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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Coronavirus: Developing Countries**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[80426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2021 to Question 73936, on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what the average cost to the public purse was of purchasing each of those 100 million doses.

George Freeman:

As laid out in my answer on 17 November, the cost of these doses will depend on both the specific vaccines donated and their cost. Unfortunately, we are not able to disclose specific costs of individual vaccines procured to date, as details of contracts between the Government and vaccine manufacturers are commercially sensitive. As such, we would not be able to disclose an average cost for these vaccines.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[80433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, by what date he plans to donate his Department's order of 20 million Janssen covid-19 vaccine doses to the Covax scheme.

George Freeman:

On 30 October, we announced that the UK will donate all 20 million Janssen doses ordered by the Government to COVAX. The donation will be confirmed once terms have been finalised with Janssen and COVAX. Janssen aim to prioritise deliveries to countries based on need so COVAX will receive the much-needed vaccines as soon as they come off the production line in 2022.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Philip Davies**

Angela Rayner:

[80320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what meetings (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) civil servants in his Department have had with the hon. Member for Shipley since 29 April 2021.

George Freeman:

Departments publish quarterly details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations on GOV.UK. Details for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

Data for July to September 2021 will be published in due course.

Details of meetings held by civil servants are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Future Fund

Chi Onwurah:

[\[77451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications for the Future Fund were (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful in each region of the UK, and what steps his Department has taken to help ensure equal distribution of funding across the UK.

Paul Scully:

A total of 1,190 Future Fund applications were successfully completed. The number of Convertible Loan Agreements (CLAs) issued in each region of the UK is provided in the table below. A total of 655 applications for the Future Fund were unsuccessful. A regional breakdown of these applications is not available as the information has not been verified.

The location of Future Fund applicants broadly reflects the distribution of equity investment across the UK. The British Business Bank addresses regional disparities in access to finance through its regional investment funds and the Regional Angels Programme, both of which were extended at the recent Spending Review.

REGION	CLAs ISSUED
East Midlands	21
East of England	90
London	649
North East	30
Northern Ireland	13
North West	84
Scotland	23
South East	134
South West	43
Wales	25
West Midlands	30
Yorkshire and the Humber	32
Other	16
Total	1,190

Note: The 'Other' category includes companies based in the Channel Islands and companies that participated in an accelerator programme that mandated incorporation of the ultimate parent company in a non-UK jurisdiction.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Devolution: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[80485\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what representations he has received from the Scottish Government on the devolution of powers over the UK Civil Service in Scotland.

Nigel Adams:

Significant engagement between the UK Government and the devolved administrations takes place every day. Officials working for the governments of the UK and Scotland are part of the same Civil Service and share the same culture and values, as set out in the Civil Service Code.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[\[80202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2021 to Question 76573 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many Afghans with confirmed eligibility for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy are in Afghanistan as of 23 November 2021.

James Heapey:

Of the 311 ARAP-eligible principals who we were not able to evacuate before the end of OP PITTING, 166 are currently known to be in Afghanistan. The ARAP scheme is not time limited, and we continue to receive and approve applications to the scheme. All those who worked for HMG in qualifying roles remain eligible. In addition, those who worked in meaningful enabling roles alongside HMG in extraordinary and unconventional contexts will also be considered. Efforts to support all eligible Afghans and to help them to come to the UK are continuing.

■ Saudi Arabia: Armed Forces

Layla Moran:

[R] [\[80437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK service personnel are stationed in Saudi Arabia as at 22 November 2021.

James Heappey:

142 UK Service personnel are stationed in Saudi Arabia. Numbers vary according to operational and other requirements.

Layla Moran:**[R]** [\[80438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to increase the number of UK service personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia.

James Heappey:

We keep our plans for our presence in Saudi Arabia under review.

■ Veterans: Identity Cards**John Healey:**[\[80203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of armed forces service leavers have received their veterans ID card.

John Healey:[\[80204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects all armed forces leavers to have received their veterans ID card.

Leo Docherty:

I refer the right hon. Member 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 [\[UIN 47041.docx\]](#)

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Credit Reference Agencies: Republic of Ireland****Claire Hanna:**[\[79510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with his Irish counterpart to help facilitate a reciprocal data sharing arrangement for Credit Reference Agencies between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Julia Lopez:

UK and Irish Credit Reference Agencies are able to exchange personal data under currently existing arrangements where required to do so. The UK has already legislated to deem EEA countries as adequate, on a transitional basis, which means personal data can flow freely from the UK to the EEA. The EU adopted data adequacy decisions for the UK in June 2021 which means personal data can flow freely from the EEA to the UK.

■ Data Protection

Chi Onwurah:

[\[78397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Information Commissioner's Office on the draft direct marketing code of practice; and what steps she is taking to ensure the provision of clear guidance on the types of data profiling use which are prohibited under the UK GDPR.

Julia Lopez:

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the UK's independent data protection regulator. It has a statutory duty to produce a code of practice that provides practical guidance for organisations on carrying out direct marketing in accordance with the data protection legislation and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003. When the final code is published, it will include guidance for organisations on how to make sure that any profiling for direct marketing purposes is done in a way that is fair, lawful and transparent. The ICO will also make available practical tools alongside the code, to help support organisations in their direct marketing activities.

The ICO has a duty to consult with the Secretary of State and other interested parties on the development of the code and the ICO engaged with DCMS during the consultation phases last year. It will submit the code formally for the Secretary of State to lay in Parliament in due course.

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

Robert Lorgan:

[\[78521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Julia Lopez:

The number of Civil Servants employed by DCMS in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions has been listed in the table below.

NUTS1 REGION	1 MARCH 2021	1 JUNE 2021	1 SEPT 2021
Wales	0	3	9
Scotland	7	9	18
Northern Ireland	2	2	3
North East England	5	9	14
North West England	45	68	88
Yorkshire and the Humber	3	3	7

NUTS1 REGION	1 MARCH 2021	1 JUNE 2021	1 SEPT 2021
East Midlands	0	3	7
West Midlands	0	6	7
East of England	0	0	0
London	1713	1708	1755
South East England	0	0	0
South West England	3	6	12

We plan to further increase our presence across some of these regions by 2025;

- North West; up to 385 roles by 2025 to support our sectors.
- North East; up to 191 roles by 2025 to support the Economic Campus.
- Northern Ireland; up to 10 roles by 2025 to support all nations of the Union - we plan to maintain an equal presence in Wales and Scotland also.

We also plan to develop a smaller presence in the East Midlands to support the creation of SportPark and our Sport ALBs.

We plan to maintain a London presence, aiming to have no more than 50% of the workforce located in London and the South East by 2030, concentrated on operational and location specific business critical delivery.

Robert Largan:

[80496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many senior civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 regions of the UK on (a) 1 March 2019, (b) 1 March 2020, (c) 1 March 2021 and (d) 1 September 2021.

Julia Lopez:

The number of Senior Civil Servants employed by DCMS in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions has been listed in the table below.

NUTS1 REGION	1 MARCH 2021	1 JUNE 2021	1 SEPT 2021
Wales	0	0	1
Scotland	0	0	0
Northern Ireland	0	0	0
North East England	0	0	0
North West England	2	4	4

NUTS1 REGION	1 MARCH 2021	1 JUNE 2021	1 SEPT 2021
Yorkshire and the Humber	1	1	1
East Midlands	0	0	0
West Midlands	0	0	0
East of England	0	0	0
London	119	110	120
South East England	0	0	0
South West England	0	0	0

We plan to further increase our SCS presence across some of these regions by 2025:

- North West; up to 20 roles.
- North East; up to 9 roles.
- Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland; a minimum of 1 role per nation.

We plan to retain at least 50% of our SCS in London for business critical and operational purposes.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: UN Climate Conference 2021

Ruth Jones: [\[80477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 75126 on UN Climate Conference 2021: Government, how many Ministers in her Department travelled to COP26 by airplane.

Julia Lopez:

No DCMS Ministers travelled to COP26 by aeroplane.

■ Gambling

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[80217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what information her Department holds on the change in problem gambling rates between 2015 and 2020 among those aged between (a) 11-18, (b) 19-25, and (c) 26-35.

Chris Philp:

As set out in Public Health England's evidence review on gambling-related harms, the estimated overall problem gambling rate for England was 0.5% in 2018, and has been stable at this rate since 2012. This estimate was drawn from the Health Surveys conducted in 2012, 2015, 2016 and most recently in 2018. The problem gambling

rates for those aged between 16-44 years old in the 2015 combined Health Survey for Great Britain and the 2018 Health Survey for England were as follows:

	16-24	25-34	35-44
Combined Health Survey for Great Britain (2015)	1.1%	1.4%	0.9%
Health Survey for England (2018)	1.0%	0.9%	0.6%

To supplement the Health Surveys, the Gambling Commission carries out a quarterly survey by telephone which includes a shortened problem gambling screen. For the year to December 2020 this estimated a problem gambling rate of 0.3% (estimated at 0.5% in 2015). The problem gambling rate among 16-24 year olds was 0.5%, among 25-34 year olds was 0.2% and 35-44 year olds was 0.8%.

The Gambling Commission's Young People and Gambling Report has measured gambling behaviour in children since 2014, including problem gambling using an adapted screen. The data is not directly comparable over the period as the sample group has changed from 12-15 year olds in England and Wales (2014-16) to 11-16 year olds in England, Scotland and Wales, and there have also been changes to the survey methodology. In 2015, the Commission found the problem gambling rate among 12-15 year olds in England and Wales was 0.6%. In 2019, the last year for which the survey has been based on complete data, the rate for 11-16 year olds in England, Scotland and Wales was 1.7%.

■ Gambling: Advertising

Jim Shannon:

[\[79372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps to tighten restrictions on gambling advertising in the UK.

Chris Philp:

All gambling advertising, wherever it appears, is subject to strict controls on content and placement. Gambling operators and their affiliates must abide by the advertising codes issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP). In addition, the gambling industry has its own gambling advertising code – The Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising which includes additional requirements, for example, a 9pm television advertising watershed for most forms of gambling and ensuring advertising is targeted only at those over 25 years old on social media.

The Government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 with the publication of a Call for Evidence which closed on 31 March. As part of the wide scope of this review we called for evidence on the potential benefits or harms of allowing licensed

gambling operators to advertise. The Call for Evidence received approximately 16,000 submissions from a broad range of interested organisations and individuals. We are considering the evidence carefully and will publish a White Paper outlining conclusions and next steps in due course. The Government is also looking more broadly at how online advertising is regulated through the Online Advertising Programme, which will be launching a public consultation in the coming months.

■ **Gambling: Reform**

Henry Smith: [\[80278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to include consideration in the Gambling Act review of the introduction of testing for new amusement machines and games to gather evidence on regulatory reforms and social responsibility measures.

Henry Smith: [\[80279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to undertake regular reviews of the gambling sector to ensure that policy, regulation, stakes and prizes are kept up to date.

Chris Philp:

As part of its broad scope, our Gambling Act Review call for evidence included questions on the rules governing land based gambling and the need to ensure an equitable approach to the regulation of the online and the land based industries.

We are carefully considering all the evidence submitted and a white paper setting out our next steps and proposals for reform will be published in due course.

■ **Holiday Accommodation**

Caroline Lucas: [\[77411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 June 2021 to Question 16064, Holiday Accommodation, when the Government plans to publish the consultation on the introduction of a Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme in England; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

Prior to Covid-19, we had been planning to explore the merits and feasibility of introducing a Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme.

The Government intends to publish a call for evidence on matters associated with short term holiday lettings in early 2022.

This will assist in developing proportionate, evidence-based policy options for a subsequent consultation.

The Government is committed to hearing the views of all interested parties as part of this call for evidence.

■ Sports: Disability

Stuart Anderson:

[\[77499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support the disability sports sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government's sport strategy, 'Sporting Future', stresses the importance of helping under-represented groups and isolated communities, including disabled people, to take part in sport and physical activity.

Sport England, DCMS's arm's length body for grassroots sport in England, launched their ten year strategy earlier this year, 'Uniting the Movement'. The strategy reinforces their commitment to tackle inequalities in sport and physical activity, and provide opportunities to people that have traditionally been left behind, including disabled people. Sport England have also ensured that each of their programmes impact directly on disabled people, along with specific initiatives like the 'We Are Undefeatable' campaign, the Tackling Inequalities Fund and partnerships with groups such as Disability Rights UK, Activity Alliance, Aspire, Sense, International Mixed Ability Sport.

In addition, we are committed to championing disability sport at the highest levels, with continued support for Paralympic sports through UK Sport funding. We support the hosting of major sporting events in the UK such as the Rugby League World Cup in 2022, which will, for the first time in the event's history, concurrently host the Men's, Women's and Wheelchair tournaments. We are also hosting the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham which will be the most inclusive Games ever, featuring the largest ever integrated para sport programme and which builds on the Games' ambition of being the 'Games for everyone'. We have also ensured the continued visibility of the Paralympics by adding the games to the list of protected sporting events that must be available to free-to-air broadcasters.

■ Telecommunications Systems: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[78493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate her Department has made of the number of properties connected to the Public Switched Telephone Network that do not have access to a fixed or wireless internet connection in (a) Wales and (b) Ceredigion.

Ben Lake:

[\[78494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many properties connected to the Public Switched Telephone Network are not included in any fibre broadband network plans that will be implemented before 2025 in (a) Wales and (b) Ceredigion.

Julia Lopez:

The upgrade of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is an industry-led initiative which is regulated by Ofcom. Providers are moving from the old PSTN to new digital Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology.

VoIP landlines do not require fibre broadband to function but simply a stable connection speed of 0.5Mbps. For current landline-only customers it will be possible to order a VoIP landline without purchasing a general internet connection.

According to Ofcom there are over 16 million lines on the Openreach network which are being upgraded to VoIP services. For more specific information relating to Wales and your constituency, I would advise you to contact Openreach or Virgin Media O2, who are leading the migration process of their networks.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure**Jamie Stone:**[\[78488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will commit to publishing her Department's response to the consultation on potential reform of the Electronic Communications Code by the end of 2021.

Jamie Stone:[\[78489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to publish the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill.

Julia Lopez:

My department's response to the consultation on the potential reform of the Electronic Communications Code was published on 24 November 2021.

The proposed reforms set out in the response were brought forward in the Product Security and Telecommunication Infrastructure Bill, which was introduced in the House of Commons on 24 November 2021.

EDUCATION**■ Children: Exploitation****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[80261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children known to children's services teams in England and Wales have had child criminal exploitation noted as a risk factor in each of the past three years.

Will Quince:

Information on the number of children known to children's services teams in England, that have child criminal exploitation recorded as a factor at the end of assessment, is not yet collected centrally by the department.

Data on child criminal exploitation will be collected for the first time in the 2021 to 2022 children in need census and included in the associated statistics release,

scheduled for publication at the end of October 2022. More information on the children in need census can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-census-2021-to-2022-guide>.

Further information on the child criminal exploitation factor is included in the 'Additional guide on the factors identified at the end of assessment' document which is available under the subheading 'Factors identified at the end of assessment' here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/children-in-need-census>.

■ Non-teaching Staff

Alex Cunningham: [80300]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) teaching assistants and (b) other educational focused support staff employed in schools in England in the latest period for which figures are available.

Alex Cunningham: [80301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school-based support staff are trained to aid children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Mr Robin Walker:

Information on the number of staff, including teaching assistants and other support staff, employed in state-funded schools in England is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

In 2020/21, the full-time equivalent of 271,370 people were working as teaching assistants in state-funded schools in England. This figure is 49,889 (equivalent to 22.5%) higher than in 2011/12.

'Teaching Assistants' comprises those support staff based in the classroom for learning and pupil support, for example higher level teaching assistants, teaching assistants, special needs support staff, nursery officers/assistants, minority ethnic pupils support staff and bilingual support assistants.

Special support assistants are included in the teaching assistant totals and special educational needs coordinator assistants are included in the administrative staff totals.

Information on the number of school-based support staff trained to aid children with special educational needs and disabilities is not collected centrally.

■ Non-teaching Staff: Schools and Local Government

Alex Cunningham: [80299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has undertaken or commissioned a study or review of the capacity and effectiveness of (a) school based and (b) local authority based educational support staff.

Mr Robin Walker:

In 2019, the department commissioned research about the use and effects of teaching assistants in primary and secondary mainstream schools. The research was published in June 2019 and is available on the government's website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-deployment-of-teaching-assistants-in-schools>.

The research explores models of deployment in a range of primary and secondary mainstream schools in England, including the factors that affect deployment and reasons for changes to deployment.

Schools have the freedom to make decisions about the recruitment, training, use and pay for teaching assistants, according to their own circumstances.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution****Geraint Davies:****[77362]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that access to accurate air quality monitoring data is provided across local communities.

Jo Churchill:

Defra's UK-Air website displays near real time measurements from monitoring sites across the UK for a range of pollutants (<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk>). The largest of these networks, the UK Automatic Urban and Rural Network, is comprised of 171 monitoring sites and provides data to measure compliance with the Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010). The number and location of these sites have been carefully selected to minimise uncertainty and to be representative of the whole of the UK. Data from automatic monitoring sites managed by local authorities is also available from UK-Air.

The department is currently undertaking a detailed review of data services on UK-Air, building on the recent user needs work published in June this year (http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=15133_DefraAirQualityUserNeeds-finalreport.pdf), to maximise the benefits this high-quality monitoring information can provide our local communities and decision makers at all levels.

Through the statutory Local Air Quality Management framework, local authorities are required to assess air quality in their area and provide a summary of their assessment in an Annual Status Report. Local authorities are required to make these reports available to the public and local stakeholders through their websites.

In addition, Defra's Air Quality Grant scheme provides funding to local authorities and supports schemes which help councils develop and implement measures to improve air quality in local communities. We have increased the funding pot available to local authorities in this year's Air Quality Grant by £6 million. A significant proportion of this

additional funding will be dedicated to projects to improve public awareness in local communities about the risks of air pollution.

Geraint Davies:

[77363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to communicate to the public the (a) dangers of air pollution in rural and urban areas from indoor and outdoor sources and (b) steps that can be taken to mitigate the health impact of air pollution from those sources.

Jo Churchill:

Defra provides a wide range of air quality data and information to the public through the UK-AIR website. This includes a five-day air pollution forecast; these forecasts are communicated using the Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI). The DAQI informs the public about levels of air pollution in their area and provides health advice in the form of recommended actions that could be taken according to the level of air pollution.

Alongside the information we already provide to the public, we are conducting a holistic review of the way we communicate air quality information and advice to ensure the public is provided with timely and relevant information about air pollution, actions people can take to limit their personal exposure, the impact of air pollution on their health, and their own influence on air quality.

■ Anaerobic Digestion

Virginia Crosbie:

[77511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the proposed new policy requirements relating to the diversion of power into pasteurisation anaerobic digestion sites on (a) the environment and (b) demand for alternative sources of power.

Jo Churchill:

Environment Agency Position Statement 029: Anaerobic digestion of agricultural manure and slurry, Version 1.0, October 2010 has been assessed as part of a current waste quality protocols review. In December 2020 the Environment Agency published its first outcome of a review of the Anaerobic Digestate Quality Protocol. This concluded that, amongst other issues, the Environment Agency needs to review its position on the waste status of manure-based digestates (as detailed in Position Statement 029). The review is ongoing. The Environment Agency has set up a task and finish group with industry representation and the revision process has started. Details of this work can be found [here](#).

■ Birds: Conservation

Layla Moran:

[80439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to halt and reverse population declines in (a) skylarks and (b) other farmland birds.

Rebecca Pow:

In England, the Countryside Stewardship scheme provides funding for a range of options which support farmland birds by increasing important food sources such as seeds and pollinators, providing nesting and roosting sites, and creating habitats for birds and other species. The scheme has a specific option which supports skylarks by providing nesting habitats in winter cereal crops throughout their breeding season.

As part of our environmental land management approach, participants are able to select from an initial set of eight standards to build their own agreements. Several of these standards contain actions to support birds. For example, the Arable and Horticultural Land Standard aims to support increased farmland biodiversity, including wild bird and pollinator populations through specific actions that will provide year-round resources for farmland birds and insects. Further, the Low and No Input Grassland Standard contains an additional action in its advanced level to provide habitat for wading birds.

Schemes that reward environmental land management will support local environmental priorities while making an important contribution to the delivery of our ambitious national targets and commitments, such as the target to be set to halt the decline of species abundance by 2030 and the establishment of a Nature Recovery Network. For example, the new Landscape Recovery scheme will support the delivery of landscape and ecosystem recovery through long-term, large scale projects, such as by creating woodland and restoring wetland and peatland. The new Local Nature Recovery scheme will also include creating, managing and restoring habitats on a smaller scale.

Layla Moran:[\[80440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to migratory birds, what steps are the Government taking (a) nationally and (b) internationally to mitigate species decline.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is a globally important territory for migratory birds, and that is why we continue to take steps nationally and internationally to mitigate species decline. This is underpinned by our new target under the Environment Act 2021, to halt species decline by 2030.

In England, the Countryside Stewardship scheme can help to mitigate species decline, including migratory birds, through a range of options which provide food, habitat and nesting sites. Migratory birds which can be supported through the scheme include lapwing, stone curlew, turtle dove, whitethroat, redshank and snipe.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan commits us to restoring 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition by 2042. Many of these sites, which in total cover over 1 million hectares, protect the habitats of migratory birds even if not specifically notified for those species. Defra and the Devolved Administrations commissioned a review of the terrestrial and coastal UK network of Special Protection Areas, some of which are designated to protect the

habitats of regularly-occurring migratory birds, and we have developed an England implementation plan in liaison with Natural England.

The Government continues to support specific conservation action for species, such as the curlew, and as part of the Nature Recovery Network (NRN), we have funded a trial translocation and recovery project in the east of England. We have also supported a range of successful reintroductions for migratory raptors including the white-tailed eagle to southern England.

Internationally, the UK is a signatory to, and proactively engaged with, a number of international agreements which seek to conserve and protect migratory birds and their habitats, in particular the Convention on Migratory Species, the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement and the International Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean. In addition to domestic financial support, the UK provides targeted funding to support the conservation of threatened migratory birds and their habitats in developing countries, in particular in Africa.

■ **Cats: Imports**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[80483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many cats were imported using the Pet Travel Scheme in (a) August, (b) September and (c) October 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The data regarding the Pet Travel Scheme covers pets entering Great Britain and is based on information provided by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals.

CATS IMPORTED INTO GB UNDER THE PET TRAVEL SCHEME

2021	Aug	Sept	Oct
Cats	3,385	3,318	2,392

■ **Fertilisers: Supply Chains**

Richard Thomson:

[\[77505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the stability and security of the agricultural fertiliser supply chain; and if he will make a statement.

Richard Thomson:

[\[77506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of agricultural fertiliser costs on farm businesses.

Victoria Prentis:

We are aware that due to the increase in cost of natural gas across the globe, which is a key input for the production of ammonium nitrate-based fertiliser products, the cost of production of these fertiliser types has increased significantly. Increased demand has also increased the cost of other alternative fertiliser types. Rising cost of natural gas is affecting Europe and the global market with fertiliser companies halting production due to high input costs.

Industry data[1] reports that ammonium nitrate prices are at record highs, having nearly tripled in price since last November. They state that from November 2020 through to November 2021, the price of imported ammonium nitrate rose from £219 per tonne to between £600 and £630 per tonne, an increase of between 174-188%. Over the same time period, the price of UK produced ammonium nitrate also rose, from £208 per tonne to between £585 and £605, an increase of 181-191%.

A few months ago, the CO2 industry reached an agreement to ensure UK businesses have access to a sustainable supply of CO2. The Government supported this through a short-term financial intervention to allow CF Fertilisers to continue operating while the industry moved towards this agreement. Ammonium Nitrate production has therefore restarted and is being placed onto the domestic market.

Defra have been in contact with key industry figures including the NFU and fertiliser producers and importers, and have frequent contact with the key sector representative body for fertilisers the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC).

We are continuing to monitor the security and stability of fertiliser and other supply chains and working closely with colleagues across government as well as industry figures. This will help inform how Defra and other industry bodies can best support farmers.

[1] AHDB Fertiliser price data (<https://ahdb.org.uk/GB-fertiliser-prices>) and Infofert in collaboration with Profercy european fertiliser review (<https://www.profercy.com/>)

■ Food and Hospitality Industry: Supply Chains**Bambos Charalambous:****[80432]**

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

Victoria Prentis:

The United Kingdom has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise, and be ready to respond to them, including Government intervention when appropriate.

In the past months, the Environment Secretary and I have agreed a series of solutions to increase the efficiency of our supply chain system and support businesses across the food and drink, and hospitality sectors. These include working

with the Transport Secretary. We have adopted a series of measures to train, recruit and retain lorry drivers as well as improve the working conditions in the industry. Our joint-Government actions will continue to build more capacity across the food supply chain.

Some of these Government-led key measures include the Driver Vehicle Standard Agency's action to increase HGV tests to 3,000 per week, the introduction of 16-week skills bootcamps to train new and returning drivers and the Department for Transport's action to streamline HGV testing with a minimised regulatory framework adding around 50,000 more tests to be conducted. Defra has also announced that up to 4700 visas will be available for HGV drivers delivering food ahead of Christmas 2021.

In addition to this, the Transport Secretary relaxed driver hours regulation, allowing more deliveries to be made during unprecedented times of national driver shortage to manage food supply chain bottlenecks. This relaxation will last up to 9 January 2022 in England, Scotland and Wales covering the Christmas peak demand period for food across the supply chain.

Overall, these measures will improve the efficiency of the supply chain and the movement of food products across the interlinked food, drink, and hospitality businesses.

■ Reservoirs

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[80214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the sufficiency of existing water reservoirs to meet future demand; what plans he has to build further reservoirs or otherwise increase storage capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises the need for new water resources infrastructure, including reservoirs and water transfers, alongside reducing leakage and conserving water to provide a secure supply of water for future generations and to protect our environment.

The National Framework for water resources, launched in March 2020, brings together industry, regulators and government to transform the way we use and look after our water supplies, including the need to reduce demand, halve leakage and develop new supplies.

As part of the current price review round (PR19), Ofwat has allocated a £469 million fund for water companies to expedite and progress the development of new water infrastructure, which includes new reservoirs. Additionally, the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) has been formed to help accelerate the development of new water infrastructure and design future regulatory frameworks to enable this development.

Water companies have the statutory duty to provide clean and reliable water to customers under the Water Industry Act 1991. Statutory water resources management plans show how water companies will meet this duty and manage water supply and demand for at least the next 25 years. These plans are revised every five years and updated plans will be consulted on in 2022.

■ Rights of Way

Siobhan Baillie:

[\[77508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of representations to delay or cancel the 1 January 2026 deadline to correct legal record rights of way.

Rebecca Pow:

We understand the concerns that many stakeholders have about the 2026 cut-off date due to delays to the project brought about by our EU Exit and the need to reprioritise the Government's legislative agenda accordingly.

Deferring the 2026 cut-off date for registration of historic rights of way is a possibility, which would create more time for the reforms to rights of way legislation to be implemented effectively. However, we must weigh this against the desire for certainty around where rights of way exist, which implementing the cut-off date will bring. Officials will continue to keep this under review in consultation with the Stakeholder Working Group.

■ Zane Gbangbola

Ruth Jones:

[\[80462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on how many occasions he has discussed the death of Zane Gbangbola with the Environment Agency.

Rebecca Pow:

Whilst neither I, nor Defra ministerial colleagues, have discussed the death of Zane Gbangbola with the Environment Agency, Defra group officials have discussed the case on many occasions and have briefed Ministers.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations: Finance

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[80429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2021 Question 75963 on Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations: Finance, what the Government's timescale is for finalising individual allocations.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO's Spending Review settlement allows us to promote a positive, confident, outward-looking Global Britain. We are now working to align our resources to our strategic priorities through our internal business planning process. We expect to finalise this process in Spring 2022.

■ Diplomatic Service**Valerie Vaz:**[\[80290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish (a) how many UK missions overseas are located in premises owned by the UK Government and (b) a list of those missions.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office currently owns 98 UK missions overseas. The number includes British Embassies, High Commissions, Deputy High Commissions and Consulates. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office publishes a list of locations where there are HMG Overseas Missions that is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-foreign-office-posts>.

■ Diplomatic Service: Ethnic Groups**Valerie Vaz:**[\[80291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK ambassadors are (a) Black, Asian and minority ethnic and (b) to which countries they are ambassadors to.

Amanda Milling:

As of 31 March 2021, 5% of FCDO Heads of Missions, Heads of Posts and Governors declared an ethnicity as Black, Asian or minority ethnic. Further details, including on countries where Heads of Missions, Posts and Governors serve, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations>.

As part of the FCDO's Inclusion Framework, the Achieving Potential pillar actively supports all staff to achieve their potential. This supports the FCDO's objectives, taking personal action to address barriers faced by groups and individuals and demonstrate all staff are valued for their contributions. The FCDO continues to make progress developing the talent pipeline and supporting participation from under-represented groups in Civil Service Talent Schemes.

■ Diplomatic Service: Females**Valerie Vaz:**[\[80292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, (a) how many UK ambassadors are women and (b) to which countries are they ambassadors.

Amanda Milling:

As of 31 March 2021, 33% of Heads of Missions, Heads of Posts and Governors were women. Further details, including on countries where Heads of Missions, Posts and Governors serve, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations>.

As part of the FCDO's Inclusion Framework, the Achieving Potential pillar actively supports all staff to achieve their potential. This supports the FCDO's objectives, taking personal action to address barriers faced by groups and individuals and demonstrate all staff are valued for their contributions. The FCDO continues to make progress developing the talent pipeline and supporting participation from under-represented groups in Civil Service Talent Schemes.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[80428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2021 to Question 75966, on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff, when she plans to conclude her Department's strategic workforce plan.

Amanda Milling:

Work is ongoing on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Strategic Workforce Plan, which will define the longer-term workforce size, skills and expertise that the department will require for the next three years. At this stage no decisions have been made.

Our focus on strategic workforce planning will ensure that we have the right capabilities to deliver on our international priorities as set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy and the forthcoming International Development Strategy. Whilst we expect staff reductions in some locations over the course of the Spending Review, we will continue to retain one of the largest overseas diplomatic networks. Where reductions in staff are required, we would look to meet these through normal departures, the redeployment of our staff into funded posts and offering voluntary exits in line with Civil Service Policy and legal guidance.

India: Foreign Relations**Valerie Vaz:**[\[80289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last met with the High Commissioner of India to the UK.

Amanda Milling:

Engagement with the High Commissioner of India to the UK is primarily led at Ministerial level by Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia. Lord Ahmad last met the High Commissioner on 13 October. The Foreign Secretary maintains regular engagement with her Government of India counterpart, the External Affairs Minister.

■ Rainforests: Brazil**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[76660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate her Department made of the amount of deforestation in Brazil in the (a) last and (b) next decade.

Vicky Ford:

HMG officials draw on a range of sources to regularly assess deforestation levels across all of Brazil's important biomes. The last decade of deforestation in Brazil has been a mixed story: between 2004 to 2012, deforestation rates in Brazil reduced by over 80% but have risen since and most sharply in recent years. The UK is of course deeply concerned by the latest data for 2020-21 released by Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE) PRODES (Measurement of Deforestation by Remote Sensing) system on November 18th 2021, which suggests a surge in deforestation.

Looking ahead to the next decade, we welcome Brazil government's recent commitments made at COP26 to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030 and to eliminate illegal deforestation by 2028. We are also pleased to see Brazil's commitment, as part of the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration at COP26, to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. To support implementation of these commitments, we will build on the established partnerships HMG has with the federal and subnational governments in Brazil.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[76661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the potential effect of Brazil's Amacro sustainable development zone on the global level of deforestation.

Vicky Ford:

HMG officials are closely monitoring the Amacro sustainable development zone proposal and the potential risks through our experts on the ground.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Breast Cancer: Screening****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[56433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the number of people unable to attend NHS breast screening in (a) Slough and (b) the South East in the last two years.

Maria Caulfield:

All National Health Service breast screening providers are operational and ensuring that those still waiting for an invitation will receive one as soon as possible.

Since March 2020, data for the South East, suggests that 113,971 fewer women aged 50 to 70 years old have been screened for breast cancer and 1,433 fewer

women in the West Berkshire area, including Slough. However, in West Berkshire, 95% of women were screened within 36 months of their previous screen against a target of 90% by August 2021.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[79407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the Cancer Patient Experience Survey takes equal account of the experience of cancer patients who have survived and not survived cancer; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 November 2021 to Question [70278](#).

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Jack Dromey: [\[80269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) civil servants referred Worldlink Resource to the high priority lane for the supply of personal protective equipment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

Departmental Ministers, special advisers and civil servants did not refer these organisations to the high priority lane.

■ Dental Services

Steve McCabe: [\[78353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure that cancer patients have access to dental services.

Maria Caulfield:

National Health Service dentists have been asked to maximise safe throughput to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focussing first on urgent care and vulnerable groups followed by overdue appointments. Patients undergoing treatment for cancer should therefore be prioritised for treatment.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[80218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to Question 35525 tabled on 19 July 2021 on the outcome of discussions with the Thalidomide Trust regarding support for ongoing health needs beyond 2022-23.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 30 July to Question [35525](#).

■ Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Research**Sir Mike Penning:**[\[58786\]](#)

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]: I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer I gave on 22 October 2021 to Question 58780.

■ General Practitioners**Theresa Villiers:**[\[80223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of GP surgery appointments available to the public.

Maria Caulfield:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney MP) on 4 November 2021 to Question [67228](#).

■ General Practitioners: Labour Turnover**Theresa Villiers:**[\[80225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the rate of retention of GPs.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Health Education England and the profession to increase recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave the profession, and encourage them to return to practice.

The updated GP Contract Framework announced a number of new retention schemes alongside continued support for existing schemes for the general practice workforce. These include the GP Retention Scheme, the International Induction Programme, the Return to Practice Programme, the Fellowship Programme, the New to Partnership Payment and Supporting Mentors Scheme.

Theresa Villiers:[\[80226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the rate of retention of female GPs.

Maria Caulfield:

We are encouraging general practitioners (GPs) to stay in the workforce for longer by addressing the reasons why doctors leave the profession and encouraging them to return to practice. Although these are open to GPs of all genders, those aimed at encouraging better flexible working may be particularly beneficial for female GPs, who may be more at risk of leaving the profession due to caring responsibilities. This includes the GP Retention Scheme, which provides enhanced flexibility and a

package of financial and educational support to help GPs who might otherwise leave the workforce.

Funding and support has also been made available for local Primary Care Flexible Staff Pools, to increase capacity in general practice and create a new offer for local GPs wanting to work flexibly. For GPs, pools can offer the flexibility of a locum role with increased job security and the benefits of a salaried position.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the recruitment and training of more GPs.

Maria Caulfield:

We have increased the number of general practitioner (GP) training places, with 4,000 trainees accepting a place this year, from 2,671 in 2014. To support training for GPs and a more balanced distribution of trainee capacity across the National Health Service, the proportion of time GP trainees spend in general practice during training will rise from 18 to 24 months.

The Targeted Enhanced Recruitment Scheme is aimed at attracting doctors to train as GPs in hard to recruit areas. The Scheme offers a £20,000 salary supplement to attract trainee GPs to work in areas of the country where training places have been unfilled for a number of years. Additional investment has seen the number of places on the Scheme expand to 500 in 2021/22 and this will increase to at least 800 in 2022/23.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[80303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of new GPs needed to fill NHS shortages in that profession.

Maria Caulfield:

There is no national recommendation for the number of general practitioners required in the general practice workforce. Each general practice is required to provide services to meet the reasonable needs of their registered population. It is therefore necessary to consider the workforce for each practice including the range of health professionals available, who are able to respond to the needs of their patients.

■ General Practitioners: Standards

Dan Jarvis:

[\[80304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the average waiting time for a (a) face-to-face and (b) telephone GP appointments in the UK.

Maria Caulfield:

This data is not collected centrally.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[80305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the average waiting time to speak to a receptionist at a GP surgery in the UK.

Maria Caulfield:

This data is not collected centrally.

■ **General Practitioners: Workplace Pensions**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reform of the tax rules related to GPs' pensions.

Edward Argar:

The Department continues to have regular discussions with HM Treasury relating to the NHS Pension Scheme. The Scheme provides generous retirement benefits for National Health Service staff after a lifetime of service. Members who reach the £1.073 million lifetime allowance for tax-free saving will have built up an annual pension of approximately £46,000 per year and tax-free lump sum of approximately £139,000. This provides considerable financial security in retirement.

We are committed to ensuring that NHS staff do not find themselves reducing their work commitments due to the interaction between their pay, their pension and the relevant tax regime. The two thresholds above which the tapered annual allowance applies were each raised by £90,000 from 6 April 2020. This means that no-one with a threshold income below £200,000 is affected by the tapered annual allowance. An estimated 96% of general practitioners are now out of scope of the tapered annual allowance based on their NHS earnings.

■ **Health and Social Care Levy**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[77467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the financial impact of the Social Care Levy on (a) private and (b) voluntary sector employers in the social care sector in (i) the UK and (ii) Scotland.

Gillian Keegan:

No assessment has been made as this is a devolved matter.

■ **Hospitals: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle:

[\[58898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people acquired covid-19 in hospital in each of the last four weeks; and what steps is his Department is taking to prevent further cases.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not hold the data requested. This is because the incubation period of the virus and local differences in application of testing protocols mean it is not possible to definitively determine the number of people who contracted the virus while in hospital.

NHS England and NHS Improvement collect data as part of a daily COVID-19 SITREP on time between admission to hospital and first positive swab. Since October 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published data relating to the number of daily new hospital COVID-19 admissions and cases, the number of patients admitted from the community with the virus and patients who tested positive within seven days of admission.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/>

Data is also published for community admissions including cases diagnosed less than eight days after admission. It is therefore possible to determine the number of cases diagnosed eight or more days after admission. However, it should be noted that the definition of an infection definitely contracted because of an infection or toxin which exists in a certain location, such as a hospital, is greater than 15 days. Therefore, some of these cases diagnosed between eight and 14 days will be community acquired.

Mechanisms for infection prevention including physical distancing, optimal hand hygiene, equipment and environment decontamination and measures such as extended use of face masks by healthcare staff, patients and visitors, are continually reviewed in line with infection prevention and control guidance. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to ensure effective infection prevention and control in all areas.

■ Hospitals: Finance**Dan Jarvis:****[80306]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to allocate funding to existing hospitals that require facilities upgrades following the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Edward Argar:

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently undertaking a detailed planning exercise following the recent Spending Review. The precise allocation of the settlement is still to be determined. Capital budgets for health and care systems and any opportunities to bid for further funding will be communicated to trusts in the usual way.

■ Kidney Diseases: Dialysis Machines**Mr Laurence Robertson:****[62571]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the minimum and maximum prevalent rate of provision of home dialysis is across renal centres in England;

and what assessment he has made of the causes of variation in home provision between areas.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: All renal units in England are achieving 10% or more compliance in providing home therapies. The highest rate of home dialysis supported by a single renal unit is 34%.

Whilst no formal assessment of this variation has been made, home therapies for dialysis remain a priority within the Renal Services Transformation Programme with the aim of all units providing home therapies to at least 20% of patients. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work to ensure all units meet this standard.

■ **Maternity Services: Finance**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[79411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that funding for maternity services is adequate to (a) safeguard the health of mothers and babies and (b) secure good working conditions for midwives.

Maria Caulfield:

In March 2021, we announced £95.6 million to support the recruitment of 1,200 midwives and 100 consultant obstetricians to ensure safe staffing levels and personalised midwifery care for women and babies. The Department has commissioned the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to develop a new workforce planning tool to improve calculations of medical staffing requirements to provide safe, personalised care tailored to communities. We have also provided £6.8 million to support Local Maternity Systems to implement Equity and Equality Action Plans and implement targeted and enhanced Continuity of Carer to improve equity and safe outcomes for mothers and babies.

The NHS People Plan includes a focus on healthy working environments and safe spaces for staff to rest and recuperate. The National Health Service has established a People Recovery Task Force to develop a framework and interventions which will ensure that all NHS staff, including midwives, are safe and able to recover. We have invested £43 million in staff mental health support for 2021/22, in addition to £15 million in 2020/21. Forty mental health hubs are providing outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to mental health services.

■ **Mental Health: Research**

Angela Crawley:

[\[79415\]](#)

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

Maria Caulfield:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). In 2020-21, the NIHR spent £109.5 million on mental health research. While

it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR's funding is available through open competition for mental health and we encourage researchers to submit applications in this area. We are also funding the Mental Health Research Initiative to expand current activity and build the capacity and capability of mental health research in regions which are currently underrepresented.

■ Mumps

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[80215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the increase in cases of mumps.

Maria Caulfield:

The United Kingdom Measles and Rubella Elimination Strategy, published in 2019, focuses on four components required to maintain elimination. These are to: achieve and sustain at least 95% coverage with two doses of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine in the routine childhood programme; achieve at least 95% coverage with two doses of MMR vaccine in older age cohorts through opportunistic and targeted catch-up; strengthen measles and rubella surveillance through rigorous case investigation and testing at least 80% of all suspected cases with an Oral Fluid Test; and ensure easy access to high-quality, evidence-based information for health professionals and the public. This will improve mumps control and reduce outbreaks occurring.

The epidemiology of mumps in the UK has been impacted in several ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. The closures and public health measures in place in educational settings since March 2020 has led to the interruption of transmission of mumps and very few cases being reported. In England, there were two laboratory confirmed mumps infections between April and June 2021.

■ NHS and Social Services: Vacancies

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[77381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that provisions in the Health and Care Bill tackle staff shortages in the NHS and social care sector.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill places a statutory duty on the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to produce a report on the system in place assessing and meeting workforce need of the health service in England. This report must be published at least once every five years. NHS England and Health Education England must assist in the preparation of this report, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State. The report will set out the roles and responsibilities of the various bodies involved in workforce planning, providing greater transparency and accountability.

In July 2021 the Department also commissioned Health Education England to work with partners and review long term strategic trends for the health and social care workforce. This will review and renew the long-term strategic framework for the health and registered adult social care workforce, to help ensure we have the right numbers, skills, values and behaviours to deliver world leading clinical services and continued high standards of patient care. This will be published in spring 2022.

■ **NHS: Reorganisation**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[77382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of provisions in the Health and Care Bill that enable reorganisation of the NHS system on the ability of that organisation to manage demand for services; and what steps he is taking to ensure services are maintained during a period of reorganisation in future.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill will ensure that organisations across the health and care system can work together effectively, to deliver high-quality, sustainable care. The Department works closely with NHS England and partners such as the Local Government Association, to ensure implementation of the Bill will remove barriers and help local leaders to address the backlog in elective care.

■ **Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[80415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of adding Sickle Cell Anaemia to the NHS prescription charge exemption list.

Edward Argar:

We currently have no plans to review or extend the prescription charge medical exemptions list to include sickle cell anaemia. Approximately 89% of prescriptions are already dispensed free of charge and arrangements are in place to help those most in need. To support those who do not qualify for an exemption, the cost of prescriptions can be capped by purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate, which can be paid for in instalments. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ **Sickle Cell Diseases: Health Services**

Catherine West: [\[75082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the No One's Listening report published by the all-party Parliamentary group on sickle cell and thalassaemia on 15 November 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

While no formal assessment of the report has been made, it raised important issues around awareness amongst healthcare professionals, quality of care, inequalities, and variabilities in treatment for people living with sickle cell disease. The NHS Race and Health Observatory recently appointed a sickle cell expert to drive forwards work to tackle ethnic health inequalities.

To improve treatment for sickle cell disease, we have established ten specialist haemoglobinopathy coordinating centres and NHS England is deploying crizanlizumab, the first treatment for sickle cell disease in over 20 years. NHS England has also prioritised the development of a national haemoglobinopathy register to support clinicians in providing equitable, consistent treatment of patients. Additionally, a multi-stakeholder subgroup reporting to NHS England's Haemoglobinopathy Clinical Reference Group has been formed with the remit to develop guidance and processes that will support patients and clinicians to manage pain relief in a hospital setting.

The United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework outlined a national vision for improving the lives of those with rare diseases, including sickle cell disease. All four nations are now developing clear action plans to implement the Framework.

■ Social Services: Vetting**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[80307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the requirement for DBS or criminal record checks for people who work as private, directly employed care workers.

Gillian Keegan:

No assessment has been made.

HOME OFFICE**■ Animal Experiments****Martyn Day:**[\[76764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the political priority given by the Government to accelerating the replacement of animal research with human relevant techniques.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]: The UK's rigorous regulatory system ensures that no animal testing or research takes place if there is a non-animal alternative that would achieve the scientific outcomes sought.

The National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs) is the UK's leading scientific based organisation dedicated to replacing, refining and reducing the use of animals in scientific research and testing. The NC3Rs supports the research community use the

latest science and technology to replace animal studies, providing new approaches for biomedical research and avoiding the time and cost associated with animal models.

■ Animal Experiments: Licensing

Sir Greg Knight:

[76597]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) undertake a review of the monitoring process in place for adherence to licenses issued under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and (b) bring forward legislative proposals to improve that process; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]: The Home Office Regulator has, on a number of occasions this year, presented to stakeholders and duty holders on its regulatory reform programme that includes changes to the monitoring processes in place for adherence to licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

In July of this year the Regulator initiated a new operating model that delivers a more structured and integrated framework aligned with leading regulatory practice. The assessment of compliance in this new model is achieved through a variety of methods including full system audits, thematic audits, for cause audits, determination and follow up of action plans, review of reports, investigations and management of cases of potential non-compliance.

In October of this year the Regulator commenced a new system of full system audits that form part of an integrated system to assess compliance across the regulated community. Full details of the full system audit process and the evidence for assessment of compliance against the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and associated licence conditions, are available here: www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-research-technical-advice#process-and-standards-for-establishment-full-system-audits.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Ruth Cadbury:

[77465]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has provided to people who have applied for a biometric resident card before 31 December 2020 but who have not received their card as of 18 November 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Guidance for applicants about UK residence cards is set out on gov.uk:

www.gov.uk/uk-residence-card.

This explains applications for UK residence cards made by 31 December 2020 will still be considered.

As residence cards are no longer issued, this webpage also makes clear to continue living in the UK, individuals need another type of permission to stay, such as settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

Applicants are notified of this in writing with their residence card decision. The written decision sets out either their application would have succeeded but residence cards are no longer issued, or their application has been unsuccessful and informs them of any right of appeal.

The decision notice for successful applicants explains where an EUSS applicant requires a 'relevant document' (such as a residence card) to be eligible for EUSS status, the Home Office has implemented a concession to ensure no one who made a valid residence card application by 31 December is disadvantaged by not having such a document.

The terms of the concession are at page 30 of the 'EU Settlement Scheme: EU, other EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members' guidance to UKVI caseworkers which was published on 11 November 2021:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-caseworker-guidance

■ Crime Prevention: Feltham and Heston

Seema Malhotra:

[80312]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding her Department is making available in Feltham and Heston constituency to support programmes working with children and young people who are at risk of crime.

Rachel Maclean:

Tackling crime and serious violence is a Government priority.

Between 2019 and 2022, we have provided The London Mayor's Office of Police & Crime with £21 million to develop London's multi-agency Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which brings together local partners to identify and tackle the drivers of violence.

The London VRU works closely with all 32 boroughs to deliver a range of interventions that aim to prevent vulnerable young people from engaging in or falling victim to violent crimes. It focuses on capacity building at a local level to help communities respond to serious violence, such as targeted work with young people in Hounslow education settings through their Schools Violence Reduction Project. We are also investing a further £5.5 million in the London VRU this year to provide specific support to young people at high risk of engagement in violence.

We are also investing £200 million in the 10-year Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) which identifies what works to divert children and young people away from serious violent crime. The YEF have invested in two projects delivering in the London Borough of Hounslow: £28,500 into the Horn of Africa Youth Association, which delivers a 'Youth Empowerment Project'; and £35,000 into the Hounslow Action for Youth Association, which delivers a 'Young Women's Writing Project'.

We are driving targeted action to respond to the exploitation of children through the Home Office-funded Prevention Programme, delivered by The Children's Society. Coordinators in each of the ten policing regions, including London, work with a range of statutory, third and private sector partners to improve understanding of child criminal exploitation and other forms of exploitation and assist collaborative approaches to preventing exploitation and supporting victims.

Through the £13.2m Trusted Relationships Fund, which supports children at risk of exploitation, including criminal exploitation, we are funding a project in the London Borough of Hounslow to deliver intensive support to young people aimed to increase wellbeing, improve engagement in positive activities, and reduce the number of children who enter the Youth Justice System.

■ **Exploitation: Children**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[80257]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of local safeguarding partnerships that have a child criminal exploitation strategy.

Rachel Maclean:

We are working collaboratively across Government and with operational partners to raise the profile and improve the local safeguarding response to child criminal exploitation.

The statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' sets out the detail of what safeguarding partnerships are required to publish as part of their arrangements; including how they will work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in their area

Alongside the Department for Education, we are working with Liverpool John Moores University to test the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partnerships in dealing with young people at risk or involved in serious violence and county lines.

We have recently received the findings from those reviews and are considering the best way to share the learning and practise with local areas.

■ **Fraud: Internet**

Damian Collins:

[80280]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle online fraud.

Damian Hinds:

Frauds that are committed online are pernicious crimes. They can cause terrible financial and emotional harm to victims. The Government has been working with partners in the public and private sectors to keep the public safe and bring these fraudsters to justice. DCMS are leading ground-breaking work on the Online Safety Bill. The Bill will require regulated companies to take action to tackle user-generated

fraud on their platforms. This will impact some of the most harmful online fraud types such as investment and romance scams. DCMS are also leading work through the Online Advertising Programme that will consider, amongst other things, the role online advertising plays in enabling online fraud.

We have also been working closely alongside the National Cyber Security Centre who launched their Suspicious Email Reporting Service last year. This has already led to over 8.1 million reports received and the removal of over 67,000 scams and 124,000 harmful websites, since its inception in April 2020.

However, Government and the public sector cannot tackle online fraud alone. That is why, on the 21 October 2021, the Joint Fraud Taskforce was relaunched under my [Security Minister] chairmanship. The JFT brings together leaders from across the Government, private sector, regulators, law enforcement and victim groups to encourage collaboration to keep the public safe from these crimes. Alongside the relaunch, we published voluntary agreement with the retail banking, telecommunications and accountancy sectors outlining innovative measures to reduce fraud facilitated through these industries (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-fraud-taskforce>). We are also engaging the tech sector specifically through the Online Fraud Steering Group.

We continue to encourage the public to report fraud to Action Fraud and to forward any suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk and suspicious texts to 7726, free of charge.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[78460]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 22 September 2021 from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, regarding a constituent who was recently evacuated from Afghanistan with their family.

Victoria Atkins:

The Minister for Afghan Resettlement has now issued a response.

■ **Migrant Workers: Employment**

Jessica Morden:

[77394]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2021 to Question 73790 on Migrant Workers: Employment, whether her Department collects data on the time taken to complete Employer Checking Service checks and (b) in what format that data is collated.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office holds management information collected as part of a daily census, which covers the total size of the Employer Checking Service work queue and the age of the oldest query awaiting unanswered. This information cannot be used to infer an average processing time for the queue as a whole.

More granular detail, and a reliable calculation of average processing time would require a case by case review, which would incur disproportionate cost.

The information is provisional internal management information and subject to change. It is not quality assured under National Statistics protocols and does not constitute part of National Statistics.

■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Human Rights Act 1998**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[77379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential effect of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill on the operation of Article 11 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Kit Malthouse:

On introduction of the Bill in the House of Commons, the then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (the Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP) made a statement under section 19(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1998 that, in his view, the provisions of the Bill are compatible with the Convention rights. Baroness Williams of Trafford also made a statement to the same effect when the Bill was introduced in the House of Lords.

Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department for Transport Ministers have jointly published a memorandum addressing issues arising under the European Convention on Human Rights in relation to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, including Article 11 of the Convention. This memorandum is available on the gov.uk website at: [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021: overarching documents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). A further ECHR memorandum will be published shortly in relation to the new public order measures tabled by the Government on 15 November for Lords Committee stage.

■ **Public Spaces Protection Orders**

Peter Kyle:

[\[80413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Public Space Protection Orders have been issued by local authorities in response to covid-19 anti-vaccination protests outside school gates.

Rachel Maclean:

The use of Public Spaces Protection Orders are matters for Local Authorities. The Home Office does not centrally collate data on the use of Antisocial Behaviour powers, including Public Spaces Protection Orders.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Chi Onwurah:

[77448]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will issue guidance on who is eligible to apply for the (a) ARAP, (b) ACRP and (c) other Afghanistan resettlement schemes.

Victoria Atkins:

Guidance on eligibility for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy is available on gov.uk at: [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-further-information-on-eligibility-criteria-offer-details-and-how-to-apply).

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is not yet open and remains under development. However, the first to be resettled through this scheme will be some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk.

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:

[79378]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Home Secretary on 27 October 2021 to the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee, what aspect of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme can she not operationalise; and for what reason.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme is not yet open and remains under development. However, the first to be resettled through this scheme will be some of those who arrived in the UK as a result of the evacuation (Operation Pitting), which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk. Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the scheme. 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.

Seema Malhotra:

[80311]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timeframe is for bringing forward the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

As I stated at the recent Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry on safe routes and resettlement from Afghanistan, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme is not yet open and remains under development. However, the first to be resettled through this scheme will be some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk.

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

■ Rohingya: Refugees**Naz Shah:****[79400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assistance her Department is providing to Rohingya families who are settled in Bradford from the UN Gateway Protection Programme to reunite with extended dependants who are residing stateless in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Kevin Foster:

The Government already provides a safe and legal route to bring families together through its family reunion policy. This allows a partner and children under 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Refugees may apply to sponsor family via this route free of charge.

Our policy makes clear there is discretion to grant visas outside the Immigration Rules, which caters for extended family members in exceptional circumstances – including young adult sons or daughters who are dependent on family here and living in dangerous situations.

There are separate provisions in the Rules to allow extended family to sponsor children to come here where there are serious and compelling circumstances.

Refugees can also sponsor adult dependent relatives living overseas to join them where, due to age, illness or disability, the person requires long-term personal care which can only be provided by relatives in the UK.

Refugees who have since gained British citizenship may sponsor family under Appendix FM of the Immigration Rules.

■ Saleh Ibrahim Mabrouk**Jonathan Edwards:****[80277]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the High Court ruling of 16 November 2021 that Saleh Ibrahim Mabrouk was jointly liable for the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher on 17 April 1984, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing release of evidence relevant to a potential criminal

prosecution for that killing, previously withheld on grounds of national security, to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Damian Hinds:

WPC Fletcher's death remains as shocking and senseless today as the day it occurred, and I understand that the decision not to prosecute remains disappointing and frustrating for all her family, friends and colleagues.

The Government cannot comment on the details of this case. This is one of the most notorious crimes of the last forty years, representing an act of state-sponsored terrorism which resulted in the murder of a serving police officer on the streets of London. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment the Metropolitan Police have shown over a prolonged period of time to bring to justice those involved in the murder of PC Fletcher.

In any case referred to the CPS by the police, a decision to prosecute is made in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors, and a case must meet the evidential and public interest stages of the Full Code Test. Ultimately, the difficult decision was taken that a prosecution could not proceed.

As I am sure that the Honourable Member will understand, I am unable to confirm or deny the existence of national security material.

In accordance with the Code, the CPS will consider any new information that is referred to them by the police in relation to this case and will continue to bring justice to offenders wherever possible.

■ **Slavery**

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[80380]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department holds information on every (a) company or (b) employer found to be engaged in modern slavery offences in the UK, under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not hold the information in the requested format.

■ **Slavery: Children**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[80258]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many child victims of modern slavery offences involving child criminal exploitation have been flagged on the police national computer in each of the last three years.

Rachel Maclean:

Statistics on referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK's system for support and identification of victims of modern slavery, are published on a quarterly basis. The latest statistics which cover Quarter 3, July – September 2021 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-quarter-3-2021-july-to-september>

Previous reports published by the Home Office, including the end of year summary reports, can be found here [National Referral Mechanism statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-referral-mechanism-statistics)

Table 3 in each of the published Data Tables sets out the number of NRM referrals by age group at exploitation, country of responsible police force, exploitation type and gender. It is important to note that criminal exploitation has only been reported as a separate category from 1 October 2019 when improvements were made to how NRM data is collected and on how exploitation types are recorded. Prior to this, criminal exploitation was recorded as labour exploitation.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Freight: Small Businesses

Steve McCabe: [\[79273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the impact of handling fees by freight companies following the UK's departure from the EU on small businesses.

Mike Freer:

High consumer demand and sustained disruption caused by Covid-19 has put pressure on global freight capacity, which has resulted in demand for shipping containers outstripping supply. This has caused an increase in the cost of freight transport globally. Higher prices have impacted UK trade causing disruption for businesses and individuals. SMEs have been disproportionately affected by higher costs. However, the increased fees are expected to be short in duration with EU trade and services being marginally affected. DIT will continue to engage with businesses and to monitor the impact of rising shipping prices on international trade.

■ Shipping: Freight

Mr Steve Baker: [\[77444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of container shipping prices on UK trade; and if she will make a statement.

Mike Freer:

High consumer demand and sustained disruption caused by Covid-19 has put pressure on global freight capacity which has resulted in demand for shipping containers outstripping supply. This has caused an increase in the cost of freight transport globally. Higher prices have impacted UK trade causing disruption for businesses and individuals. DIT has supported DfT in working with the shipping industry to mitigate disruption. DIT is also engaging with affected businesses and continues to monitor the impact of rising shipping prices on international trade.

JUSTICE**■ Belmarsh Prison: Prison Accommodation****Ms Lyn Brown:****[77399]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Belmarsh, published on 10 November 2021, whether the Prison Service plans to reinstate the tripling up of prisoners in any cells in HMP Belmarsh.

Victoria Atkins:

There are currently no plans to resume the use of triple cells at HMP Belmarsh.

HMPPS continually monitors the anticipated population and capacity of the prison estate and will always ensure that there is sufficient space to hold those committed to custody from the courts.

■ Children: Exploitation**Ms Lyn Brown:****[80259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prosecutions and (b) convictions there have been of offences under the Modern Slavery Act in connection with child criminal exploitation (i) for each of the last three years and (ii) in total since 31 July 2015.

James Cartlidge:

From centrally held Ministry of Justice data, it is not possible to identify how many offences under the Modern Slavery Act were prosecuted or convicted in connection with child criminal exploitation. The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions for offences under the Modern Slavery Act in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, available below, but these do not identify the age of the victim:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

- Use the 'Offence' filter to select '106 Modern Slavery'.

Offences involving child criminal exploitation will be recorded in court data under their legal offence title.

Information to identify the age and specific offence may be held on court record but to identify them would require a manual search of court records and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Coronavirus**Ms Lyn Brown:****[77407]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the proportion of people in prisons in England and Wales who have been placed into custody as a place of safety as a result of mental health conditions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government has committed to remove prison as a place of safety under the Mental Health Act. Instances of prison being used as a place of safety are not recorded centrally; consequently there is no one data source that determines the scale of use. Work is underway to explore the use of prison as a place of safety; whether it is used solely in respect of concerns over mental health, or in conjunction with other factors such as the offending history of the individual; how this information is recorded; and the extent to which it can be quantified.

■ Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[77396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Report on an unannounced inspection of HMYOI Cookham Wood, published on 16 November 2021, what steps he is taking to help ensure that progress is made against HMIP inspection outcomes at HMYOI Cookham Wood.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[77397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Report on an unannounced inspection of HMYOI Cookham Wood, published on 16 November 2021, what steps he is taking to help ensure that there is improvement in access to sufficient hours of education at HMYOI Cookham Wood; and if he will establish a timescale for such improvement.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[77398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Report on an unannounced inspection of HMYOI Cookham Wood, published on 16 November 2021, what steps he is taking to help ensure that an effective violence reduction strategy is implemented at HMYOI Cookham Wood; and if he will establish a timescale for the implementation of such a strategy.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice is currently preparing an action plan which will be published in due course in response to the HMIP inspection report on HMYOI Cookham Wood.

The plan will set out steps being taken to address the issues identified including those to reduce violence and providing children with more access to education.

■ Homicide: Sentencing

Jonathan Edwards: [\[80276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to punish those guilty of murder of desecrating or concealing the bodies of their victims.

Tom Pursglove:

On 8 November, the Government announced an Inquiry into the offences committed by David Fuller in Tunbridge Wells, and that we would be reviewing the existing penalty available for the offence of sexual penetration of a corpse. These reviews

may highlight issues relating to the coverage of the existing offences that deal with desecration, and we will consider any changes to the law in light of their findings.

■ **Human Rights Act 1998: Reform**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[77417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to progress reform of the Human Rights Act.

James Cartlidge:

As the Deputy Prime Minister has set out, we will overhaul the Human Rights Act (HRA) to end its abuse by dangerous criminals and restore common sense to our justice system. In line with our manifesto commitment we will make sure it meets the needs of the society it serves and commands public support.

The Government 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 have received the Panel's report and are carefully considering its conclusions. We will publish the Panel's report in due course and consult on any proposed legislative changes.

■ **Immigration: Appeals**

John Redwood:

[77355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the 2020-21 budget is for providing legal aid to people appealing migration decisions.

James Cartlidge:

The Lord Chancellor has a duty to ensure that legal aid is made available in accordance with the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (2012), for cases where the relevant criteria, such as the financial eligibility of the applicant and/or the degree of legal merit in their case, is met, where applicable.

The Ministry of Justice works within HM Treasury allocations as shown in the Main and Supplementary Estimates (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-main-estimates>) each year. However, the nature of Legal Aid funding means that it is demand led, and as such the MoJ ensures sufficient allocation is made to cover the incurred costs.

Spend on legal aid since 2010 can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/legal-aid-statistics>, which currently shows expenditure up to and including June 2021.

■ **Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[77406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the implications for Government policy

of a potential increase in the (a) scale and (b) severity of (i) untreated and (ii) treated mental health conditions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice has been a member of the ministerial cross-government Mental Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish group, co-chaired by the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health and Social Care, since it was established in May 2020. This group was formed to examine and respond to the mental health and psychosocial impacts of the pandemic and it published a COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan on 27 March 2021.

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973936/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-recovery-action-plan.pdf).

Protecting prisoners and their mental health and wellbeing has been the priority for HMPPS throughout the pandemic. Mental health services have remained open, often adapting to provide support via digital services. We will continue to monitor and review prisoners' mental health needs and facilitate access to health services.

■ **Offenders: Mental Illness**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[77401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders, published on 17 November 2021, what recent discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues in the Department for Health and Social Care on the (a) steps needed to increase the use of Mental Health Treatment Requirements and (b) information-sharing and rates of attendance at Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement meetings by mental health providers.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice welcomes the joint thematic inspection and will be providing a formal response and supporting action plan in the new year.

Working with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England we will be increasing the availability of Primary Care Mental Health Treatment Requirements to cover at least 50% of all courts by 2023. We are also preparing to launch a campaign with sentencers and court staff to raise awareness of MHTRs where they are available and to promote their use.

The Secretary of State's statutory guidance to (MAPPA) responsible authorities has a dedicated chapter on mentally-disordered offenders, emphasising the importance of information sharing with and by medical practitioners, to inform risk assessment and risk management. The guidance is available at <https://mappa.justice.gov.uk/MAPPA/view?objectID=5682416>.

Officials have also undertaken significant work to build awareness on the part of medical practitioners of the role of MAPPA and of their part in the effective delivery of these arrangements in individual cases.

■ Prisons: Restraint Equipment

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[77400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Altcourse, published on 11 November 2021, whether it is HM Prison and Probation Service policy to record the use of rigid bar handcuffs (a) as a use of force and (b) otherwise.

Victoria Atkins:

Operational guidance on the use of rigid bar handcuffs, and the HM Prison and Probation Service policy on the use of force state that any use of handcuffs is considered a use of force, and must only be used when necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the seriousness of the circumstances. Following the use of rigid bar handcuffs, staff must complete a statement to justify their decision.

Use of rigid bar handcuffs must be discussed at a subsequent local Use of Force committee meeting and lessons learned shared with all staff. This can include, for example, discussions on alternatives which may have de-escalated the situation and any further training that may be required.

■ Reoffenders: Mental Illness

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[77402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders, published on 17 November 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of prison leaver homelessness on reoffending linked to mental ill-health.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[77403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders, published on 17 November 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on reoffending of the length of waiting lists for (a) mental health assessments in the community and (b) mental health treatments in the community.

Victoria Atkins:

The MoJ welcomes the joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders and will be providing a formal response and supporting action plan with HMPPS, DHSC and NHSE/I in the new year.

The Government is committed to tackling the causes of reoffending to keep our communities safe. We know there is a link between homelessness and reoffending; offenders without settled accommodation are around 50 percent more likely to reoffend. As part of the Beating Crime plan, MoJ have delivered a new transitional accommodation service for offenders leaving prison at risk of homelessness. Launched initially in five probation regions this July it is offering up to 12 weeks

temporary accommodation and support to prison leavers to facilitate them into settled accommodation.

My department is supporting efforts to ensure those with mental health needs are referred to community services for assessment and treatment in a timely fashion through such work as the NHS' RECONNECT scheme which provides a care after prison custody service to support patients through all healthcare pathways including mental health. Integrated Offender Management (IOM) schemes include clear pathways to support mental health services to help address the root cause of criminal behaviour. By facilitating offenders' access to these services, we are helping them turn their back on crime.

■ Young Offenders

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[80260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children were known to youth offending services and have had (a) gangs or (b) child criminal exploitation noted as an issue in each of the last three years.

Victoria Atkins:

Between April 2017 and March 2020, Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) recorded 67,372 children (26,681 in 2017/18, 21,665 in 2018/19 and 19,026 in 2019/20) receiving a caution or court sentence. This does not include children YOTs worked with who were on bail or remand and did not subsequently receive a caution or court sentence, or children who have not received a pre-court or court disposal, such as community resolutions.

It is not currently possible to specify the proportion of those children who have gang or child criminal exploitation. Data-recording requirements were amended in 2019 and 2020 to collect this data; changes are being made to IT systems to allow this to be analysed and published in due course.

■ Young Offenders: Hearing Impairment

Alex Cunningham: [\[80297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the number of young people in secure training centres have (a) hearing loss and (b) are registered as deaf.

Alex Cunningham: [\[80298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people in youth detention centres with (a) disabilities and (b) registered disabled.

Victoria Atkins:

All establishments within the youth estate in England and Wales must adhere to the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled

persons. Support is also provided for all children and young people with a disability in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Data is not currently available on disability for the entire population in youth custody. From April 2021 the Youth Custody Service (YCS) has centrally collected information on all protected characteristics of children and young people held under their care. This includes details on the presence and type of disabilities and long-term health conditions. This information is reviewed and updated when a child or young person is placed into a youth secure estate establishment. As this information was not collected for those admitted prior to April 2021 reliable figures for the whole estate are not available.

Internal information, which is subject to change, is available from April to October 2021. This shows that during that time there have been 581 new admissions to the youth estate. As of 24 November, 389 have responded and ten are recorded as having a disability. The number who are recorded as having a hearing impairment is five or fewer and is not being published to prevent disclosure in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998. This information relates purely to admission during the period and may include individuals who have since left the secure estate.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Building Safety Fund

Lucy Powell:

[80314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applicants waited (a) 1 month or less, (b) between 2 and 6 months, (c) between 7 and 9 months, (d) between 10 and 12 months and (e) over 1 year for a response to their application to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government acknowledges that remediation of unsafe cladding is complex and each individual project will vary in their journey through the funding application process. Information on the Building Safety Fund application process and estimated timelines can be found in the Building Safety Fund application guidance available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-application-process. The latest Building Safety Fund statistics, showing registration and application progress, are available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit correctly completed applications as soon as possible. The quicker an applicant submits their application, the quicker their application will be processed. A poorly completed full application will result in delays.

■ Business Premises: Empty Property

Rachael Maskell: [\[77469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to require property landlords to accommodate local businesses in empty premises at affordable rates.

Rachael Maskell: [\[77470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will determine a maximum period for a high street property to be empty before mandating that the property be sold.

Rachael Maskell: [\[77471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will enable large empty retail facilities to be converted into small business facilities.

Neil O'Brien:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of COVID-19. In July, we published the Build Back Better High Streets strategy which sets out the Government's long-term plan to support the evolution and regeneration of all high streets across every part of the UK into thriving places to work, visit and live.

■ Empty Property: Change of Use

Rachael Maskell: [\[77475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what further steps he will take to ensure that void properties are brought into use.

Christopher Pincher:

Government has given local authorities powers and strong incentives to tackle empty homes. Through the New Homes Bonus, they receive the same amount for bringing an empty home back into use as building a new one. Billing authorities in England also have the power to charge up to 100% extra council tax - on top of the standard bill - on properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for at least two years, up to 200% extra on properties that have been empty for at least five years, and up to 300% extra on properties that have been empty for at least 10 years.

In certain circumstances, local authorities can exercise powers to take over the management of long-term empty homes in order to bring them back into use in the private rented sector. Local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) when a property has been empty for more than two years, subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for their proposal.

Grant funding is also available through the Affordable Homes Programme to bring empty homes back into use. Empty properties must not be existing social housing owned by the Registered Provider or by another Registered Provider.

It is for local housing authorities to decide when to use their powers to deal with empty properties, and they have the flexibility to focus on locally determined priorities and allocate their resources accordingly.

The number of long-term empty homes remains substantially lower than when records began in 2004. At May 2010, over 300,000 homes in England had been standing empty for longer than 6 months. As of October 2021, the number of long-term empty properties had fallen to 238,306.

■ Housing: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[77473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that City of York Council progress house building to meet local need.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to supporting the supply of new homes across the country and have made strong progress towards our aim of building 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s – delivering around 244,000 last year, the highest in over 30 years. Our plans will enable us to build back better and level up our great towns and cities, supporting jobs in the construction industry for years to come

Homes England, our housing delivery agency, continues to work closely with the City of York Council to identify opportunities to deliver more homes that meet local need.

We are providing £77.1 million in housing investment grant funding to the York Central project, to unlock 2,500 homes on a brownfield city centre location next to York Railway Station.

We have provided £300,000 of resource funding to City of York Council to aid in the delivery of the West of Elvington Lane Garden Village. This will aid in the delivery of over 3,300 homes.

We have also invested £1,466,800 from the Local Authority Accelerated Construction Fund at the Lowfield School site in York. This is delivering 165 new homes, as well as community and care facilities. Our funds are now entirely drawn down, all homes have started on site, and completions have begun.

Through the Brownfield Land Release Fund, we have provided £2.64 million of grant funding to the City of York council to support the release of land for 97 homes across three local-authority owned sites. This includes two sites to release land for 10 new self and custom build homes.

■ Mary Anning**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[77418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing assistance to Dorset local planning authority in to consider the merits of erecting a statue of Mary Anning proposed by the Mary Anning Rocks campaign in Lyme Regis.

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities have a statutory target of 8 weeks to determine planning applications for minor development, and it is for them to ensure they have the resources in place to ensure this target is met. In this case, given the importance of this proposal to the community, I would expect a decision on this application to be prioritised by Dorset Council.

■ Parking: Codes of Practice**Navendu Mishra:** [\[76842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made in implementing the parking code of practice.

Daisy Cooper: [\[77501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to introduce the parking code of practice following the enactment of the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019.

Neil O'Brien:

As part of the process to implement the parking Code of Practice, the Government recently published its 'Private parking charges, discount rates, debt collection fees and appeals charter: further technical consultation'. The consultation contained proposals to bring private parking charges into closer alignment with Local Authority Penalty Charge Notices, along with a number of other measures to improve the private parking sector. The consultation closed on 27 August and the Department is finalising its analysis of the responses. Our intention is to publish the consultation response together with the new Code of Practice as soon as possible so that motorists can benefit and industry has time to adapt itself to the new requirements.

■ Parking: Fees and Charges**Daisy Cooper:** [\[77502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to allow appeals of parking charges under the parking code of practice, once introduced, to be made retrospectively from the date on which the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019 came into force.

Neil O'Brien:

Section 7 of the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019 gives the Secretary of State the power to appoint a single appeals service to handle appeals against private parking

charges. However, as a parking charge is an invoice for an alleged breach of the terms and conditions that applied at that particular time, the Act does not provide the power to cancel parking charges retrospectively. Additionally, the appeals window for many historic charges would have closed by the time the new appeals system is operating, which would risk court action for motorists with longer standing appeals. My Department is undertaking work to better understand the requirements of the new appeals service, and as part of that will consider how best to transition from the current appeals services, including ensuring that cases still being handled under the current services are treated fairly and in line with the new Code and its enforcement mechanisms.

■ **Property Development: Limited Liability**

Steve Reed:

[80316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of property developers who form limited companies and avoid ongoing liability for development sites with which they have been involved in by voluntarily striking off or winding-up those companies.

Christopher Pincher:

Companies House publishes regular statistical releases on, among other things, trends in the number of companies removed from the Register over time. The latest release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/companies-register-activities-statistical-release-2020-to-2021>.

■ **Regional Planning and Development: Walsall**

Valerie Vaz:

[80293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much and what proportion of the Government's levelling up funding will be allocated to (a) Walsall South constituency and (b) Walsall Borough.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: This Government is committed to levelling up, and delivering the economic and social priorities to boost living standards across the UK. As part of this agenda, the following funds have been announced and more information is available on the gov.uk website: £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, £3.6 billion Towns Fund, £830 million Future High Street Fund, £220 million Community Renewal Fund that will help to shape the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and £150 million Community Ownership Fund.

Walsall will receive up to £42.6 million (£21.3 million Bloxwich, £21.3 million Walsall) as part of the Towns Fund, subject to approval of the full business case, and over £11 million from the Future High Street Fund. The West Midlands Combined Authority, the lead applicant, will receive over £5 million as part of the Community Renewal Fund, with direct and indirect funding benefit Walsall. The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive fund, with funding distributed to places across the UK based on

successful project selection. Further detail on how future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund Fund and UKSPF will operate from 2022-23 onward will be set out in due course.

■ Social Rented Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[77474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the (a) availability of labour in maintenance roles and (b) potential effect of that availability on the time taken for council residential properties to be made available to people on the housing waiting list.

Eddie Hughes:

Since 2012, the number of households on local authority waiting lists has reduced by 37.5%.

There is high demand for social housing and even those with priority for social housing may have to wait before a home which meets their needs becomes available. Local authorities are responsible for managing their waiting lists.

We believe the most effective way of reducing social housing waiting list times is by increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Our new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. This builds upon the success of our £9 billion Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme, running to 2023, which will deliver approximately 250,000 new affordable homes.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[80317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30362 on Community Renewal Fund, what recent assessment he has made of the likelihood of all projects allocated funding by the Community Renewal Fund to be completed by March 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: We have extended the delivery timeline for the UK Community Renewal Fund by 3 months to ensure that successful applicants still have the same delivery window as set out in the fund prospectus.

Steve Reed:

[\[80318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30362 on Community Renewal Fund, whether funding will be withdrawn from projects granted funding by the Community Renewal Fund in the event that those projects are not completed by March 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: In recognition of the three month delay to announcements and to enable successful bidders to have sufficient time in which to deliver their projects, we have amended the delivery timeline beyond 31 March 2022. Projects will now have until the 30 June 2022 to deliver. We will work with lead authorities (mayoral combined authorities, county councils or unitary authorities) and directly with applicants in Northern Ireland in managing any change to their projects.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland**Louise Haigh:**[\[80378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the Community Renewal Fund awards.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: UK government ran a national competition against a fixed national allocation. All areas in Northern Ireland are eligible for funding and applicants applied directly to UK government. We have not applied any sub-national targeting within Northern Ireland to seek to ensure that all communities across NI can apply for these funds.

Following the UKCRF announcement successful and unsuccessful letters were issued direct to project applicants in NI. Grant funding agreements will then be issued to all successful project applicants in NI.

Louise Haigh:[\[80379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish the criteria by which scores were awarded in respect of the Community Renewal Fund for Northern Ireland.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: We have published on Gov.uk the UK Community Renewal Fund Explanatory Note. This sets out the assessment and decision-making process for selecting successful bids to the UK Community Renewal Fund including the assessment criteria for Northern Ireland.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Northern Ireland Protocol****Louise Haigh:**[\[80376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether the legal text of the UK's proposed changes to the Northern Ireland Protocol has been shared with the Northern Ireland Executive.

Conor Burns:

As part of the ongoing discussions with the EU on the Northern Ireland Protocol (the Protocol) we have shared a draft legal text with the EU which reflects the proposals in our Command Paper and provides the foundation for a new forward-looking Protocol that will govern the trading relationship between the UK and EU as far as it affects Northern Ireland. It is a negotiating document at the moment and therefore not public.

Ministers meet regularly with the Northern Ireland Executive First Minister and deputy First Minister to share information on the progress of our discussions with the EU on the Protocol.

PRIME MINISTER■ **Owen Paterson****Angela Rayner:**[\[80323\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last met Mr Owen Paterson, the former Rt Hon. Member for North Shropshire.

Boris Johnson:

As Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party, I routinely meet and engage with Conservative MPs. I have not met with Mr Paterson since he resigned as a Member of Parliament and became a private citizen.

■ **Summit Resorts & Developments****Justin Madders:**[\[80343\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what meetings have taken place between (a) Ministers and/or civil servants and (b) officials from Summit Resorts and Developments Limited (formerly David Lloyd Developments Limited) since 2019.

Boris Johnson:

Formal Ministerial meetings, and Permanent Secretaries' meetings, with external organisations are published each quarter on gov.uk

TRANSPORT■ **Department for Transport: Meetings****Angela Rayner:**[\[78420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what meetings (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) civil servants in his Department have had with the Rt Hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell since 1 September 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State had a one-to-one call with Chris Grayling on 19 May 2021 to discuss the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail. A DfT Special Adviser also attended.

Baroness Vere met with Chris Grayling and one of his constituents on 19 May 2021 to discuss road safety.

■ Heathrow Airport: Railways

Seema Malhotra:

[\[80310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with local authorities in West London and neighbouring Heathrow airport on Southern rail access to Heathrow.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Government remains committed to the Southern Access to Heathrow scheme and is working towards the next step of market testing, which is dependent on the scheme being affordable to taxpayers. Ministers and officials have frequent discussions with local authorities and Heathrow Airport on a range of topics

■ Members: Correspondence

Angela Rayner:

[\[80324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what correspondence have (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) civil servants in his Department received from the Rt Hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell since 1 September 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has received 74 pieces of Ministerial Correspondence and 8 Parliamentary Questions from Chris Grayling since 1 September 2020.

■ Ports: Carbon Emissions

Seema Malhotra:

[\[80309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support decarbonisation of British ports.

Robert Courts:

UK ports and the UK maritime sector that rely on our ports, are covered by the Net Zero 2050 target and our national carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act. As part of the implementation of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, we are accelerating the development of zero emission technology and infrastructure in the UK via a £23m Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition.

Building on the success of this programme, the Net Zero Strategy announced our intention to extend this to a multi-year programme, delivering real-world demonstrations and technology trials of clean maritime vessels and infrastructure to decarbonise the maritime sector. This is part of our commitment to a UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions.

We also support UK ports through other ways, including through the Freeports programme, which is already seeing green investments – for example, GE Renewables is locating its new offshore wind blade manufacturing plant in the

Teesside Freeport, and Siemens Gamesa is investing £186m to expand its offshore wind manufacturing in the Humber Freeport.

■ Trailers: Driving Tests

Bill Wiggin: [\[80220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals on trailer driving tests.

Trudy Harrison:

New legislation was re-laid in Parliament on 23 November 2021 to allow all full car licence holders to tow a trailer without having to pass a separate category B+E test.

Once these changes have been approved by both Houses, we will be able to confirm the date the licensing law will be introduced.

TREASURY

■ Banks: Closures

Ruth Jones: [\[80461\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of bank branch closures in Wales since July 2019.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the continued importance of access to banking. However, decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue for banks and building societies.

In May 2017, the largest banks and building societies, including those with a large presence in Wales, signed up to the Access to Banking Standard which commits them to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services.

Guidance from the Financial Conduct Authority also sets out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This ensures the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

Alternative options for access can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking, and the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

Furthermore, LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has commitments to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs and is held to account against these commitments by the Payment Systems Regulator. The financial services industry is also working with retailers to introduce cashback without a purchase to thousands of local shops following changes to the law by the Government through the Financial Services Act 2021.

The Government also remains committed to legislating to protect access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term. The Government recently undertook a consultation on Access to Cash. This set out proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. The Government's proposals support the continued use of cash in people's daily lives and help to enable local businesses to continue accepting cash by ensuring they can access deposit facilities.

■ BCC Blake Bidco

Gareth Thomas: [\[78350\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with representatives of Companies House on who the beneficial owners of BCC Blake Bidco Limited are; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[78351\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the (a) Financial Conduct Authority and (b) Prudential Regulation Authority on who the beneficial owners of BCC Blake Bidco Limited are; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Treasury has not held any discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), Prudential Regulation Authority, or Companies House about the beneficial owners of this company.

BCC Blake Bidco Limited is not listed in the FCA's Financial Services Register. The Jersey Financial Services Commission's Register shows that the company is registered in Jersey.

■ Carbon Emissions: Costs

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[77415\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Department has made of the potential costs to households during the transition to net zero.

Helen Whately:

HM Treasury has considered the possible exposure of households and business to the transition in the Net Zero Review. The report highlights that quantifying the thirty-year transition to net zero is challenging and highly speculative. The eventual impact will ultimately be determined by a variety of factors, including future technology costs

and choices, efficiency gains, wider economic impacts and the choices of future governments over the next thirty years

The CCC in their advice to Parliament, and OBR in their Fiscal Risk Report, have made some assessments on the additional investment required across the economy. Both are clear that the cost of inaction against climate change outweigh the costs of action. In our Net Zero Strategy we have set out an ambitious set of policies that will help businesses and consumers to move to clean power in an affordable way, supporting hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs and leveraging up to £90 billion of private investment by 2030.

■ Customs: Small Businesses

Steve McCabe:

[\[79271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of recent changes to customs import and export legislation on the ability of small businesses to import and export products.

Lucy Frazer:

Overall, our assessment is that many businesses have adapted well. Our focus is now on ensuring that those still facing challenges get the support they need to trade effectively with the EU.

HMRC are continuing to support traders adjust to changes in their customs obligations following the end of the transition period, with extensive engagement and communication campaigns, guidance, and educational resources, working in collaboration with other Government departments. The Government launched the SME Brexit Support Fund in March 2021 to support Small Medium Enterprises adjust to new importing and exporting processes. The scheme closed for applications on 30 June 2021, and over 4,000 businesses have benefitted from it.

The Department for International Trade launched its Export Support Service on 1 October 2021, which is a dedicated hotline and a 'one stop shop' to help more British businesses export to Europe.

We continue to work with industry to ensure that as many traders as possible understand the new rules and where they can access further support.

■ Employers' Contributions

Mary Glendon:

[\[77453\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department made of the financial impact of the rise in Employer National Insurance Contributions on (a) the employment rate and (b) wages, before that decision was taken.

Lucy Frazer:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer that was given on 19 November 2021 to PQ UIN 75954.

Mary Glindon: [\[77454\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what research he has commissioned within his Department on the impact of the rise in Employer National Contributions on (a) the employment rate and (b) wages.

Lucy Frazer:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer that was given to PQ UIN 76718.

■ Employment Allowance

Mary Glindon: [\[77455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of raising the Employment Allowance in order to support small employers to offer (a) more roles and (b) higher wages.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has no current plans to increase the Employment Allowance (EA). The EA has already been significantly increased since its introduction in 2014. In April 2020, the Government increased the EA from £3,000 to £4,000 and focused the relief on helping smaller businesses take on extra staff, fulfil their potential, and boost employment. This increase benefitted around 510,000 businesses, of which 65,000 businesses were estimated to be taken out of paying National Insurance contribution bills entirely.

■ Inheritance Tax: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: [\[80484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received from the Scottish Government on the rate of inheritance tax.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government is unaware of any representations from the Scottish Government on the rate of inheritance tax in the UK.

■ National Debt: Interest Rates

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[80216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much interest was paid in servicing the National Debt in (a) October 2020 and (b) October 2021.

John Glen:

The Office for National Statistics, jointly with HM Treasury, publishes monthly data on the public sector finances including central government debt interest spending. Central government debt interest payments in October 2021 were £5.6 billion, and £1.8 billion in October 2020.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Bridget Phillipson: [80284]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC self-assessment helpline were not answered at all, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [80285]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC VAT helpline were not answered at all, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [80286]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC National Insurance helpline were not answered at all, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [80287]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC Tax Credits helpline were not answered at all, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [80288]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC employers helpline were not answered at all, in each of the last 36 months.

Lucy Frazer:

Information on HMRC's current performance is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>

■ Treasury: Meetings

Angela Rayner: [80319]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) civil servants in his Department have had with the hon. Member for Shipley since 29 April 2021.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ VAT: Small Businesses

Steve McCabe: [79272]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of the length time taken to transfer data in respect of the Postponed VAT Accounting system on small businesses.

Lucy Frazer:

Postponed VAT Accounting (PVA) was introduced on 1 January 2021 for goods imported from anywhere in the world. This means UK VAT registered businesses are

now able to simultaneously account for and recover import VAT on the same VAT return, subject to the normal rules on input tax deduction, rather than paying import VAT at or soon after the time that the goods arrive at the UK border. This is similar to the way that VAT on goods acquired from the EU was accounted for prior to 1 January 2021.

Businesses that opt to use PVA on their customs declaration will be provided with a monthly import VAT statement no later than the sixth working day of the month following the import. Businesses that use staged customs controls, for which PVA is mandatory, will be provided with an import VAT statement no later than the sixth working day following submission of their supplementary declaration. Businesses access this statement through the financial dashboard of the Customs Declaration Service and will use it to both account for the import VAT in Box 1 of their VAT return and recovery of import VAT in Box 4.

Comprehensive guidance has been published and businesses should find PVA to be a cost effective and straightforward method of accounting for import VAT.

WALES

■ Muslim Council of Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[80463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he last met representatives of the Muslim Council of Wales.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with representatives from various religious groups.

The Government wholeheartedly supports the invaluable work being done by the Muslim community, and indeed all of our faith communities, who are inspired by their faith or belief.

The Government believes that people need to be able to feel strong in their religious identities and we are making sure that the voices of people of faith are heard in Government.

Increasing understanding and respect between faith communities is central to the Government's integration agenda.

We continue to work with all of our faiths, and even more so during the pandemic. A Places of Worship Taskforce and faith-specific roundtables, including a Muslim roundtable, chaired by the Faith Minister were established so we can best support our faith communities, and listen and act on their concerns.

■ Wales Office: Meetings**Owen Thompson:****[78452]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will provide details of his Department's process for recording and retaining minutes from all meetings in respect of Government business.

David T C Davies:

Formal, structured meetings are usually minuted, however, not all internal meetings need to be minuted. In line with the Civil Service Code obligation to 'keep accurate official records', officials make judgements as to which meetings need to be minuted.

Specific procedures are in place for external meetings involving ministers. These are publicly available and can be found in the [Guidance on the management of Private Office Papers](#).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

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

[\[HCWS425\]](#)

Contingent Liability (Indemnity)

Today I will lay before Parliament a Departmental Minute describing a contingent liability arising from an indemnity for the Energy Administrators acting in the Special Administration Regime for Bulb Energy Limited ('Bulb').

It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability of £300,000 and above, for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present Parliament with a minute giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances.

I regret that I have not been able to follow the usual notification timelines to allow consideration of these issues in advance of issuing the indemnity, but the fast moving nature of Bulb's situation has required a rapid response to protect consumers.

Bulb entered the Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime on 24 November 2021. Energy Administrators were appointed by court to achieve the statutory objective of continuing energy supplies at the lowest reasonable practicable cost until such time as it becomes unnecessary for the special administration to remain in force for that purpose.

My Department has agreed to provide an indemnity to the Energy Administrators in respect of personal liabilities they might incur in the exercise and performance of their powers and duties as administrator. I will update the House if the indemnity is called upon.

The legal basis for an indemnity covering the Energy Administrators' personal liability is section 166 Energy Act 2004, as applied by section 96 Energy Act 2011.

HM Treasury has approved the arrangements in principle.

Contingent Liability (Letter of Credit)

Today I will lay before Parliament a Departmental Minute describing a contingent liability arising from the issuance of a letter of credit for the Energy Administrators acting in the Special Administration Regime for Bulb Energy Limited ('Bulb').

It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability of £300,000 and above, for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present Parliament with a minute giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances.

I regret that I have not been able to follow the usual notification timelines to allow consideration of these issues in advance of issuing the letter of credit, but the fast-moving nature of Bulb's situation has required a rapid response to protect consumers.

Bulb entered the Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime on 24 November 2021. Energy Administrators were appointed by court to achieve the statutory objective of continuing energy supplies at the lowest reasonable practicable cost until such time as it becomes unnecessary for the special administration to remain in force for that purpose.

My Department has agreed to provide a facility to the Energy Administrators, with a letter of credit issued, with my approval, to guarantee such contract, code, licence, or other document obligations of the company consistent with the special administration's statutory objective. I will update the House if any letters of credit are drawn against.

The legal basis for a letter of credit is section 165 Energy Act 2004, as applied and modified by section 96 Energy Act 2011.

HM Treasury has approved the arrangements in principle.

■ **Departmental Contingent Liability Notification (Extension of the Recovery Loan Scheme)**

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS424\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable Members to bring to their attention the details of the extension to the Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 27 October 2021.

RLS is facilitated by the Government-owned British Business Bank and delivered through its delivery partners. Under the extension, lenders will offer facilities of up to £2 million to support businesses that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak. There will be no limit on the number and aggregate value of loans that can be made under the scheme.

The extension covers the period 1 January 2022 to 30 June 22. Under the extension, the following changes will come into force:

- The percentage of the remaining balance of each loan that is guaranteed by the Government will be 70 per cent (changed from 80 per cent).
- The maximum facility size will be £2 million per business (changed from £10 million).
- The scheme will only be open to small and medium sized enterprises (annual turnover less than £45 million).

Otherwise, scheme parameters are unchanged. As previously:

- The minimum facility size will be £25,001 for loans and overdrafts and £1,000 for asset and invoice finance.

- Businesses will be required to meet the costs of interest payments and any fees from the outset.
- Businesses who have made use of the previous Coronavirus loan schemes will be able to access the scheme.
- The lender must establish that the borrower has a viable business proposition assessed according to its normal commercial lending criteria. This may, but is not required to, be determined without regard to any concerns over the borrower's short-to-medium term business performance due to the uncertainty and impact of Coronavirus.

Our central estimate for lending for the initial scheme period (6 April – 31 December 2021) has been updated to £1.6bn, meaning a maximum contingent liability of £1.28bn.

The maximum contingent liability for assumed additional lending under the extension of £850 million (our central estimate) is £595 million.

I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Events Research Programme

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Ms Nadine Dorries):
[\[HCWS426\]](#)

The Government has published today the final reports from the science-led Events Research Programme.

The Events Research Programme has gathered evidence on the risks associated with events-related transmission routes of the COVID-19 virus, characteristics of events and surrounding activities, and the extent to which mitigation measures could be effectively implemented and address these risks.

The Events Research Programme was commissioned by the Prime Minister in February 2021 as part of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown. The programme consisted of three phases. Between April and July a total of 31 pilot events were conducted in England across a range of settings and sectors, with over two million participants involved in the programme. The programme used an innovative and collaborative approach involving leading university research teams, independent scientific and ethics advisers working in partnership with multiple government departments and agencies, national and local public health leads, events industry stakeholders and 27 local authorities.

The findings of the Events Research Programme have already been instrumental to inform both Government and industry on how to conduct events safely, and this publication further strengthens the evidence base already generated by the Events Research Programme.

Full copies of these findings can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), and copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid): [\[HCWS427\]](#)

The government is taking decisive precautionary action against a new COVID-19 variant by introducing travel restrictions on arrivals from South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Namibia from midday Friday 26 November. This precautionary move comes as Variant B.1.1.529 is declared a Variant under Investigation (Vul) by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). The variant includes a large number of spike protein mutations as well as mutations in other parts of the viral genome. These are potentially biologically significant mutations which may change the behaviour of the virus with regards to vaccines, treatments and transmissibility. More investigation is required.

From midday on Friday 26 November, non-UK and Irish residents who have been in these countries in the previous 10 days will be refused entry into England. This does not apply to those who have stayed airside and only transited through any of these countries while changing flights.

UK and Irish residents arriving between midday Friday 26 November and 4am Sunday 28 November from these six countries will be required to self-isolate at home for 10 days. They must take PCR tests on Day 2 and Day 8 post-arrival. These can be NHS PCR tests and passengers should take them even if they have already booked or taken their lateral flow test.

UK and Irish residents arriving from 4am Sunday must isolate in a government-approved facility for 10 days. During their stay, they will be required to take a coronavirus test on day 2 and day 8.

A temporary ban on commercial and private planes travelling from the six countries will also come into force at midday on Friday until 4am Sunday to reduce the risk of importing this new variant under investigation while hotel quarantine is stood up. This excludes cargo and freight without passengers.

The UK government thanks the government of South Africa for its surveillance of this variant and its transparency. Meanwhile the UK Health and Security Agency continues to monitor the situation closely, in partnership with scientific and public health organisations across the world, and we will offer to work collaboratively with the six countries that have been currently placed on the UK red list to understand the virus and possible mitigations.

TRANSPORT

■ Transport Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS423\]](#)

In October 2020, the Prime Minister asked Sir Peter Hendy to undertake a detailed review of how the quality and availability of transport infrastructure across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life.

Since then, Sir Peter and his panel have engaged with a multitude of industries, individuals, and institutions across the UK, and have drawn on their evidence, experiences, and views to develop a set of recommendations. Today, the recommendations are being published.

The UK Government is extremely grateful to Sir Peter for his leadership of the review and to all the members of his advisory panel for their expert input. It is a thorough analysis of the current state of transport infrastructure in the UK and presents ambitious solutions to improving connectivity. The report published today includes recommendations that the Government should:

- design and implement a strategic transport network for the whole of the UK, with funding commitments targeted at parts of the network that require it the most;
- upgrade the West Coast Main Line north of Crewe to improve journey times and capacity and to enable HS2 to better serve connectivity between Scotland and England;
- seek to work with the Scottish Government to conduct an assessment of the East Coast rail and road corridor to determine appropriate investments for better connectivity between Scotland and England;
- offer funding to upgrade the key A75 link to improve freight and passenger connectivity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
- seek to work with the Welsh Government to develop improvements to connectivity between North Wales and North West England on the A55, M53 and M56 roads and on the North Wales Coast Main Line, utilising HS2 and electrification to better serve North Wales, and for connectivity with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;
- relieve congestion on the M4 South Wales and England corridor by upgrading and building new rail stations, supporting the Welsh Governments package of public transport improvements and easing capacity restrictions at the junction of the M4/M5;
- develop a package of measures to improve rail journey times and capacity between Cardiff and Birmingham and beyond;
- improve connectivity to and from Northern Ireland through the development of a long term pipeline of infrastructure investment, better rail connections to airports

and by supporting the Northern Ireland Executive in their participation in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review;

- take measures to improve domestic aviation connectivity through revising subsidy rules, reducing tax and by intervening in the assignment of slots at London airports, and;
- secure better rail connectivity for freight across the UK with ports, and freeports as they are established.

Sir Peter was also asked to assess the technical engineering feasibility of constructing a fixed transport link between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The UK Government would like to thank Professor Douglas Oakervee CBE and Professor Gordon Masterton OBE for their leadership of this work. Sir Peter's work found that a bridge or a tunnel between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is feasible. But with today's technology and existing infrastructure, Sir Peter has concluded that the benefits would not outweigh the costs. He is therefore recommending that further work on the fixed transport link should not progress beyond this feasibility study. We accept this recommendation - it is a visionary project whose time might come in future decades, but not now.

The Government's levelling up vision can only be achieved if the transport system across the UK on which we all rely supports and drives economic growth, job creation and social cohesion.

The UK Government wholly welcomes Sir Peter's report and invites the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to work closely with us, in a spirit of collaboration and co-operation, to consider the review's recommendations and to agree how a new strategic transport network for the whole United Kingdom and the vital upgrades highlighted by Sir Peter can be taken forward to strengthen transport connectivity for the benefit of all parts of the UK.

As we build back better, the Government is determined to do so in a way that levels up across the UK, bringing communities across the country even closer together. Wherever you live in the UK, a connected local and national transport network will bring you closer to all the social and economic opportunities available.

Sir Peter's review is a landmark study along that path to a better-connected future. The UK Government thanks him, and his team for their excellent work. We will reflect on his conclusions, discuss them with our colleagues across the UK, and aim to publish a full response to the review in early 2022.