largest investment in affordable housing since 2010.

This includes our new Affordable Homes Programme which will provide up to 180,000 affordable homes, should economic conditions allow.

■ Building Safety Fund

Luke Pollard: [\[56154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of expediency of funds disbursed under the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We have already allocated £734 million of funding from the original £1 billion first announced for Building Safety Fund, but it is important to remember that we are reliant on building owners providing the necessary basic information for us to assess their registrations to the fund and we continue to encourage these building owners who are yet to provide the information to do so. As more building owners are completing their applications and giving us the information we need, so too is the pace of allocation of funding increasing.

Luke Pollard: [\[56598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support he is giving to leaseholders who own properties in buildings which are under the 18m threshold for financial support from the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders and we are introducing new measures that will legally require building owners to prove they have tried all routes to cover costs. The fire risk is lower in buildings under 18 metres and costly remediation work is usually not needed. Where fire risks are identified, they should always be managed proportionately. The Secretary of State is looking closely at this issue to make sure everything is being done to support leaseholders. Further detail on the support offer for leaseholders in residential buildings of 11-18 metres will be released when all options have been fully considered.

Apsana Begum: [\[57409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether buildings which have received a B1 EWS1 assessment, and therefore do not require remediation, are eligible for the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Where a building has been deemed eligible for the Building Safety Fund but the building has since achieved a B1 rating through an EWS1 assessment then it is currently at the applicant's discretion if they wish to continue with their application for funding.

■ **Building Safety Fund: Bethnal Green and Bow**

Rushanara Ali:

[\[57040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has received an application from Clarion Housing Group to the Building Safety Fund for fire safety measures at Clare House.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has not received an application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of Clare House.

■ **Building Safety Fund: Harrow**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[56760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he expects the Pearmain House, in Harrow, application to the Building Safety Fund will be determined; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department received an application for funding from the Building Safety Fund for Pearmain House in Harrow on 30 June 2021. It has been through technical diligence and been found eligible on the basis of external wall materials and this has been communicated to the applicant. The Department is committed to the safety of residents and will continue to work as quickly as possible to assess applications.

■ **Building Safety Fund: Leasehold**

Luke Pollard:

[\[56600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will provide any financial support to leaseholders who own properties in buildings which are under the 18 metre threshold with unsafe cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN 56598 on 25 October 2021.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[57180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the number of leaseholders in buildings under 18 metres high having to pay for remediation works, despite the Government issuing a recommendation that EWS1 forms should not be required for those buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not hold this information. An independent expert statement in July this year was clear that there is no systemic risk of fire in residential buildings under 18 metres and that EWS1s should not be required by lenders on buildings under 18 metres. The Government strongly supports this position and made this clear in its written statement of 21 July. Existing EWS1 assessments of buildings under 18 metres should be reviewed to ensure that proportionate risk management and

mitigation has been considered before committing to remediation, and the Building Owner should share that information with the leaseholders.

■ Building Safety Regulator

Apsana Begum: [\[57404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to make additional resources available to the Health and Safety Executive for the proposed establishment of the Building Safety Regulator.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is funding and will continue to fund the Health and Safety Executive to establish and run the Building Safety Regulator. Budgets will be determined following the Spending Review. We intend to use the Building Safety Bill to give the Building Safety Regulator powers to recoup a significant proportion of costs from regulated parties.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Apsana Begum: [\[57407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to update the Consolidated Advice Note to reflect the announcement of 21 July 2021 that buildings under 18 metres will no longer require an EWS1 form.

Christopher Pincher:

As stated in the 21 July Written Ministerial Statement, the Department will shortly retire the Consolidated Advice Note.

The Consolidated Advice Note will be superseded by new statutory fire safety guidance and the British Standards Institution (BSI) will publish guidelines on how to undertake fire risk assessments of external walls.

■ Buildings: Insurance

Apsana Begum: [\[57408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of insurance companies refusing to insure buildings which have been not been deemed in need of remediation through an EWS1 survey.

Christopher Pincher:

We are aware of a very small number of buildings for which insurers have requested that additional remediation plans are put in place in order for them to provide building insurance.

The Department has raised this issue with insurers as part of our ongoing work with the insurance industry to restore confidence in building safety. Ministers continue to press insurance companies and industry bodies to take a more proportionate approach to pricing insurance.

■ Camping Sites

Simon Jupp:

[\[56357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to extend the 56 day rule for temporary campsites into 2022.

Christopher Pincher:

Nationally set permitted development rights allow for temporary use of land. To support businesses during the COVID-19 restrictions we introduced a new right which increased the length of time during which land can be temporarily used for other purposes, and for moveable structures to be set up on the land. The time was increased from the existing allowances of 28 days generally, and 14 days for particular uses such as motorsports, to 56 days and 28 days respectively.

The right allowing for additional days is due to end on 31 December 2021. This decision was taken on balance, considering the wide nature of the right to allow for the use of land for any purpose and the impacts that this can have on communities.

■ Carbon Emissions

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[903803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the President of COP26 on his Department's role in helping city regions to achieve the Government's net zero emissions target ahead of COP26.

Michael Gove:

My Department is working closely with the COP Unit, and will continue to ensure there is seamless coordination between local and national governments at both the Summit and beyond. Global leadership must be matched by action on the ground. To that end, the BEIS Local Energy programme has established five unique Local Net Zero Hubs, each covering a region of England.

■ City of York Council: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[59854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment has he made of the financial position of City of York Council; and what steps he plans to take to help ensure that local authorities have sufficient funding to meet local needs.

Kemi Badenoch:

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. On top of this, the Government provided councils in England with over £12 billion to tackle the impacts of the pandemic.

■ Coastal Areas: Government Assistance

Andrew Gwynne: [\[58764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support he is providing to the UK's coastal communities.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We have continued to make significant progress in supporting coastal communities in a number of areas, demonstrated by the Coastal Communities Fund now having supported 359 projects, totalling over £229 million since 2012, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities across the country including in coastal areas.

Further to this, our coastal areas have already benefited from over £600 million through successful bids into Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund. Of the 101 towns receiving a Town Deal, 22 of them are coastal towns.

■ Community Ownership Fund

Tim Farron: [\[56305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to determining eligibility for future rounds of the Community Ownership Fund, if he will include the potential future use of an asset within local communities as a criteria for funding.

Neil O'Brien:

The Community Ownership Fund is a £150 million fund over 4 years to support community groups across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets which are at risk of being lost to the community.

We will conduct a review to learn from the first bidding round and the assessment criteria accordingly. Currently, applicants are required to demonstrate the value of the asset to local people and that the asset can run sustainably for the long-term benefit of the community.

Tim Farron: [\[56929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the criteria for future rounds of the Community Ownership Fund will be changed so that community assets are defined in line with Section 88.1 of the Localism Act.

Neil O'Brien:

The Community Ownership Fund is a £150 million fund over 4 years to support community groups across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets which are at risk of being lost to the community.

We will conduct a review to learn from the first bidding round and amend future rounds and assessment criteria accordingly. Currently, the fund will support a range of asset types and ownership models, providing the applicant demonstrates their community value.

Tim Farron:

[\[56930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the eligibility criteria for future rounds of the Community Ownership Fund, if he will consider the equity of granting community groups leases with no break clauses.

Neil O'Brien:

The Community Ownership Fund is a £150 million fund over 4 years to support community groups across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets which are at risk of being lost to the community

Round 1 of the fund closed in August 2021 and we will shortly be announcing the first projects to receive funding. We will conduct a review to learn from the first bidding round and amend future rounds accordingly, to make sure that the Fund has the reach and impact intended to support communities.

■ **Community Ownership Fund: Scotland**

John Lamont:

[\[57236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to engage with local communities in Scotland on the Community Ownership Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

The Community Ownership Fund is a £150 million fund over 4 years to support community groups across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets which are at risk of being lost to the community.

In the lead up to launching the fund we engaged widely with stakeholders across the United Kingdom. This included webinars and joint promotion of the fund through community infrastructure, membership and networking organisations, who support local voluntary and community sector groups. The same approach to wide stakeholder engagement will be taken in future rounds of the fund.

■ **Community Renewal Fund: East Sussex**

Sally-Ann Hart:

[\[56151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding will be allocated from the Community Renewal Fund to projects submitted by East Sussex County Council on 18 June 2021; and on what that funding will be disbursed.

Neil O'Brien:

There has been significant interest in the UK Community Renewal Fund across the four investment priorities and bids are being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes will be announced shortly and bidders informed. We will provide further guidance on UK Community Renewal Fund as soon as possible, to enable bidders to plan for delivery once decisions have been announced.

■ Correspondence: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[56452\]](#)

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

Eddie Hughes:

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

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

■ Councillors: City of London**Nickie Aiken:** [\[56224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of repealing Section 618 of the Housing Act 1985 which imposes an additional restriction on a City of London resident councillor when no equivalent restriction applies to a resident councillor of other local authorities.

Christopher Pincher:

The City of London has brought this matter to the Department's attention. The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL)'s review of Local Government Ethical Standards made a number of recommendations that relate to disclosable pecuniary interests. Ministers are considering the CSPL's report and recommendations and will issue the government response in due course.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Freedom of Information**Stephen Timms:** [\[59707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to answer a request for information, reference 11588408, submitted on 11 June 2021 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by constituent of East Ham, Ms Annette Best.

Eddie Hughes:

This FOI was responded to on 5 July 2021 and the internal review was sent out on 20 October 2021.

■ Derelict Land

Henry Smith:

[\[903792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help build new homes on brownfield sites.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is taking a “brownfield first” approach as part of our regeneration efforts and our commitment to preserving the Green Belt and our treasured green spaces and countryside.

Last week we allocated over £57 million to 53 councils through the Brownfield Land Release Fund, which will unlock over 5,600 new homes.

This investment builds on the £400 million Brownfield Housing Fund we announced last year to help deliver 26,000 homes in the North and Midlands.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith:

[\[56647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 48273, on Elections: Proof of Identity, whether his Department has appointed a voter ID implementation lead, or equivalent role, in the last three months.

Cat Smith:

[\[57114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 48273 on Elections: Proof of Identity, if he will publish the names of the projects within the Electoral Integrity Programme that are supporting the implementation of the changes created by the Elections Bill.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Electoral Integrity Programme is running concurrent projects to support the delivery of primary legislation, secondary legislation, digital delivery and business change. Within the programme are roles responsible for the implementation of the changes created by the Elections Bill. We continue to work with local authorities, the Electoral Commission, charities and civil society organisations to make sure that reforms are delivered in a way that is inclusive for all voters.

■ Empty Property: Retail Trade

Rachael Maskell:

[\[53278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of vacant buildings on the high street (a) nationally and (b) in York.

Neil O'Brien:

The information to answer this question is not held centrally.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:** [\[59997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the timeframe for all energy performance certificate data becoming fully available for Northern Irish (a) homes and (b) businesses.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has not made an estimate of the timeframe for all energy performance certificate data becoming fully available for Northern Irish (a) homes and (b) businesses. Energy Performance Certificates are a devolved matter in Northern Ireland.

■ Fairer Share Campaign**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[56424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has with campaigners on behalf of the Fairer Share Campaign group.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government does not have any plans to introduce a new proportional property tax, but keeps all taxes under review.

■ Health: Disadvantaged**Kate Hollern:** [\[58893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on tackling health inequalities in highly deprived regions of the UK.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Secretary of State meets regularly with his colleagues across government to discuss delivery of levelling up, including the Health Secretary.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation**Kelly Tolhurst:** [\[56212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of banks refusing mortgages on properties affected by cladding related issues until remedial works are completed.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is aware of anecdotal reports of lenders requesting remediation to be completed prior to lending. The Department does not support this approach and is of the firm view that a clear financing plan for remediation, including Government grant funding, removes the financial risk to lenders and should enable mortgage lending to progress.

Luke Pollard:

[56601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if local authorities will provide housing assistance to leaseholders at risk of (a) bankruptcy or (b) homelessness as a result of capital costs of removing and replacing unsafe non-ACM cladding systems not met by the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government has committed £5.1 billion of grant funding through the Building Safety Fund for the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding on residential buildings over 18 metres. The Secretary of State is looking closely at this issue to make sure everything is being done to support leaseholders. Further detail on the support for leaseholders with unsafe cladding in residential buildings of 11 - 18 metres will be released when all options have been fully considered. We continue to examine what more can be done to protect and support leaseholders.

Government funding does not absolve building owners of their responsibility to ensure that buildings are safe. All routes to meet costs, for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work should be explored. The Building Safety Bill also contains measures to protect leaseholders by providing a legal requirement for building owners to prove they have tried all routes to cover the cost of essential safety works, along with evidence that this has been done. If this does not happen, leaseholders will be able to challenge these costs in the courts.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. Local authorities must work with people at risk of losing their homes to develop personalised housing plans, tailored to focus on the needs and circumstances of the household.

We have provided local authorities with £310 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant this year to support those at risk of homelessness. Local authorities may use homelessness funding flexibly in line with local need.

■ High Rise Flats: Safety

Gareth Thomas:

[56759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he expects the Harrow 13 (Trident Point) application to the Building Safety Fund will be determined; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The eligibility of the registration to the Building Safety Fund for the Trident Point building in Harrow is currently being assessed. The Department is committed to the safety of residents and will continue to work as quickly as possible to assess registrations and applications to the Fund.

Rushanara Ali:

[\[57041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in the context of Clarion Housing Group's decision to decant Clare House, if he will urgently commission independent research into the progress of steps taken by social landlords to (a) undertake works to make safe Large Panel System Bison-design tower blocks and (b) move tenants and leaseholders out of those blocks since 2017.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is actively raising awareness and facilitating the dissemination of best practice for large panel system buildings with those responsible for their maintenance. In addition, the government has established a new Building Safety Regulator, empowered under the Building Safety Bill. This regulator will have additional powers as well as duties to help ensure that all blocks of flats – including large panel system building – above 18m in height are safe.

■ Holocaust Commission

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41612 on the Holocaust Commission, when the Government plans to announce funding for implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Holocaust Commission other than the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and from which budgets those funds will be allocated.

Kemi Badenoch:

Good progress is being made with implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Holocaust Commission. Announcements will be made at the appropriate time.

■ Housing First: Finance

Kim Johnson:

[\[56645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on using the forthcoming spending review to secure funding to expand Housing First provision to other areas in England.

Eddie Hughes:

This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping as part of its latest Manifesto Commitment, utilising schemes like Housing First. Announcements regarding the Spending Review are imminent, which will set out how Government will continue to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

■ Housing First: West Midlands

Kim Johnson:

[\[56642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what funding will be made available to the Housing First pilots in (a) Liverpool City Region, (b) Greater

Manchester, (c) West Midlands Combined Authority to ensure that their clients will continue to be supported beyond their current funding deadlines from March 2023 onwards.

Eddie Hughes:

This Government committed to ending rough sleeping as part of its latest manifesto, utilising schemes like Housing First. A research consortium led by ICF was commissioned at the start of the scheme to evaluate the pilots. Reports on individual pilots and the scheme as a whole will be produced in due course and these will inform next steps. Announcements regarding the Spending Review are imminent, which will set out how Government will continue to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

■ **Housing: Access**

Apsana Begum:

[\[57414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he has taken to end the use of segregated entrances for residents with different tenures in developments.

Christopher Pincher:

We have provided guidance to local planning authorities which asks them to take this issue into account when preparing their local plans and taking decisions on planning applications. The National Design Guide advises that housing should be designed to be tenure neutral and socially inclusive, avoiding features that could create actual or perceived barriers, or contribute to segregation, and that there should be no differentiation in the positions of entrances. The National Model Design Code gives advice to local authorities on how to prepare their own design codes which set standards for the design of new development. This clarifies that design codes can help by requiring that the same shared entrances and facilities are available for all tenants within a building.

■ **Housing: Carbon Emissions and Renewable Energy**

Helen Hayes:

[\[59886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that new homes are (a) carbon neutral and (b) fuelled by renewable energy sources.

Christopher Pincher:

From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will make sure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions compared to those built to current standards. In the short term, this represents a considerable improvement in the energy efficiency standards for new homes. Homes built under the Future Homes Standard will be future proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency.

Housing: Derelict Land**Mr Jonathan Lord:**[\[57018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to (a) encourage housebuilding on brownfield sites and (b) protect the green belt.

Christopher Pincher:

Our National Planning Policy Framework strongly encourages housebuilding by prioritising the regeneration of brownfield land wherever practicable. To support this, Government has significantly invested in unlocking brownfield sites: for instance, the £4.35 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund; the £4.95 billion Home Building Fund; the £400 million Brownfield Housing Fund; and the £75 million Brownfield Land Release Fund.

We have a manifesto commitment to protect and enhance the Green Belt. The Framework states that a local authority can propose to alter a Green Belt boundary only in exceptional circumstances and only if it can show that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs. A local authority should therefore make as much use as possible of suitable brownfield land; optimise density of development; and discuss with neighbouring authorities whether they could take some of the development required. The Framework also makes clear that most types of new building are inappropriate in Green Belt, and should be refused planning permission unless justified by very special circumstances.

Housing: Insulation**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[56557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance his Department has for leaseholders where a B2 rating of a building given in an EWS1 survey was made on the basis of incorrect information, including an error in the identification of the type of cladding on a building's exterior.

Christopher Pincher:

Building owners are responsible for commissioning an EWS1 assessment. The Building Owner should address any concerns about the process and outcome of an assessment with the professionals who conducted the assessments, and their professional bodies, as necessary. Assessments should not recommend costly remediation work unless there is evidence of genuine fire safety risks that can not be addressed by risk management or mitigation.

Luke Pollard:[\[56599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support he is giving to leaseholders who are unable to sell their properties without a valid EWS1 form, despite that form not being legally required for the sale of the property.

Christopher Pincher:

An independent expert statement in July this year was clear that there is no systemic risk of fire in residential buildings under 18 metres and that EWS1s should not be required by lenders on buildings under 18 metres. The Government strongly supports this position and made this clear in its written statement of 21 July.

In the small minority of cases under 18 metres where concerns are identified via an up to date statutory fire risk assessment, and risk management and mitigation is not an option, leaseholders will be able to access a financing scheme, where costs will not exceed £50 a month. This commitment offers assurance to lenders concerned about financial risk.

Government remains committed to working with lenders to support a more proportionate approach to mortgage lending on blocks of flats.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[56623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the rules on buildings above 18 metres tall and with potentially combustible cladding apply to those buildings originally under 18 metres tall, which are subsequently extended vertically to above 18 metres.

Christopher Pincher:

Details of the scope of the ban on combustible materials are provided in the circular letter which accompanied the amendments of the Building Regulations and associated amended guidance. The circular letter is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/924452/29112018_Circular_Letter.pdf.

In summary existing blocks of flats originally under 18m tall which are subsequently extended vertically to above 18m would be undergoing a material change of use defined in regulation 5(k). In these cases, Regulations 5(k) and 6(3) provide that the construction of the external walls, and specified attachments, must be investigated and, where necessary, work must be carried out to ensure they meet the requirements of the ban.

We have published the following circular letter dealing specifically with upward extensions and the application of the Building Regulations requirements in August 2020.

The circular letter is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/924449/Building_regs_circular_032020.pdf.

■ Housing: Standards**Dr Alan Whitehead:****[56721]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Government's response to the Future Homes Standard consultation, published in

January 2021, whether he plans to bring forward the legislative proposals necessary for the Future Homes Standard in 2024 as set out in that response.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[56722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Government's response to the Future Homes Standard consultation, published in January 2021, whether his Department plans to fully implement the Future Homes Standard in 2025 as set out in that response.

Christopher Pincher:

From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes are future-proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency to produce at least 75 per cent lower CO2 emissions compared to those built to current standards, which represents a considerable improvement in energy efficiency standards of new homes.

As set out in the Government response to the Future Homes Standard consultation, our work on a full technical specification for the Future Homes Standard has been accelerated and we will consult on this in 2023. We also intend to introduce the necessary legislation in 2024, ahead of implementation in 2025.

It is also worthy of note that later this year we will introduce an interim uplift in Part L standards that provides a stepping stone to the Future Homes Standard and will require new homes to produce 31% less CO2 emissions compared to current standards.

This timeline delivers on our net zero commitments, while ensuring that new homes are delivered in sufficient numbers in the places that we need them; providing the good quality, warm homes that consumers expect; and continuing to keep energy bills low.

■ Housing: Sustainable Development

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[56791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that the building of new homes is done to sustainable specifications.

Christopher Pincher:

From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will make sure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions compared to those built to current standards. In the short term, this represents a considerable improvement in the energy efficiency standards for new homes. Homes built under the Future Homes Standard will be future proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. They will be 'zero carbon ready', meaning that in the longer term, no further retrofit work for energy efficiency will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon homes as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

We must make sure that all parts of industry are ready to meet the Future Homes Standard from 2025, which will be challenging to deliver in practice and at scale, by

supporting industry to take a first step towards the new standard. Later this year we will introduce an interim uplift in Part L standards that provides a stepping stone to the Future Homes Standard and will require new homes to produce 31% less CO2 emissions compared to current standards. This will deliver high-quality homes that are in line with our broader housing commitments and encourage homes that are future proofed for the longer-term.

■ **Housing: Water Supply**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[57365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will issue guidance on how local authorities should balance achieving the Government's housing targets set by its standard methodology with the protection of chalk streams in areas of water stress.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government does not set local housing targets - the standard method for calculating local housing need is the starting point in the process of planning for the right number of homes, but it is not the housing requirement. Housing requirements are decided by local authorities when they write their local plan, taking account of constraints they face locally, including specific environmental constraints. Each plan is subject to a public examination in front of an independent Inspector, who plays an important role in examining plans impartially to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is committed to working jointly with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to deliver the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions for achieving clean and plentiful water. In July, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs presented a written statement on reducing demand for water and we will continue to work closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on matters pertaining to local authority guidance and building regulations.

■ **Imperial War Museum**

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to visit the Holocaust Galleries at the Imperial War Museum.

Kemi Badenoch:

Members of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation have accepted an invitation from the Imperial War Museum to visit the new galleries.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[56910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timetable is for announcing the next round of funds from the Levelling Up Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. Further detail on how the Fund will operate from 2022-23 onwards will be set out later this year.

Daniel Kawczynski:[\[56911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has conducted an economic valuation of the benefit that funding from the Levelling Up Fund will provide for town centres.

Neil O'Brien:

Monitoring and evaluation of the Levelling Up Fund will involve a combination of national-level evaluation activity with project-level monitoring and evaluation. As part of business case development, local authorities are required to set out a proportionate plan for project-level monitoring and evaluation. In addition, national-level evaluation activity will include producing and publishing an M&E framework and guidance to support the development of project-level evaluations.

Local Government Finance**Steve Reed:**[\[59804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on what date his Department intends to publish the draft local government finance settlement for 2022-23.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department intends to publish the next provisional Local Government Finance Settlement this year.

Local Government: Meetings**Tim Farron:**[\[56382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to enable local authorities to conduct remote meetings.

Kemi Badenoch:

We launched a call for evidence on 25 March to gather views and inform a longer-term decision about whether to make express provision for councils to meet remotely on a permanent basis. The call for evidence closed on 17 June. The Department is reviewing the responses to the consultation and the Government will respond in due course. Any permanent change would require legislation, and would depend upon Parliamentary time being available.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[56899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 11 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding West Lancashire Borough Council, reference ZA56668.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response to the letter was sent on 25 October 2021

■ Multiple Occupation

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[56508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the powers given to local authorities to regulate houses of multiple occupancy within the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

Under a national permitted development right, a private house is able to change use to a House in Multiple Occupation for up to six people sharing facilities without the need for a planning application. Change of use to a larger House in Multiple Occupation requires an application for planning permission.

Where there is sufficient evidence of the need to protect local amenities or the well-being of the area, a local planning authority may withdraw a permitted development right using an Article 4 direction. This would mean any change of use to a House in Multiple Occupation would require an application for planning permission.

We believe this strikes the right balance between allowing individuals to decide how best to use their property, with appropriate safeguards to address localised concerns.

■ National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation made of the costs of creating the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre on each of the three sites shortlisted in January 2016 by CBRE.

Kemi Badenoch:

The sites shortlisted by CBRE were not assessed by the Foundation as suitable and no detailed cost estimates were made.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Permanent Secretary has asked for an instruction relating to the proposed National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Kemi Badenoch:

No Ministerial direction has been requested.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much of the funding available for the National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been spent on education in each of the last six years.

Kemi Badenoch:

Funding for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is allocated solely for the development of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

■ National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer to Question 41609 of 13 September 2021 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, by what date the charity undertook to secure pledges of at least £25 million of private funding for that Centre.

Kemi Badenoch:

Funding arrangements will be in place before main construction begins.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41611 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, which operating models are under consideration for the management of the proposed Centre.

Kemi Badenoch:

A range of operating models are under consideration.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41608 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, if he will revisit the cost estimate for that Centre made in December 2018 to take account of recent changes in costs.

Kemi Badenoch:

The cost estimate is reviewed regularly as part of normal programme management arrangements.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to question 41608 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, what the estimated cost of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is for (a) pre-construction planning and design, (b) site preparation, (c) construction including for (i) materials and (ii) labour, (d) fitting out, (e) taxes, (f) contingencies and (g) any other significant categories of cost.

Kemi Badenoch:

This information is commercially sensitive and not currently suitable for publication

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41607 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, if he will provide a breakdown of the estimated annual running costs of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and if he will place the detailed figures in the Library.

Kemi Badenoch:

Estimated running costs are kept under review. More detailed figures will be provided at the appropriate time.

■ **National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Costs**

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[56729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 41608 on National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, what contracts for the (a) construction, (b) operation, (c) maintenance and (d) security of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre have been signed to date; and what proportion of the estimated total cost has been committed.

Kemi Badenoch:

A contract is in place under (a) construction for enabling works, including redirecting cables, new incoming services, relocating the Spicer Memorial, tree root investigation and pruning. No contracts have been let under (b) operation, (c) maintenance and (d) security.

■ **Non-Domestic Rates**

Henry Smith:

[\[56967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to assist local authorities to ensure that the allocation of the forthcoming Business Rates relief fund is consistent across England.

Kemi Badenoch:

The £1.5 billion fund will be allocated to local authorities based on the stock of properties in the area whose sectors have been affected by COVID-19 and are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. Local authorities will use their knowledge of local businesses and the local economy to make awards. My Department will publish guidance in due course to help local authorities set up their local schemes, once the legislation relating to COVID-19 Material Change of Circumstances provisions has passed.

■ Owner Occupation

Stuart Anderson: [57344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to promote house ownership.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to helping make the dream of home ownership a reality and offer several schemes to support this. For example, our recently launched First Homes programme offers discounts of at least 30% to first time buyers, and our Help to Buy scheme and Shared Ownership also offer routes into home ownership.

More detail on all of these schemes and others are available on the Government's home ownership website: www.ownyourhome.gov.uk.

■ Park Homes: Fees and Charges

Justin Madders: [57081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the Government's timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals changing the Pitch Review Inflationary Index from Retail Price Index to Consumer Price Index.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to improving protections for park home residents and this includes changing the pitch fee review inflationary index from the Retail Prices Index (RPI) to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

■ Park Homes: Property Transfer

Justin Madders: [57080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress the Government has made on its research into the impact of the 10 per cent commission fee on the sale of mobile park homes.

Eddie Hughes:

Following an initial scoping study, University of Liverpool were appointed in March this year to undertake the research.

The research team has completed focus group meetings and surveys with residents and site owners and is currently assessing and modelling the data obtained. The final report is expected at the end of the year.

■ Permitted Development Rights

Ruth Cadbury: [56510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has carried out an impact assessment of the amount of revenue that would be gained by requiring change of use conversions through permitted development rights to be subjected to Section 106 agreements.

Christopher Pincher:

We have consulted on introducing a new infrastructure levy to replace section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy as part of the 'Planning for the Future' consultation. The Government's consultation response will be published.

■ Permitted Development Rights: Equality**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[56501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has carried out an equalities impact assessment on the introduction of the new permitted development rights, Class MA, announced on 1 August 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

In developing the proposals we undertook assessments of any potential impacts on people who share a protected characteristic as required under the public sector equality duty.

■ Planning Permission: Carbon Emissions**Catherine West:**[\[903794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the planning system enables local authorities to contribute to the Government's net zero emissions target.

Eddie Hughes:

As Members will be aware, the Secretary of State is currently considering the best way forward on planning reforms and we will announce next steps in due course.

However, the hon lady will be aware that we are already taking action to ensure the homes we build are fit for the future through the Future Homes Standard and the 2021 interim uplift to the energy efficiency standards for new homes. And last week the Government published its Net Zero Strategy, setting out our commitments to enable local areas to deliver net zero.

■ Planning: Disclosure of Information**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[56512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what representations he has received from media organisations on the proposals to remove the requirement for physical notices of planning applications.

Christopher Pincher:

My officials maintain contact with bodies representing media organisations and other stakeholders following on from proposals to reform the planning system

Government is mindful of the potential impact that any changes to the existing publicity requirements for statutory notices might have on transparency and local democracy, as well as the potential effect on the sustainability of the local news

sector as a whole. We also recognise the continued importance of print local newspapers to the communities they serve.

The Secretary of State is taking time to review departmental programmes and engage with key stakeholders. An announcement on our proposed way forward will be made.

■ Private Rented Housing: Estate Agents

Apsana Begum:

[\[57405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of estate agent renewal fees on the cost of privately rented homes.

Eddie Hughes:

The Tenant Fees Act came into force on 1 June 2019 to improve transparency and affordability for renters, by way of banning unfair fees and capping tenancy deposits. Letting agent fees previously charged to tenants, for renewals, 'admin' costs, inventory and credit checks are now banned unless they are specified in an existing tenancy agreement signed before 1 June 2019. These provisions benefit up to 4.4 million private renting households and save them an average of £70 per year.

■ Proof of Identity: Research

Cat Smith:

[\[57115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the total cost of the Cabinet Office IFF research entitled, Photographic ID Research - Headline Findings.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Cabinet Office commissioned IFF Research to conduct quantitative research to understand the levels of ownership of the accepted forms of photographic identification among those eligible to vote in Great Britain and to inform planning for the implementation of voter identification nationwide. Details of Government contracts and the cost of this research are published on gov.uk.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Rachael Maskell:

[\[53287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to ensure that (a) York and (b) other local authority areas with high rates of inequality are included as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government is committed to levelling up across the UK. We will empower local leaders; boost living standards, particularly when they are lower; spread opportunity and improve public services, particularly where they are lacking; and restore local pride

York Central has already been designated an Enterprise Zone and Government is investing over £77 million for the York Central Project, to unlock 2,500 homes on this strategic city centre brownfield site. We will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper later this year, articulating how bold new policy interventions will improve livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic and its effect on the economy and public services.

Kate Hollern:

[\[58894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish the Levelling Up White Paper.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: Levelling up is at the heart of the Government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic and to deliver for citizens in every part of the UK. This is a transformative agenda and the Department's priority is to produce a White Paper which matches our ambition and which will drive change for years to come.

The White Paper will build on existing action being taken across Government, setting out bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunities in all parts of the UK.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[903798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the role of public health and wellbeing in his Department's levelling-up agenda.

Neil O'Brien:

Improving public health and wellbeing is a critical part of levelling up. The government is already taking action to level up health inequalities and improve wellbeing across the UK. This includes £3.7 billion of investment to build 40 hospitals and recruit 50,000 new nurses in England, ensuring people have access to the best public services, wherever they live. We have also committed to increasing the number of GP appointments while preventing 150,000 cases of cardiovascular disease and diagnosing 75 percent of cancer cases early.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Coastal Areas

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[58765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Coastal Powerhouse Manifesto published on 16 September 2021 by Maritime UK and the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We appreciate Maritime UK and the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group's detailed and insightful Coastal Powerhouse manifesto and we recognise the value of the recommendations

made. We welcome the continuous engagement of the sector as we are progressing with our levelling up agenda. In this respect, we share the view expressed on the need to continue the strong partnership that exists between Government and key stakeholder groups.

■ Rented Housing: Airbnb

Janet Daby: [\[57330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of Airbnb on the availability of homes for long-term renting.

Eddie Hughes:

We recognise the benefits that short-term holiday lets such as Airbnb, can bring to local economies, as well as some of the challenges that this can sometimes pose to communities. Whilst we have not made an assessment of the impact of Airbnb on the availability of homes for long-term renting, we keep this under review.

■ Rented Housing: Evictions

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[56790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that tenants are supported in taking action against landlords where illegal evictions occur.

Eddie Hughes:

Local authorities have powers to tackle illegal evictions. Local authorities can investigate offences of illegal eviction under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and prosecute where an offence has been committed.

In cases where the landlord has been convicted of acting illegally, they may be subject to a rent repayment order, a fine and/or imprisonment for up to two years. The landlord may also be subject to a banning order as unlawful eviction and harassment under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 is a banning order offence. This would result in the landlord being entered onto the Database of Rogue Landlord and Property Agents.

■ Retail Trade: Shops

Andrew Gwynne: [\[56240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the rate of recovery of footfall in retail premises in urban areas and the impact of that rate of recovery on urban economies following the covid-19 outbreak.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department engages regularly at both Ministerial and official level with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a range of joint issues

affecting urban areas, including the recovery of footfall in the retail sector and recovery following the covid-19 pandemic.

The Government is providing support to local leadership with a High Streets Task Force, giving them expert advice to support their high streets and town centres to adapt and thrive. Over five years this is providing hands-on support to local areas to develop data-driven innovative strategies and connect local areas to relevant experts. The Task Force has set up a Sector Leaders Group and a Professional Research and Data Group, who are playing a vital role in supporting the recovery of our local economies by providing intelligence and evidence to support the High Street Tasks Force and Government in its response to the pandemic. The Professional Research and Data Group provides regular data analysis, including footfall trends, on the Task Force website (<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/>).

More broadly, our ambition is to ensure that town and city centres continue to flourish now and in the future. On 15 July, we published the Build Back Better High Streets Strategy, where we committed to continue working with the sector on its long-term strategic needs to ensure that businesses are profitable, resilient, innovative and support local economies in socially and environmentally responsible ways.

The Government also set up the Urban Centre Recovery Task Force last year to consider the impact of covid-19 on our cities and offer recommendations on practical measures that government could take to help cities adapt and take advantage of new opportunities. This includes the permanence of any changes, how to support city economies to adapt and how to take advantage of any opportunities, with a focus on regeneration, repurposing, housing and other relevant areas such as planning.

■ Sewers

Charlotte Nichols:

[57427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will provide ring-fenced funding to local authorities for the cleaning of drains.

Kemi Badenoch:

We have empowered local authorities to make decisions on a range of matters that shape what happens in their area. 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.

■ Sheltered Housing

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[57016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential barriers to growth for housing-with-care for older people.

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[57017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a taskforce to help improve access to housing-with-care for older people.

Christopher Pincher:

Offering vulnerable people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently and feel more connected to their communities. This Government is committed to the provision of suitable homes for older people, including extra care housing, which contributes to levelling up across communities. Housing-with-care allows individuals to choose where they want to live, with whom, how they can best be supported, and what happens in their home. Both the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care provide capital funding to incentivise their supply. Our planning rules already mean councils must consider the needs of older people when planning for new homes. In 2019, we published guidance to help councils implement the National Planning Policy Framework policies.

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, where 10 per cent of delivery over the course of the programme will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing, including retirement housing. The Department of Health and Social Care are also continuing to subsidise new supply of specialist housing for older and disabled people through the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CASSH) Fund.

The Government's plan for health and social care, announced on Tuesday 7 September, also recognised the important role of housing, and supported housing in particular, in providing care and support to people in the community.

Both the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care are committed to further improving the diversity of housing options available to older people. We are engaging closely with both the sector and a range of other stakeholders on this issue. This includes considering the merits of different engagement and delivery models including proposals from the sector for a cross-Government taskforce.

We continue to work closely with the older people's housing sector and across Government to look at how we can further support its growth. I look forward to engaging with representatives in the sector further and value their insight.

■ Social Rented Housing

Chris Evans:

[56509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the trend of fewer social homes being available due to their sale or demolition than are being built each year.

Christopher Pincher:

Since 2010, this Government has delivered over 382,300 affordable homes for rent, of which over 149,400 homes for social rent. We are committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade.

This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme (AHP), which will deliver more than double the social rent than the current programme, which are typically 50 to 60% of market prices, with around 32,000 social rent homes due to be delivered. These homes for social rent will be available to deliver across the country, providing secure, affordable housing to families who need it most.

In March 2021, the Government introduced a package of reforms to the use of Right to Buy receipts. These reforms will help local authorities build more homes and make it easier to deliver homes for social rent. This set of reforms, combined with the abolition of the borrowing cap in 2018, gives councils substantially increased flexibilities to build new homes.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[903790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase the supply of (a) affordable and (b) social housing.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to increasing the supply of affordable homes and are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing. This is the largest investment in affordable housing since 2010.

This includes our new Affordable Homes Programme which will provide up to 180,000 affordable homes - should economic conditions allow. Around 32,000 of these will be homes for social rent.

■ Social Rented Housing: Bethnal Green and Bow**Rushanara Ali:**[\[57038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will request a report from Clarion Housing Group on (a) the reasons for its decision to institute a waking watch at a 21 story tower block from September 2020 and (b) the timeline for its decision to urgently decant Clare House from 29 September 2021, including the date on which the original report was received by the Clarion Housing Group senior management team and Board of Directors.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has been in regular contact with Clarion Housing Group and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets regarding the situation at Clare House. Clarion Housing Group are the owners of Clare House and have responsibility for the safety of residents in the building. Clarion has provided the Department and the local authority with information provided by their technical experts on structural and fire safety at Clare House.

■ Social Rented Housing: Carbon Emissions

Chris Evans:

[\[56997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to invest in carbon neutral, climate resilient social homes.

Christopher Pincher:

Retrofitting insulation and low carbon heat in social homes is a crucial step in achieving our commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and will contribute towards our Carbon Budget targets and our legally binding fuel poverty targets.

The Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator has awarded £61 million to 18 local authority-led projects across England and Scotland, covering over 2,100 social homes, to test innovative approaches to retrofitting at scale. Beyond these projects up to £160 million total funding will be allocated for the first wave of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund programme in 2021/22. This funding supports the government's commitment to invest in the energy performance of homes.

In the Heat and Buildings Strategy and Net Zero Strategy, launched 19 October 2021, it was announced that a further £800 million has been committed for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund as part of the 2021 Spending Review process.

From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% fewer CO2 emissions than those built to current standards.

■ Social Services: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[58848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the finding of the Institute for Public Policy Research, published on 3 September 2021, that long term social care expenditure is £5,300 per person lower in the North East than across England as a whole, what steps he is taking to ensure that long term social care expenditure per person is equally distributed among regions.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: We are committed to making sure councils continue to get the support they need to maintain key services and build back better after the pandemic. The Spending Review will be the opportunity to consider local government's future funding needs, including social care expenditure. We are committed to the delivery of world-leading health and social care across the whole of the UK, and our 7 September 2021 announcement of £5.4 billion of investment over three years marked an important step on the journey to reform adult social care.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[56472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on what date successful applicants to the Community Renewal Fund will be notified; and whether he plans for the fund to extend beyond March 2022.

Mr Robert Goodwill: [\[56626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to announce the successful UK Community Renewal Fund projects; and whether he plans to extend the project completion deadline beyond 31 March 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

There has been significant interest in the UK Community Renewal Fund across the four investment priorities and bids are being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes will be announced shortly and bidders informed. We will provide further guidance on UK Community Renewal Fund as soon as possible, to enable bidders to plan for delivery once decisions have been announced.

Steve Reed: [\[59803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, by what deadline his Department will inform applicants for the Community Renewal Fund on whether their application has been successful.

Neil O'Brien:

Applications for the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) closed at midday on 18 June 2021. There has been significant interest in the CRF across the four investment priorities and bids are being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes will be announced in due course and bidders informed.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund: Public Consultation

Steve Reed: [\[59805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what consultation his Department carried out on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2021.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government has been engaging with key stakeholders on the design and priorities of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund since 2016, including holding a series of regional engagement events which helped to identify the opportunities for UK Shared Prosperity Fund policy and learn lessons from EU funding.

Since the publication of the UKSPF Heads of Terms at Spending Review 2020, we have continued to engage widely on UKSPF across a variety of different organisations and sectors.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund: UK Shared Prosperity Fund**Steve Reed:** [\[59802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department plans to take to incorporate learning from projects funded by the Community Renewal Fund into the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

To help local areas prepare over 21/22 for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we are providing an additional £220 million through the UK Community Renewal Fund to support our communities across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches.

As set out in the prospectus, the UK Community Renewal Fund will help inform the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund through funding of one-year pilots. We want to use the UK Community Renewal Fund to test greater integration of types of interventions and greater flexibility between investment themes than under EU structural funds.

UK community Renewal Fund applications were expected to build on local insight and knowledge, demonstrate how projects complement other national and local provision, and align with long-term strategic plans for local growth, target people most in need and support community renewal. Applicants, if successful, will need to develop an evaluation plan with between 1-2% of their award to be dedicated to that evaluation with a minimum threshold of £10,000.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund**Steve Reed:** [\[59801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department expects to provide details on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK. At Spending Review 2020, the Government committed to set out further details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund later this year and to confirm its funding profile at the next Spending Review.

■ Urban Areas: Children**Rachael Maskell:** [\[59851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the economic impact that child-friendly cities can have; and whether he has plans to support further local authorities and communities to achieve UNICEF Child Friendly City status following the five city pilot launched on 20 November 2017.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has changed planning guidance to ensure more high-quality places are created.

The National Design Guide emphasises that well designed places should benefit people and communities, including children. The National Model Design Code, which provides guidance to local councils in producing design codes, emphasises the need to consider the design of play space and accessibility.

Urban Areas: Coronavirus**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[56864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings in the report published on 10 September 2021 by the Local Government Association, entitled A vision for urban growth and recovery, comparing the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on local and rural areas and the long-term fiscal security of urban communities.

Neil O'Brien:

We appreciate the Local Government Association detailed and insightful 'Vision for Urban Growth and Recovery' report and we recognise the value of the recommendations made. We welcome the continuous engagement with the sector as we are progressing our levelling up agenda. In this respect, we share the view expressed on the need to continue the strong partnership that exists between Government and key stakeholder groups.

Britain's cities are at the heart of our national economy, accounting for more than 60% of jobs, productivity and taxes, despite accounting for less than a tenth of land. As we look towards the new normal, cities and towns across the UK will continue to be powerhouses across the UK, driving economic growth and of crucial importance to the Government's levelling up agenda.

The report highlights the significant and more pronounced impact of covid-19 on urban centres than non-urban centres. We recognise that the impacts of covid-19 have been significant on health, the economy and our society, but most keenly felt across our urban centres. The immediate focus of policy making in the last eighteen months has been to support individuals and businesses through the pandemic and to promote the quickest recovery and is therefore why our package of support for businesses through this period totals over £352billion, including through business grants, the coronavirus loan schemes and Job Retention Scheme.

In Government, we are keen to continue working with the Local Government Association and partners from right across the public and private sectors to deliver our levelling up agenda for our urban centres and beyond, and continue to welcome such insightful, relevant and comprehensive engagement.

■ Urban Areas: Finance**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[56242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a £7 billion sustainable urban futures fund to support local leaders to invest in (a) infrastructure improvements, (b) new housing projects and (c) town centres to support the economic recovery from the covid-19 outbreak in urban areas.

Neil O'Brien:

This Government is committed to supporting local leaders to create sustainable urban centres following Covid-19. For example, the National Home Building Fund (NHBF) was announced at the 2020 Spending Review and brings together existing housing land and infrastructure funding streams into a single, flexible, more powerful pot. This will support the government's ambition to deliver 1 million homes over the Parliamentary term and the 300k homes per year. £4.8 billion of the funding brings together existing capital programmes across land and infrastructure and confirms a continued commitment to the £400 million Brownfield Fund. The department is investing over £10 billion in local growth funds, including the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund, to deliver regeneration across the UK. Additionally, the Build Back Better High Streets strategy was published in July which sets out Government's long-term plan to support the evolution and regeneration of all high streets across every part of the UK.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ British Pregnancy Advisory Service****Stephen Farry:**[\[57465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of British Pregnancy Advisory Service provision in meeting the requirement for the funding of a Central Access Service in the direction given on 22 July 2021.

Brandon Lewis:

I am extremely grateful to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service for stepping in at a crucial moment to provide women and girls with a temporary interim service. However, I am disappointed it had to get to that stage.

I will continue to monitor the new services provided by BPAS and I am determined that women and girls receive at least the same level of service as under the previous provider while this interim service is in place. I recognise that this is not a permanent solution, and that more needs to be done. It is for this reason that in July, I issued a Direction to the Department of Health and First and deputy First Minister to commission and make abortion services available by no later than 31 March 2022.

The Government recognises the importance of consulting with experts, counselling and other support services to support women and girls in accessing services and making individual decisions on these matters. I would like to put on record my thanks to Informing Choices NI for providing a central access point from April 2020 to September 2021, until they were forced to withdraw some services as a direct result of inaction from the Department of Health.

The Northern Ireland Office will continue to work closely with the Department of Health in taking forward implementation of this important devolved issue.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[56170\]](#)

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

Conor Burns:

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

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

The Northern Ireland Office receives a significant amount of correspondence across the Department's wide and varied portfolio. The Department has a robust process in place to manage and respond to queries in line with our obligations.

SCOTLAND

■ Sovereignty: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[58523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has received a formal request for a section 30 order for a referendum on Scottish independence from the First Minister of Scotland.

Mr Alister Jack:

The UK Government's focus is on responding to and recovering from the challenges the Covid pandemic has created. We are committed to continuing to work with the Scottish Government and other devolved administrations on this mission. Engaging in constitutional debates would only distract and delay this.

The Prime Minister wrote to the First Minister of Scotland in January 2020 to confirm he cannot agree to any request for a transfer of power that would lead to further independence referendums.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[58524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether the statement made in Scotland in August 2021 by the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office on another referendum on Scottish independence if it became the settled will of the Scottish people is Government policy.

Mr Alister Jack:

The comments referred to reflect the UK Government's position that now is not the time to return to an all-consuming debate on the constitution. As people across the United Kingdom rightly expect, the UK Government's focus is on responding to and recovering from the challenges the Covid pandemic has created.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[59131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Prime Minister and (b) the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the timetable of a potential Referendum on Scottish Independence.

Mr Alister Jack:

I have frequent discussions with the Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues on matters relating to strengthening the Union of the United Kingdom and ensuring our focus is on delivering for Scotland as we work to recover from the pandemic.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[59133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether the statement on holding a future referendum on Scottish independence by the Secretary of State for Scotland in August that there would be one if 60 per cent or more of the Scottish people supported a further vote and if that support was sustained over a reasonably long period is Government policy.

Mr Alister Jack:

The comments referred to reflect the UK Government's position that now is not the time to return to an all-consuming debate on the constitution. As people across the United Kingdom rightly expect, the UK Government's focus is on responding to and recovering from the challenges the Covid pandemic has created.

■ Trade: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[58519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make an estimate of the total value of Scottish goods and services traded with the rest of the UK in 2019; and what proportion that represents of Scotland's total exports to all countries including the rest of the UK.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scottish Government's own figures show that Scotland's sale of goods and services to the rest of the UK for the year 2019 had a value of £52.0 billion. This means that around 60 per cent of the total Scottish exports of over £87 billion are destined for Scotland's largest market, the rest of the UK. In 2019, the value of Scotland's exports to the rest of the UK was approximately three times larger than the £16.4 billion sold to the EU, and also nearly three times greater than sales to international destinations that are non-EU of £18.7 billion.

Kenny MacAskill:[\[58520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what estimate he has made of the total value of goods and services traded with Scotland by the rest of the UK; and what proportion that represents of the rest of the UK's exports to all countries including Scotland.

Mr Alister Jack:

The latest Scottish Quarterly National Accounts estimate that Scottish imports in 2019 from the rest of the UK had a value of over £66 billion, this compares to over £34 billion of imports from the rest of the world.

The Scottish Quarterly National Accounts do not provide estimates on UK international exports. However, the latest UK National accounts estimates total UK international exports for 2019 with a value of £699.3 billion, as published by the ONS. It is important to note that there are methodological differences and the numbers are not comparable for the avoidance of any confusion; the ONS figures for exports do not include sales to Scotland.

TRANSPORT**■ A46: Newark****Robert Jenrick:**[\[57053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he and National Highways plan to announce the preferred route for the A46 Newark northern by-pass.

Trudy Harrison:

Following consultations early this year where stakeholders were presented with the potential options to improve the A46 Newark Bypass, National Highways has been considering the feedback received to help develop the best option. National Highways anticipate a decision on the preferred route to be made later this year or early next year.

■ Aviation: Licensing**Munira Wilson:**[\[57384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) guidance and (b) support his Department has in place for commercial pilots licensed in the UK who may no longer be able to operate EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) registered aircraft.

Robert Courts:

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

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) published guidance for holders of UK pilot's licenses in preparation for EU Exit. Further guidance has been published setting out the validity of UK licenses in Europe.

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

The procedures set out in Commission Delegated Regulation 2020/723 to obtain an EU licence continue to apply to UK license holders wishing to obtain a valid EU license.

The Department for Transport has implemented various support measures for commercial pilots in the UK. In February 2021, we launched the Aviation Skills Retention Platform (ASRP) to support skills retention for highly trained jobs, including pilots, by offering increased visibility of opportunities across the sector and courses to support skills, delivered by the Civil Aviation Authority International (CAAi).

■ Bridges: Suicide**Alberto Costa:**[\[56572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to increase suicide prevention awareness signage at (a) motorway bridges and (b) other bridges across the road network.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government and National Highways takes its responsibility to support vulnerable people on the road network extremely seriously.

National Highways has also worked in partnership with Samaritans to develop specific guidance for placing crisis signs on the Strategic Road Network and Road Investment Strategy includes dedicated funding through to 2025 for its regional teams to place signs when a need is identified.

Local authorities already have powers to provide suicide prevention signs. It is for them to work with relevant charities, public health bodies, and other stakeholder groups to consider whether such signing would be beneficial and in what locations.

■ Bus Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of changes in the demographics of bus users (a) nationally and (b) in York; and what assessment his Department has made of the opportunities and risks such usage presents.

Trudy Harrison:

The table attached shows the average number of local bus trips (trip rates) by age and gender: England, 2019 and 2020 from the National Travel Survey. These statistics are not available for York due to small sample sizes.

The Department's annual bus statistics provides some additional basic demographical information for passenger journeys made by all passengers and by concessionary passengers including elderly, disabled and youth concessionary passengers. However, comparable statistics for the equivalent period have not yet been released.

In 2018/19, there were 9.1 million older and disabled concessionary passes in England, which was a decrease of 3% since 2017/18. This can be partly explained by changes in the population eligible for the state pension. However, the projected increase in the older age population offsets this impact. 90% of these total passes were for older people, and 10% were for disabled people. In 2018, women were 2% more likely to hold an older person's concessionary pass than men.

Since the pandemic, those who hold an older person's bus pass have been generally slower to return to buses, and DfT has urged local authorities to continue to pay concessionary payments at pre-COVID levels. This is to ensure that bus services could continue to operate through the outbreak and into recovery as concessionary reimbursement forms a significant revenue stream for bus operators. This has meant that, over this period, spending for concessionary travel has remained at a similar rate to 2019/20, with the Government supporting council spending of around £1 billion a year so older and disabled people can travel on buses up and down the country for free.

Attachments:

1. Bus User [Bus user demographics.xlsx]

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the change in the demographic of bus users on revenue from (a) ticket sales and (b) bus passes; and what assessment his Department has made of those changes on the income of bus companies.

Trudy Harrison:

The table attached shows the average number of local bus trips (trip rates) by age and gender: England, 2019 and 2020 from the National Travel Survey. These statistics are not available for York due to small sample sizes.

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Attachments:

1. Bus User [Bus user demographics.xlsx]

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of skills shortage in the road haulage industry on the availability of bus drivers; and whether there has been a movement of bus drivers to drive HGVs.

Trudy Harrison:

Through its engagement with the sector, the Department is aware of localised driver shortages in the bus sector. The Department is working closely with industry to continuously monitor the situation, in order to better understand the extent of the problem. There is regular engagement within the Department, across Government and with industry to proactively take measures to alleviate the situation. The Government appreciates the important role that buses play within our communities and strongly encourages bus drivers to remain within the profession.

■ **Bus Services: Disability**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[56141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals for the introduction of audio visual access to buses to improve bus services following the Bus Services Act 2017.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) bus companies have introduced audio visual equipment on their buses and (b) buses out of the total fleet have introduced audio visual equipment in each company.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with bus companies on concerns regarding the fitting audio visual equipment on buses ahead of regulations being agreed.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide funding to bus companies to assist with the costs of fitting audio and visual equipment on buses to assist with access requirements of sensory impaired passengers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government collects annual survey data from a sample of bus operators and based on this data, we estimate that 39% of the local bus fleet in Great Britain provided audio-visual information in 2019/20.

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with bus operators and their representatives on a range of issues, including the impact of new regulations on existing accessible information provision.

As announced in the National Bus Strategy for England, subject to final analysis, we will make Accessible Information Regulations by Summer 2022, ensuring passengers can board any bus with confidence and that they will know when to alight when their destination is reached.

The Government has also pledged to provide £3.5 million of funding to support smaller bus operators to provide accessible information onboard their services, ensuring passengers benefit from it as soon as possible.

■ Bus Services: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department requires local authorities to consult bus service users as part of applications for funding under the Bus Services Improvement Plan.

Trudy Harrison:

It is mandatory that Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) seek and report the views of passengers on the merits and demerits of bus services in their area. The National Bus Strategy sets out clearly how we expect BSIPs to take into account the views of local people.

Rachael Maskell:[\[57159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Bus Back Better strategy, published in March 2021, what steps local authorities are expected to take in consulting bus service users and user groups; and what effect a lack of such consultations by local authorities will have on funding applications.

Trudy Harrison:

It is mandatory that Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) seek and report the views of passengers and third parties, including local transport users' groups, on the merits and demerits of bus services in their area. Further detailed guidance on the funding allocation process will be published in due course.

■ Cars: Fuels

Catherine West:[\[56518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will take steps to give priority access to key workers and disabled people to fuel their cars during fuel supply chain pressures.

Trudy Harrison:

This is a matter for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

■ Castle Railway Line

Robert Jenrick:[\[56404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the number of services on the Castle Line from Lincoln to Nottingham through Newark Castle Station will be restored to the level of those services prior to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Along with other operators East Midlands Railway (EMR) reduced services during the height of the pandemic as demand was reduced and the ability to operate services reliably was affected by driver resource constraints and delayed arrival of rolling stock from another operator.

EMR will be operating an increased timetable from December this year as some services are re-instated, and further additions are part of consideration of plans for May 2022. It essential that these service additions are done in a measured way to provide a reliable service that appropriately meets post-COVID levels of demand.

■ Department for Transport: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:[\[56780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport publishes data on government grants spending annually including, grants provided to Local Authorities. The most recent grants data relating to the financial year 2019/20 can be found at [DfT 19/20 Grant data](#). Details of grant schemes and individual awards are published online.

In 2019/20 Local Authorities received funding from ten grant schemes via a competitive bidding process. These are set out below:

- Safer Roads
- Access Fund
- Local Growth Fund
- Large Local Majors
- Local Resilience Forums
- City Scheme
- Low Emission Taxi
- Low Emission Bus
- Opening LA transport data
- Transforming Cities Fund

The Department is currently reviewing its grant data for 2020/21 and will be published by the Cabinet Office in March 22.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:**[\[56895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide assistance in securing a response from the Chief Executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to a letter dated 6 July 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on a licence renewal, reference ZA57214.

Trudy Harrison:

A reply to the correspondence referred to was sent by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency on 19 October. The reply included an apology for the delay in responding.

Dave Doogan:[\[59052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the DVLA plans to substantively respond to the ongoing case of the constituent of the hon. Member for Angus, reference DD4418.

Trudy Harrison:

A reply to the correspondence referred to was sent by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency on 21 October. The reply included an apology for the delay in responding.

■ Driving Licences**Jack Dromey:**[\[56942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to make it a requirement of medical professionals to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency of someone who is medically unfit to drive.

Trudy Harrison:

Healthcare professionals, doctors and opticians play an important role in the driver licensing process. They advise patients of the implications of their condition on driving, the effect of any treatment or medication and when they should notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

There are no plans to make it a requirement for healthcare professionals to notify the DVLA directly about a patient's medical condition. However, healthcare professionals can and do notify the DVLA when they are concerned about a patient's driving fitness. The General Medical Council's guidance states that while they must make every reasonable effort to persuade patients to inform the DVLA, doctors can notify the DVLA of a patient's medical condition, in confidence, if the patient does not do so. Similar guidance is available to opticians.

To assist the medical profession, the DVLA has a specific form that can be used for this purpose and provides a dedicated telephone line which allows doctors to discuss concerns directly with one of the DVLA's doctors. The DVLA treats notifications received from doctors and opticians as a high priority.

Drew Hendry:[\[57145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the DVLA on (a) reducing the backlog in driver license applications that need processing, and (b) the potential merits of prioritising rural communities when tackling that backlog.

Trudy Harrison:

The quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence is to use the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online service. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their licence within a few days.

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

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

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

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

The DVLA is unable to prioritise applications received from those living in rural communities. However, the large majority of drivers applying to renew their licence can continue driving while their application is being processed. Section 88 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 allows drivers who have sent a valid application to the DVLA to continue driving while waiting for their application to be processed. Strict criteria apply and these are outlined online [here](#).

■ Driving Tests: Welsh Language

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[57213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment has he made of the availability of Welsh language driving tests.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[57214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment has he made of the adequacy of the (a) provision and (b) availability of driving tests in North Wales.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Services Agency (DVSA) offers driving tests in Welsh at all 24 practical driving test centres (DTC) in Wales, as well as those outside Wales whose catchment area includes part of Wales. Customers can choose to take a practical test in Welsh at the time of booking. The DVSA has 13 Welsh speaking driving examiners (DE) who will be deployed to meet requests to deliver Welsh language driving tests.

The DVSA has a number of measures in place to increase practical driving tests, including North Wales. 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 and will shortly launch a specific recruitment campaign to increase the number of Welsh speaking examiners.

■ Electric Scooters

Owen Thompson: [\[56454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that retailers of e-scooters advise customers of the law on their use.

Trudy Harrison:

Ministers wrote to e-scooter retailers in December 2018 and July this year to highlight the need for providing consumers with clear information about the laws relating to privately owned e-scooter use, including, for example, that they are lawful to use on private land. Officials are continuing to consult with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), who oversee consumer law, about further steps that can be taken to encourage retailers to be responsible in their messaging with consumers of e-scooters

■ Electric Vehicles**Stuart Anderson:****[57341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support the transition to electric vehicles with sufficient supply of electricity.

Trudy Harrison:

To prepare for this the Government is working with Ofgem, the independent regulator, and the energy industry to plan for electric vehicle uptake and ensure the energy system can meet future demand in an efficient and sustainable way. The capacity market is our principal tool for ensuring security of supply. It has successfully brought forward a diverse range of new capacity, such as renewables, storage and gas plants, to replace older capacity as it retires off the system. We are confident it will enable us to meet energy demand, including that arising from greater uptake of EVs, in the future. The UK electricity market is already set up to bring forward investment in generation to meet demand. For example, the Contracts for Difference scheme supports significant investment in low carbon generation.

EVs also offer new opportunities for consumers to be part of a smarter and more flexible energy system. Smart charging can help reduce constraints on the network by shifting charging to off-peak periods. In 2019 the Government consulted on mandating that all private charge points sold or installed in the UK must have smart functionality and meet device level requirements. We intend to lay the relevant legislation later this year.

■ Electric Vehicles: Buses**Chi Onwurah:****[59787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many electric buses have been provided to Newcastle upon Tyne through his Department's policies in each of the last five years.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department has provided funding to bus operator Go North East to support the introduction of 18 electric buses and charging infrastructure over the last five years.

In 2019, the Department awarded £1,330,005 in funding from the Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme to Go North East for nine electric buses and charging infrastructure. These buses were introduced into Go North East's services in Newcastle and Gateshead in November 2020.

In March 2021, the Department awarded £1,270,005 in funding from the Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme to Go North East for a further nine electric buses and charging infrastructure. These buses are expected to enter service on Go North East's services in Newcastle and Gateshead in 2022.

In addition to this, Transport North East are currently working with the department to produce a business case to secure funding for further electric buses under the standard process of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme. The department will select successful business cases and award funding by March 2022.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Ben Everitt:

[\[56478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding Milton Keynes Council has received to install electric car charging points since 2015.

Trudy Harrison:

Since 2015 Milton Keynes Council has received £865,690 under the On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS). Milton Keynes also received a total of £9,797,400 through the Go Ultra Low City Schemes (GULCS) between Financial Year 15/16 and Financial Year 19/20, this funding was used to support the delivery of public chargepoints and to help establish the Electric Vehicle Experience Centre which provides advice to the public considering making the switch to electric driving.

The number of grants awarded for the installation of electric vehicle charging devices in the UK are published and updated on a regular basis on our public website.

Helen Hayes:

[\[59883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to help local authorities improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government's On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) is available to all UK local authorities to provide public chargepoints for their residents without access to off-street parking. This year, £20 million is available under the scheme to ensure more local authorities and residents can benefit. We also offer extensive support and guidance for local authorities including through the Energy Saving Trust (EST), which runs the Local Government Support Programme – an impartial advisory service which helps local authorities in England to develop local policies and strategies to support ZEV uptake. We will also work with EST on a series of webinars to support the sharing of best practice and expertise, and ensure local authorities are sighted of the national policy developments and direction in this space. We believe that local authorities have a crucial role to play in enabling the transition to zero emission driving and we are working closer than ever with them to encourage uptake of central Government funding. In early 2022, in collaboration with the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), we will publish an EV infrastructure guide for local authorities to assist with the transition to ZEVs. More widely, later this year, we will

publish an electric vehicle infrastructure strategy, setting out our vision for infrastructure rollout, and roles for the public and private sectors in achieving it.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Subsidies**

Helen Hayes:

[59884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to introduce subsidies that bring the retail value of electric cars in line with their fossil fuel counterparts.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has committed to introduce a zero emission vehicle mandate setting targets for a percentage of manufacturers' new car and van sales to be zero emission each year from 2024. The Government announced a further £620m towards the electric vehicle transition as part of the Net Zero Strategy. This will have a particular focus on targeted plug in vehicle grants and local on-street residential charging. This is in addition to the Government's existing support to drivers making the switch to electric vehicles through the Plug in Car Grant (PiCG), which provides up to £2,500. Government has already previously committed £582m towards for cars vans, motorcycles and taxis to 2022/23, following the Budget in 2020. This will support greater uptake of zero emission vehicles for greener journeys. Once fuel costs and tax incentives are factored in, we expect the total cost of ownership to reach parity during the 2020s, compared to petrol and diesel cars. It costs from 1p per mile to run a new electric vehicle, compared to around 10p per mile for new diesel or petrol vehicles. We are also supporting the second hand market, through charging infrastructure support and zero road tax for zero emission vehicles.

■ **Heathrow Airport: Security**

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[53188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on Heathrow Airport's plans to extend use of the Smiths Detection Systems for airport security after the assessment period.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[53189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with representatives of Heathrow Airport on its use of the Smiths Detection system at Terminal 2; and if his Department will make an comparative estimate of costs of (a) Smiths Detection system and (b) other standard security screening systems.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[53190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of use of the Smiths Detection System at Heathrow Airport Terminal 2 on (a) safety at airports and (b) national security.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with all security regulated airports about upgrading their security checkpoints over the next few years. This includes Heathrow Airport. Decisions on the type of equipment that airports want to use at security checkpoints is between the airport and manufacturers.

Any equipment in use must meet the security standards set by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) and be approved for use by the Department for Transport. Approved equipment can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/aviation-security-screening-approved-equipment-list>. We do not provide specific details of the security equipment in use.

■ High Speed Two

Philip Davies: [56904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent by HS2 Ltd on childcare services and creches for HS2 staff in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Philip Davies: [56905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent by HS2 Ltd on unconscious bias training in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Philip Davies: [56906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent by HS2 Ltd on (a) calls to the speaking clock and (b) other directory enquiries in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Philip Davies: [56907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent by HS2 Ltd on the design and manufacture of physical models of (a) trains, (b) platforms, (c) buildings and (d) other items associated with the project in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021.

Philip Davies: [56908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent by HS2 Ltd on branded (a) hard hats, (b) overalls and (c) other workwear in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021.

Philip Davies: [56909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Penalty Charge Notices were issued to HS2 Ltd vehicles in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021; and what the total value was of those charges in each of those years.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Ltd produces data on senior officials' business expenses and hospitality and publishes all transaction over £25,000 and all corporate card transactions over £500. This is available on gov.uk and is updated quarterly. It is not possible to find the information you have requested within a reasonable cost and timeframe.

■ Imports: Customs

Alan Brown: [\[57154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many ships are being held offshore waiting to be able to unload goods at UK ports as at 15 October 2021.

Robert Courts:

The specific details of vessel movements to and from our ports, and how they choose to undertake their operations or manage schedules, is a matter for shipping lines, in conjunction with relevant port operators. Waiting at anchor can be part of normal operations, and for many reasons, such as bad weather.

It is the case however, that recent reporting of significant vessel delays at anchor due to supply chain bottlenecks are inaccurate. Very few vessels have been held at anchor and any delays minimal.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Feryal Clark: [\[57438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to Answer of 20 September to Question 47079, what (a) number of training places were created for job seekers to drive HGVs, (b) additional amount of money was provided to fund these places and (c) number of places were created for apprenticeships, and (d) number of additional HGV driver testing places have been created since September 2020.

Trudy Harrison:

The requested information on the number of training places created for job seekers to drive HGVs and the amount of funding provided for the places is not available. The DWP Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs) statistics include non-HGV driver roles and it is not possible to split HGV driver SWAPs from the data. It is also not possible to identify purchases of HGV driver training within general Flexible Support Fund spending.

The number of apprenticeship places is not limited. There were 1,739 LGV Driver apprenticeship starts in the academic year 2020/21. The new Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship was made available on 2 August 2021. The data for starts since its introduction is not yet available.

Weekly HGV testing capacity prior to March 2020 was 1,500. Additional capacity has been incrementally put into place since May this year, through operational and legislative changes. Currently there are up to 2,850 HGV tests are available weekly.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Nick Fletcher: [\[56534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is considering extending grandfather rights to all those who possess a full driving licence in order to increase the number of potential HGV drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

Acquired rights (grandfather rights) for car drivers who passed their test prior to 1 January 1997 allowed drivers with a Category B (car) licence entitlement to drive vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes (Category C1). We have no existing plans to amend the requirements for acquiring a C1 licence.

Drivers wishing to obtain a Category C or C+E licence for heavy goods vehicles are required to complete the driving test for that category of vehicle.

Sir Geoffrey Cox:[\[56543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to increase the speed with which HGV licence applications are processed; how many additional staff have been hired by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in the last six months; what assessment he has made of the average time applicants must wait for a substantive response to correspondence; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is prioritising applications for vocational driving licences, including those for HGV entitlement. There is no backlog for provisional vocational licences and these are being processed within the normal turnaround time of five working days. The DVLA has significantly increased the processing of vocational licence renewals and has moved more staff into this area. Given this, the DVLA expects to be processing applications for both provisional vocational licences and renewals within normal turnaround times by early November. The large majority of those applying to renew an HGV licence can continue driving while their application is being processed.

In the last six months the DVLA has employed 180 new staff and is currently recruiting more.

Information about the average time taken to reply to correspondence is not available.

John Redwood:[\[56712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by what date his Department expects the backlog of HGV licence applications to be cleared.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is prioritising applications for vocational driving licences, including those for HGV entitlement. There is no backlog for provisional vocational licences and these are being processed within the normal turnaround time of five working days.

The DVLA has significantly increased the processing of vocational licence renewals and has moved more staff into this area. Given this, the DVLA expects to be processing applications for both provisional vocational licences and renewals within normal turnaround times by early November. The large majority of those applying to renew an HGV licence can continue driving while their application is being processed.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests

John Redwood:

[\[56372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many HGV driver tests can be carried out each week; and what comparative assessment he has made of that number and the weekly number of those tests undertaken before the covid-19 outbreak.

Trudy Harrison:

A vocational test slot is a slot that could be used for either a heavy goods vehicle (HGV) or passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) test. It would be for the trainer to book the slot and determine the category of test he/she wants to use that slot for.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has been making an average of 3,000 practical vocational test slots available each week; this compares to 2,000 test slots available pre-pandemic, and there is currently spare capacity. It is not possible to know how many of the 3,000 vocational test slots will be used for HGV or PCV tests.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Qualifications

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[56389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will waive the two yearly Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) card training requirement for HGV drivers to help increase the size of the HGV workforce.

Trudy Harrison:

There is no two-yearly training requirement for driver certificates of professional competence. New lorry drivers obtain driver certificates of professional competence in a testing process alongside HGV driving tests. In order for professional drivers to retain their entitlements, they are required to complete 35 hours (five days' worth) of periodic training every five years. The requirements are in legislation. The Department is considering this issue alongside taking other measures in the context of the lorry driver workforce.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete

Hilary Benn:

[\[56148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the latest study by Highways UK on the impact of 38.4 tonne and 44 tonne volumetric concrete mixers on road infrastructure.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways (then Highways England) commissioned a report into the load effects of volumetric concrete mixers (VCMs) in 2017. The Department for Transport does not have plans to publish the report.

Munira Wilson:

[\[57380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what research his Department has carried out on the impact of (a) 38.4 tonne and 44 tonne volumetric mobile plants on road

infrastructure and (b) increasing number of journeys required by the use of lighter volumetric mobile plants on the environment.

Trudy Harrison:

In 2017, the Government published the response to a consultation relating to specialised vehicle testing in which it was asked whether volumetric concrete mixers (VCMs) should be permitted to exceed the standard 32-tonne weight limit for vehicles of their design.

Prior to the consultation, it was common for some businesses in the sector to operate VCMs at weights in excess of this limit. The Department for Transport, working with National Highways (then Highways England), reviewed the effect of these loading practices on older local authority-owned bridges, and found that it was outside the modelled tolerances and would have unacceptable negative impacts on structures. No environmental impact assessment has been undertaken, however, an impact assessment was conducted at the time of the regulatory change, which included these factors, and is available online.

■ **London Underground**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[56992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make representations to the Mayor of London on reinstating the night time underground service.

Trudy Harrison:

Responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and TfL, with the Government paying over £4bn in emergency funding to keep TfL services running during the coronavirus pandemic and to support London's economic recovery. TfL announced on 14 October that the Night Tube will resume on Central and Victoria lines on 27 November. Should TfL wish to open further lines of the Night Tube while in receipt of emergency government funding, they will need to demonstrate how service level enhancements will be financed, given their current reliance on the national taxpayer, many of whom do not benefit from a London-style, 24-hour transport network.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**

Dan Carden:

[\[59942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) increase in SUV use and (b) potential impact of that matter on the Government's progress to reaching its net zero targets.

Trudy Harrison:

The government has announced that from 2035 all new cars and vans must be fully zero emissions at the tailpipe and the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans will end from 2030 onwards. Between 2030 and 2035, new cars and vans can be sold if they have significant zero emission capability which will be defined through consultation later this year.

■ Motor Vehicles: Fuels**Deidre Brock:** [\[57079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to enable priority access to filling station forecourts for food and drink wholesalers to ensure the delivery of provisions to key public sector organisations.

Trudy Harrison:

This is a matter for the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

■ Motor Vehicles: Mileometers**Alex Sobel:** [\[59951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require the recording of car mileage at every MOT and car service to minimise mileage fraud, where the mileage of newer cars not yet subject to MOTs were captured and recorded.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the seriousness of odometer fraud. While it is not mandatory to record mileage every time a vehicle is serviced, it is recorded as part of the annual MOT test. In order to reduce the ease of fraud, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has made MOT data far more transparent online through the open publishing of MOT history data, including odometer readings. This makes it far easier for consumers to detect potential mileage fraud. The Department for Transport continues to work closely with the DVSA in considering whether further changes to the vehicle testing system might reduce the risk of fraud and improve outcomes for motorists and the public.

■ Passenger Ships: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:** [\[57093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many covid-19 cases have been linked to the outbreak of covid-19 on MSC Virtuosa.

Robert Courts:

As part of the Department's ongoing monitoring of cruise restart, we were notified through both industry reporting and Test and Trace that a number of crew and passengers tested positive for COVID-19 during and after domestic sailings on the MSC Virtuosa last month.

Cases on board were managed in line with industry protocols, in coordination with Public Health England and port health authorities. My officials have spoken with MSC and are content with the implementation of the protocols.

The evidence from cruises continues to strongly demonstrate that cruises can operate safely and respond to any outbreaks effectively.

■ Ports: Charging Points

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[59734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support he is providing to increase the number of shore power installations and charge point facilities at UK ports.

Robert Courts:

The Government is allocating funding under its Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition to projects including on shore power, and will consult this year on the appropriate steps to support and, if needed, mandate the uptake of shore power in the UK.

■ Public Transport: Protective Clothing

Caroline Lucas:

[\[59758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to make face coverings mandatory with exemptions for people who cannot wear them on public transport to reduce transmission of covid-19; by what means he is assessing the extent to which the Government recommendation to continue wearing a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you don't usually meet is being adhered to on public transport; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The success of the vaccination programme meant that at Step 4 of the Roadmap we were able to move away from legal restrictions. However, Government guidance sets out that members of the public should wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed areas where they come into contact with people they do not normally meet.

■ Public Transport: Sexual Harassment

Gareth Thomas:

[\[56219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure (a) the implementation of a zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment on the public transport network and (b) that all allegations of sexual harassment on the public transport network are taken seriously and investigated fully; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[56763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that (a) the culture and environment of the public transport network enables women to feel confident about their safety when travelling and (b) sexism, misogyny and harassment are challenged and eradicated on the public transport network; what steps his Department is taking to ensure that progress in both those areas is being monitored; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Everyone has the right to feel safe when travelling and using public spaces. The Department for Transport is working closely with Home Office on the Government's cross-departmental strategy to address Violence Against Women and Girls.

The rail industry has a well-established strategy and programme of work to target sexual harassment. Tackling incidents of sexual harassment is also a policing priority for British Transport Police who have developed a significant programme of work in recent years. We are working hard to support these work streams and deliver best practice across the whole transport network.

However, we are keen that we do more to ensure everyone is safe when using public transport. This is why I was delighted with the appointment earlier this year of DfT's first Violence Against Women and Girls Champions.

The Champions will be engaging with campaign groups, industry and Government to understand areas for improvement across the UK's transport network. By January 2022 they will produce independent recommendations for the department and wider transport network on what best practice should be adopted to improve safety of the transport network for women and girls.

■ **Railways: Commuters****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[59928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative assessment he has made of the level of commuting on the UK rail network so far in 2021 with (a) 2017, (b) 2018 and (c) 2019.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No comparative assessment of commuting levels in 2021 has yet been made by the Department.

Statistical estimates on commuting journeys by rail is available for 2020 and earlier time periods. Table 1 below presents the proportion of rail trips that were for the purpose of commuting by year

| YEAR | COMMUTERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF RAIL USERS |
|------|---|
| 2017 | 47% |
| 2018 | 47% |
| 2019 | 47% |
| 2020 | 37% |

Please note: due to changes in the methodology of data collection, changes in travel behaviour, and a reduction of data collected during 2020, as a result of the

coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, care should be taken when interpreting this data and comparing to other years, due to the small sample sizes.

■ Railways: Electricity

Ian Mearns:

[\[56986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what impact assessment his Department has been made of the increase in electricity charges on Network Rail's Traction Decarbonisation Strategy.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

An impact assessment of electricity price fluctuations on Network Rail's Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS) has not been undertaken. TDNS is a long-term strategy that provides advice about the most appropriate technology (electrification, battery, or hydrogen) to power trains on each section of the network, based on certain assumptions. While the electricity price changes are expected to be short-term, the analysis that informs TDNS will need to be updated as technology develops.

Ian Mearns:

[\[56990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether increases in electricity prices will be passed on to rail passengers via increased ticket prices.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No decision has been made on national rail fares for 2022. The Government is considering a variety of options and we will announce our decision in due course.

■ Roads: Litter

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[56163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to extend the use of roadside funnel bins following the trial in 2017.

Trudy Harrison:

Following National Highways' trial of roadside funnel bins in 2017 at Lymm Truckstop, a further 44 bins have been installed including at Sandbach and Maidstone Service Areas. National Highways continue to work with Motorway Service Area (MSA) operators to encourage them to install bins and trial different interventions to influence drivers to dispose of their rubbish responsibly.

More broadly, National Highways has commissioned charity Keep Britain Tidy to carry out research into littering behaviour on the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The behavioural insights and outputs from this research will be used by National Highways to implement targeted campaigns including social media campaigns, improvements to rest areas, installation of more drive-up bins, distribution of 'pinned bins', and engagement with families and employees.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Andrew Gwynne: [\[58761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what further support his Department plans to provide to help decarbonise the UK's maritime sector.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[58762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he made of the implications for his policies of Maritime UK's proposal for investment in maritime decarbonisation as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[58763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the level of economic development that investing in maritime decarbonisation may provide to the UK's coastal communities.

Robert Courts:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: To date the Department for Transport has funded a £1.5m competition for innovation in clean maritime and provided £93,897 in grant support through the 2019 Department's Transport Technology Research Innovation Grant (TRIG) Programme to early stage research projects related to clean maritime. In 2020 the TRIG programme provided almost £90,000 to clean maritime projects. Under this programme the Department will allocate up to £400,000 this year to 13 projects in zero emission shipping.

In March this year Government launched a Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition (CMDc) to decarbonise the maritime sector. The CMDc will allocate up to £23m in R&D funding to 55 projects comprising of feasibility studies and trials in zero emission shipping technologies, accelerating the development of zero emission technology and infrastructure in the UK.

The Government has carefully considered all industry submissions, including the proposals published by Maritime UK. The Spending review launched on 7 September by the Chancellor of the Exchequer will conclude alongside an Autumn Budget on 27 October. It would be premature for me to comment on any plans for further investment in maritime decarbonisation before a settlement has been agreed.

The Department has made no assessment of the level of economic development that Government funding for maritime decarbonisation may provide to the UK's coastal communities. However, in 2019, alongside the Clean Maritime Plan, the Department published an assessment which identified that low and zero emissions shipping could result in potential economic benefits to the UK of around £360-£510 million per year by the middle of the century.

Maritime UK has published its views that investment in maritime decarbonisation could in future create jobs in all four nations of the United Kingdom, particularly in coastal communities with a tradition of maritime economic activity, including shipbuilding.

Industry research estimates that in 2017 the UK maritime sector as a whole directly supported more than 220,000 jobs for UK employees.

Dave Doogan:

[\[59051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic development achievable by investing in maritime decarbonisation in the UK's coastal communities; and what steps the Government will take to ensure that development is achieved equitably between all nations of the UK.

Robert Courts:

The Department has made no assessment of the level of economic development achievable by investing in maritime decarbonisation in the UK's coastal communities. However, in 2019, alongside the Clean Maritime Plan, the Department published an assessment which identified that low and zero emissions shipping could result in potential economic benefits to the UK of around £360-£510 million per year by the middle of the century.

Maritime UK has published its views that investment in maritime decarbonisation could in future create jobs in all four nations of the United Kingdom, particularly in coastal communities with a tradition of maritime economic activity, including shipbuilding.

Industry research estimates that in 2017 the UK maritime sector as a whole directly supported more than 220,000 jobs for UK employees.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[59738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition, what plans he has to invest in additional maritime decarbonisation initiatives.

Robert Courts:

The Spending review launched on 7 September by the Chancellor of the Exchequer will conclude alongside an Autumn Budget on 27 October. It would be premature for me to comment on any plans for further investment in maritime decarbonisation before a settlement has been agreed.

■ Shipping: Crew

Robin Millar:

[\[56142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring ships (a) registered in UK and (b) mainly operating in the UK are staffed by UK nationals or permanent residents of the UK to assist the UK seafaring industry.

Robert Courts:

The Government acknowledges the international nature of the shipping industry and that it is customary for shipping companies to have the freedom to flag and crew vessels in a manner that suits their individual operating models. There are currently no proposals to restrict vessel access to the UK domestic market.

■ Taxis: Coronavirus**Feryal Clark:** [\[56193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps his Department has taken to support taxi and private hire vehicle drivers during the period of reduced demand as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Trudy Harrison:

The majority of taxi and PHV drivers are self-employed and were therefore able to apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) before the scheme closed on 30 September 2021.

Drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles may also have been eligible for other sources of support, including locally administered grant funding. An online support finder tool was made available to help businesses and self-employed workers determine what support was available to them.

Ongoing engagement with sector stakeholders indicate that demand for taxi and private hire vehicles (PHVs) is very high with PHV operators seeking to increase driver numbers to meet this.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions**Rachael Maskell:** [\[57160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness of Local Transport Plans and (b) adequacy of local authority timetables for producing decarbonisation plans.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport has committed to revitalising Local Transport Plans to deliver the best local transport outcomes and as the main instrument for places to set out strategies and proposed projects that support decarbonisation.

To support effective local delivery, work is underway to develop new guidance on Local Transport Plans and later this year we will publish a Local Authority Toolkit, providing guidance to support local areas to deliver more sustainable transport measures.

■ Travel Restrictions: Ecuador**Mark Tami:** [\[56814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons Ecuador has been included in the red list in respect of covid-19 restrictions for international travel.

Robert Courts:

Ecuador has been on the red list since 15 January 2021 due to the ongoing presence of variants of concern. Government scientists will continue to engage with countries still on the red list and keep the evidence on variants of concern, especially Lambda

and Mu, under close review in order to ensure the UK's approach remains proportionate.

Decisions on red country assignment and associated border measures will continue to be taken by Ministers, who take into account the JBC risk assessments alongside wider public health factors.

The data for all countries and territories will be kept under regular review and the Government will not hesitate to take action where a country's epidemiological picture changes.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[57109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason Ecuador remains on the covid-19 travel red list.

Robert Courts:

Ecuador has been on the red list since 15 January 2021 due to the ongoing presence of variants of concern. Government scientists will continue to engage with countries still on the red list and keep the evidence on variants of concern, especially Lambda and Mu, under close review in order to ensure the UK's approach remains proportionate.

Decisions on red country assignment and associated border measures will continue to be taken by Ministers, who take into account the JBC risk assessments alongside wider public health factors.

The data for all countries and territories will be kept under regular review and the Government will not hesitate to take action where a country's epidemiological picture changes.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Luke Pollard:

[\[56139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance he has provided to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution on the potential risk of that organisation's activities being defined as illegal when rescuing migrants from the English Channel in respect of the Government's plans to bring forward new legislative proposals under the Government's Our New Plan for Immigration.

Robert Courts:

The MCA are engaged with DfT and Home Office officials on the drafting of new legislative proposals under the Government's Our New Plan for Immigration. This has included work to ensure that the activities undertaken by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution when responding to Search and Rescue incidents and rescuing migrants in the English Channel are not considered as illegal activity.

The MCA is also in regular dialogue with the RNLI Executive teams to brief them on our activity in ensuring their action is not considered as illegal when they are tasked to Search and Rescue Incidents to rescue migrants in the English Channel.

TREASURY■ **Air Passenger Duty: Northern Ireland**

Paul Girvan: [\[57267\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress has been made by the technical working group convened to consider the operational and legal challenges to changing Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland.

Paul Girvan: [\[57268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to make a decision on making changes to Air Passenger Duty for Northern Ireland.

Helen Whately:

The government established a technical working group to explore the operational and legal challenges to changing APD in Northern Ireland at Budget 2018.

Members include representatives from industry, experts, and civil servants from both the UK government and Northern Ireland.

Since the Technical Working Group was established, the UK Government has published a consultation on aviation tax reform, to consider how APD could better support Union connectivity and our environmental objectives. We have engaged with the Northern Ireland Executive as part of this process.

We will update on the next steps following the consultation in due course.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties**

Kelly Tolhurst: [\[56227\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support the hospitality industry and independent distilleries through the upcoming Budget and the Alcohol Duty Review; and when he plans to announce the next stage of that Review.

Helen Whately:

The 2020 Budget committed the Government to undertaking a wide-ranging review of alcohol. Last Autumn the Government launched a Call for Evidence for this review. We are now in the process of analysing responses.

The Government has acted through its unprecedented coronavirus response to support the hospitality sector, including through furlough, grants and business rates relief. As announced at Budget 2021, the Government extended the temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) for the tourism and hospitality sector. Although that relief ended on 30 September 2021, on 1 October 2021, a new reduced rate of 12.5 per cent was introduced for these goods and services to help businesses manage the transition back to the standard rate. The new rate will end on 31 March 2022.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Emma Hardy:

[57287]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what funds were raised by the Apprenticeship Levy in the financial years (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Helen Whately:

Monthly receipts data for the Apprenticeship Levy is published by HM Revenue & Customs in their Tax & NIC Receipts publication which can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>

■ Bank Cards: Fraud

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[59718]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to monitor potential increased fraudulent use of contactless cards following the payment limit increase to £100.

John Glen:

Since 15 October 2021, consumers and businesses have been able to take advantage of new higher contactless payments limits.

The legal contactless payment limits were raised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) through changes to the Strong Customer Authentication rules in March 2021. The FCA has the power to amend these limits subject to public consultation and Treasury approval.

In line with this process, the FCA publicly consulted on increasing contactless limits. In making this decision the FCA fully considered the risks to customers, including the potential impacts on fraud, alongside the benefits. When the limits were last raised in Spring 2020 from £30 to £45 there was no significant recorded increase in the fraudulent use of contactless cards. Similarly, no material increase in fraudulent transactions has been observed in other countries where the contactless limit increased to the equivalent of £100 or above. The FCA continues to monitor fraud rates across all payment types and will consider action as appropriate if fraud rates rise.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Owen Thompson:

[58439]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assurances he has sought from lenders of the (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme that they are being flexible in assisting borrowers in restructuring and refinancing their debt to avoid default.

Owen Thompson:[\[58444\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to encourage conversations between Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme lenders and borrowers seeking to restructure or refinance their debt.

John Glen:

Any business concerned about repayments should get in touch with their lender who will be able to provide support and talk them through their options.

In order to give businesses who have borrowed under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme further support in making their repayments, the Government announced “Pay as You Grow” (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their Bounce Back Loan over ten years. This will reduce their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times). They can also pause their repayments entirely for up to six months. If borrowers want to take advantage of these options, they should notify their lender when they are contacted about their repayments.

For those who borrowed under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Government has taken action to allow lenders to provide borrowers with more time to make their repayments where they assess that borrowers are in difficulty and will benefit from the extension. Given loans under CBILS are more varied than the standardised BBLS and resemble more traditional commercial lending, CBILS borrowers are likely to benefit from engagement with their lender if they have concerns about repayments. Lenders have an ongoing relationship with CBILS borrowers and will be best placed to provide support tailored to an individual business’s circumstance.

■ Business: Finance

Owen Thompson:[\[58443\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the main cashflow challenges affecting businesses.

Helen Whately:

The Covid-19 pandemic left many businesses in the UK and elsewhere facing sharp revenue falls in the absence of support. Due to the unprecedented support package put in place by HM Government, UK businesses have made it through the pandemic, often with higher levels of cash reserves than they started. And they are rebounding strongly, with recent figures for August showing that hospitality GVA returned to pre-Covid levels.

However, as the UK and other economies recover from the pandemic, a number of pandemic-related and global factors have led to rising commodity prices, particularly for energy. These and other disruptions in global supply chains, are driving up expenses for UK businesses such as the cost of labour, raw materials and logistics.

We will continue to work closely with other departments to actively monitor these disruptions and their effects on business cashflow, which are being experienced by economies across the globe.

■ Cannabis: Taxation

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[56483\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential tax revenues that would be generated annually by a regulated cannabis market.

Helen Whately:

The Government has no current plans to legalise and introduce a tax on cannabis.

■ Carbon Emissions: Costs

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[59797\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2021 to Question 45954, on Carbon Emissions: Costs, when his Department will publish the expected cost of achieving the Government's net zero emissions target.

Helen Whately:

HM Treasury has published the Net Zero Review (NZR), which is an analytical report that uses existing data to explore the key issues and trade-offs as the UK decarbonises. This is against a backdrop of uncertainty on technology and costs, as well as changes to the economy over the next thirty years. It focuses on the potential exposure of households and businesses to the transition, and highlights factors to be taken into account in designing policy that will allocate costs over this time horizon.

As highlighted in the NZR, the overall impact is uncertain and challenging to estimate. Existing estimates suggest that the impact on GDP by the end of the transition is likely to be relatively small, and dwarfed by the costs of global inaction. The economic impact will be uneven across the economy. The scale of the change for some businesses, sectors and regions is likely to be substantial.

As the transition will be dynamic and take place over thirty years, it is not possible to forecast impacts on households and assessments of abatement costs in the future are highly speculative. The net zero transition will also entail a number of technology transitions, and there is significant uncertainty in relation to their costs, although technology costs for some green technologies have shown that projected costs have been far higher than actual costs. The eventual impact will therefore depend on policy choices and the way the economy adjusts over time.

The NZR has not sought to duplicate existing analysis and uses the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) analysis on costs and benefits in line with Carbon Budget 6 and the Net Zero Strategy (NZS). In the NZS, BEIS estimate that the net cost, excluding air quality and emissions savings benefits, will be equivalent to 1-2% of GDP in 2050.

■ Care Homes: Fringe Benefits

Thangam Debbonaire:

[56683]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the cost of taxi trips for care home staff that were paid for by the Infection Control Grant are treated by HMRC as a benefit in kind for employees and so are taxable; and if he will instruct HMRC to publish updated guidance on that matter.

Lucy Frazer:

The provision or reimbursement of the costs of taxis, or similar road transport, for travel between an employee's home and workplace will not be taxed if all the following conditions are met:

- the employee has to work later than usual, and until at least 9pm,
- this happens irregularly,
- by the time the employee finishes work, either public transport has stopped, or it would not be reasonable to expect them to use public transport.

Where the employer funds the provision or reimbursement of costs of transport using the Infection Control Grant, the same conditions apply.

Where the conditions are not met, the provision of transport or reimbursement of the costs of transport to employees for travel between the employee's home and workplace will be taxable.

HMRC updated its guidance on paying or refunding transport costs during coronavirus (COVID-19) on 23 March 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-treat-certain-expenses-and-benefits-provided-to-employees-during-coronavirus-covid-19#paying-or-refunding-transport-costs>

■ Cash Dispensing: Older People

Catherine West:

[59903]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is planning to take to ensure access to cash for elderly and vulnerable people in response to bank closures.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash is important to the daily lives of millions of individuals and businesses across the UK, particularly to those who may be in vulnerable groups. That is why the Government has committed to protecting access to cash for those who need it and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term.

The Government made legislative changes via the Financial Services Act 2021 to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase, which will allow shops and other businesses to offer a new form of cash withdrawal service to local communities. The Government also recently closed an Access to Cash Consultation on 23 September, setting out further proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash.

In September 2020, the FCA published guidance for regulated firms setting out its expectations for banks, building societies and credit unions when they are considering closing branches or ATMs. It requires them to notify customers and the FCA of upcoming branch closures and consider the provision of alternatives for customers.

Banks themselves are best placed to make the commercial decisions required to operate their businesses for their customers. However, the Government believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered, and mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live and especially the most vulnerable, continue to have access to face-to-face banking services.

■ **Chronic Illnesses: Government Assistance**

Marion Fellows:

[\[57130\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will provide additional financial support for people who are immunocompromised and who are unable to return to work as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and who cannot work from home, following the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Helen Whately:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's health, jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services.

The Government recognises the concerns that immunocompromised people may have about returning to the workplace. People who are immunocompromised are being offered a third dose of the vaccine, and their adult household contacts are also being prioritised for the booster vaccination programme currently underway.

The vaccination campaign, along with our improved understanding of the virus and the clinical risks it poses means that those previously classed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are no longer advised to shield. The government will continue to assess the situation based on clinical advice, to keep the most vulnerable safe.

Individuals should also talk to their employer to discuss and agree options in relation to work, for example the ability to work from home, or returning to the workplace in a different role if their previous position cannot be fulfilled in a Covid-secure manner.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[57428\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme who (a) will retain their job role and (b) may be made redundant after the closure of that scheme.

Lucy Frazer:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was set up to support employers to retain their employees through the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the scheme has succeeded in supporting 11.7 million jobs across the UK with employer claims

totalling £69.3 billion, aiding businesses and protecting livelihoods. After running continuously for nineteen months, the scheme closed on 30 September 2021.

As set out in the Plan for Jobs Progress Update, published on 13 September 2021, the economy and labour market are now in a stronger position than they were last autumn. The latest data show that the Government's Plan for Jobs is working across all parts of the UK, with just 1.3 million people on furlough on 31 August 2021, and online job vacancy levels 35 per cent above February 2020 levels. At the start of the crisis, it was feared that unemployment would reach twelve per cent, or even higher. The figure is now less than half of that, meaning almost two million fewer people are out of work than had been feared, while the headline unemployment rate of 4.6 per cent has now fallen for seven consecutive months. The ONS has also found that of all workers who had ever been furloughed, more than nine in ten were still in work in the three months to June 2021. This is a similar proportion as for workers who had never been furloughed, meaning that there was no statistically significant difference in employment rates between those furloughed and those who had never been furloughed.

■ **Cybercrime: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna:

[\[58552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the proposal to establish a Global Centre for Secure and Intelligent Regulatory Technologies in Northern Ireland.

John Glen:

The government is committed to maintaining the UK's position a world-leading destination for fintech.

In line with this ambition, the Government is taking forward key recommendations of the independent Kalifa Review of UK Fintech as part of ensuring the UK remains at the global cutting edge of technology and innovation in financial services.

Government funding for future years will be confirmed as part of the Spending Review which will be announced on 27th October.

■ **Diesel and Petrol: Excise Duties**

Alan Brown:

[\[56324\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the estimated revenue receipts from petrol and diesel fuel sale duties was for financial year 2021-22; and what the revised projection is.

Alan Brown:

[\[56435\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) estimated and (b) actual revenue receipts from petrol and diesel fuel sale duties was to the end of Quarter 2, financial year 2021-22.

Helen Whately:

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published its fuel duties forecast as part of its Economic and fiscal outlook in March 2021. This set out that fuel duties are estimated to reach £26.0bn in 2021-22.

Monthly profiles were subsequently published for 2021-22 and estimate that £12.6bn would be received up to the end of quarter 2 (April-September).

An updated annual forecast is expected to be published by the OBR on Wednesday 27 October.

Monthly receipts are published by HMRC at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>

■ Energy: Tax Yields**Alan Brown:****[56311]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) estimated and (b) actual revenue receipts from VAT on domestic energy bills was to the end of Quarter 2, financial year 2021-22.

Alan Brown:**[56313]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the estimated revenue receipts from VAT on domestic energy bills was for financial year 2021-22; and what the revised projection is.

Alan Brown:**[56320]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) estimated and (b) revenue receipts from VAT on petrol and diesel fuel sales was to the end of Quarter 2, financial year 2021-22.

Alan Brown:**[56434]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the estimated revenue receipts from VAT on petrol and diesel fuel sales was for financial year 2021-22; and what the revised projection is.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC does not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services. Businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

■ Financial Services**Zarah Sultana:****[56249]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to extend to the purchase of all financial products the 14-day cooling-off period applicable to some of those products.

John Glen:

Various laws give consumers rights to cooling off periods, including the Consumer Credit Act 1974 which provides a 14 day cooling off period in which to cancel a credit agreement, such as a personal loan. In addition, the Financial Services (Distance Marketing) Regulations 2004 set out that for most financial services sold at a distance, consumers generally have 14 days to cancel the contract. For some products, such as certain pension products, the period is 30 days.

There are some financial products where the right to cancel doesn't apply, for example where the price of that service depends on fluctuations in the financial markets beyond the control of the product provider, or where the service purchased has been used in full.

The Government keeps all legislation under review, working closely with the financial services regulators as appropriate.

■ Fossil Fuels: Taxation

Alan Brown: [56315]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) estimated and (b) actual oil and gas production revenues receipts were to the end of Quarter 2, financial year 2021-22.

Alan Brown: [56316]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the estimated oil and gas production revenues for financial year 2021-2022 was; and what the revised projection is.

Helen Whately:

Forecasts for government revenues from oil and gas production are provided by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). Their most recent published forecast, provided for Budget 2021 on 3 March, is available on the OBR website at the following link <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2021/>. The OBR will publish an updated forecast on 27 October, alongside Autumn Budget 2021. HM Revenue and Customs publishes monthly tax receipts statistics, including for UK oil and gas production, on a cash receipts basis, at GOV.UK at the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>.

■ Freeports: Scotland

David Duguid: [58987]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he plans to accept bids for a freeport in the northeast of Scotland.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Freeports will be national hubs for trade, innovation and commerce, regenerating communities across the UK attracting new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities up and down the country.

We remain committed to establishing at least one Freeport in Scotland and specific locations will be chosen in a fair, open and transparent allocation process.

■ Gambling: Reviews

Andrew Bridgen:

[57033]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has modelled the potential impact on (a) tax receipts and (b) the sport and leisure sector of the Gambling Commission's proposals of affordability checks put forward as part of the Government's review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made. In line with its statutory duties, the independent OBR publish the fiscal impact of any government policy that is introduced as part of the Budget process.

DCMS is considering the responses to its call for evidence, along with Gambling Commission proposals, and expect to publish a response document setting out any conclusions and consulting on next steps by the end of the year.

■ Government Departments: Environment Protection

Daisy Cooper:

[57360]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date the Greening Government Commitments in the Treasury's Public Procurement Policy were last reviewed.

Helen Whately:

The Treasury regular monitors its performance against the Greening Government Commitments 2021-25.

Chapter 6 of HM Treasury's [Annual Report and Accounts](#) reports on Sustainability. It includes details of how procurement policies and operations continue to be aligned to GGC targets.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

Rachael Maskell:

[56333]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 50095, on Health and Social Care Levy, how many people who were ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will be required to pay the Health and Social Care Levy.

Lucy Frazer:

The information requested on the number of people who were ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme who will be required to pay the Health and Social Care Levy is not held.

The Health and Social Care Levy is based on National Insurance Contributions and will be paid by employers, employees and the self-employed. The Levy will be introduced from April 2022.

This Levy, together with the equivalent increase in dividend tax rates, will make available an additional £12 billion a year for the NHS and social care.

■ Non-domestic Rates

Rachael Maskell:

[\[59853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the comparative potential merits of a (a) profit-related and (b) turnover-related tax to replace business rates.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government published a Call for Evidence on 21 July 2020, as part of its Review of Business Rates, to gather views from stakeholders on all elements of the business rates system and several alternative taxes. This included questions on the scope and potential impacts of an Online Sales Tax.

A summary of responses to the Call for Evidence was published in March 2021. The review will conclude at the Autumn Budget.

■ Offshore Funds: Disclosure of Information

Jim Shannon:

[\[58865\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to tackle the recent leak of offshore data which exposed financial dealings of some of the most affluent in society.

John Glen:

This government is committed to making the UK a hostile place for illicit finance and economic crime. The Financial Action Task Force has found that the UK has one of the strongest systems in the world for combatting money laundering. However, as a global financial centre, we are determined to go further to crack down on dirty money and financial exploitation, to protect our security and prosperity.

We published a landmark public-private partnership Economic Crime Plan in 2019. The Plan outlines a comprehensive national response to economic crime, and sets out 52 actions being taken by both the public and private sectors to ensure the UK cannot be abused for economic crime.

A key part of going further is working with international partners to tackle cross-border illicit financial flows. In 2016, the UK became the first major economy in the world to implement a public register of company beneficial ownership – the People with Significant Control Register. In June 2021, the UK agreed, with G7 partners, on the importance of strengthening international standards on beneficial ownership, so we have the tools to prevent money laundering through corporate structures. The G7 agreed that beneficial ownership registries – like the UK's pioneering People with Significant Control register – are a key part of this.

Regarding tax evasion, HMRC already has a great deal of information on individuals and companies that use offshore arrangements to hide money. Each year HMRC gathers tens of millions of items of data through intelligence-gathering, the acquisition of bulk data (including through international data exchange agreements), and through their own expert investigations. HMRC is looking closely at the information the ICIJ

has disclosed to see if it reveals anything new to their existing knowledge and investigations.

■ Pensions: Taxation

Neale Hanvey:

[\[58531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending legislation on pension commencement lump sums in order to allow for the option of a minimum regular monetary sum as tax free, as an alternative to the 25 per cent tax free portion of the total pension pot.

John Glen:

The Government keeps all aspects of the tax system under review, as part of the annual Budget process, and in the context of the wider public finances. In 2015, pension freedoms were introduced to give individuals the choice as to how to access their own pension savings including full pot withdrawal, purchasing an annuity, flexi-access drawdown or taking an uncrystallised funds pension lump sum. In the five years since pension freedoms were introduced, over £45bn has been accessed by over 1.8 million individuals. The Government believes it is right that individuals are trusted to choose how to access their pension income and provides a range of options for them to do so.

■ Probate

Jane Hunt:

[\[57457\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2021 to Question 52624 on the probate limit, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the probate limit of premium bonds.

John Glen:

As required by legislation governing NS&I, NS&I will request a Grant of Probate for any holding over £5,000. Making payment without probate comes with some risk, as there could be a subsequent successful claim on the deceased's estate. The cost of having to pay out against a second claim would be borne by the taxpayer.

The Government will keep under review the effect of increasing the probate limit that applies to customer holdings in National Savings and Investments (NS&I).

■ Public Finance: Publicity

Christine Jardine:

[\[59927\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding has been allocated by his Department to public relations for the October 2021 Budget, including promotion on social media.

Helen Whately:

All communications products related to the October 2021 Budget are produced in house by the Treasury's Communications Team at no additional cost.

■ Railways: Electrification

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[59929\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on funding for electrification of the UK rail network in relation to the 2040 target to remove all diesel-only trains from the network.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Net Zero Strategy published last week reiterated the government's commitment to deliver a net zero rail network by 2050, with the ambition to remove all diesel-only trains by 2040. Earlier this year, the government announced a £317 million investment to electrify and upgrade the Transpennine route between York and Church Fenton and a £78 million investment to electrify the route between Wigan and Bolton.

We are currently carrying out the Spending Review which will set the Department for Transport's resource and capital budgets for the next 3 years (2022-23 to 2024-25). This Spending Review concludes on 27th October alongside the Autumn Budget 2021.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Catherine West:

[\[56484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will commit to new funding for local authorities to repair damaged roads and potholes.

Helen Whately:

This Government recognises that maintaining local roads is a key priority for local communities and businesses.

At the last Spending Review, the Chancellor committed £1.125 billion in 2021/22 for local roads maintenance including the £500 million Potholes Fund committed in the manifesto. This represents a £125 million increase on typical annual funding from Spending Review 2015.

Maintenance in London, including repairing potholes, is a matter for Transport for London and the London Boroughs. This Government has supported TfL with c£4bn in emergency Covid support since the start of the pandemic.

We will set out future highways maintenance funding at Spending Review 2021.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Martyn Day:

[\[58453\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic merits for families of abolishing the VAT on school-specific uniform items; and if he will make a statement.

Martyn Day:

[\[58454\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department's policy is on abolishing VAT applied to school-specific uniform items.

Martyn Day:

[\[58455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of abolishing the VAT on school-specific uniform items on families, particularly those on lower incomes.

Helen Whately:

Under the current VAT rules, all children's clothing and footwear designed for young children who are less than 14 years of age, including school uniforms, attract a zero-rate of VAT, meaning that no VAT is charged on the sale of these items.

The Department for Education plans to publish statutory guidance in Autumn 2021, which will aim to ensure that parents do not incur additional costs from sudden uniform changes.

■ **Spirits: Excise Duties**

Pete Wishart:

[\[56175\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to review the application of duty stamps on Scotch whisky and spirits.

Pete Wishart:

[\[56457\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been raised from the Duty Stamps Scheme since the introduction of that scheme.

Helen Whately:

Duty stamps do not raise revenue, they are an anti-fraud measure that have helped secure the alcohol supply chain, making it more difficult for illicit products to infiltrate the market. HMRC's tax gap estimate indicates that such measures are successfully keeping spirit's fraud at historically low levels.

The Government is keen to support innovation in the alcohol sector. That is why, at Budget 2020, we announced plans to review alcohol duty with the aim of improving the current system to make it simpler, more economically rational and less administratively burdensome.

Following a Call for Evidence launched in October 2020, the Government is currently considering the responses. While scope of this review does not include duty stamps, HM Revenue and Customs will review the duty stamps policy when any changes to the alcohol regime have been developed.

Pete Wishart:

[\[56176\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many instances of sprits and duty fraud have been successfully prosecuted since the introduction of the Duty Stamps Scheme.

Helen Whately:

HMRC regularly publishes alcohol fraud prosecution data on the GOV.UK website.

The most recent publication ([Tackling alcohol smuggling: outputs – April 2016 to April 2019](#)) shows that during the period April 2016 and March 2019 HMRC conducted 33 arrests with 25 convictions for offences relating to alcohol fraud. Figures for the periods since April 2019 will be published in due course.

■ Tax Avoidance**Catherine West:****[56698]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will set up a 24 hour suicide prevention helpline for people who are feeling suicidal as a result of facing the loan charge.

Drew Hendry:**[57147]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) extending HMRC's Loan Charge helpline to a 24 hour a day service and b) ensuring that mental health support workers are available through that helpline.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government takes concerns about the wellbeing of all taxpayers seriously and recognises that the Loan Charge can add significant pressures for some taxpayers.

Following Lord Morse's Independent Loan Charge Review, the Government has taken further steps to mitigate the impact of the Loan Charge to ensure that the right support is in place for those who need it.

HMRC operates a settlement helpline for taxpayers who have used disguised remuneration avoidance schemes, and all call handlers are trained to identify taxpayers who might need additional support.

It would be inappropriate for HMRC, as a tax authority, to set up a helpline for those in severe mental distress. For taxpayers who need specialised help, HMRC advisors suggest they contact organisations like Samaritans or Mind.

HMRC has a well-established approach to helping those who are struggling to pay their liabilities in full. HMRC will agree a sustainable and manageable payment plan to spread the tax liability for anyone who is unable to pay in full.

■ Taxation: Energy**Dan Carden:****[59940]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans the Government has to use the UK tax system to accelerate the transition to clean energy in response to the European Commission's 2019 finding that the UK had the biggest fossil fuel subsidies in the EU.

Lucy Frazer:

This Government is committed to net zero and takes its legally binding climate commitments very seriously. Carbon pricing (including through tax) is one of the most

efficient tools for promoting decarbonisation and already plays a key role in helping the UK achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The UK Emissions Trading scheme, alongside a wide range of taxes, including the Climate Change Levy, Vehicle Excise Duty, and Carbon Price Support rate, are designed to encourage businesses and consumers to make greener choices.

The UK supports the G20 commitment to rationalise and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, and sees clear benefits in doing so. The UK does not have any fossil fuel subsidies, which are measures that reduce the effective price of fossil fuels below world market prices, as per the definition used by the International Energy Agency.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any changes are made in the round at fiscal events.

■ Treasury: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[56447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to improve his Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Helen Whately:

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

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

In April 2021, 72% of Treasury replies were answered within 20 working days. This has increased to 77% as of October 2021 and we are continuing to make improvements to response times.

■ Treasury: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[56771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government is committed to providing local authorities with the flexibility they need to use funding in a way that responds to local needs and priorities. The Local

Government Finance settlement and the vast majority of local government's Core Spending Power (£51.3bn) is un-ringfenced, giving local authorities flexibility over their spending decisions. Local authorities also receive significant funding through unringfenced Section 31 grants.

There are times when dedicated competitive biddable funding streams are the best way to make sure local authorities receive the support they need to deliver the Government's objectives, including specific funding initiatives, trials or pilots. In such circumstances, HM Treasury works closely to support Departments as they seek to maximise value for money by considering the timing, value and conditions attached to any funding.

HM Treasury does not distribute any biddable funds to local authorities as these are administered separately by departments.

■ VAT: Scotland

Ian Murray:

[59773]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what analysis has been undertaken on the impact on Scottish retail shops and tourism businesses of the decision to end tax free shopping for international visitors.

Helen Whately:

On 11 September 2020, the Government announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers) following the transition period. The following rules were implemented on 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) can purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances apply to passengers entering Great Britain from any destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain has not been extended to EU residents and has been withdrawn for all passengers.
- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods has been removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May 2020. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with industry stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government has also met and discussed these changes with many stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes was provided in the written ministerial statement and the published summary of responses to the consultation and a detailed technical note has also been made available to stakeholders.

On 25 November 2020 the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) set out their assessment of the fiscal impact of the withdrawal of the VAT RES.

Factoring in a higher-than-usual elasticity of 1.9 to account for spending on luxury goods, the OBR estimate that the withdrawal of the VAT RES will result in a significant direct Exchequer saving of around £400 million per year, once passenger numbers recover from the impacts of Covid-19. Based on the 1.2 million users of the scheme who received a refund in 2019, this includes an assumption that approximately 20,000 – 30,000 fewer tourists visit Great Britain a year. That is 0.07% of the 40 million visitors to the UK in 2019.

The OBR also looked at this package in the round when assessing the indirect impact on the economy – including the effects of extending duty-free sales – alongside the substantial support provided to the economy and retail industry.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equal Pay: Gender

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[57355\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, in the context of the reintroduction of enforcement on Gender Pay Gap reporting requirements in October, what estimate she has made of the proportion of employers that have put in place plans to tackle their pay gaps.

Kemi Badenoch:

Over nine thousand employers reported their gender pay gap data for 2020/21, having been given an additional six months before enforcement action began in October, to reflect the impact of the pandemic on businesses. Many took the additional step of producing an action plan detailing how they intend to close their gap.

As there is no mandatory requirement to publish an action plan, not every employer who has one will have noted this on the Government reporting portal, making it difficult to establish an accurate estimate of how many have a plan to tackle their pay gap.

The reporting regulations have helped to motivate employers to take action, and the UK's gender pay gap currently stands at a record low of 15.5%.

■ Marriage

Stella Creasy:

[\[59778\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Government consultation Consultation on civil partnerships: the future of conversion rights, when she expects to (a) publish the consultation response and (b) bring forward any legislative proposals in response to that consultation.

Mike Freer:

The Government Equalities Office ran a consultation on the future of conversion rights in England and Wales in 2019. We are analysing the responses and intend to publish the Government response and bring forward any necessary legislation as soon as possible.

■ UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**Claire Hanna:**[\[59995\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what mechanisms her Department has put in place to enable the devolved Administrations to collaborate on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government Equalities Office works closely with the devolved administrations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The devolved administrations contributed examples of the progress they had made with implementation to the eighth periodic report submitted to the CEDAW Committee, and representatives of each of the devolved administrations participated in the one day hearing in front of the CEDAW Committee in 2019.

Claire Hanna:[\[59996\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what engagement her Department had with the (a) Northern Ireland Executive and (b) other devolved Administrations as part of the recent CEDAW interim report preparation.

Kemi Badenoch:

All of the devolved administrations were consulted as part of the preparations for the production of the recent CEDAW interim report.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Bereavement Support Payment****Ian Mearns:**[\[56088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she had made of the potential merits of making Bereavement Support Allowance an ongoing payment with similar criteria to Carers Allowance for those bereaved who have been left with children, using an earning threshold allowance for eligibility beyond the existing 21 months.

Ian Mearns:[\[56236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of changing the Bereavement Support Allowance eligibility from a fixed period of 21 months to an indefinite and ongoing payment which would be means tested based on annual income.

Ian Mearns:

[56520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to extend the period of eligibility for payment of the Bereavement Support Allowance from the existing 21 months period.

Guy Opperman:

There are currently no plans to reform Bereavement Support Payment (BSP). BSP is a contributory benefit intended to help with the immediate costs of bereavement. In common with other contributory benefits, BSP is not means tested. Other sources of financial assistance, including Universal Credit, are available for those who require on-going financial support.

Whilst we have no plans for broader reform, on 15th July we laid a draft proposal for a Remedial Order (The Bereavement Benefits Remedial) Order 2021) that will extend eligibility to Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment to cohabitees with dependent children. Further details can be found on Gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bereavement-benefits-proposal-for-implementation-of-the-mclaughlin-2018-and-jackson-2020-judgments>

■ Carers Allowance

Ian Mearns:

[56234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to increase carers allowance in England in line with inflation and the cost of energy during the winter months.

Chloe Smith:

The weekly rate of Carer's Allowance is protected by annual uprating in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The rate for April 2022 will be announced in due course as part of the annual Uprating Statement.

Since 2010, the rate of Carer's Allowance has increased from £53.90 to £67.60 a week, providing an additional £700 a year for carers. Carers also have access to the full range of social security benefits according to their circumstances.

Real terms expenditure on Carer's Allowance in 2021/22 is forecast to be £3.2bn. Between 2021/22 and 2025/26 real terms expenditure on Carer's Allowance is forecast to increase by around a quarter (around £0.8 billion). By 2025/26, the Government is forecast to spend just over £4.0bn a year on Carer's Allowance.

■ Cosham Pension Centre: Closures

Stephen Morgan:

[56285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will guarantee that no redundancies will result from the closure of Cosham Pension Centre.

Guy Opperman:

Redeployment will always be our priority and activity is underway to explore opportunities within DWP and across other government departments. The

department will fulfil its legal commitment with regard to redundancy in any situation where it is necessary to do so, although redundancies may be unavoidable, we will support individuals throughout.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[56287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will explore finding alternative positions in Portsmouth for staff impacted by the closure of Cosham Pension Centre.

Guy Opperman:

DWP follows an established workforce management policy to manage and support impacted colleagues.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[56167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to improve her Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is currently experiencing high volumes of customer complaints, and it is taking us longer than usual to reply as we start to recover from the challenges of the pandemic.

DWP now triage complaints giving priority to vulnerable claimants who may be at risk, and those with benefit payment issues. We aim to contact customers within 15 working days to clear the complaint or agree how to investigate it if it will take longer.

We continue to look into all complaints as quickly as we can and, as part of the triage process, we write or call those customers where there may be a delay in answering their complaint.

We are in the process of designing the future operating model for DWP complaints and correspondence. As part of this we will be looking for further opportunities to drive efficiency in the process whilst ensuring that vulnerable customers are prioritised.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Local Government Finance

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[56777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by her Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if she will publish the names of those funds.

Guy Opperman:

Local Authority Partnership, Engagement and Delivery (LA-PED) provides funding to local authorities for the costs in delivering Housing Benefit (a DWP benefit delivered by local authorities) and reimburses local authorities for Housing Benefit expenditure incurred. More recently, we fund for further grants delivered by local authorities, such

as, the COVID Winter Support Grant. The delivery of HB and grants (as applicable) is legislated and therefore a statutory duty for local authorities. All funding provided through LA-PED does not go through a process of competitive bidding.

To date we have had no competed grants to LAs in 2021/22

■ **Household Support Fund: Crawley**

Henry Smith: [\[56260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what level of funding from the Household Support Fund will initially be received by Crawley Borough Council.

David Rutley:

The Department for Work and Pensions is boosting households with £500m funding this winter, with £421m dedicated to the Household Support Fund in England, which will help vulnerable people in England with essential household costs. The funding is being made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England. West Sussex will receive £4,870,362.11. County Councils are expected to work together with District Councils to provide support and to ensure the funding meets its objectives by identifying those most in need.

■ **Job Centres: Poplar and Limehouse**

Apsana Begum: [\[56349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether all employees from Poplar Job Centre will (a) remain in her Department's employment and (b) be on the same contractual terms and conditions following the closure of the Poplar Job Centre.

Mims Davies:

The Department is able to confirm that employees from Poplar Jobcentre will remain in employment under the same terms and conditions following the closure of Poplar Jobcentre.

Apsana Begum: [\[57413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which (a) people and (b) organisations were consulted prior to the decision to close the Job Centre in Poplar and Limehouse constituency.

Apsana Begum: [\[57419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what alternative locations her Department assessed the potential merits of in order to retain a Job Centre Plus in Poplar and Limehouse constituency.

Mims Davies:

The closure of Poplar Jobcentre is as a result of the landlord's plans to redevelop the site. Consultation has taken place in confidence with the Tower Hamlets Council. The

Department undertook an independent and extensive property search and opted for the most suitable replacement building in the local area.

■ **Jobcentres: Poplar and Limehouse**

Apsana Begum: [57410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the increased cost of travel for benefit claimants who will no longer be able to access a Job Centre Plus within Poplar and Limehouse constituency.

Apsana Begum: [57411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the closure of Poplar Job Centre on claimants with (a) disabilities, (b) caring responsibilities and (c) children.

Apsana Begum: [57412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the closure of Poplar Job Centre on benefit claimants with no or limited access to the internet at home.

Apsana Begum: [57420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the accessibility of employment support available to Poplar and Limehouse constituents in the context of the closure of the Poplar Job Centre.

Mims Davies:

The new site is located near to Poplar Jobcentre and has excellent transport links.

Work Coaches can advise claimants in such circumstances.

If an individual has a disability, caring responsibilities, children or any other reason for needing support Jobcentre Work Coaches will discuss and offer support to people based on their individual circumstances this also includes limited or no access to the internet at home, for which claimants can request to attend a local Jobcentre. Work Coaches will continue to offer employment support to people in Poplar and Limehouse.

■ **Maternity Allowance**

Caroline Lucas: [56957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to expand the groups of people eligible for Maternity Allowance to support them while taking time off to have a baby to include (a) PhD candidates and (b) other students; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

Entitlement to Maternity Allowance is determined by an employment and earnings test, designed to establish a recent connection to the labour market. PhD candidates, and students, can qualify for Maternity Allowance provided they meet the

employment and earnings test. The Government currently has no plans to expand eligibility for Maternity Allowance.

■ Occupational Health

Theresa Villiers: [\[56274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government's response to the Health is Everyone's Business consultation, published on 4 October 2021, what steps the Government is taking to help tackle potential unequal and inconsistent access to occupational health.

Theresa Villiers: [\[56276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to expand access to occupational health as a means to improve productivity and support individuals with health conditions such as long covid.

Theresa Villiers: [\[56461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government's policies on levelling up will include increasing access to occupational health schemes.

Theresa Villiers: [\[56498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government's response to the Health is Everyone's Business consultation, published on 4 October 2021, what steps the Government is taking to help expand access to occupational health.

Theresa Villiers: [\[56499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government's programme to help tackle health inequalities will include improved access to occupational health.

Chloe Smith:

Quality Occupational Health (OH) services have the potential to prevent work-related illness and avoidable sickness absence, support disabled people and those with ill health conditions to remain in work, support business productivity and potentially reduce pressures on the NHS.

Following the publication of the response to the Health is Everyone's Business consultation, we are exploring a number of policy options in partnership with the Department for Health and Social Care to increase access to quality and cost effective OH services, whilst ensuring that the market has the capacity to provide the services. We are particularly focusing on improving access to OH for SMEs and the self-employed as evidence suggests that smaller employers are less likely to provide access to OH than larger employers.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Justin Madders: [\[57096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is her Department's policy that in circumstances where the automatic identification process has identified two wage payments in one assessment period, her Department's staff can assign one of those two payments to an earlier assessment period.

David Rutley:

As part of our ongoing commitment to make the Universal Credit process as simple as possible, an automatic identification process was implemented in July this year. This allows the Department to assign earnings to the correct assessment period without any claimant intervention. This ensures benefits are paid without interruption in the vast majority of circumstances.

Marion Fellows: [\[57124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Supreme Court judgment in Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Appellant) v MM (Respondent) (Scotland) [2019] UKSC 34, if she will confirm that her Department's review of PIP claims since 6 April 2016 will not negatively impact claims and result in claimants' payments being increased and backdated accordingly.

Marion Fellows: [\[57125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Supreme Court judgment in Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Appellant) v MM (Respondent) (Scotland) [2019] UKSC 34, whether claimants identified in her Department's review of PIP claims since 6 April 2016 will be required to (a) complete a reassessment, (b) complete an additional application form or (c) provide additional evidence as part of that review process.

Marion Fellows: [\[57126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Supreme Court judgment in Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Appellant) v MM (Respondent) (Scotland) [2019] UKSC 34, what her Department's timeframe is for its review of PIP claims since 6 April 2016; when her Department plans to complete that review and distribute payments; and how many PIP claims they plan to review each month.

Chloe Smith:

We are not planning to invite claimants for an assessment or require them to complete an additional application form as part of this review. However, we may contact claimants, their representatives or carers for more information, so that we can make a decision on their claim.

I can confirm awards will not be reduced as part of this exercise. If claimants are entitled to more PIP following a review, they will have their award increased and will receive backdated payments.

While it is too early in the process for us to give a date by which we expect to have completed all the reviews, I would like to provide reassurance that we are committed to ensuring that claimants get the PIP they are entitled to.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[53236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether a claimant's ability to travel and receive the covid-19 vaccine has been used by her Department as evidence when assessing a person under activity 11 of the Personal Independent Payment assessment.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Personal Independence Payment Activity 11 – planning and following journeys considers a claimant's ability to plan the route of a journey in advance, their ability to leave the home and embark on a journey and their ability to follow the intended route once they leave the home.

Health Professionals are expected to consider in the round the ability of an individual to carry out the activity safely, to an acceptable standard, reliably and repeatedly using their clinical expertise, the evidence provided and their observations of the claimant's functional ability.

Guidance does not specifically direct Health Professionals to consider a claimant's ability to travel to receive a vaccine and the information requested about specific cases is not available.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Vulnerable Adults**

Jessica Morden:

[\[56666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 41756, on Social Security Benefits: Vulnerable Adults, whether his Department's policy on whether it has a duty of care to benefit claimants has changed since 2012-14.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department is required by law to pay the correct amount of benefit to eligible customers at the correct time. This legal duty to benefits claimants has remained consistent.

Further to this, where customers require additional support we take steps to understand their circumstances and will offer advice and support as needed. DWP staff can also signpost customers to other public authorities (including those that have statutory safeguarding responsibilities). Through this collaborative approach, we provide effective support to customers who may be particularly vulnerable.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney

Gerald Jones:

[\[59866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney who have reached state pension age were awaiting an initial payment after (a) one month, (b) two months or (c) more than two months after qualifying for that pension.

Guy Opperman:

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.

■ Universal Credit

Justin Madders:

[\[57097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants had wages assigned to different assessment periods in each week from 24 May 2021 to 31 August 2021 under the legislation introduced in response to the judgment in Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v Danielle Johnson, [2020] EWCA Civ 778.

David Rutley:

The following data shows how many Universal Credit claimants had wages assigned to different assessment periods in each week from 24 May 2021 to 31 August 2021:

| WEEK ENDING | 24/05/21 | 31/05/21 | 07/06/21 | 14/06/21 | 21/06/21 | 28/06/21 | 05/07/21 | |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Volume | 150 | 633 | 647 | 309 | 165 | 593 | 391 | |
| Week ending | 12/07/21 | 19/07/21 | 26/07/21 | 02/08/21 | 09/08/21 | 16/08/21 | 23/08/21 | 30/08/21 |
| Volume | 200 | 184 | 398 | 402 | 258 | 225 | 239 | 794 |

It is important to note that this data is derived from unpublished management information and a database which relies on manual input. This was collected for internal Departmental performance use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The data should therefore be treated with caution.

Sam Tarry:

[\[58564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the findings of research commissioned by Save the Children which found that 61 per cent of claimants said it would be harder to afford food and 48 per cent said it would be tougher to cover essential bills, whether she plans to reverse the decision to remove the £20 a week uplift to universal credit.

David Rutley:

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced. With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, it is right that our focus is on helping people back into work.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending over £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22. With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, it is right that our focus is on helping people back into work. This approach is based on clear evidence about the importance of parental employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty

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. 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 new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The funding is being made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England. Newcastle City Council will receive £2,898,403.85.

In April this year we increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins. We are also investing up to £221m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children are benefitting from a range of support, including healthy and nutritious meals as well as fun and engaging activities covering the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

■ Universal Credit: Newcastle upon Tyne**Chi Onwurah:****[58844]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support the Government is providing to children in Newcastle Central whose families are affected by the end of the temporary universal credit uplift.

David Rutley:

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

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■ Universal Credit: Telephone Services**Drew Hendry:****[57144]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the current call waiting time for individuals seeking support with a universal credit claim from her Department's helpline; and if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of that call waiting time.

Guy Opperman:

We regularly review our resources both internally and with our telephony suppliers to ensure we meet customer demand across all services of contact including our phone lines, our service partners are currently recruiting additional staff to answer customer enquiries. Whilst demand fluctuates, this recruitment has supported so far this month our aim to keep average wait times under ten minutes, adequate for the freephone services available for all DWP customers.

The Actual Average Speed of Answer (Call Waiting) for Universal Credit April to September 2021 is shown in the table below in the format of hours:minutes:seconds.

| APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|
| 12:28 | 10:43 | 04:00 | 04:57 | 07:05 | 11:38 |

Average Speed of Answer measures the average customer wait time from the point of entering a queue to connection to an agent. This excludes any time spent in pre-queue messaging and any wait time for calls ultimately abandoned by callers.

Please note that the data in the above tables is derived from unpublished management information which was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The data should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus**Sir Christopher Chope:****[50608]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications her Department has received under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 in respect of covid-19 vaccines; how many applications have been (a) rejected and (b) accepted; and how many staff are engaged in processing those applications.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 21 September 2021]: The Department has received 437 applications under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 in respect of Covid-19 vaccines. All applications have been acknowledged and no applications have been rejected. All applications are subject to medical assessment to identify if, in light of all the available evidence, it is more probable than not that there is a link between vaccination and disablement.

Side effects of COVID-19 vaccines are rare and scientific understanding is continuing to grow. Following discussion with Department of Health and Social Care, DWP have now started the evidence gathering process for COVID-19 claims to allow the clinical assessment to happen, where the evidence has reached a position where a decision can be confidently made.

There are currently four members of DWP staff processing vaccine damage claims. The team are responsible for processing Child and Adult flu vaccination claims as well as recording, acknowledging and commencing the evidence gathering process on COVID-19 claims NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) will take over the administration of the VDPS on November 1st 2021. In preparation for this, NHSBSA will be recruiting and training additional resource to undertake the administration of VDPS claims. DHSC own the policy.

■ **Winter Fuel Payments**

Douglas Chapman:

[59822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to ensure that the correct addresses have been used in letters sent to winter fuel payment recipients by her Department.

Guy Opperman:

For Winter Fuel Entitlement, and all customer notifications, DWP uses information from customer records across the Department to identify the most recent address provided by a citizen.

It is the responsibility of the citizen to inform DWP if they change their address and of any other changes that may affect their entitlement to Winter Fuel.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

EDUCATION

■ Schools: Standards

Feryal Clark:

[\[44463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to reduce the attainment gap between state and independent schools in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) London and (c) England.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 September 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Robin Walker:

Since 2010, this government has been committed to raising educational standards in all state schools across the country. In March 2020, 86% of schools were Good or Outstanding compared to just 68% in 2010. When it comes to raising standards, evidence shows that teachers are the most important in-school factor affecting attainment.

In June 2021, we announced an investment of over £250 million in teacher **development** ~~quality~~, which includes investment in our National Professional Qualification and Early Career Framework programmes. School leadership is the second most important in-school influence on pupil learning. Since 2010 the number of academies has grown from 200 to over 9,400, enabling more leaders of good schools to make decisions based on local need and the interests of their pupils, and more previously underperforming schools to receive the support they need to raise standards for all pupils as part of a strong multi-academy trust.

We know that COVID-19 and disruption to education has created an additional challenge for schools, and that the impact of the COVID-19 has been felt most significantly by disadvantaged pupils, which is why we have targeted much of our education recovery funding specifically at this group. Through the recovery premium, schools will directly receive over £300 million in the 2021/22 academic year for them to use flexibly to support disadvantaged pupils.

This is in addition to the funding we already target towards disadvantaged pupils as part of the National Funding Formula. The pupil premium targets further funding to disadvantaged pupils and plays a crucial role in the work of schools across England, to ensure they have the resources they need to boost the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Through this, we will be providing £2.5 billion nationally for the 2021/22 financial year. The pupil premium allocation for London is £405 million, and £19.2 million for Enfield for the 2021/22 financial year.

In Enfield, we know there are a higher number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, with an average of 37.6% of secondary pupils eligible, compared to the national average of 27.7%. This year, Enfield is receiving £283.4 million, or

£5, ~~640~~ ~~283~~ per pupil, in funding. This is an increase of 2.0% per pupil in the local authority's pupil-led funding compared to the 2020/21 financial year, and is above the national average in per pupil funding of £5,228.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Damien Moore:

[\[49264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to discourage GPs from making non-urgent referrals to accident and emergency departments.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 12 October 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Maria Caulfield:

In 2021/22 the Investment and Impact Fund (IIF) will recognise general practitioner (GP) practices, organised into Primary Care Networks (PCNs), for developing and implementing plans to reduce unnecessary accident and emergency attendances and emergency hospital admissions. In 2021/22 and 2022/23, the IIF will also recognise PCNs for making and implementing plans to increase referrals from general practice to the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service. We have launched the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (**CPCS**) which is providing GPs, ~~emergency departments~~ and NHS 111 pathways for referring patients to a consultation with a pharmacist for lower acuity conditions. **Further work is underway to develop the CPCS referral routes from emergency departments and urgent treatment centres.**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Policy Update

Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): [\[HCWS351\]](#)

The Government is today announcing that it intends to make new powers to enable the Secretary of State for International Trade to call in certain investigations conducted by the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA).

These powers will ensure that the Secretary of State for International Trade has oversight for and may direct transition review investigations where she considers it is needed. The call in power only applies to transition reviews and reconsiderations of transition reviews, and does not apply to new investigations. Where the call in power is exercised, the Secretary of State for International Trade will set out her reasons for doing so in a statement to the House of Commons.

One of the advantages of being an independent trading nation is that we can adapt our domestic rules to UK economic circumstances.

The Government will always do everything in its power to defend UK industry and jobs and to allow our world-leading companies to compete on an equal footing.

The UK has always been a strong supporter of free trade. But free trade does not mean trade without rules. Rather than restricting free trade, trade remedies can help ensure that free trade is also fair trade. All major trading nations have a trade remedies system in place and many of these allow for greater Ministerial involvement in decision making than the UK currently allows.

As announced on 30th June 2021, the Government will continue to consider whether wider changes might need to be made to the trade remedies framework to ensure it can consistently defend UK industry. DIT will continue to work collaboratively with the TRA on this process and in the application of the call in power where the Secretary of State decides it is needed.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Housing Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary for Rough Sleeping and Housing (Eddie Hughes): [\[HCWS352\]](#)

The Government has protected renters across the country throughout the pandemic, providing an unprecedented £400 billion support package for the economy, a six-month stay on possession proceedings to protect renters from eviction, and extended notice periods. Thanks to this support, the vast majority of private renters (93%) are up to date with their rent. We are spending almost £30 billion supporting people with their housing

costs in 2020-21. With the UK economic recovery gathering pace, we are continuing to help people into work and increase their earning potential – the most sustainable route to financial security. We are investing billions through our Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

We recognise, however, that some private renters have rent arrears built up as a result of the pandemic and vulnerable households may need additional support.

We have therefore announced an exceptional one-off payment of £65 million that will be made available to local authorities in 2021/22 through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The additional funding will support local authorities to help vulnerable households with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless, including helping households to find a new home where necessary. Local authorities will target funding to those who need it most and help them to get back on their feet.

The investment builds on the £310 million in funding already available to local authorities through the Homelessness Prevention Grant - a £47 million uplift on last year to help fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act – which is part of the overall investment of more than £750 million this year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

This announcement underlines the Government's commitments to building back better from the pandemic, supporting renters and to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. The funding will ensure local authorities are given the resource they need to make this a reality in local areas. It will allow us to build upon the success we have had in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping with the number of families in temporary accommodation now at the lowest level since 2016 and a 37% decrease in rough sleeping recorded in the 2020 Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot compared to 2019.

The £65 million funding is in addition to the recently announced £421 million Household Support Fund to help vulnerable families in England with essentials over the coming months, which will be distributed by councils to those who need it most, including for example, through small grants to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities. Further support is also available to renters through the welfare system. This includes £140 million in Discretionary Housing Payments funding, which is available for local authorities this financial year to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

■ Local Government Update

Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch): **[\[HCWS353\]](#)**

Our local councils play a vital frontline role in our communities and our democracy. Everyone in the House recognises what they do and the importance of making sure they are able to contribute to our levelling up agenda. We need our councils to be able to make our towns and cities great places to live, where everyone, no matter what their circumstances, has the opportunity to thrive and can take advantage of effective and efficient service delivery. We need our councils to be able to support our most vulnerable citizens, for example through children's services and adult social care. In doing so, we need councils to make the most of every penny they receive from hard-pressed taxpayers

to secure better outcomes. This will build confidence and trust between local authorities, local councillors, and the communities they serve. That is why the situation at Slough Borough Council is of such concern.

Slough Borough Council was one of a small number of local authorities to request exceptional financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government agreed in principle to this request subject to the outcome of an external assurance review. This review considered the Council's financial position and the strength of its wider governance arrangements, and provided an assessment of the Council's ability to achieve financial sustainability without further recourse to public funds.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) led on the financial aspects of the review. Jim Taylor, former Chief Executive of Salford City Council, Trafford Council and Rochdale Borough Council, led on governance. I would like to thank Jim Taylor and CIPFA for their hard work. Copies of the reports have been deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

The reports paint a deeply concerning picture of mismanagement, of a breakdown in scrutiny and accountability, and of a dysfunctional culture at Slough Borough Council. The Council's internal controls and processes are inadequate, and the overview and scrutiny function is not equipped to operate effectively. Service delivery is hampered by ineffective core corporate functions such as IT and HR, and the residents of Slough are poorly served by the Council's struggling revenues and benefits service. The Council's contract management is weak and has resulted in rushed procurement, missed exit opportunities, and has delivered poor value for money. There is little evidence that the Council understands the entirety of its commercial investments and their impact on its finances. The staffing structure lacks the capacity and capability to deliver on the challenges the Council faces without external help. It is only very recently that senior members have grasped the seriousness and urgency of this situation and established it is not just solely a result of financial accounting assumptions. The Council cannot demonstrate a track record of making difficult decisions or of taking decisive action to bring about improvements. The reports confirm that, as indicated in the Section 114 notice issued by the Council earlier this year, the Council's expected requirement for additional financial support in 2021/22 has risen from £15.2 million to over £100 million.

The review shows unequivocally that Slough Borough Council has failed to comply with its best value duty of continuous improvement, as required by the Local Government Act 1999. The financial challenge is acute, and the review has concluded that the Council cannot become financially self-sustaining without considerable Government support.

To quote the review:

"An authority struggling to comply with its best value duty displays the following characteristics:

- an overreliance on interim officers
- a lack of corporate capacity
- many inadequate internal processes

- signs of distrust among and between councillors and senior officers
- the absence of effective scrutiny, transparency, and public consultation
- insufficient capacity to achieve the change required
- instances of poor-quality advice to members
- a lack of understanding of how some meetings should be conducted
- in some cases, members not understanding their role
- significant unknown past liabilities yet to be determined.

“Slough Borough Council has been displaying these characteristics over past years until present day and has failed its best value duty despite the concerted efforts in the last few months. It is unable to resolve the difficulties on its own.”

Expressed in formal terms, the Secretary of State is satisfied that Slough Borough Council is failing to comply with its best value duty and he is considering exercising his powers of intervention to secure compliance with the duty. To that end, and in line with procedures laid down in the Local Government Act 1999, officials in my department have today written to Slough Borough Council, asking for representations on the external assurance review and on the proposed intervention package. That letter also recognises the hard work of many of the staff at Slough Borough Council.

The proposed package is centred on the appointment of Commissioners to exercise certain and limited functions as required, for a minimum of three years. The proposal is for the Council – under the oversight of the Commissioners – to prepare and implement an Improvement Plan, and report on the delivery of that Plan to the Commissioners every six months.

In detail, the Council would be required to:

- Complete, within three months, an assessment of the functional capability of all service areas to identify the gaps in capacity and capability.
- Prepare and agree, within six months, action plans to the Commissioners' satisfaction to address any functional shortcomings.
- Undertake any actions the Commissioners require to avoid incidents of poor governance or financial mismanagement that would jeopardise the Council's ability to meet its Best Value duty.
- Prepare and agree, within three months, a fully resourced Improvement Plan which should include action plans to deliver: financial sustainability; improvements in democratic services, including the audit and corporate governance functions; a scrutiny function that is fit for purpose; improvements in internal audit; properly functioning procurement and contract management functions; improvements in the Council's IT function; an officer structure and scheme of delegation which provide sufficient resources to implement the Improvement Plan.

It is also proposed that Slough Borough Council will:

- Devise and implement a programme of cultural change to rebuild trust between officers and members within six months.
- Following the review of Council companies, within six months consider the roles and case for ongoing operation of each subsidiary company (except Slough Children First).
- Take steps to enable better and evidence-based decision making, including enhancing data and insight functions.

I hope and expect Slough Borough Council will take the lead on this path to improvement. Given the gravity of the review's findings, the Secretary of State must consider what would happen if the Council failed to deliver the necessary changes, at the necessary speed.

The Secretary of State is, consequently, proposing to direct the transfer to Commissioners of all executive functions associated with:

- The governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Council.
- The strategic financial management of the Council.
- The oversight of collection of revenues and the distribution of benefits by the Council.
- All non-executive functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers at the Council to the Commissioners.

These powers are for use should the Council not satisfy the Commissioners in their improvement processes. I hope it will not be necessary for the Commissioners to use these powers, but they must be empowered to do so if they consider the required improvement and reforms are not being delivered.

The Commissioners will report to the Secretary of State at six monthly intervals on progress. They will also work closely with Trevor Doughty, the Children's Services Commissioner for Slough Borough Council already in place and reporting to the Secretary of State for Education. This will ensure that the improvements that he has overseen to date through the Department for Education's statutory intervention continue to be made, and that services for Slough's vulnerable children and families continue to be delivered to an acceptable standard. Similarly, the Commissioners will be mindful of the interests of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and the consultancy support available from the Department for Work and Pensions to improve the revenue and benefits service.

We are inviting representations from the Council on the report and the Secretary of State's proposals by Friday 5 November. Given the conclusion of the review that "Improvement for Slough Borough Council will rely on stability in political leadership, and it would be advisable that the council moves towards a four yearly election cycle at the earliest opportunity", we are also seeking views on how best to achieve this.

We want to provide the opportunity for members and officers of the Council, and any other interested parties, especially the residents of Slough, to make their views on the Secretary of State's proposals known. Should the Secretary of State decide to intervene along the lines described here, he will make the necessary statutory directions under the 1999 Act and appoint Commissioners. I will update the House in due course.

Government does not take these steps lightly and recognises and respects the role of local councils in our communities and our democracy. Slough Borough Council is a rare case of failure. Most local authorities in England have a good record of service delivery, transparency, probity, scrutiny, and accountability. It is a record worth protecting. We will take whatever steps are necessary to uphold the good name of local government and to root out practices that do it down.

Finally, I urge council leaders across the country to read these reports. I know the local government sector – officers and members – will be saddened by the news that a council is failing. I would encourage all to make sure that they are not making the same mistakes as those that are described in this review. Local people deserve better than this from their local councils.