



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 September 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:30 P.M., 20 September 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Fraud: Convictions

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[47337]**

To ask the Attorney General, how many convictions were secured by the Serious Fraud Office against (a) corporates and (b) individuals in each year between 2013 and 2021 inclusive.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The table below sets out how many convictions were secured in Serious Fraud Office (SFO) cases in each year and whether they relate to a corporate or an individual. This does not include cases that were resolved through Deferred Prosecution Agreements (DPAs), where the SFO have entered into 12 DPAs since their introduction in 2014.

YEAR	CONVICTIONS SECURED AGAINST INDIVIDUALS	CONVICTIONS SECURED AGAINST CORPORATES
2013	14	0
2014	17	1
2015	5	1
2016	9	1
2017	12	1
2018	19	1
2019	5	0
2020	1	0
2021	1	2

In 2022 to date, the SFO have secured convictions of four individuals as well the conviction of one corporate. An additional 12 individuals will be standing trial in cases this year that are yet to conclude. Detailed information regarding SFO cases be found on their website: <https://www.sfo.gov.uk/>.

#### ■ Fraud: Prosecutions

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[47336]**

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutions were brought forward by the Serious Fraud Office against (a) corporates and (b) individuals in each year between 2013 and 2021 inclusive.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The table below sets out how many prosecutions the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) brought forward in each year and whether they relate to a corporate or an individual. The term “brought forward” has been taken to mean the instigation of a charge against an individual or corporate. This includes cases where charges were brought

but the case did not progress to conviction, including cases resolved through Deferred Prosecution Agreements.

YEAR	PROSECUTIONS BROUGHT AGAINST INDIVIDUALS	PROSECUTIONS BROUGHT AGAINST CORPORATES
2013	27	3
2014	18	2
2015	10	3
2016	25	2
2017	27	5
2018	7	1
2019	7	2
2020	14	4
2021	7	4

Detailed information regarding SFO cases be found on their website:  
<https://www.sfo.gov.uk>.

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### ■ Biofuels

**Selaine Saxby:** [45584]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's timescale is for the publication of the Government's biomass strategy.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is actively progressing work on the biomass strategy, including work on the assessment of the priority use of biomass across the economy, which will be explained in the forthcoming strategy. The Government plans to publish the Biomass Strategy in due course.

### ■ Boilers: Production

**Seema Malhotra:** [45481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with boiler manufacturing companies about (a) the availability of fans for boilers and length of time of supply and (b) any suspension of new boiler production in the last 24 months as a result of fan availability.

**Graham Stuart:**

Officials from the Department have regular discussions with boiler manufacturers, either directly or through trade bodies. These cover a range of issues, including supply chains.

## ■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[45288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will increase support for (a) the ventilation and insulation of buildings and (b) other climate change mitigation measures following the summer 2022 heatwave.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the Heat and Buildings Strategy the Government set out plans to decarbonise the UK's 30 million homes and workplaces and committed to considering current and possible future scenarios including overheating risks and indoor air quality risks when developing future policies. BEIS plans to undertake further research in this area.

The Government has committed £6.6 billion across this Parliament to decarbonise heat and buildings. All measures installed under Government schemes must meet the latest Publicly Available Specification PAS2035/2030:2019 standards. These standards adopt a whole-house approach to home retrofit, requiring adequate ventilation throughout the dwelling and steps to mitigate against overheating risks.

## ■ Business: Energy

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[47546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of rising energy bills on the viability of businesses; and if he will make an estimate of the number of businesses forecast to close in the next two years.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is in regular contact with business groups and suppliers to understand the challenges they face and explore ways to protect consumers and businesses.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[47548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with (a) the British Chamber of Commerce, (b) Hospitality UK, (c) the Federation of Small Businesses, (d) Make UK and (e) the Institute for Family Business on the potential impact of rising energy bills on British businesses.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is in regular contact with business groups and suppliers to

understand the challenges they face and explore ways to protect consumers and businesses.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

## ■ Carbon Emissions

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[45347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, published in October 2022 and the High Court judgment on the strategy of 18 July 2022, for what reason the Government did not provide the level of analysis required in that strategy on its plans for reaching net zero.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Net Zero Strategy included a mix of quantified proposals and policies, as well as some additional emerging proposals and policies at earlier stages of development which we were unable to quantify. It is inherently difficult to quantify the emission reductions that a particular proposal or policy will generate over time with certainty. This was especially the case for meeting the sixth carbon budget, given that it was 12-16 years ahead. The Government is seeking permission from the Court of Appeal to appeal the judgment.

## ■ Cars: Sales

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[47536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the trends in new car sales over the last six months and the impact on the UK car manufacturing sector; and if he will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

The UK automotive market showed a positive start to 2022 with new car registrations in Jan-Feb 2022 above 2021 levels, when lockdown restrictions meant showrooms were shut. However, registrations are still below pre-pandemic levels with semiconductor chip shortages continuing to constrain supply globally.

As part of the Government's Net Zero Strategy, we are allocating a further £350 million for the Automotive Transformation Fund, as part of our £1 billion commitment to build an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain including gigafactories.

## ■ Civil Society: Energy

**Rachael Maskell:**

[47587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps is he taking to help support (a) charities and (b) faith-based organisations with rising energy costs.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* The Government has announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

## ■ Coal Authority: Climate Change

**Caroline Lucas:**

[45763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2022 to Question 39801 on Coal Authority, and with reference to Climate Change Committee's Sixth Carbon Budget, published in December 2020, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of revising the duties of the Coal Authority in respect of licensing metallurgical coal developments to (a) support the transition green steel and (b) deliver on commitments in the Climate Change Act 2008.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has published an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy setting out a technology-neutral approach that does not rule out the use of coking coal in an integrated steel making process together with carbon capture as a net zero compliant option going forward, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-decarbonisation-strategy> The strategy notes that coking coal is currently essential for primary steel manufacturing using the basic oxygen furnace route.

The Government keeps the Coal Authority's duties under review. There are currently no plans to revise its duties with respect to licensing coal extraction.

## ■ Commodity Markets: Fossil Fuels

**John Spellar:**

[45708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of financial speculation on the volatility of the gas and oil commodity markets.

**Graham Stuart:**

As internationally traded commodities, oil and gas prices are primarily driven by the underlying price in the global market of crude oil and natural gas. These are also

influenced by exchange rates and a range of other supply and demand factors, including stock levels, logistics and distribution costs and seasonal demand variations. The reopening of the global economy following the pandemic and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine have also contributed to increased pressure on oil and gas markets.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Aramco**

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[45769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will the publish the (a) attendees and (b) minutes of his lunch with Saudi Aramco on 31st January 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022, my rt. hon. Friend the then Secretary of State undertook site visits to energy facilities in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. He had discussions over the course of the day with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and the Chief Executive Officer of Saudi Aramco, Amin Nasser, as well as other Saudi Energy Ministry and Saudi Aramco officials. The then Secretary of State was accompanied by Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a special adviser, and officials from BEIS and the British Embassy Riyadh.

Discussions covered clean energy innovation and Aramco's sustainability initiatives, including hydrogen technology, carbon capture, utilisation and storage, and the reduction of fugitive emissions associated with oil and gas production.

All meetings have been declared as required, through transparency data released on 14 July 2022.

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

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department spent on energy in each of the last three years.

**Graham Stuart:**

At the Department's headquarters building at 1 Victoria Street, London, the net spend on gas and electricity for the last three financial years was as follows:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Gas	£76,668	£100,439	£136,274
Electricity	£641,927	£455,386	£563,925
<b>Total</b>	<b>£718,595</b>	<b>£555,825</b>	<b>£700,199</b>



## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Visits Abroad

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[45238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, (a) what was the total cost of his visit to the Shaybah oil field in Saudi Arabia and (b) who bore the costs of this visit.

**Graham Stuart:**

The costs of the then Secretary of State's travel to and from Saudi Arabia, as well as those of his delegation, were met by the UK Government. Internal flights to the Shaybah oil field were arranged by the Saudi Energy Ministry and also provided by Aramco.

Flights have been properly and publicly declared, as is required, through transparency data released on 14 July 2022 and can be found on the gov.uk website.

## ■ Electricity: Imports

**John Spellar:**

[\[45525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of a reduction in hydro-based electricity exports from Norway on the availability and price of electricity imported via interconnectors.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government works closely with Ofgem, National Grid Electricity System Operator and other key industry organisations to monitor gas and electricity supply and prepare for winter.

Interconnectors are one source of a diverse range of energy supplies. The Government is monitoring the situation with Norwegian reservoirs and understands Norway is securing strategic reserves of water in its reservoirs to guarantee long-term security of energy supply.

The UK and Norway have a bilateral treaty on electricity interconnection and this puts obligations on both nations to ensure the North Sea Link interconnector is operated in a market-based, transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

## ■ Electricity: Price Caps

**Mr David Jones:**

[\[45606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a national pricing structure for the supply of electricity.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The British wholesale electricity market currently has a national pricing structure.

The Government is considering reforms to wholesale electricity pricing under the Review of Electricity Markets Arrangement (REMA). The recently published REMA consultation sets out the Government's initial considerations on zonal and nodal pricing, which are two potential alternatives to national pricing under consideration.

## ■ Energy

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the roll out of (a) nuclear energy, (b) onshore renewable energy and (c) offshore renewable energy schemes.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government published the British Energy Security Strategy in April, which sets out the UK's ambitions for deployment of low-carbon energy, including nuclear and renewables.

## ■ Energy Bills Rebate

**Richard Foord:** [\[47724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on providing support to households that will not be reached through the £400 energy bills discount.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* On 29th July, the Government set out further details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) following the technical consultation which ran from April to May.

As part of this package, the Government confirmed that further funding will be available to provide equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the households which will not be reached through the EBSS. This includes those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an energy supplier.

The Government will be announcing details in the autumn on eligibility and how additional households will receive the £400 of support.

## ■ Energy Intensive Industries: Energy

**Jonathan Reynolds:** [\[47523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising energy prices on energy intensive industries.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government remains determined to secure a competitive future for our energy intensive industries (EIs), providing them with extensive support, including over £2 billion to help with the costs of energy and to protect jobs. As part of our British Energy Security Strategy we recently announced an extension of the EI

Compensation Scheme for a further three years and its budget will be more than doubled.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

## ■ Energy: Billing

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[47593]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that people who fall behind on their energy payments are (a) not disconnected and (b) provided an assessment of their legal entitlement to (i) financial and (ii) other forms of support by their energy supplier.

**Graham Stuart:**

Consumers who are struggling to pay their energy bills should contact their supplier.

For indebted consumers, suppliers must set repayment plans that are based on the consumer's ability to pay, provide an option to pay via the Fuel Direct scheme or install a prepayment meter. The supplier must provide energy efficiency advice to reduce bills. Disconnection of supply for non-payment may only be an action of last resort if the consumer declines the facilities offered, and they are not of pensionable age, or living with persons under the age of 18 or someone who is disabled or chronically sick.

## ■ Energy: Charities

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[46196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to include (a) charities that provide housing and (b) community groups, including village halls, in future Government energy efficiency schemes.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* Charities that provide housing could be eligible under the Local Authority Delivery Scheme, provided they meet certain criteria. Moreover, further funding via the Energy Bills Support Scheme will be available to support households not currently in scope. Details will be announced this Autumn.

Charities and non-profit organisations may be also entitled to a reduction in VAT, and exclusion from the main rates of the Climate Change Levy on the energy they use for non-business purposes.

Officials remain in close contact with representatives from the charity sector to monitor the situation and assess how and where additional support can be provided.

**■ Energy: Conservation****Julian Knight:** [45389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that homeowners make informed choices on the energy efficiency of their homes.

**Graham Stuart:**

In July the Government launched the online service 'Find ways to save energy in your home'. This can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency>.

**■ Energy: Consumers****Fleur Anderson:** [45601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to ensure that people are able to add funds to their energy top up cards without being required to purchase additional items at top up points.

**Graham Stuart:**

There is no requirement for shopkeepers to ask customers to purchase additional items when adding credit to their energy top up cards. If this were to happen, then customers are entitled to raise a complaint with their supplier.

**■ Energy: Costs****Rachael Maskell:** [47591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) all residents receives support with their energy costs and (b) pensioners and those receiving social security payments have the cost of their energy bills capped at an affordable level.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* From 1 October, a new Energy Price Guarantee will mean a typical UK household will, on average, pay no more than £2,500 a year on its energy bill for the next two years. This is in addition to the support the Government announced earlier this year, which includes the £400 rebate via the Energy Bills Support Scheme, a one-off £300 payment for pensioners, a one-off £650 payment for those on means-tested benefits and a one-off £150 payment for the disabled. Council Tax rebates have also been provided to households living in council tax bands A to D.

**■ Energy: Government Assistance****Bim Afolami:** [45991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support businesses with rising energy costs.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. The scheme will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

The Government is also providing a 50% business rates relief for businesses across the UK and reducing employer's national insurance. This is in addition to the billions in grants and loans offered throughout the pandemic.

**Energy: Meters****Steve McCabe:**[\[45703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that energy companies are not sending consumers false information in relation to smart meters.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* Energy suppliers are required to abide by the Standards of Conduct outlined in their licence conditions, which set expectations regarding their behaviour, information provision and customer service processes. As part of this, when communicating with their customers, energy suppliers must provide information that is complete, accurate and not misleading.

Energy suppliers are regulated against their licence obligations by Ofgem, which has a range of enforcement tools at its disposal.

**Energy: Nationalisation****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[46185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an assessment of the impact of bringing energy companies into public ownership on energy bills.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not intend to make such an assessment. Nationalisation will not solve the current challenge of high global fossil fuel prices and the impact this is having on the cost of energy. Properly regulated markets, which incentivise private capital to invest in the energy system, provide the best outcome for consumers and promote market competition as the best driver of efficiency, innovation and value.

**Fuel Oil: Price Caps****Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[45236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 1 July 2022 to Question 23820 on Fuel Oil: Price Caps, if he will publish his

Department's assessment of the potential merits of introducing an energy price cap on heating oil.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has carefully considered the introduction of a price cap to help domestic fuel customers with high fuel prices, however analysis indicates that a cap would not be in the long-term interests of consumers.

■ **Glass: Industry**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[47613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the glass industry.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is determined to secure a competitive future for energy intensive industries (EIIs) including the glass industry. In recent years, the Government has provided EIIs with extensive support, including more than £2 billion to help with the costs of energy and to protect jobs. The British Energy Security Strategy announced the three-year extension of the EII Compensation Scheme, doubling its budget. The Strategy also announced a consultation on plans to consider increasing support offered by the related EII Exemption Scheme. That consultation closed on the 16 September and the Government will respond in due course.

■ **Glass: Manufacturing Industries**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the impact of rising energy costs on the glass manufacturing sector.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is determined to secure a competitive future for energy intensive industries (EIIs) including the glass industry. In recent years, the Government has provided EIIs with extensive support, including more than £2 billion to help with the costs of energy and to protect jobs. The British Energy Security Strategy announced the three-year extension of the EII Compensation Scheme, doubling its budget. The Strategy also announced a consultation on plans to consider increasing support offered by the related EII Exemption Scheme. That consultation closed on the 16 September and the Government will respond in due course.

■ **Heat Pumps**

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[44978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an (a) estimate of the cost and (b) assessment of the feasibility of reinforcing the electricity network to achieve the Government's aim to install 600,000 heat pumps per year by 2028; and if he will place a copy of that assessment in the Library of the House.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government and Ofgem jointly published an Electricity Networks Strategic Framework on 4 August 2022, which sets out a vision for the transformation of the electricity network needed to maintain our energy security while reducing emissions and our dependence on imported fossil fuels. Network regulation, including ensuring sufficient investment to deliver the capacity needed to meet demand, is a matter for Ofgem. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem and electricity network operators to discuss their plans to support connections of low carbon technologies, including heat pumps.

**Hinkley Point C Power Station****Alan Brown:**[\[45096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with (a) EDF and (b) the Low Carbon Contracts Company about an extension of EDF's deadline for generating electricity from reactor one at Hinkley Point C nuclear plant while continuing to access the full 35 year contractual period of the Contract for Difference.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The Government, the Low Carbon Contract Company (LCCC) and EDF maintain regular contact on the Hinkley Point C Contract for Difference (CfD).

In their role as counterparty to the CfD, the LCCC have recognised that COVID-19 is capable of being a Force Majeure event and discussions on this are ongoing.

HPC is a private, developer-led project and any cost overruns during construction are borne by the developer.

**Housing: Stockport****Navendu Mishra:**[\[46191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of capacity issues at the national grid on housebuilding in Stockport.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The Government is aware of lengthy connection timelines currently being offered in parts of the country, particularly where transmission network upgrades are required to accommodate distribution network connections, such as housing developments. Network companies are working with Ofgem to release capacity including through improved modelling of network impacts of new connections and streamlining of connection procedures.

## ■ Iron and Steel: Carbon Emissions

**Jane Stevenson:** [45011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government is taking steps to help support the UK steel industry to decarbonise; and if he will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The Net Zero Strategy, published on 19 October 2021, reaffirms the Government's commitment to work with the steel industry on decarbonisation and to consider the implications of the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee: to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

BEIS continues to work with companies, who are developing their own decarbonisation strategies, to understand the trajectories of their plans and to support them as they make commercial decisions on the optimum route for their sites.

## ■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Prices

**Angela Crawley:** [47577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to support liquified petroleum gas off grid gas users with the rising cost of fuel.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Price Guarantee will benefit all Great Britain households who are grid connected and buy gas or electricity directly from a supplier. Where equivalent support is needed the Government will provide it to those whose homes are powered differently, including park homes, heat networks and, off grid households.

## ■ Microgeneration

**Drew Hendry:** [45521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of Ofgem on microgeneration feed-in tariff rates for domestic home producers.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department works closely with Ofgem to discuss a range of topics, including microgeneration feed-in tariff, and matters discussed include areas of operations and policy. Further information regarding feed-in tariff rates can be found on Ofgem's website:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/feed-tariffs-fit/tariffs-and-payments>.



## ■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

**Alberto Costa:**

[\[45895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21, Mineworkers' Pension Scheme, published on 29 April 2021, HC 1346, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the size of the mineworkers' pension scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Mineworkers' Pension scheme is funded through investments. The Government guarantees that pensions will be paid in the event that returns on those investments are insufficient to meet members' benefit entitlements.

## ■ National Grid: East of England

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[45346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether National Grid has plans to consult the Ministry of Defence on the potential impact of the East Anglia GREEN proposals on operations at Wattisham Air Base.

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[45395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether National Grid has plans to consult Wattisham Air Base on the potential operational implications for the air base as a result of the East Anglia GREEN proposals.

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[45538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether National Grid has plans to consult Wattisham Air Base on the East Anglia GREEN project.

**Graham Stuart:**

Consulting on East Anglia Green is a matter for National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET). The Ministry of Defence is a Statutory Consultee under the Planning Act, and the Government understands that NGET are engaging with RAF Wattisham on any potential impacts of the project on Wattisham Air Base.

## ■ Natural Gas: Electricity

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[46212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help separate the link between the cost of gas and electricity.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA), first announced in the British Energy Security Strategy, will consider how the long-term role of gas as a price setter for electricity could be reduced.

### ■ Natural Gas: Energy Supply

**John Spellar:**

[45707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness of the Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism and (b) potential merits of introducing such a mechanism in the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism contains measures for a potential gas supply shortfall that are specific to Australia's position as a Liquefied Natural Gas exporter. The United Kingdom does not produce Liquefied Natural Gas, therefore such measures would not be appropriate here.

### ■ Natural Gas: Safety

**Drew Hendry:**

[45900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his officials have had with representatives of Ofgem on ensuring adequate support for customers capping gas mains to install carbon free energy solutions.

**Graham Stuart:**

BEIS Ministers and officials regularly meet with Ofgem representatives to discuss a range of topics related to energy markets.

Gas meters are owned by Meter Asset Providers (MAPs). Energy suppliers pay a monthly fee to MAPs to rent each meter and the cost is passed onto consumers through the standing charge. If a consumer no longer wants to use gas the supplier can remove the meter and cap the supply. The cost for this service is a commercial matter because the supplier will incur costs from the MAP for removing the meter and supplying an engineer to undertake the work.

### ■ Nitrogen Trifluoride

**Caroline Lucas:**

[45766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 18 June 2021 to Question 13025 on Nitrogen Trifluoride, for what reason his Department has not brought forward legislation to amend the definition of greenhouse gases in the Climate Change Act 2008 to include nitrogen trifluoride; and what the revised timetable is for doing so.

**Graham Stuart:**

Legislation will be introduced to Parliament as soon as parliamentary time allows.

The Government has completed its statutory requirements under sections 24 and 25 of the Climate Change Act 2008 to consult national authorities and obtain the advice of the Climate Change Committee. The Climate Change Committee has published its advice online at <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/letter-inclusion-of-nitrogen-trifluoride-nf3-as-a-targeted-greenhouse-gas/>.

## ■ Nuclear Power Stations: Decommissioning

**Alan Brown:**

[\[47578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his most recent estimate is of the cost of decommissioning the existing nuclear sites within the remit of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority; when that estimate was made; and when he next plans to review that estimate.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* The Nuclear Provision is updated by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) as part of its Annual Report. The Nuclear Provision represents the best estimate of the NDA's long-term mission to decommission its nuclear sites. The latest estimate is £149bn undiscounted (£237bn in present value terms).

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Warm Home Discount Scheme

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[47540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of removing eligibility for the warm home discount scheme from people who receive Personal Independence Payments on their ability to meet the costs of heating their homes.

**Graham Stuart:**

Around 62% of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) recipients also receive one of the qualifying means-tested benefits and so would be considered low-income under the Core Group 2 criteria. Those with high energy costs would therefore be eligible for a rebate. The Government's analysis shows that 160,000 more households, where there is a person with a disability or long-term illness, will receive a rebate each winter compared to the previous scheme.

## ■ Private Rented Housing: Energy Bills Rebate

**Peter Kyle:**

[\[45121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that private renters whose energy bills are included in their rent benefit from the £400 energy rebate payment paid directly to their landlords.

**Graham Stuart:**

Where there is a domestic electricity connection and an inclusive charge is made for accommodation with no specified charge for gas or electricity and no separate agreement for the resale of energy, parties are encouraged to come to an agreement on the EBSS discount, in line with the arrangements in their respective contracts or tenancy agreements.

## ■ Renewable Energy

**Bim Afolami:** [45496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to help mitigate the impact of new onshore renewable energy projects on local communities.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government recognises that renewable energy projects can have local impacts. There are established routes in the planning system that require local impacts to be measured and controlled (such as through Environmental Impact Assessments), that enable communities to raise concerns about renewable energy developments in their area, and that ensure the adverse impacts of these developments are addressed satisfactorily prior to consent being granted.

## ■ Shops: Energy

**Charlotte Nichols:** [45530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to require shops selling cold food to have doors on their chillers.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government set out in the Energy related Products Framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-related-products-policy-framework>) that research has identified commercial refrigeration as a potential area for energy efficiency improvement.

The Government will continue to develop its understanding of the barriers preventing the uptake of the most energy efficient technology, and of the enablers which could help to lessen these barriers.

## ■ Small Businesses: Energy

**Grahame Morris:** [45779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to seek an extension of the energy price cap to include small businesses.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. The scheme will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[47545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of providing additional support for SMEs in the context of rising energy costs.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2022]:* My rt. hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues including the impact rising energy prices will have on businesses of all sizes.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

#### ■ **Small Modular Reactors: Capital Investment**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[47614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the announcement on 9 November 2021 that the Government would invest £210 million to develop small modular reactors in the UK, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the likely overall impact of that investment and (b) the progress that has been made in achieving that end up to 5 September 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Advanced Nuclear Fund includes up to £210 million announced in November 2021 for Rolls-Royce SMR to develop the design for one of the world's first Small Modular Reactors, potentially capable of deployment in the UK in the early 2030s. This has already leveraged £280m of private sector investment to support the project and wider activities.

The project has completed significant engineering milestones, and the key objective of completing Step 2 of the Generic Design Assessment by Spring 2025 remains achievable – a view shared by the Infrastructure & Projects Authority in their July 2022 report.

#### ■ **Smart Export Guarantee**

**Jerome Mayhew:**

[\[45487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the Smart Export Guarantee Scheme to help ensure that microgenerators receive a price that reflects the market value of the electricity they sell.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) is a cost-reflective and market led mechanism and it is for suppliers to determine the value of the exported electricity and to take account of the administrative costs associated when setting their tariffs.

■ **Solar Power: Exports****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[46192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the Smart Export Guarantee scheme to enhance the facilitation of owners of small numbers of solar panels to sell their energy into the marketplace.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) is a cost-reflective and market led mechanism and it is for suppliers to determine the value of the exported electricity and to take account of the administrative costs associated when setting their tariffs.

■ **Solar power: Feed-in Tariffs****Kim Leadbeater:**[\[47723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the potential increase to the solar feed-in tariff rates in relation to the increased price of wholesale energy.

**Graham Stuart:**

Feed-in tariff (FIT) rates are adjusted annually, in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI). Further information regarding the FIT rates for solar can be found on Ofgem's website: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/feed-tariffs-fit/tariffs-and-payments>.

■ **Solar Power: Greater London****Ruth Jones:**[\[46071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last held discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the Mayor of London's Solar Action Plan.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ministers are in regular contact with Cabinet colleagues to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest, including options for facilitating deployment of low-cost renewable technologies such as solar PV.

■ **Solar Power: Housing****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[45063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of reintroducing grants or interest-free loans to fund the installation of domestic solar panels.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the British Energy Security Strategy, the Government committed to look into facilitating low-cost finance from retail lenders to drive rooftop solar deployment. Rooftop solar is supported in a range of schemes such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Energy Company Obligation, and the Home Upgrade Grant, subject to certain requirements. The Smart Export Guarantee introduced in January 2020, allows households with rooftop solar to receive payment for electricity they export to the grid.

**■ Solar Power: Prices****Jerome Mayhew:**[\[46139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to introduce a regulated market for solar microgenerators.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government's approach to supporting microgeneration including solar is through the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG). The SEG is a cost-reflective and market led mechanism whereby it is for suppliers to determine the value of the exported electricity.

**Jerome Mayhew:**[\[46140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that energy suppliers pay a price that reflects the market value of energy produced by solar microgenerators.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) ensures small-scale generators are paid for the renewable electricity they export to the grid. It is a cost-reflective and market led mechanism. Suppliers determine the value of the exported electricity and take account of the associated administrative costs when setting their tariffs.

**■ Warm Home Discount Scheme****Jessica Morden:**[\[45678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to finalise and the eligibility statement for the 2022-2023 Warm Home Discount.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government consulted on a draft Eligibility Statement for the Warm Home Discount scheme for England and Wales over the summer. The Government is reviewing responses and will publish the final Eligibility Statement in due course.

**■ Wind Power: Electricity Generation**

**Alan Brown:** [\[45907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many gigawatts of energy the Electricity System Operator plans to allow from future connections from offshore wind projects in (a) Scotland and (b) England and Wales in the context of the Government's increased target of up to 50 GW of operating offshore wind capacity by 2030.

**Graham Stuart:**

For projects expected to connect by 2030 that are not already operational, 26GW of capacity will connect in England and Wales, and 18GW of capacity will connect in Scotland.

Projects that are expected to connect before 2030 but do not yet have an indicative landing point have been excluded from the figures above.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Balance of Trade**

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[45137\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the balance of trade for Standard Industrial Classification groups (a) J.58.1, (b) J.58.2, (c) J.60, (d) J.62, (e) M.72 and (f) R.90 in each of the last five years.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 2nd September is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response to 45137 [\[UKSA Response to PQ45137.pdf\]](#)

**■ Blood: Contamination**

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[45304\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Sir Brian Langstaff's interim report on the Infected Blood Inquiry, if he will make it his policy to adopt the report's recommendation that interim payments should be immediately made to those infected and affected by contaminated blood.

**Edward Argar:**

I refer the Hon. member to the answer given to PQ [42184](#) on 6 September 2022.

**Beth Winter:** [\[45311\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the interim report by Sir Brian Langstaff, Chair of the Infected Blood Inquiry, published on 29 July 2022, and the



endorsement in that report of the interim payment recommendations of Sir Robert Francis QC, when the funds will be made available to the eligible recipients identified in that interim report.

**Edward Argar:**

I refer the Hon. member to the answer given to PQ 42184 on 6 September 2022.

■ **Cabinet Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47429\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many payments were fraudulently charged to the budgets of (a) his Department and (b) Downing Street using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (i) 2019-20, (ii) 2020-21 and (iii) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (A) made and (B) recovered in each of those years.

**Edward Argar:**

For the purposes of reporting Cabinet Office and Downing Street are the same entity so separate figures cannot be provided.

It is cardholders and their line managers duty to check all ePCS transactions promptly and notify the bank of any fraudulent activity. The total value of fraud reported through the use of purchasing cards is as below.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CASES	VALUE	VALUE RECOVERED
2019/20	4	£931.09	£931.09
2020/21	1	£707.00	£707.00
2021/22	0	0	0

■ **Government Departments: Birmingham**

**Julian Knight:**

[\[45073\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many jobs have been created in the West Midlands as a result of the establishment of the cross-Government hub at 23 Stephenson Street in Birmingham.

**Edward Argar:**

23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham, opened in October 2021 housing 1,700 staff across 20 different Government departments. The vast majority of these civil servants were brought together through consolidation of existing roles in Birmingham but additional capacity for 30 new roles has been created.

**■ Government Departments: Buildings**

**Holly Lynch:** [\[45459\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many work stations were available for civil servants to use in each Department as of 2 September 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

Cabinet Office can only provide the answer for their own sites; each government department holds their own information.

The total number of workstations available for Cabinet Office staff to use across all our offices is 5286.

**■ Local Resilience Forums: Weather**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[40854\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will (a) instruct all resilience forums to establish a plan for tackling extreme heat, including checks on vulnerable residents and cool rest facilities, and (b) publish guidance his Department has issued on this prior to the period of extreme heat in July 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

This instruction should, and does, come from the Department for Health and Social Care as the lead department on the Heatwave Plan for England (through the UKHSA) rather than the Cabinet Office. As part of this, their officials and ministers liaise with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities to share policy guidance for Local Resilience Forums.

UKHSA's [Heatwave Plan for England](#) contains the following:

- “The plan focuses on the effects of severe hot weather on health and well-being, however, severe and extended heatwaves can also cause severe disruption to general services. For this reason, multi-agency Local Health Resilience Partnerships (LHRPs) and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) will have a critical role in preparing and responding to heatwaves at a local level, working closely with Health and Wellbeing Boards on longer term strategic planning.
- At local level, emergency planning arrangements run by local government and the NHS are brought together in the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), which have many years of experience with heatwave plans and heat-health alert system. LHRPs have been established to bring together the local health sector organisations to support in strategic planning.
- Health Services and local authority commissioners, together with multi-agency LRFs, should satisfy themselves that providers and stakeholders take appropriate actions according to the heat-health alert levels.”

The Heatwave Plan for England also contains resources that provide guidance, recommendations and advice for the public and professionals. Given the health threat and the impacts observed in summer 2021 additional work has been taken forward

by UKHSA and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to raise awareness of the health consequences of hot weather and enable professionals, organisations and individuals to plan, mitigate and respond to hot weather episodes effectively. These include:

- Updating the materials related to hot weather risks on the Heatwave Plan for England collection page. These provide sector specific guidance on actions to take during a heatwave to safeguard patients and service users.
- Publishing the 2022 Heatwave communications toolkit and social media assets which have been shared with UKHSA regional communications, cross-government partners and local government to support consistent and clear messaging on heat-health.

Coordinating all of the previously circulated guidance will pose a disproportionate cost.

#### ■ **Overseas Trade: Somaliland**

**Alexander Stafford:** [48521]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish recent statistics on the volume of trade between Somaliland and the UK.

**Alexander Stafford:** [48522]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish details of the UK's main (a) exports to and (b) imports from Somaliland.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 6 September is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA letter response to PQ48521 and 48522  
[\[UKSA Response to PQ48521 PQ48522.pdf\]](#)

#### ■ **Refugees: Hitchin and Harpenden**

**Bim Afolami:** [45693]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of Ukrainian refugees who are in work in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency as on 2 September 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 2nd September is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA letter response to PQ45693 [UKSA Response to PQ45693.pdf]

**Retail Prices Index**

**Andrew Lewer:** [46014]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the methodology for calculating the Retail Price Index used at the Budget statements of (a) 27 October 2021, (b) 3 March 2021 and (c) 11 March 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 2 September is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response to 46014 [[UKSA Response PQ46014.pdf](#)]

**CHURCH COMMISSIONERS****Church of England: Kirklees**

**Mark Eastwood:** [45060]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church has taken to ensure that an (a) Agricultural Land Classification and (b) Soil Assessment is undertaken prior to any applications being submitted to Kirklees Council relating to land at Heybeck, Batley and Chidswell, Dewsbury.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Agricultural Land Classification was reviewed as per the Agricultural Land Classification Map for Yorkshire and the Humber region (ref 10-111c). The site is identified as grade 3 agricultural land and referenced within the Planning Statement. The Environmental Impact Assessment submitted with the application looks at the impact of the development on soil.

**DEFENCE****16 Air Assault Brigade: Armoured Fighting Vehicles**

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [45274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of continuing the use of the FV107 Scimitar by 16th Air Assault Brigade.

**James Heappey:**

16 Air Assault Brigade do not have FV107 Scimitar as a brigade.

## ■ Afghanistan: Al Qaeda

**John Healey:** [\[45716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of threat to UK security interests in Afghanistan posed by Al Qaeda activity in that country.

**James Heappey:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 May 2022 to Question 4479.

**Attachments:**

1. 4479 - Afghanistan Radicalism [[UIN 4479.docx](#)]

## ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**John Healey:** [\[47357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2022 to Question 4476 on Afghanistan: Refugees, whether any further data breaches of personal data relating to Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants have occurred since May 2022.

**John Healey:** [\[48226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2022 to Question 4476 on Afghanistan: Refugees, whether any further data breaches of personal data relating to Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants have occurred since May 2022.

**James Heappey:**

Since May 2022, there have been no known data breaches of personal data relating to ARAP applicants.

## ■ Air Force: Military Bases

**John Healey:** [\[49062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times the use of RAF runways in the UK has been temporarily suspended as a result of extreme temperatures since 2010.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Air Force: Photographs and Social Media

**Luke Pollard:** [\[44975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there are any restrictions on Royal Air Force pilots (a) filming videos and taking photographs in the cockpit of RAF Typhoons and (b) publishing those images on social media.

**James Heappey:**

Typhoon pilots may only film in the cockpit with prior permission of their chain of command in accordance with security policy and on the basis that flight safety will not be compromised. Subject to authorisation, images may only be placed on social media if they do not compromise operational security or the personal security of individuals.

**■ Ajax Lessons Learned Review****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[48267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of when the independent QC's inquiry into the management of the Ajax Armoured Vehicle programme will be concluded; whether he plans to publish that report; and if he will make a statement.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Clive Sheldon KC was formally appointed on 19 May 2022 to lead the independent Ajax Lessons Learned Review. In accordance with his terms of reference, he advised the Department in June that he estimated it would take him a further six months to finish gathering information and draft his report. I intend to publish the report, subject to redaction of commercially sensitive content and personal information where applicable, as soon as possible after it is finalised.

**■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement****John Healey:**[\[48235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Armoured Cavalry 2025 Ajax programme (a) on time and (b) on budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that programme as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Ministry of Defence continues to work with General Dynamics to resolve the noise and vibration problems on Ajax while protecting the taxpayers' interests. As acknowledged by the Infrastructure Projects Authority the project remains within its approved budget and General Dynamics are required to deliver to the terms of the £5.5 billion firm-priced contract. We will not accept a vehicle until it can be used safely for its intended purposes and until long-term solutions to the noise and vibration problems have been found, we cannot determine a realistic timescale for the introduction of Ajax into operational service.

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[48266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he next plans to make a statement to the House of Commons on the status of the Ajax Armoured Vehicle project.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I will continue the commitment of my predecessor to update the House on the progress of the Ajax programme and will give a statement to the House in the near future.

**■ Armed Forces: Housing****John Healey:**[\[45185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to improve the insulation of (a) Service Living Accommodation and (b) Service Family Accommodation to help reduce energy bills in the context of rising prices.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

A new sustainability forum working with customers will identify schemes such as improvements in insulation for Single Living Accommodation (SLA) for the financial year 2023-24 and beyond.

Information on improvements made to insulation for SLA is not held centrally. However, thermal insulation on existing SLA buildings complied with - and in some cases exceeded - the industry standards when they were constructed.

MOD have targeted the worst insulated Service Family Accommodation (SFA) to improve their thermal efficiency which will help to reduce families' utility bills. 2782 homes have received new insulation over the past three years, while in the last financial year alone, 13,000 homes received upgrades including new windows and boilers. Further insulation work will be carried out to SFA in 2022-23, including installing new boilers in hundreds of homes and increasing loft insulation across the estate to a depth of 300mm, going beyond the industry standard of 270mm.

**John Healey:**[\[49068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints his Department received on Service Family Accommodation in each month in 2022.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The table below shows the number of complaints relating to UK Service Family Accommodation in each month in 2022:

MONTH	NO OF COMPLAINTS
Jan 22	559
Feb 22	519
Mar 22	577
Apr 22	867
May 22	1,092
Jun 22	1,318

MONTH	NO OF COMPLAINTS
Jul 22	988
Aug 22	1,016
As at 8 Sep 22	319

**John Healey:**

[\[49069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints has the (a) Army, (b) Royal Air Force and (c) Navy received on Single Living Accommodation in each month in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Complaints received for Single Living Accommodation are not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Vehicles**

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[45291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what mounting jacks are used on British military vehicles; and whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of moving towards one universal jack for all vehicles.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The jack is diverse piece of equipment that covers a multitude of vehicles and variants. Due to the differences in size and weight of military vehicles, which range from under one ton to over 70 tons, it would not be viable to use a single piece of equipment for all vehicles in service. Consequently there are no current plans to introduce a universal jack.

#### ■ **Armoured Fighting Vehicles**

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[45278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the combat suitability of The Jackal 2 platform when pitted against (a) peer and (b) near peer opponents.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Army's capabilities are regularly assessed against both peer, near peer and other adversaries in planned force testing including operational analysis and Wargaming – supported by DSTL. I am withholding the specific detail of the testing as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.



## ■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[44942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the British Army's 979 Armoured Personnel Carriers are rated RED on the Joint Asset Management and Engineering Solutions system.

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[45181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many working, serviceable and rated green on JAMES heavy equipment transporters there are in the British Army as of 2 September 2022.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I am withholding the information as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[45292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to improve fleet management capabilities for cavalry regiments.

**James Heappey:**

The Army are enhancing their planning activity to ensure that operational, training, unit and sustainment fleets are correctly balanced, providing sufficient capacity against the demand across all regiments.

## ■ Artillery

**John Healey:** [\[45199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK's current long-range artillery capability.

**John Healey:** [\[45720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to procure High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) for the British Army.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Army's long-range artillery capability is continually under review. The department plans to invest in the recapitalisation of our M270 tracked missile launcher system and various missile types to complement our current Guided Multi Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) munition stock.

## ■ Artillery: Procurement

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[48279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to replenish its supply of long-range artillery weapons.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Army's long-range artillery capability is continually under review. The department plans to invest in the recapitalisation of our M270 tracked missile launcher system and various missile types to complement our current Guided Multi Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) munition stock.

**■ AWACS: Procurement****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[48268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the date of initial operating capability is for the E-7 Wedgetail as of 6 September 2022.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

On current planning, Initial Operating Capability for the E-7 Wedgetail is expected to be achieved in 2024 but this will not be confirmed until the Full Business Case is submitted towards the end of Financial Year 2022-23.

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[48269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the individual unit cost is of the proposed three E-7 Wedgetail aircraft, expressed as (a) acquisition and (b) through-life cost.

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[48271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of the reduction in the proposed purchase from five to three aircraft on the acquisition cost of the E-7 Wedgetail programme; and what the revised cost of the E-7 programme is, expressed as total (a) acquisition and (b) through-life cost.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The impact of the decision taken as part of the Integrated Review in March 2021 to reduce from five to three the number of Wedgetail aircraft that will enter Royal Air Force service was assessed in light of wider Departmental fiscal considerations. I am withholding details of the acquisition cost and Whole Life Costs as not all elements of the programme are yet on contract and to release this information would prejudice the Ministry of Defence's commercial interests while negotiations have not yet concluded.

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[48270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason his Department decided to reduce the number of E-7 Wedgetail aircraft it will purchase from five to three.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The E7 Wedgetail will provide a step-change in the UK's Airborne Early Warning and Control Capability. The decision to reduce the scope of the E7 Wedgetail fleet from five to three aircraft was agreed in the Integrated Review, as part of a wider balance of investment across Defence.

## ■ Challenger Tanks

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[45285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the potential saving to the public purse of reducing the number of Challenger 2 battle tanks.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer my predecessor, the hon Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), gave 15 June 2022 to question 13643 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey).

**Attachments:**

1. Challenger Tanks [\[13643 - Challenger Tanks.docx\]](#)

## ■ Challenger Tanks and Horses

**John Healey:** [\[45719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Challenger tanks and (b) horses are currently operational.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Ministry of Defence publishes statistics on Armed Forces Equipment and Formations on an annual basis. A further breakdown of Challenger tanks is not available as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

The Army currently has 492 horses (including 2 pony mascots).

## ■ Defence Equipment

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[45182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a list of approved non-issued kit suitable for use by armed service personnel while in the field or on operations.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Department has not made any assessment of the potential merits of introducing a list of approved non-issued kit suitable for use by Armed Forces personnel while in the field or on operations.

The Ministry of Defence keeps under review all issued kit to ensure it is fit for purpose and provides all of the necessary requirements for personnel while deployed in the field or on operations.

## ■ Defence: Employment

**Damien Moore:** [\[45139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support defence jobs in (a) Merseyside and (b) Lancashire.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The most recent estimate shows MOD investment supports 219,000 jobs in industries across the UK. This includes 17,700 direct jobs in the North West of England.

Earlier this year, we marked the first anniversary of the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS), which received positive feedback from industry.

Continued high, and focussed investment in defence, along with the changes we are making as part of DSIS, will contribute to further economic growth and prosperity, across the Union.

**■ Defence: Finance**

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[45737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of inflation on defence spending.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

High inflation will reduce the Ministry of Defence's spending power over the Spending Review period and beyond. However, due to its volatility, a precise estimate of its impact is challenging. Our existing controls will substantially limit exposure and we keep our programmes under constant financial review, using our contingency to manage risks if they materialise.

**■ Defence: Radar**

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[48272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many fixed radar sites form part of the UK air defence network as of 6 September 2022.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[48273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many mobile air defence radars the RAF has in its inventory as of 6 September 2022.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

There are seven fixed radar sites forming part of the UK Air Defence network. There are two mobile Air Defence radars in the RAF's inventory.

**■ Defence: Technology**

**John Healey:** [\[48228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the assessment criteria are for companies wishing to apply for funding through the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP) assessment criteria are as follows:

- Desirability: strategic fit, including alignment with Enduring Capability Challenges, and end user support/pull
- Feasibility: technical credibility, innovation, risk, and expertise of team/capability
- Viability: costs and value for money, commercialisation and project delivery/plan

The full assessment criteria for DTEP can be found on the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) website on GOV.UK, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1093679/DTEP\\_Assessment\\_Criteria.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1093679/DTEP_Assessment_Criteria.pdf)

## ■ F-35 Aircraft

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[45734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK's F-35Bs can be fully upgraded to the combat capable Block 4 standard without a new engine.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Block 4 upgrade programme will deliver a world leading Combat Air capability for UK Lightning through improvements in lethality, survivability and supportability. These capability enhancements do not require new engines.

## ■ F-35 Aircraft: Accidents

**John Healey:**

[48239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to replace the F-35 jet that fell into the Mediterranean Sea in November 2021.

**James Heappey:**

A replacement for the lost F-35B, BK-18, has been included in the recently announced procurement of additional UK F-35B Lightning.

**John Healey:**

[48240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in the context of the crash of an F-35 jet into the Mediterranean Sea in November 2021, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that no accidental loss of aircraft from aircraft carriers occurs in future.

**James Heappey:**

Safety remains of paramount importance in all military flying, including operations from aircraft carriers. The Service Inquiry (SI) into the loss of F-35B ZM152 on 17 November 2021 is on-going, with an interim report into the likely cause of the accident published on 8 September 2022. The SI panel continue to work to identify any relevant lessons and will make recommendations to help prevent reoccurrence.

**■ F-35 Aircraft: Engines**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[45733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to upgrade the (a) RAF and (b) Fleet Air Arm F-35Bs with the (i) General Electric XA100 or (ii) Pratt & Whitney XA101 engine.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

These engines will only be suitable for the F-35A and C variant and will not be compatible with the F-35B. An upgrade path for future F-35B propulsion upgrades is under development by the Joint Program Office. The UK Lightning fleet will continue to be upgraded as appropriate, throughout its service life, through the Follow on Modernisation programme.

UK F-35B Lightning aircraft are operated under a single Force Headquarters, with all units jointly manned by both Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel. Air system capability development is overseen by an Air Command Capability team which again is jointly manned.

**■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement**

**John Healey:** [\[48237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the increase in the whole-life cost to the Lightning Programme is a result of inflation.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The cost of delivering the Lightning Programme is under constant scrutiny in order to deliver the most cost-efficient capability to UK defence. Changes to its Whole Life Costs are reported through Ministry of Defence's Government Major Projects Portfolio data.

**John Healey:** [\[48238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of when his Department will be able to deploy two operational squadrons of F-35s.

**James Heappey:**

809 Naval Air Squadron is due to stand up in quarter two of 2023. Full Operating Capability for the Lightning Force is expected in 2025 at which point the Lightning Force will be able to operationally deploy both squadrons concurrently.

**■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[45117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Capital Adequacy Tests will be undertaken on all companies and teams bidding into the Fleet Solid Support Ship competition.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer my predecessor gave him on 10 September 2021 to Question 44205.

**Attachments:**

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships Procurement [[44205 - Fleet Solid Support Ships Procurement.docx](#)]

**■ Guided Weapons: Procurement****John Healey:****[48236]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Future Cruise / Anti-Ship Weapon programme (a) on time and (b) on budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that programme as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The delivery confidence of the Future Cruise Anti-Ship Weapon (FCASW) programme, which is currently in Assessment phase, was assessed as RED by the Senior Responsible Owner and this was confirmed at the programme's first Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) review in February 2022. Recommendations outlined in the IPA report have since been implemented and incorporated into the programme plan with support from across the Defence enterprise and in May 2022, a follow up review was completed by the IPA team where the delivery confidence assessment for FCASW programme outcomes (Performance, Cost and Time) was upgraded to AMBER.

As is standard Defence practice, the FCASW programme remains subject to regular review against delivery of performance, cost and time parameters by both internal and external independent bodies.

**■ Harland and Wolff: Contracts****Mr Kevan Jones:****[47375]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the announcement on 14 July 2022 that British shipyard, Harland & Wolff, has been awarded a £55 million contract to regenerate a former Royal Navy mine-hunting vessel, whether it is Harland & Wolff, the wholly owned subsidiary, Harland & Wolff Group Holdings plc, or another corporate entity which now holds that contract.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The contract for the regeneration of HMS Quorn was awarded to Harland and Wolff Appledore Limited.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[47376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government conducted capital adequacy tests on Harland & Wolff before it was awarded the contract to regenerate the former Royal Navy mine-hunting vessel, HMS Quorn.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

A capital adequacy test was conducted as part of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire process and risk mitigations were enacted where necessary, which were fed through into the contracting process.

## ■ Hawk Aircraft

**John Healey:**

[\[49064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the nature of the issue is with the Rolls-Royce engine on the Hawk jet; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of that issue on training.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

A fault has been identified with the Rolls-Royce/Safran Adour 951 engine, which powers the Hawk TMk2. The fault affects the components contained in the Safran manufactured Module 1 of the engine, also known as the Low-Pressure Compressor. As a precaution, a number of engines have been temporarily removed from service whilst the Ministry of Defence supports a Rolls-Royce/Safran investigation into the root cause and rectification. While this has reduced current aircraft availability, Fast Jet training is continuing at RAF Valley.

Initial assessments suggest the reduction in aircraft availability will have an impact on UK Fast Jet (FJ) training output over the next three years, but work is ongoing to minimise that impact.

## ■ HMS Glasgow

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[48263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his most recent estimate is of when HMS Glasgow will achieve initial operating capability.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

HMS Glasgow is forecast to achieve Initial Operating Capability in Royal Navy service in 2028.

## ■ HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[48264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the nature is of the defect that recently affected HMS Prince of Wales; and what the timetable is for rectifying that issue.



**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[48265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who the senior engineering officer is of HMS Prince of Wales.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Shortly after HMS PRINCE OF WALES (PWLS) sailed on 27 August, a mechanical fault was discovered with the starboard shaft. Our initial assessment has revealed that a coupling which joins the final two sections of the shaft has failed. This is a very unusual fault, and we continue to pursue all repair options. It is too early to say what the timetable is for rectifying the issue.

While PWLS has a Senior Marine Engineering Officer who reports to the Captain, responsibility for the safety and material state of any warship lies with her Commanding Officer.

## ■ **HMS Quorn: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[47377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the competitive tendering process for the award of the contract to overhaul the former Royal Navy mine countermeasures vessel, HMS Quorn.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

A formal competitive process was run by the Defence Equipment Sales Authority (DESA) under the Defence and Security Public Contracts Regulations on behalf of the Lithuanian Defence Materiel Authority (LTU DMA). During the bid process all but one of the bidders withdrew from the process. The competitive process was brought to a conclusion with the single remaining bidder as permitted by the Defence and Security Public Contracts Regulations. The contract was placed with Harland and Wolff (Appldore) Limited and immediately novated to LTU DMA and is proceeding in accordance with its terms.

## ■ **Indo-Pacific Region: Armed Forces**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[48280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 67 of the Integrated Review 2021 and the escalation of tensions on the Taiwan border, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the UK's military presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

**James Heappey:**

The Integrated Review recognises that the Indo-Pacific region is at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with multiple potential flashpoints. The recent actions and remarks made by China on Taiwan are concerning. We will continue to encourage open communication and de-escalation.

The Ministry of Defence regularly reviews UK global defence posture and capabilities to take account of emerging threats and crises. We have not made an assessment as

to the adequacy of the UK's military presence in the Indo-Pacific region. However, we are strengthening defence and security cooperation, increasing our engagement with regional security groupings and exercising with the US, Australia and regional partners, including through the Five Powers Defence Arrangements (FPDA) members.

Our maritime presence in the region has grown, with the deployment of two Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) as part of our persistent presence approach. The joint UK and US defence facility on the British Indian Ocean Territory plays a vital role in our efforts to keep the region secure and we retain a permanent presence in Brunei, through the Resident Infantry Battalion.

### ■ **Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems**

**John Healey:**

[\[48234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Crowsnest programme (a) on time and (b) on budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that programme as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

In terms of feasibility, CROWSNEST achieved its In Service Date in February 2021 and has already deployed on the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carriers in 2021 and 2022. It was recently assessed on its last Independent Projects Authority's Gateway Review June 2022 as Amber.

A formal review has been completed with CROWSNEST remaining within its budget. A timing reapproval Review Note has been submitted for the Department's consideration.

### ■ **Military Aircraft: Training**

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[48275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost of the Military Flying Training System contract has been in each of the last five financial years.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The cost of the UK Military Flying Training System Contract with Ascent in each of the last five financial years (FY) is as follows:

<b>FY2017-18</b>	<b>FY2018-19</b>	<b>FY2019-20</b>	<b>FY2020-21</b>	<b>FY2021-22</b>
£75,331,323	£144,534,848	£180,868,883	£183,212,561	£196,150,573

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[48276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will place a copy of the contract between his Department and the Ascent consortium relating to the Military Flying Training System contract in the Library.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The contract between the Ministry of Defence and the Ascent consortium is commercially sensitive. I am therefore withholding it as its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

**■ Military Bases: Natural Gas****John Healey:**[\[45714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increased price of wholesale gas on properties on the defence estate.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has made no individual assessment of the potential impact of the increased price of wholesale gas.

The MOD is mandated by the Cabinet Office to use the centralised Crown Commercial Services (CCS) contracts for wholesale gas. As such, CCS advise MOD on current energy markets and through economies of scale and forward contracting, facilitate reduced costs and enable prices to be known for planning and forecasting purposes.

CCS represent the MOD at the quarterly External Risk and Governance Board where risk and trading strategies are reviewed to ensure that MOD secure the best possible wholesale gas price.

**■ Military Bases: Operating Costs****John Healey:**[\[47359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 4 of his Department's report A Better Defence Estate, published in November 2016, how much the Defence estate optimisation programme has saved his Department in running costs for the defence estate each year since 2016.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Defence Estate Optimisation Portfolio has to date generated over £200 million in receipts from the sale of surplus sites and saved more than £18 million in running and maintenance costs in the last six years. This has already been reinvested in completed builds at five sites, with construction underway at a further five sites.

**■ Military Bases: Sales****John Healey:**[\[47358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 4 of his Department's report A Better Defence Estate, published in November 2016, how many new homes were built on land formerly owned by his Department prior to October 2016.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not retrospectively track the development of its former sites to validate how many homes have been built. The Housing Unit Potential

scored at the time of sale, represents the estimated number of houses that could be built. The overall figure may change dependent on how the new owner secured development permissions, particularly on sites that were sold without outline planning permission but have gone on to be developed.

Between financial year (FY) 2010-11 and FY 2016-17 MOD sold 572 parcels of land, totalling c4,555 hectares. This could provide for at least 44,500 housing units, as well as additional commercial and agricultural use.

## ■ Military Exercises

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[45231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason regular and annual battlegroup training exercises have ceased; and if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reintroducing such exercises.

**James Heapey:**

Regular and annual Battlegroup training exercises have not ceased. There have been a number of Battlegroup level exercises this year, including Exercise Iron Storm, which concluded in July. The exercise provided the 1 Mercian Battlegroup an opportunity to come together and train in a combined arms environment.

The Army has a substantial and sophisticated exercise programme in place to ensure that it is trained and ready to operate at the Battlegroup level. This includes training with Allies and partners.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Coronavirus

**John Healey:**

[\[48230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the delivery schedules for his Department's major projects.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The delivery schedules of our programmes may be impacted by a range of factors, including COVID. Any issues are dealt with as part of normal programme governance. The portfolio of major programmes is reviewed on a quarterly basis both internally and by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority to identify and address any systemic issues.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Costs

**John Healey:**

[\[49070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio data 2022, whether there is a difference between (a) whole and (b) through life costs.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Both whole life costs and through life costs for a programme reflect the total cost of ownership over the life of the asset. These may be refined through the lifecycle of a

programme. Where capabilities will remain in service for several decades, disposal costs may form part of a separate programme of work.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many payments were fraudulently charged to his Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The total number of payments proven to have been fraudulently charged to the Ministry of Defence budget, using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22, together with their value and the amounts recovered are as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF FRAUDULENT PAYMENTS	VALUE OF FRAUD	AMOUNT RECOVERED
2019-20	Nil	Not applicable	Not applicable
2021-21	1	£698	£698
2021-22	2	£250.44	£250.44

The above data comprises fraud that has been detected and logged within the Confidential Hotlines Case Management System, and dates are based on when the cases were logged on the system. It also only includes cases that are closed and where the fraud has been proven.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Energy

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on energy in each of the last three years.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The cost to the Ministry of Defence for energy for approximately 80% of sites on the UK Defence Estate in each of the last three financial years (FY) can be found in the table below.

FY2019-20	FY2020-21	FY2021-22
UK Defence Estate£ million	UK Defence Estate£ million	UK Defence Estate £ million
265.029	242.265	267.386

Gas and electricity information for the remaining 20% of UK Defence Estate sites is not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure

**John Healey:**

**[45722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will set out the annual budget for (a) Navy Command, (b) Army Command, (c) Air Command, (d) Strategic Command, (e) Defence Nuclear Organisation, (f) Strategic Programmes Directorate for each year since 2010.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The annual spend of organisations across the department are detailed in the relevant departmental Annual Report and Accounts (ARAC). These can be found at the following link;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-annual-reports>

As the Department's organisational structure, as well as the structure of its financial reporting, have changed significantly over the last 12 years, a direct comparison year on year is only possible between 2019-22.

	FINANCIAL YEAR		
Annual Spend (£ million)	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Navy Command	6,545.7	6,905.8	7,586.2
Army Command	10,706.7	10,981.5	11,052.0
Air Command	6,826.3	7,822.2	8,538.2
Strategic Command	5,065.4	5,355.7	6,321.2
Defence Nuclear Organisation	4,110.4	4,515.8	5,245.4
Strategic Programmes Directorate	940.2	925.5	1,188.7

**John Healey:**

**[47360]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to MOD Government Major Projects Portfolio Data, 2022, which aspiration projects were not included in the Spending Review proposition and as part of the re-baselining exercise, leading to whole life costs for the Defence Estate Optimisation increasing by £4.127 billion.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The capital investment for Defence Estate Optimisation (DEO) has not increased. The Spending Review secured the method of funding for DEO, it did not see the capital investment budget increase.

Aspirational projects by their nature are unfunded proposals that are still to be assessed, and therefore were not included in the DEO Spending Review proposition which was to secure funding for costed Defence priority projects.

**John Healey:**[\[48229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of fluctuations in foreign exchange rates on the projected affordability of his Department's major projects.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Department has assessed the impact of foreign exchange rates on its latest ten year forecast and adverse changes in the USD rate have been absorbed within the overall departmental position. Additional budget has been allocated to budget holders to ensure that the affordability of the equipment programme is not affected.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Travel****Emily Thornberry:**[\[47408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the travel section of his Department's Government procurement card spending over £500 for February 2022, for what reason there is a negative value of -£7,755,844.69 under the account code with last four digits 0102 with transaction date 2 November 2022.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The negative value of -£7,755,844.69 is a payment by the Ministry of Defence to Barclaycard, the Electronic Purchasing Card provider, for its hotel lodged card bill for spend in January 2022. This covers hotels booked for official travel in the UK where a bill back arrangement is in place, meaning the stay is paid for immediately, instead of via the pay and claim arrangement in place for overseas accommodation.

The transaction date in the Travel and Stationery data sheet for February 2022 uses the month/day/year format, and as such, the actual date of the transaction was 11 February 2022.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[47409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the travel section of his Department's government procurement card spending over £500 for December 2021, for what reason there are negative values under the account code ending in 0248 recorded as (a) -£8,104,758.24 with transaction date 12 August 2021 and (b) -£3,864,252.86 with transaction date 1 July 2022.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the travel section of his Department's government procurement card spending over £500 for October 2021, for what reason there is a negative value under the account code ending in 0248 recorded as -£5,246,855.41 with transaction date of 13 October 2021.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

These negative values of -£5,246,855.41 set out in the travel section of the Electronic Purchasing Card spend data for October 2021, and of -£8,104,758.24 and -£3,864,252.86 in the equivalent data for December 2021, are payments by the Ministry of Defence to Barclaycard, the Electronic Purchasing Card provider, for Travel Management Account expenditure in September, November and December 2021. This covers a range of business travel services such as flights, rail travel and hire cars, that are charged to a centrally lodged card.

The transaction dates in the Travel and Stationery data sheets use the month/day/year format, and as such, the actual dates of these transactions in December 2021 were 8 December 2021, and 7 January 2022 respectively.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the travel sections of his Department's publications of government procurement card spending over £500, first published on 19 April 2021, whether the negative values up to a level of -£80,000 published in those sections reflect the refunds made to his Departmental budget in each month of amounts previously paid to (a) travel operators, (b) transport companies and (c) hotels.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Negative values set out in the Electronic Purchasing Card spend data published by the Ministry of Defence, which are associated with travel operators, transport companies and hotels, typically represent refunds from these providers.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the travel sections of his Department's publications of government procurement card spending over £500, whether the transaction dates associated with negative values typically reflect the dates for which any refunded bookings were originally made.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Where negative values set out in the Electronic Purchasing Card spend data published by the Ministry of Defence relate to refunds, the transaction date will typically be that when the refund is submitted and not the original travel date or the original transaction date.



## ■ National Flagship: Procurement

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the contracts agreed by his Department with (a) the Royal Institute of British Architects on 20 October 2021, procurement reference 307174/1074355 and (b) Burgess Technical Services Ltd on 22 April 2022, procurement reference 311440/1088351, are related to the projects managed by his Department for the design and manufacture of a National Flagship.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 26 August 2021 to Question 27069 on National Flagship: Procurement, whether a successful bidder has been chosen for the contract to design the National Flagship; and when he intends to announce the successful bid.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 August 2021 to Question 27069 on National Flagship: Procurement, what amount of compensation will be guaranteed to the supplier of the contract to design the National Flagship if a decision is taken not to proceed with that project; and for how long after the agreement of that contract will that compensation payment be guaranteed.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has (a) spent and (b) committed on the projects managed by his Department for the design and manufacture of a National Flagship as of 5 September 2022.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department intends to award the contract for the manufacturing of a National Flagship; and whether that contract will include compensation clauses if a future decision is taken not to proceed with that project.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The design phase is due to complete soon, an announcement will be made in due course.

## ■ National Grid Electricity Transmission: AAC Wattisham

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[45545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the East Anglia GREEN proposals on operations at Wattisham Air Base.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Requests for information have been submitted to the National Grid project team by Wattisham Flying Station (WFS). WFS are awaiting a response from the project

team, before a full assessment regarding the impact on operations can be made. The WFS team will confirm the findings once the assessment has been made.

## ■ NATO Innovation Fund

**John Healey:**

[\[47355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2022 to Question 37443 on NATO Innovation Fund, how the UK's contribution to the NATO Innovation Fund is calculated; and how much the UK will contribute to it in each year until 2025.

**James Heappey:**

The UK's contribution to the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) is based on a funding split, with part of the costs split on an equal share between all partners and another proportionate to GDP, like the existing common funding model. The exact contribution to the fund out to 2025 is still being settled but the UK is likely to contribute c£10 million per year.

## ■ Navy: South China Sea

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[45656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to send the HMS Queen Elizabeth and associated task group on a further exercise in the South China sea.

**James Heappey:**

The Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper detail the importance of the Indo-Pacific region to the UK and the growing tensions around maritime chokepoints, including the South China Sea. Strengthening our defence cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners to tackle shared security challenges and mitigate growing threats is a key defence aim. HMS Queen Elizabeth and her associated task group provides a platform vital to the delivery of the Government's defence priorities.

As set out in the Defence Command Paper, the Royal Navy will be increasing its global presence on a constant and enduring basis, contributing to regional security and assurance, including the protection of shipping lanes and freedom of navigation, and the championing of international rules.

With support from partners in the Indo-Pacific, Offshore Patrol Vessels are now persistently deployed and a Littoral Response Group in 2023 will complement the episodic deployment of our Carrier Strike Group. However, the Ministry of Defence does not routinely comment on future operational deployments.

## ■ Nuclear Powered Vessels: Shipbuilding

**John Healey:**

[\[48233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Core Production Capability programme (a) on time and (b) on

budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that programme as red.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Department remains committed to delivering the reactor cores our submarine build programme needs. One of the factors that contributes to a red IPA rating is risk. Obviously, a combination of a "first in class" and a "highly complex capability" will raise risk levels much higher. We are constantly working to reduce risk and, following the Infrastructure Project Authority's report on the Core Production Capability, we are currently implementing a number of changes to minimise any impact. An Accounting Officer Assessment will be published once this work has been completed.

**John Healey:**

[\[49072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Core Production Capability programme (a) on time and (b) to budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that project as red.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Department remains committed to delivering the reactor cores our submarine build programme needs. One of the factors that contributes to a red IPA rating is risk. Obviously, a combination of a "first in class" and a "highly complex capability" will raise risk levels much higher. We are constantly working to reduce risk and, following the Infrastructure Project Authority's report on the Core Production Capability, we are currently implementing a number of changes to minimise any impact. An Accounting Officer Assessment will be published once this work has been completed.

**John Healey:**

[\[49565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the Core Production Capability programme.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The original expected programme cost to completion at initial approval was £1,385 million. The current programme expected cost to completion is £1,822 million. The cost increase is due to changes in programme scope since initial approval along with the combination of additional submarine core manufacturing and facility regeneration costs.

## ■ **RAF Coningsby: Typhoon Aircraft**

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[44976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any training schedules were (a) adjusted, (b) cancelled and (c) lowered in intensity to facilitate the Prime Minister's flight in an RAF Typhoon.

**James Heappey:**

The then Prime Minister's flight on 14 July 2022 was integrated into RAF Coningsby's routine training programme and there was no requirement to alter training schedules to accommodate it.

**Russia: Military Equipment****Andrew Rosindell:****[47390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to prevent British technology from being used in Russian radars and missile systems; and if he will make a statement.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Government reviews all licence applications for the export of UK-manufactured military and dual-use equipment against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, including an assessment of any risk that the items will be diverted to an undesirable end-user or for an undesirable end-use. In addition, the UK ensures its arms exports are compliant with the Arms Trade Treaty, and international trade sanctions. Restrictions on the export of military and dual use goods will also make it more difficult for Russia to access this technology.

The Ministry of Defence is an advisory Department to the Department of International Trade on the export licence assessment process, and assesses the risk of such exports against our defence capability and national security, as well as the risk of diversion. The Government works hard to ensure that sensitive classified defence technologies have the necessary protections in place.

**Andrew Rosindell:****[47391]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent potential smuggling of British military and dual-use technology into Russia through the use of Chinese and Indian companies.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend (Jeremy Quin) on 6 June 2022 to Question 7924 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Kevan Jones).

**Attachments:**

1. Arms Trade: Russia [[7924 - Arms Trade Russia.docx](#)]

**Somaliland: Military Alliances****Alexander Stafford:****[48524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish details of the UK's military cooperation with Somaliland in the (a) Horn of Africa and (b) Gulf of Aden.

**James Heappey:**

We currently have a modest defence relationship with Somaliland itself. We fund a limited advisory reform project for the armed forces and offer a junior staff training

course. We do not routinely publish details but MOD does set out in its Annual Report and Accounts each year updates on our major defence activity in Somalia.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[48525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's military cooperation with Somaliland in the (a) Horn of Africa and (b) Gulf of Aden.

**James Heappey:**

UK and MOD in particular plays an important role in promoting security in Somalia. We currently have a modest defence relationship with Somaliland itself. We fund a limited advisory reform project for the armed forces and offer a junior staff training course. We will continue to evaluate how we best balance our various forms of defence cooperation across Somalia to promote shared security interests.

## ■ Tanks: Procurement

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[45215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of procuring Leopard 2s to (a) further complement the British Army's fleet of main battle tanks and (b) increase inter-operability with NATO allies.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Army's Challenger 3 Main Battle Tank (MBT) will become one of the most mobile, most protected, and most lethal in Europe, making up the core of both of the Army's future Armoured Brigade Combat Teams. These will be more capable against peer adversaries and integrated with our NATO Allies and partners.

No requirement has been identified for additional MBT capability.

## ■ Trident Missiles: Scotland

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[47682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has held recent discussions with Scottish police fire and emergency services on the safety of convoys carrying Trident nuclear weapons driving on roads in Scotland.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

Defence Nuclear Materials are transported only when necessary to meet operational requirements, and a wide range of safety and contingency measures are in place to ensure nuclear transport operations are conducted safely. Officials from my Department have regular discussions with all relevant agencies regarding the movement of Defence Nuclear Materials, including with the police, fire and emergency services in Scotland.

## ■ Type 26 Frigates: Procurement

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[44952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the in-year spends on the Type 26 frigate have been since that project's commencement.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[45180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the in-year spends on the Type 31 frigate have been since that project's commencement.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Expenditure for the Manufacture phases for the Type 26 and Type 31 frigate programmes (rounded to the nearest million) is detailed in the table below. Costs incurred against the Assessment Phase have not been included, in line with normal reporting against Business Case approvals. The costs Spend data for the current financial year (FY2022-23), is excluded as this is incomplete.

	FY2017-18 £	FY2018-19 £	FY2019-20 £	FY2020-21 £	FY2021-22 £
PROJECTNAME	MILLION	MILLION	MILLION	MILLION	MILLION
Type 26	288.8	464.3	507	572.3	642.2
Type 31			75.4	199.2	252.6

## ■ Typhoon Aircraft

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[48274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many serving RAF pilots are qualified to fly the Typhoon to Quick Reaction Alert standard as of 6 September 2022.

**James Heappey:**

All UK national pilots who have graduated from the UK Typhoon Operational Conversion Unit and hold up to date flying currency, are qualified for the Quick Reaction Alert role.

## ■ Ukraine: Military Aid

**John Healey:** [\[47356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a full breakdown of the £2.3 billion in UK military aid to Ukraine.

**James Heappey:**

The Department provides details of specific measures of support to Ukraine, when appropriate to do so. However, due to the ongoing nature of the conflict and for reasons of operational security, it would be inappropriate to release a full breakdown of the military aid provided to Ukraine at this stage.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[47383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to send further (a) M270 launchers and (b) Nlaw Next Generation Light Anti-Tank weapons for the Ukrainian military.

**James Heappey:**

For reasons of operational security we cannot comment on options for future gifting to Ukraine. We continue to liaise closely with the Armed Forces of Ukraine to help meet their requirements.

**John Healey:**

[\[49065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) UK and (b) non-UK armed forces personnel are involved in Operation Interflex.

**James Heappey:**

As of 8 September 2022, 950 UK Armed Forces personnel and 410 non-UK Armed Forces personnel are involved in Operation Interflex.

#### ■ **Ukraine: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[47387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has engaged in recent talks with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe on supporting the return of the mandate for the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

**James Heappey:**

The UK has long been a strong supporter of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine - politically, financially and through providing a large number of qualified personnel, including one of the Deputy Chief Monitors of the Mission. The UK Government condemned Russia's decision in March to block the renewal of the mission's mandate, which will lead to its full closure by 31 October 2022. As renewing the mandate requires consensus from all 57 participating OSCE States, including Russia, there is unfortunately no prospect of doing so under the current circumstances.

#### ■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

**John Healey:**

[\[47352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Armed Forces personnel have been involved in Operation Isotrope each month since its inception.

**James Heappey:**

On average approximately 180 personnel are engaged on operation ISOTROPE at any time. This has remained broadly constant for the duration of the operation with only small fluctuations when there are personnel changeovers.

**John Healey:**

[\[47353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many small boats has the Royal Navy intercepted in the English Channel as part of Operation Isotrope.

**James Heappey:**

As of 6 September 2022, there have been 541 migrant vessels intercepted as part of operation ISOTROPE since it began on 14 April 2022, in which the Royal Navy plays a strong control and co-ordination role. It should be noted however that physical interception of small boats and cross-decking of migrants is principally conducted using specialist Border Force Crew Transfer Vessels (CTVs). Royal Navy assets primarily perform coordination and monitoring roles.

**John Healey:**

[\[47354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Royal Navy and (b) Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels have been involved in Operation Isotrope.

**James Heappey:**

Operation ISOTROPE has involved contributions from the Royal Navy of up to one River Class Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV), six P2000 Archer Class fast inshore patrol craft, and three rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs). No vessels from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary have been involved.

## ■ Unmanned Air Vehicles

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[45374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department are taking steps to develop the British Army's loitering munitions capabilities.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Ministry of Defence keeps under review capability requirements to ensure it can meet threats faced now and in the future.

## ■ USA: Military Alliances

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[44938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the US National Defense Strategy 2022, what steps his Department is taking to work jointly with the US Defense Department, including on coordinating cyberspace strategies.

**James Heappey:**

The US is our principal defence and security partner, and we remain committed to working with them to deliver on our common interests of maintaining international peace and security. We have regularly engaged with the US Defense Department during the development of its 2022 National Defense Strategy and look forward to working with them on its implementation when it is published, including deepening our unique partnership on advanced and innovative capabilities such as cyber. Our strategies reflect a shared commitment to working in partnership and we work closely



on delivery of our cyber strategies through bilateral and multilateral forums as well as benefiting from well-established links between operational and policy communities.

## ■ Weapons of Mass Destruction

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[47385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's CBRN resilience.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence takes the threat of a CBRN-based incident very seriously and will continue to be robust in our efforts to counter and prevent this. The Department routinely monitors the CBRN threat through our security partners which informs our resilience capability. The MOD's ability to respond to a CBRN incident is regularly tested as part of a routine and regular exercise programme. This is in support of the Home Office which oversees the response of our emergency services, including police and ambulance personnel.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ BBC News

**Alex Norris:**

[\[45146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the merger of BBC News and BBC World channels on domestic political news coverage.

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[45219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed merger between BBC News and the BBC World Service on the quality of news.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government wants to see the BBC continue to serve both UK and international audiences with high quality, accurate and impartial news and information, which is an essential part of its Mission and Public Purposes.

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government and the government cannot intervene in the BBC's day-to-day operations. It would therefore be inappropriate for the government to intervene in their decision to merge BBC News and BBC World News.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of the BBC, is responsible for ensuring that the BBC continues to meet the public service obligations set out in the BBC Charter, Agreement, and Operating Licence. In response to the BBC's announcement, Ofcom has said that it expects the BBC to be clear about how it plans to ensure that BBC News will continue to provide high quality UK news. Ofcom has also stated that it will continue to develop its understanding of the detail of the BBC's proposals, and that if

issues of concern arise Ofcom will work with the BBC to address them, and if necessary, take steps to ensure the BBC continues to deliver for audiences in the UK.

■ **BBC: Local Broadcasting**

**Alex Norris:** [\[44956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with the BBC on its assessment of the potential impact of ending the weekly current affairs programme entitled We Are England on the provision of regional news broadcasts.

**Alex Norris:** [\[44958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to ensure that local news production is at the centre of (a) the BBC and (b) other modern media stations.

**Alex Norris:** [\[44960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of programme sharing across neighbouring regional stations by the BBC on local news provision.

**Alex Norris:** [\[45151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has plans to help the BBC increase funding for regional broadcasting.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government recognises that local and regional news and current affairs play a vital role in bringing communities together and providing shared experiences across the UK, and the BBC has an important role to play.

The BBC's mission and public purposes are set out in the Royal Charter. The Charter requires the BBC to provide impartial news and information to help build people's understanding of all parts of the United Kingdom and of the wider world. The BBC should offer a range and depth of analysis so that all audiences can engage fully with major local, regional, national, United Kingdom and global issues.

This is alongside broader legislative and regulatory obligations for all public service broadcasters, including the BBC, which are required to provide high quality, impartial news and current affairs programmes. The BBC, ITV and STV are also required to provide regional news. The Government has no plans to relax these requirements.

The BBC was given a fair licence fee settlement that aims to support households at a time when they need that support the most. It sends an important message about keeping costs down while also giving the BBC what it needs to deliver on its remit. With this settlement, the BBC will continue to receive around £3.8 billion in annual public funding, allowing it to deliver its mission and public purposes and to continue doing what it does best.

As the BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the Government, and decisions over its spending and how it meets its obligations and delivers its services are a matter for the BBC.

## ■ **BBC: Religious Broadcasting**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[47533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will have discussions with the BBC on reports of its plans to reduce the budget for Songs of Praise.

**Julia Lopez:**

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the Government and the Government cannot intervene in the BBC's day-to-day operations. It would therefore be inappropriate for the government to intervene in BBC spending decisions, including any BBC proposals to alter its budget for Songs of Praise.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of the BBC, is responsible for ensuring that the BBC continues to meet the public service obligations set out in the BBC Charter, Agreement, and Operating Licence. The BBC is required to deliver its remit, reflecting, representing and serving the diverse communities of all the United Kingdom's nations, regions and communities. This requirement includes the obligation on the BBC to provide religious programming.

## ■ **Broadband: Misrepresentation**

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[39901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made representations to representatives of (a) Ofcom and (b) the Advertising Standards Agency on consumers being misled in respect of the sale of fibre to the cabinet products (FTTC) as full-fibre products; and if she will make a statement.

**Julia Lopez:**

In 2017, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the UK's regulator of advertising, reviewed consumer understanding of the term 'fibre' as used in broadband advertising (particularly for part-fibre services such as Fibre to the Cabinet) and any impact the use of this term has on consumers' transactional decisions. The ASA engaged with stakeholders and received a range of responses from providers of part-fibre and full-fibre broadband services, consumer organisations and other regulators.

The ASA published their findings in November 2017 and concluded by stating the following: "It is not possible to conclude that the word 'fibre', as currently used in part-fibre advertising, is likely to mislead and misinform consumers."

Both the ASA and Ofcom are independent regulators and such matters relating to industry rules on advertising and broadband speed claims are a matter for their discretion.

**■ Broadband: Romford****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[48288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her department is taking to increase broadband speed in Romford.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is delivering the biggest broadband upgrade in UK history. Partly as a result of our measures to bust barriers and drive competition in the UK market, 85.5% of Romford's premises now have access to gigabit capable connections, up from 6% in September 2020.

More broadly, 70% of UK premises can access gigabit-capable broadband, continuing a rate of incremental growth in line with meeting the target of at least 85% gigabit-capable coverage across the country by 2025. Where private sector deployment is not viable without subsidy, our £5bn Project Gigabit will contribute to nationwide coverage.

**■ Broadband: Rural Areas****Bim Afolami:**[\[45257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to (a) support and (b) accelerate the roll-out of (i) full-fibre broadband and (ii) 5g in rural communities.

**Julia Lopez:**

In March 2021 we launched Project Gigabit, our £5 billion mission to deliver lightning-fast, reliable broadband across the UK. Project Gigabit's objective is to level up the UK by giving hard-to-reach areas access to gigabit-capable internet speeds and, coupled with commercial gigabit delivery, ensuring almost all of the UK has access to gigabit-capable internet as soon as possible.

Our Project Gigabit procurements are prioritising delivery to rural, hard-to-reach premises and to those with the lowest broadband speeds. We have recently signed our first local Project Gigabit contract in North Dorset and expect to award further contracts over the coming months.

Furthermore, up to £210 million is available for Gigabit Broadband Vouchers, which are already helping communities that are not in line for commercial connections right now.

Building Digital UK's legacy and current programmes have already upgraded over 740,000 hard-to-reach premises to gigabit speeds, and we are continuing to move at pace.

5G network rollout is a matter for industry, but we have seen good progress. Up to half of the properties in the UK are located in an area with outdoor 5G coverage available from at least one mobile network operator according to the latest statistics from communications regulator Ofcom.

We recently made reforms to the planning system to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage. The changes, which came into force on 4 April 2022, enable operators to upgrade existing sites for 5G and share infrastructure to improve mobile coverage, particularly in more rural areas. We are reducing further barriers to deployment by legislating to reform the Electronic Communications Code through the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill.

The Government is developing a Wireless Infrastructure Strategy to set out a strategic framework for the deployment and adoption of 5G, and within the Strategy we will be establishing a new ambition for 5G.

## ■ Broadband: Solihull

**Julian Knight:**

**[45856]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to increase the provision of (a) fast and (b) reliable broadband to (i) homes and (ii) business in Solihull constituency.

**Julia Lopez:**

Gigabit broadband coverage is expanding rapidly in Solihull. According to the independent website [www.thinkbroadband.com](http://www.thinkbroadband.com) almost 98% of premises in the constituency now have access to gigabit-capable broadband, which is above the national average of 70%. Over 99% of premises in Solihull also have access to superfast broadband with speeds of at least 30 Mbps.

We are investing £5 billion through Project Gigabit so homes and businesses in hard-to-reach areas can access gigabit broadband. A core element of the programme is delivered through regional and local contracts that provide subsidies to broadband suppliers to build gigabit-capable infrastructure to premises that would not otherwise be reached through suppliers' commercial plans.

Solihull is included in our regional supplier procurement for Leicestershire and Warwickshire, which we plan to launch between February and April 2023. A small number of premises in Solihull are likely to be included in the procurement, taking into account the current availability of gigabit broadband and suppliers' build plans for the area.

Some parts of Solihull may also be included in the intervention area for our regional supplier procurement covering Birmingham and the Black Country. We are currently conducting market engagement which will help to inform us of the extent of public intervention that is required in these areas.

Some homes and businesses may also be able to apply for subsidy via the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, which provides a micro-grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband.

**■ Building Digital UK**

**Julian Knight:** [\[45191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many network operators have submitted build plans to Building Digital UK as part of the Gigabit Open Market Review and Public Review activity as of 2 September 2022.

**Julia Lopez:**

As part of our Open Market Review and Public Review processes for Project Gigabit we ask broadband suppliers to submit build plans containing their current coverage and/or future build intentions. As of 2 September 2022, 61 broadband suppliers have submitted build plans to Building Digital UK.

**■ Building Digital UK: Contracts**

**Julian Knight:** [\[45179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many operator build plans has Building Digital UK accepted in full as part of its market analysis.

**Julian Knight:** [\[45201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many operator build plans are under review by Building Digital UK as part of its Gigabit Open Market Review and Public Review activity as of 2 September 2022.

**Julian Knight:** [\[45227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many operator build plans have been (a) partially accepted and (b) rejected by Building Digital UK as part of its market analysis.

**Julia Lopez:**

As part of our Open Market Review and Public Review processes for Project Gigabit we ask broadband suppliers to submit build plans containing their current coverage and/or future build intentions. Building Digital UK (BDUK) encourages suppliers to provide as much information as possible in support of their claims and plans, with each submission assessed on its own merits.

Since the first BDUK-led Open Market Review was launched in March 2021, eight build plans have been assessed as credible in full by BDUK. A further 143 build plans have been partially assessed as credible, and 64 build plans have been assessed as not currently credible in full or in part.

As of 2 September 2022, 52 operator build plans are in the process of being assessed.

BDUK reassesses suppliers' build plans on a regular basis through our National Rolling Open Market Review. This ensures that we have the most up to date information about these suppliers' existing and planned build which we use to continuously inform where subsidy is likely to be needed to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to hard-to-reach areas.

**Julian Knight:**[\[45204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many unique property numbers in total have been included within operator build plans submitted to Building Digital UK.

**Julian Knight:**[\[45212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many unique property numbers in total have been included within operator build plans submitted to Building Digital UK that have subsequently been rejected by the agency.

**Julia Lopez:**

As part of our Open Market Review and Public Review processes for Project Gigabit we ask broadband suppliers to submit build plans containing their current coverage and/or future build intentions. As of 2 September 2022, suppliers have submitted build plans for a total of 32.7 million premises. This figure includes all premises submitted to BDUK by a supplier, including where a supplier has indicated in their response that they do not expect to build to the premises commercially but has included them for completeness. As of 2 September 2022, build plans for 4.5 million premises were not assessed as credible.

**Julian Knight:**[\[45208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of the operator build plans that have been submitted to Building Digital UK which include unique property reference numbers have been designated as (a) black, (b) grey, (c) under review, (d) voucher priority area and (e) white as part of Building Digital UK's ongoing analysis.

**Julia Lopez:**

The table below provides the number and proportion of premises included in operator build plans that have been submitted to Building Digital UK showing the breakdown between premises that have been classified through a subsidy control process as black, grey, under review, white or have not yet been assessed.

STATUS	NUMBER OF UNIQUE PREMISES	%
Gigabit Black	3,800,000	12
Gigabit Grey	15,200,000	46
Gigabit Under Review	8,200,000	25
Gigabit White	4,500,000	14
Not yet assessed	1,100,000	3
Total	32,700,000	100



BDUK expects the proportion of black / grey / under review premises to grow over time, as more suppliers provide greater or updated information in support of their plans through subsequent mapping exercises.

Voucher Priority Areas are determined separately from subsidy control processes and are confirmed when invitations to tender for each procurement Lot are issued by BDUK. To date, 200,000 premises have been assigned by BDUK as within a Voucher Priority Area, and these include both premises that are commercially viable for a gigabit connection and those that require public subsidy.

## ■ Charities and Religious Buildings: Energy

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[47595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of the increase in energy costs on (a) charities and (b) places of worship.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

As households and communities face rising energy prices, charities are seeing increased demand for their services while contending with the same price increases themselves. Places of worship are facing similar price pressures and increased running costs.

With government support, charities have shown significant resilience over the past two years, and will again be crucial in supporting communities and households over the winter.

That is why the government will support all charities, public sector organisations and businesses with their energy costs this winter, offering an energy price guarantee for six months, equivalent to the protection offered to British households. Further details will be announced in due course.

Through engagement with key stakeholders, government officials are continuously monitoring the impact of energy costs on the charity sector and other civil society organisations, such as places of worship.

## ■ Charities: Government Assistance

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[46180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing financial support to (a) charities and (b) other similar organisations with rising energy costs.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

As households and communities face rising energy prices, charities are seeing increased demand for their services while contending with the same price increases themselves.



With government support, charities have shown significant resilience over the past two years, and will again be crucial in supporting communities and households over the winter.

That is why the government will support all charities, public sector organisations and businesses with their energy costs this winter, offering an energy price guarantee for six months, equivalent to the protection offered to British households. Further details will be announced in due course.

My department will keep engaging with their counterparts across the sector and government to continuously monitor the impact of rising energy costs on the charity and broader civil society sector.

## ■ Cultural Heritage: South Asia

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[48200]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department last funded celebrations, exhibitions and programmes related to (a) the contributions of the South Asian community to UK life and (b) the culture, history and religions of South Asian countries; and if she will make a statement.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

My Department has funded many exhibitions and programmes related to the contribution of South Asian culture and history through the bodies it funds.

Significant projects have been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund between 2003- 2021, in the London Borough of Harrow, with a total investment of £178,732 which explored and celebrated the South Asian community. Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants has also supported a wide range of organisations and events including: the South Asian Heritage Trust, which delivers their annual South Asian Heritage Month observance; Luton Mela, a festival of South Asian arts and cultural heritage; and Croydon's Beeja Dance Company who play a national role in developing the next generation of Indian dance leaders in the UK.

Current projects supported by Historic England are celebrating South Asian Places of Worship through thematic listing and research, and two projects have been awarded through their Everyday Heritage programme to the Bengali Photography Archive and the Sikh Development Academy.

There are also future events to look forward to. In 2023 the Manchester Museum will unveil a new South Asian gallery in partnership with the British Museum and which has been part-funded by a £5m grant from the government. The British Library also plays a part in celebrating South Asian culture and history through their partnership programmes and events such as the upcoming Lahore literature festival in 2023.

**■ Culture: Finance****Munira Wilson:****[47683]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the impact of rising inflation on the heritage and culture sector; and whether her Department has plans to increase funding to (a) museums, (b) galleries and (c) other heritage organisations to (i) support their continued operation and (ii) ensure their employees are paid an adequate wage.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

As the Prime Minister stated to Parliament on 8 September, and as the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy set out in a written ministerial statement on the same day, the government is acting to protect the UK from the spiralling costs of energy. The Government will support all business, charities and public sector organisations with their energy costs this winter, offering an equivalent guarantee to that for households for six months.

The written ministerial statement can be found [here](#).

The Government continues to support the UK's world-leading culture and heritage sectors, building on unprecedented support during the pandemic, and our long-term investment in these areas. My department is currently engaging with museum and heritage stakeholders to understand the impact of energy and inflation increases on the sector.

**■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution****Emily Thornberry:****[47414]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish her department's data for spending over £500 using an electronic purchasing card during the financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Department aims to publish details of transactions over £500, using electronic purchasing cards, for financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21 by October 2022.

**■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Termination of Employment****Ruth Jones:****[46103]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many members of staff have left her Department since 12 December 2019.

**Julia Lopez:**

1506 members of staff (permanent, FTA and contractors) have left the Department since 12 December 2019.

## ■ Emergency Services Network

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[45162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which commercial operators have (a) agreed and (b) shown an interest in utilising the infrastructure associated with the Extended Service Area Masts at locations (i) EAS0021, (ii) EAS0028, (iii) EAS0701 and (iv) EAS1013.

**Julia Lopez:**

As part of the Shared Rural Network £184m of the £500m in government funding for the programme will be made available to the Home Office and the mobile network operators to upgrade Extended Area Service (EAS) masts being built as part of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) for commercial use by the four mobile network operators. This will help eliminate 'total not-spots' - the hard to reach areas where there is currently no 4G coverage at all from any operator

All four mobile network operators have shown an interest in deploying on EAS sites. BT/EE will deploy on all feasible sites as part of the ESN project. The other operators will be able to commit to individual sites after design and acquisition work being performed for SRN by the Home Office has been completed

We can confirm that the design and acquisition of upgrades to enable SRN deployment on EAS0021, EAS0701 and EAS1013 have now started and should be handed over to the operators in 2023 at the latest, should the sites pass our reviews successfully. However, a site can be withdrawn from consideration at any point due to a number of factors such as value for money, planning issues and the level of coverage provided. Once a site is passed over to the operators they then have 12 months to activate it commercially.

## ■ Football Index

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[45150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how investigations into the collapse of football index are progressing; when she expect those investigations to conclude; and if she will make a statement.

**Damian Collins:**

In March 2021, the Gambling Commission launched an investigation into BetIndex, the operator of Football Index. This has now concluded and resulted in the revocation of BetIndex's licence to operate.

Following information received from the administrators and the Gambling Commission, the Insolvency Service has confirmed that the conduct of Betindex Limited's directors is currently being investigated by them. The progress and outcome of the investigation will depend on the evidence obtained. It will not be possible for the Insolvency Service to comment on the investigation while it is ongoing.

## ■ Football: Females

**Julian Knight:**

[\[45355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to provide more pitches and facilities for women's football teams.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Each year, the government invests £18 million into community sport facilities via the Football Foundation, alongside the English Football Association and the Premier League. A further £21 million was invested in England in 2021/22, supporting a range of projects to deliver improved facilities in deprived areas, support multi-sport use and increase participation among currently under-represented groups including women and girls and disabled players. The Government has committed another £205 million between 2022 and 2025, with plans for this investment due to be announced in the Autumn.

We are working with the FA to build on the momentum created by the Women's Euros to ensure there is a legacy of growth in women and girls, including 500,000 new football opportunities to engage women and girls across the nine host cities by 2024, and 20,000 more women playing for fun across the country. To raise the profile of facilities in the UK, and to commemorate the Lionesses, the Football Foundation is working with facility owners to name pitches/facilities in towns and cities that have a strong link to each tournament winning squad member.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation: Regulation

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[45675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to regulate (a) operation and (b) growth in the number of Airbnb properties in residential areas.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The sharing economy has brought many benefits to the tourism sector and wider economy, as well as creating an additional income stream for homeowners. However, we recognise that the increase in short-term letting has also prompted some concerns. These include the impact on the housing market and local communities, and a sense that new entrants in the market are not being held to the same health and safety standards as, for example, hotels and B&Bs.

The Government committed in the Tourism Recovery Plan published in June last year to consider a possible Short Term Accommodation Registration Scheme in England. As a first step in this process, a Call for Evidence was published on 29 June and runs until 21 September.

We want to hear from a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, in order to build a much-needed evidence base on these issues and enable us to develop proportionate policy responses for a future consultation. We ideally want to strike a balance between the benefits of the sharing economy and the concerns of

the impacts on some communities, alongside ensuring consistency in quality among the range of different tourism accommodation providers.

## ■ Independent Press Standards Organisation

**Alex Sobel:**

**[45118]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what data her Department holds on (a) the number of fines imposed and (b) how many standards investigations have been launched by IPSO since 2014.

**Julia Lopez:**

Since the report of the Leveson Inquiry was published in 2012, we have seen a fundamental reform of the self-regulatory landscape for the press, including the establishment of two new regulators, Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and The Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS). The majority of traditional publishers—including 95% of national newspapers by circulation—are members of IPSO. A small number of publishers have joined IMPRESS.

These regulators enforce codes of conduct which provide guidelines on a range of areas, including discrimination, accuracy, privacy, and harassment. If they find that a newspaper has broken the code of conduct, they can order corrections.

The Government is committed to independent self-regulation of the press, and does not intervene in or oversee the work of IPSO.

## ■ Local Press: Government Assistance

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[45753]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help support journalists at local newspapers, in the context of rising inflation.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[45754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of (a) local and (b) regional news outlets on the impact of the economic situation on (i) those organisations and (ii) their employees.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government understands that people across the UK are worried about the rising cost of living and are seeing their disposable incomes decrease as they spend more on the essentials. In May, we announced over £15 billion of additional cost of living support, targeted at those with the greatest need. As a result, millions of vulnerable households will receive at least £1,200 of support this financial year, with the vast majority of households receiving at least £550. This package builds on the over £22 billion previously announced, meaning government support for the cost of living now totals over £37 billion this year, equivalent to 1.5% of GDP.

With regard to energy costs, while the majority of UK non-domestic customers are on fixed price energy deals, some are not. Businesses did not benefit from the Ofgem

price cap and there was a risk that some would fall through the gap, unable to fix their energy price and unable to access the kind of support we are making available to households. A new 6-month scheme for businesses and other non-domestic energy users (including charities and public sector organisations like schools) will be offered support as is being provided for consumers. After this initial 6 month scheme, the government will provide ongoing focused support for vulnerable industries. There will be a review in 3 months' time to consider where this should be targeted to make sure those most in need get support. Further details will be published shortly.

In addition to timely, temporary and targeted support, the government is also committed to tackling the root cause of the cost of living challenge – high inflation. Through independent monetary policy, responsible management of the public finances and supply-side reforms, we will combat high inflation and reduce it over time.

More specifically in relation to local and regional news outlets, the government is committed to supporting local newspapers as vital pillars of our communities. We are in regular contact with news organisations to understand the financial pressures they face and we have taken action to support them. Our plans for a pro-competition regime for digital markets will, among many other things, help to rebalance the relationship between news publishers and online platforms. We have also delivered a £2 million pilot innovation fund, zero rated VAT on e-newspapers, extended business rates relief on local newspaper office space, and published the Online Media Literacy Strategy. In addition, the BBC Charter Mid Term Review will evaluate how the BBC and Ofcom assess the market impact and public value of the BBC in an evolving marketplace and how that relates to the wider UK media ecology, including with regard to the local news sector. We will continue to consider all possible options in the interest of promoting and sustaining the sector.

## ■ Museums and Galleries

**Christopher Pincher:**

[\[47516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing capital funding to support the establishment of local art galleries including in Tamworth.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Government's position towards the creation of new museums, as set out in the action plan following The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England, is that public funding should only support the creation of new museums in areas and communities with a demonstrable need for them. Instead we have focused on investment in existing museums and galleries through capital programmes such as the DCMS / Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund and the Museum Estate and Development Fund, and our direct sponsorship of fifteen museum arm's length bodies (encompassing 48 museum sites).

Arts Council England is our arm's-length body providing wider support and funding for museums and galleries, and its Museum Development services can provide guidance to organisations on how to open a new museum. They can help develop thinking on how the proposed museum fits within the ecology of arts, culture and heritage in the local area, including determining the scale and interest of the potential audience, and advise on potential avenues for capital funding.

## ■ **Press: Privacy**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[45087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of current trends in the levels of press (a) intrusion and (b) harassment of grieving families in the UK.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is committed to a free and independent press, and does not intervene in what the press can and cannot publish. We are clear, however, that with this freedom, comes responsibility, which media organisations must take seriously. It is important that there exists an independent self regulatory regime to ensure that the press adheres to a wide set of clear and appropriate standards, and to offer individuals a means of redress where these are not met.

## ■ **Russian Embassy: Twitter**

**Tracey Crouch:**

[\[45404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) social media platforms to prevent the Russian Embassy in the UK from sharing hateful content relating to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine via its official Twitter account.

**Damian Collins:**

The Government takes the issue of disinformation seriously. The DCMS Counter Disinformation Unit leads the domestic operational and policy response for countering disinformation across HMG, working closely with major social media platforms to encourage them to swiftly remove disinformation and coordinated inauthentic or manipulated behaviour, as per their Terms of Service. We also engage with platforms to understand policy changes and other countermeasures related to Russian information activities, and the effectiveness of these actions. This work aids HMG assessment bodies and the UK Government Information Cell, which brings together the government's counter-disinformation expertise and capabilities to identify and counter Russian information aggression and disinformation.

It remains of significant concern that the network of Russian diplomatic accounts continues to disseminate pro-Russian content with the aim of sowing distrust and questioning the veracity of reports of Russian atrocities committed in Ukraine. Although the government welcomes steps that platforms have taken in response, including demonetising, deamplifying and labelling content from Russian state



affiliated accounts, the government is clear that there is more that needs to be done and that the recent tweets from the Russian Embassy in the UK are unacceptable. In our view Twitter should apply its policies consistently, removing content that it has acknowledged breaches its Terms of Service.

## ■ Social Media: Disinformation

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[47705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many times Government teams tackling disinformation have reported content or user accounts to social media providers in the past 12 months.

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[47706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of reports about content or user accounts made to social media providers by Government units established to tackle disinformation resulted in action being taken by the social media providers in the last 12 months.

**Damian Collins:**

The Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. The Counter Disinformation Unit team, based in DCMS, works to understand the scope, scale and reach of disinformation and works with a range of partners, including social media platforms, to tackle it.

The primary purpose of the team is not to spot every instance of disinformation across all social media platforms, but rather to understand overall trends and coordinated attempts to artificially manipulate the information environment. When the Unit does identify particular pieces of harmful content which may violate platforms' terms of service these are referred to the relevant platform for consideration, who in turn decide what action to take.

As an operational matter it is not appropriate for the government to publicly provide details of content reported to platforms as doing so would give malign actors insight into our capabilities.

## ■ Sports: Hitchin and Harpenden

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much the Government (a) has invested and (b) plans to invest in grassroots sports facilities in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency between 2019 and 2024.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Sport and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health and everyone, regardless of their background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

Since 2019, the department, through Sport England, has invested 24 grants totalling £171,061 into a wide range of grassroots sport projects within the Hitchin and



Harpenden constituency. In addition, the Football Foundation, a charity jointly-funded by Sport England, has awarded £944,850 to develop football and multi-use grassroots sports facilities in the same period.

Sport England continues to work with Local Authorities and grassroots sports facilities to ensure that future funding is targeted where it can best improve access to sport and physical activity.

## ■ Telecommunications: Prices

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[45142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps are being taken by her Department to help prevent price increases over and above CPI by telecoms companies.

**Julia Lopez:**

Annual price increases are contained within the terms and conditions that consumers agree to when taking out their communications service. Ofcom [General Condition \(c1.3\)](#) requires operators to provide customers with a clear summary of their contract terms - including any elements relating to price rises - prior to final sale.

We continue to engage with the sector regarding affordability and pricing. Customers should check whether they are in their minimum contract period as they may be able to save money by negotiating with their existing provider or consider switching.

Figures released by [Ofcom](#) in November 2021, show that 35% of consumers in 2020 were out of contract, and the average out of contract broadband customer could save more than £61 a year by switching providers.

## ■ Television Licences: Concessions

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[45149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing free TV licences for those suffering from dementia.

**Julia Lopez:**

TV Licence concessions are available to people who are registered blind or severely sight impaired, people living in qualifying residential care who are disabled or over 60 years old, and people aged 75 and over in receipt of Pension Credit. There are no further concessions available for people with disabilities or other health conditions.

The licence fee settlement covers the period until 31 March 2028.

## ■ Unboxed

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[47495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department has taken to assess the extent to which the Unboxed Festival met the objectives set for it.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The UNBOXED programme aims to bring people together and showcase our creativity and innovation to the world through 10 major commissions across the UK. There are 8 commissions that are live or about to go live, and the live events programme will conclude at the end of October. The UNBOXED delivery company, an arm's length body of DCMS, continues to measure the programme's progress and success, including through a range of key performance indicators.

There is an independent evaluation of the programme underway. This will consider areas such as: job creation; training, development and volunteering opportunities offered; the number of people who will experience UNBOXED in person and online; and the number of participants in the learning and engagement programmes delivered by the creative teams across the country. The evaluation will be published in early 2023.

**Barbara Keeley:****[47496]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she took to ensure the Unboxed festival delivered value for money.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The UNBOXED programme is still running. The live events programme will conclude at the end of October. A departmental [Accounting Officer Assessment](#) for the UNBOXED programme was published on 12 August. It stated that our pre-delivery assessment of the costs and benefits for UNBOXED showed the programme would be value for money, even where some expected benefits are not monetisable. DCMS has kept the programme under review to ensure that it remains value for money.

There is also an independent evaluation of the programme underway. This will consider areas such as job creation; training, development and volunteering opportunities offered; the number of people who experience UNBOXED in person and online; and the number of participants in the learning and engagement programmes delivered by the creative teams across the country. It will be published in early 2023.

**■ Unboxed: Overseas Visitors****Emily Thornberry:****[47404]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 June 2022 to Question 13078, if she will publish the (a) names, (b) positions and (c) nationalities of the 12 international delegates who visited Scotland in August; and what conclusions were reached in consultation with that delegation regarding the potential of Unboxed projects to tour overseas.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK delivered two five-day international delegations in partnership with the British Council. The names, positions and nationalities of the delegates can be found [here](#).

The delegations were devised to facilitate knowledge exchange and to share practice regarding interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement and creative production. Commercial touring opportunities are now being explored in several countries.

## ■ Voluntary Work

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[45984]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps she has taken to ensure the fair treatment of volunteers within the voluntary and charitable work sector.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Volunteering is critical to a vibrant and resilient civil society; it benefits volunteers and the organisations involving them and has transformational impacts on beneficiaries and their communities.

This Government is committed to enabling people to take part in all forms of social action, including volunteering. We know the profound benefit that volunteering has on the individual, on communities and on society.

Volunteers do not have a contract of employment as a volunteer, so do not have the same rights as an employee or worker, and are not placed under the same obligations. However, they will usually be given a volunteer agreement that explains:

- the level of supervision and support they will get
- what training they will get
- whether they are covered under the organisation's employer or public liability insurance
- health and safety issues
- any expenses the organisation will cover.

The volunteer agreement is not a contract, but it is a good way of setting out what volunteers can expect from the organisation they are volunteering for. You can find information about this at <https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/pay-and-expenses>. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) also has information on [volunteers' legal status](#) and guidance on solving volunteer problems.

If a volunteer believes they are treated unfairly, there is recourse available to them through a variety of means. Volunteers for charities are able to raise concerns to the Charity Commission. The Health and Safety Executive, Disclosure and Barring Service, and the Information Commissioner's Office are also useful points of contact.

**EDUCATION****■ Apprentices****Bim Afolami:****[46001]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help encourage employers to provide high quality apprenticeships.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The department wants more employers to offer high-quality apprenticeships. We are increasing funding for apprenticeships in England to £2.7 billion by the 2024/25 financial year. Employers who pay the apprenticeship levy can make use of their levy funds, topped up by 10% by the government, to fund apprenticeship training and assessment in their businesses, and smaller employers can reserve funding for up to 10 new apprenticeships.

We are encouraging the use of more flexible training models, such as accelerated and flexi-job apprenticeships, so that employers in all sectors can benefit from apprenticeships and apprentices can attain occupational competence as quickly as possible. We also continue to make improvements to the apprenticeship levy transfer system to make it easier for large employers to make full use of their levy funds and support starts in their supply chain, sector, or local area, and to support more employers, including SMEs, to meet local or sectorial skills needs

We want to make sure that every apprentice has a high-quality experience. To achieve this, we are further improving quality by investing in a comprehensive package of professional development for apprenticeship training providers and their workforces, and by giving employers the tools, advice, and direction they need to provide high-quality experiences for their apprentices.

**Bim Afolami:****[46002]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to promote the apprenticeship route to young people in secondary education.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The department's new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign showcases apprenticeship standards which offer great opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education.

The first featured apprenticeships, all at level 2 and 3, launched in August. More information on the campaign can be found here:

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/career-starter-apprenticeships>, and more featured apprenticeships will be published over the coming months.

The department also continues to promote apprenticeships in schools and colleges through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge programme. This free service provides resources and interventions to help better educate young people about apprenticeships. Since September 2021 it has reached over 685,000 students and over 2,500 schools.

Alongside this, our 'Get the Jump' campaign is raising awareness and understanding of the full range of education and training choices available to young people. More information is available at: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-your-education-and-training-choices>.

#### ■ **Apprentices: Hertfordshire**

**Bim Afolami:**

**[45167]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) apprenticeships placements and (b) apprenticeship vacancies are available in Hertfordshire.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The department is committed to supporting employers and individuals across the country to benefit from the high-quality training that apprenticeships offer.

The latest published statistics show that in the first three quarters of the 2021/2022 academic year, or August 2021 to April 2022, there were 4,960 apprenticeship starts in Hertfordshire.

As of 6 September 2022, there are currently 311 adverts comprising 407 vacancies within Hertfordshire posted on our Find An Apprenticeship service. Individuals can also find and apply for apprenticeship vacancies through an employer's website, recruitment agencies, or local job centres, meaning that the actual number of apprenticeship vacancies in Hertfordshire will likely be higher than the stated figure.

#### ■ **BTEC Qualifications**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[45625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that future BTec results are not delayed.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

#### ■ **Health and Science: T-levels**

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[48306]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with a) NCFE, b) Ofqual and c) the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education on the results for T-Levels in (a) health, (b) healthcare science and (c) science in 2022.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The department has worked with Ofqual, the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE), and NCFE to determine the factors which contributed to students receiving grades for their first-year assessments which were lower than expected for T Levels in Health, Healthcare Science and Science.

Ofqual have now concluded, through an independent expert review, that the examination papers set by NCFE were flawed. New grades will be issued on the basis of other evidence, with an assurance that students' grades will not be any lower than those originally issued. Students will also be able to retake assessments twice before the end of their course, should they choose to do so, and only the highest grade will count.

Training providers were briefed by the Chief Regulator at Ofqual and senior officials from the department and IfATE on 7th September, in order to provide clarity for students as rapidly as possible.

## ■ Overseas Students

**Sarah Olney:** [45504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many international students were accepted by British Universities in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020, (d) 2021 and (e) 2022.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

UCAS publish data on the number of international students accepted to UK higher education providers.

Data on acceptances at the end of the admission cycle is available here:

<https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2021>.

The 2022 admissions cycle is still in progress and latest available data is here:

<https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/statistical-releases-daily-clearing-analysis-2022>.

Note that not all international students are accepted through UCAS. The Higher Education Statistics Agency publishes data on the total number of international student enrolments, with the latest data covering the 2020/21 academic year. This data is available here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he#numbers>.

## ■ Pupils and Students: Suicide

**Damien Moore:** [44937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is planning to take in the proposed 10-year suicide prevention strategy that will help tackle suicides among school and university students.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The government is committed to doing all we can to prevent suicides. We continue to work with experts and to review our plans to ensure they are fit for the future. The mental health and wellbeing of students in schools and universities, including suicide prevention, is a government priority. The department has been working closely with higher education (HE) providers, schools and health colleagues to ensure students are supported.

As part of a coordinated, whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, the department is committed to ensuring schools provide safe, calm, and supportive environments, with access to early, targeted support. This is vital in preventing the onset, progression, and escalation of ill mental health. We are enabling schools to introduce effective, whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing by committing to offer all state schools and colleges a grant to train a senior mental health lead by 2025. This is backed by £10 million in 2022/23. Over 8,000 schools and colleges, including half of state-funded secondary schools in England, have signed up so far.

The department is also expanding access to early, targeted mental health support by increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges to 400 by 2023, covering around 35% of pupils in England, with over 500 planned to be up and running by 2024.

Alongside these initiatives, we are promoting good mental health amongst children and young people through the school curriculum. Health education is compulsory in all schools and has a strong focus on mental wellbeing. Pupils are taught where and how to seek support for themselves as well as others. At secondary level, teachers may choose to discuss issues such as self-harm, addiction, and suicide when teaching these topics.

In addition to this, the department is funding a large-scale randomised control trial of approaches to improve pupil mental health and wellbeing in schools. The 'Aware' arm of the trial is testing approaches to mental health awareness teaching, including Youth Aware of Mental Health, which has good international evidence of reducing suicidal ideation. Moreover, colleges funded through the £5.4 million college collaboration fund have developed new ways to support student and staff mental health and wellbeing, with resources available to all further education providers online.

We also expect all universities to engage actively with suicide prevention, intervene to support students at risk, and act sensitively when a tragedy occurs.

The department supports the Suicide-Safer Universities framework, led by Universities UK (UUK) and Papyrus. This framework supports university leaders to prevent student suicides, and support students and families after the death of a student. Its approach has been widely adopted and is a key component of the University Mental Health Charter, led by Student Minds, which aims to raise standards in mental health provision across the sector.

## ■ Students: Coronavirus

**Bim Afolami:**

**[45169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government plans to compensate students who attended university during the covid-19 pandemic for missed in-person teaching.



**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The unprecedented and unique nature of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated changes to the way higher education (HE) providers delivered their teaching.

The former Minister for Higher and Further Education wrote to all English HE providers to make clear that they are expected to offer a high-quality, face-to-face student experience. Online learning should only be offered to enhance the student experience, not to detract from it, and it should not be used as a cost-cutting measure. The former Secretary of State for Education wrote an open letter to students about face-to-face teaching, setting out what they can do if they feel they are not getting the teaching they signed up for.

HE providers are independent and autonomous bodies who are responsible for the management of their own affairs. If current or former students have concerns about the delivery of their university courses, they should first raise them with their provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for HE to consider their complaint. OIA recommendations can include practical remedies as well as financial compensation, where that is deemed appropriate.

**■ Students: Energy**

**Jessica Morden:** [\[45757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of rising energy prices on students in higher education.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[46176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support will be made available to students to assist them with rising energy and food costs.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

To support disadvantaged students and those who need additional help, the department has confirmed in guidance to the Office for Students (OfS) on funding for the 2022/23 financial year that universities will continue to be able to support students in hardship through their own hardship funds and the student premium, for which up to £261 million is available for academic year 2022/23.

We have also worked closely with the OfS to clarify that English providers can draw upon this funding now, to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

Maximum grants and loans for living costs have also been increased by 2.3% this academic year. Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the 2022/23 financial year has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.



In addition, maximum tuition fees, and the subsidised loans available from Government to pay them, remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year in respect of standard full-time courses. We are also freezing maximum tuition fees for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years. As well as reducing debt levels for students, the continued fee freeze will help to ensure that the HE system remains sustainable while also promoting greater efficiency at providers.

As part of a package of support for rising energy bills, the government is giving a council tax rebate payment of £150 to households that were living in a property in council tax bands A to D as their main home on 1 April 2022. This includes full-time students that do not live in student halls or in property that is not considered a House in Multiple Occupation for council tax purposes. Alongside this, the government is also making available discretionary funding of £144 million to support vulnerable people and individuals on low incomes, including students, to support those ineligible for council tax.

The government has also announced that households will get £400 of support with their energy bills through an expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are also eligible for this support. Furthermore, The Energy Price Guarantee, announced on 8 September, will save the average household at least £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount.

## ■ **Students: Homelessness**

**Catherine West:**

**[48460]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the recent report published by Higher Education Policy Institute on hidden homelessness among university students.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

No student should ever have to worry about their residential accommodation whilst balancing their studies. Although the department plays no role in the provision of student accommodation, we are investing £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

Universities and private accommodation providers are ultimately autonomous and responsible for setting their own rent agreements but we have always encouraged them to review their policies to make sure that their accommodation policies are fair, clear and have the interests of students at heart.

For any student with concerns, we recommend them reaching out to their university, many of whom have hardship funds that students can apply to for financial assistance.

The government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted students. Therefore, in order to support

disadvantaged students and those who need additional help, we have confirmed in our guidance to the Office for Students (OfS) on funding for the 2022-23 financial year that in addition to their existing hardship funds, universities can continue to be able to support students in hardship by drawing on the student premium, for which up to £261 million is available for academic year 2022/23.

## ■ Students: Loans

**Liz Twist:**

[\[45978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the geographical eligibility of the student loan repayment scheme for teachers.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The 'Teachers: claim back your student loan repayments' scheme was announced in 2017 and is targeted at 26 local authorities in England we have identified as having a high need for teachers, as determined by our published data at this time.

We have commissioned an external evaluation of the scheme and expect to publish the final evaluation report this year. Once we receive the final evaluation report, we will consider if eligibility for the scheme should be extended.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[48418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department will recommend increasing the size of student loans to help cover increased living costs for students.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

Maximum grants and loans for living costs have been increased by 2.3% for the 2022/23 academic year. The government is reviewing options for uprating maximum grants and loans for the 2023/24 academic year and an announcement will follow in the autumn.

Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the tax year 2022/23 has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed. In addition, maximum tuition fees, and the subsidised loans available from the government to pay them, remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year, in respect of standard full-time courses.

We are also freezing maximum tuition fees for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years. As well as reducing debt levels for students, the continued fee freeze will help to ensure that the higher education (HE) system remains sustainable while also promoting greater efficiency at providers.

The government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted students. Many HE providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance.

To support disadvantaged students and those who need additional help, we have confirmed in our guidance to the Office for Students (OfS) on funding for the 2022/23 financial year that universities will continue to be able to support students in hardship through their own hardship funds and the student premium, for which up to £261 million is available for the academic year 2022/23.

The government has also worked closely with the OfS to clarify that English providers can draw upon this funding now, to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

As part of a package of support for rising energy bills, the government is giving a council tax rebate payment of £150 to households that were living in a property in council tax bands A to D as their main home on 1 April 2022. This includes full-time students that do not live in student halls or in property that is not considered a house in multiple occupation for council tax purposes. Alongside this, the government is also making available discretionary funding of £144 million to support vulnerable people and individuals on low incomes, including students, to support those who are ineligible for council tax.

The government has also announced that households will get £400 of support with their energy bills through an expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are also eligible for this support.

## ■ **Students: Mental Health Services**

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

**[44951]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to support students' mental health following the outbreak of covid-19.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

In the longer term, the department is offering all state schools and colleges a grant to train a senior mental health lead by 2025, enabling them to introduce effective, whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. Over 8,000 schools and colleges are already receiving grants and this year, we are providing an additional £10 million, so two thirds of state schools and colleges will have access to a grant by March 2023.

In further education, we are investing over £800 million across the next 3 academic years to fund an average of 40 additional learning hours for band 5 and T Level students in 16 to 19 education. The additional hours can be used to support areas, including mental health and wellbeing, where these are a barrier for students effectively accessing teaching and learning.

Whilst it is for higher education (HE) providers to determine what welfare and counselling services they need to provide to their students to offer that support, the government and the Office for Students (OfS) are proactive in funding and promoting effective practice in this area, ensuring that providers can access evidence to inform their approaches.

We have worked with the OfS and Student Minds to provide Student Space, which is designed to work alongside existing services, to bridge any gaps in support for students arising from the pandemic. Funded with up to £3.6 million by the OfS and the HE Funding Council Wales, Student Space has now received a funding commitment of £262,500 annually, for three years, to extend this provision of online mental health support to all students in England and Wales to 2026.

We have also asked the OfS to distribute £15 million of funding in the 2022/23 financial year to give additional support for transitions from school or college to university, and through targeting funding to support partnership working with NHS services to provide pathways of care for students.

In the Budget and Spending Review for 2021, the government announced £82 million to create a network of family hubs in 75 areas. This is part of a wider £302 million package to transform services for parents, carers, babies and children in half of council areas across England. The 75 local authorities eligible to receive the funding were announced on 2 April 2022. Information on support for vulnerable families can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infants-children-and-families-to-benefit-from-boost-in-support>.

## ■ T-levels

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[48340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) review and (b) improve T Level quality following the first cohort of students' and teachers' feedback.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The first cohort of students completed their T Levels in summer 2022 and achieved an overall pass rate of 92.2%. As further T Levels are made available, the department is monitoring their performance to ensure that they are meeting their intended purpose. This includes working closely with Ofqual, the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education and with awarding organisations to ensure that the qualifications are functioning as intended and to develop mitigations where they are not. We also engage regularly with the schools and colleges delivering T Levels, and with Association of Colleges, to gather their feedback and concerns. Our regular survey of T Level students is designed to build a picture of their experiences that we can factor these into the ongoing roll-out of T Levels. We will update our survey report as new findings are gathered.

## ■ T-Levels: Assessments

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[48307]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will have discussions with a) NCFE, b) Ofqual and c) the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education on the process for appealing T-level results.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

If students or training providers consider that a T Level result is erroneous, or they consider the assessment criteria was not fairly, reliably, and consistently applied, they can submit an appeal to the relevant awarding organisations. T Level awarding organisations, such as NCFE, offer a comprehensive post-results service, that allows students and training providers to challenge any results which are outside of their reasonable expectation.

Providers can request a review of marking or moderation, as well as a copy of the marked student paper. Administrative guidance on NCFE's post-result service and appeals process can be found at: <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/approach-to-awarding/results/>.

Students who are partway through their course also have two opportunities to retake their core assessments, should they wish to improve their grade.

Additionally, should a student wish to dispute their industry placement completion status, they should appeal directly to their training provider. As with other 16-19 education and training programmes, providers must have an existing internal student appeals process to deal with student appeals about the industry placement completion decision. Providers have a responsibility to treat all student appeals seriously, and they must be followed-up promptly.

In relation to this summer's Health, Science, and Healthcare Science T Level results, Ofqual have now concluded through an independent expert review that the examination papers set by NCFE were flawed. New grades will be issued on the basis of other evidence, with an assurance that students' grades will not be any lower than those originally issued.

**Universities: Admissions****Chi Onwurah:****[48339]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students in (a) the North East and (b) total were accepted into UK universities using T Levels in 2022.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The number of T Level students that were accepted into university on results day was 370, which was 71% of applicants. This number is likely to increase as students are placed into a university course through the clearing process, and UCAS plan to publish an updated statistic in due course.

Information on university places is held by UCAS, and therefore we are unable to provide information on T Level students entering university at a regional level.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Agricultural Products: Imports**

**Daniel Zeichner:** [45196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Border Control Points were operational on 2 September 2022; where each of those points was located; and whether those points were fully staffed and funded.

**Mark Spencer:**

Operational Border Control Posts are published on gov.uk at [UK border control posts: animal and animal product imports - GOV.UK](#) for live animals and animal products, and for plants at [Plant imports: authorised border control posts in the UK - GOV.UK](#).

These checks are undertaken by staff from APHA and PHAs and they are self-funded through the charging mechanisms.

**Daniel Zeichner:** [45198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Border Control Points are planned to be (a) approved or (b) developed in the next 12 months; and where those points will be located.

**Mark Spencer:**

Commercial port operators may bring forward plans to develop Border Control Posts at any time. Need for additional support will be assessed following publication of the Target Operating Model.

**Daniel Zeichner:** [45200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what body has responsibility for testing produce that enters the UK.

**Mark Spencer:**

There are two enforcement authorities at the border. The enforcement authority for live animals, plants and plant products is the Animal and Plant Health Agency, and for products of animal origin it is the local Port Health Authority. Each is responsible for documentary, identity and physical checks which includes sampling for diagnosis tests.

**■ Agricultural Products: UK Trade with EU**

**Daniel Zeichner:** [45361]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to increase testing of produce entering the UK from the EU for pesticide residues.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government currently has no plans to make changes to the current monitoring regime for testing food for pesticide residues. The Government's priority regarding pesticides is to ensure that they will not harm people or pose unacceptable risks to

the environment. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) employs a wide range of monitoring and intelligence-led enforcement activities to ensure that the supply and use of pesticides complies with legal requirements. This includes a robust annual pesticide residue monitoring programme which is representative of the country's food supply.

All agri-food products imported into the UK under existing and future free trade agreements must comply with our rules on pesticide maximum residue levels (MRLs). The regulations set strict controls on the amounts of pesticide residues that are permitted in food to ensure the safety of consumers. The maximum permitted residue levels are always set below, and usually well below, the level considered to be safe for consumers.

## ■ Agriculture: Employment

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[45805]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the demand for farm machinery operatives in the agricultural sector; and what recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the recruitment of skilled agricultural workforce from overseas.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra continues to speak regularly with the agricultural sector and other Government departments, including the Department for Education, to understand labour supply and demand, including both permanent and seasonal workforce requirements, and to ensure there is a long-term strategy for the agricultural workforce. Attracting bright new talent into agricultural and horticultural careers and having a skilled workforce in place is vital for the future of UK food and farming. By raising awareness of agriculture as an exciting and attractive career path, people will understand the opportunities available to them.

During 2021, Defra undertook a review of automation in horticulture, covering both the edible and ornamental sectors in England. We have now published this review ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-led-review-of-automation-in-horticulture> ) and there will be a Government response to its recommendations. Our responses to the review of automation in horticulture will work alongside the extended and expanded Seasonal Worker Visa Route and Defra's efforts to attract more UK residents into agricultural work – to support the overall aim of reducing the sector's dependency on seasonal migrant labour.

On 1 January 2021 free movement ended and was replaced with the UK's Points Based System, under which EU and non-EU citizens are treated equally. The Skilled Worker route is open to all nationals who wish to come to the UK for the purpose of working in a skilled job they have been offered; with people awarded points for a job offer at an appropriate skill level, meeting the appropriate salary threshold and if they speak English to an appropriate level.



## ■ Agriculture: Government Assistance

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional support his Department has provided to farmers since the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020.

**Mark Spencer:**

We will maintain current average levels of investment in farming of £2.4 billion per year in England over the life of this Parliament. All funding released from reductions in Direct Payments are being re-invested into delivering new schemes that contribute to our three goals: supporting viable businesses, maintaining food production at its current level, and achieving animal health, welfare and climate outcomes.

For example, we are introducing three new schemes that reward environmental benefits including the Sustainable Farming Incentive which farmers and land managers can now apply online for.

Defra has also launched the new Farming Investment Fund which offers funding for equipment, technology, and infrastructure that improves farm productivity and benefits the environment.

Last October, we launched the Farming Innovation Programme with an initial £17.5 million, which encourages groups of farmers, growers, businesses, and researchers to get involved in collaborative research and development. This will support and drive adoption of new innovation by farmers and growers to ensure it can make a real difference.

Since 2020, farmers have continued to receive financial support for delivering environmental outcomes through the Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship agri-environment schemes. Since 2021, Defra has made a number of changes to improve the application process for farmers for Countryside Stewardship, and updated payment rates.

## ■ Agriculture: Hitchin and Harpenden

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help (a) farmers and (b) food producers in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency use sustainable farming methods.

**Mark Spencer:**

Farming in England is now going through the biggest change in a generation. As government, our approach to working with the farming sector is changing too. Food is still the primary purpose of farming, and always will be. But if we want farming and food production to be resilient and sustainable over the long term, then farming and nature can and must go hand in hand.

In 2022 we started to roll out some core elements of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). We will gradually expand the scheme until all elements are available



from 2024/25 onwards. In its early years, the scheme will focus on supporting and maintaining environmentally sustainable farming improvements that most farmers can make, such as soil and livestock management, pesticide use and fertiliser use. The core elements of the SFI that are available as of June 2022 are: arable and horticultural soils standard; improved grassland soils standard; and moorland standard which will be followed by the Annual Health and Welfare Review.

Local Nature Recovery is the improved and more ambitious successor to the Countryside Stewardship scheme in England. It will pay for locally-targeted actions to make space for nature in the farmed landscape and the wider countryside, alongside food production. We plan to make an early version of the scheme available to a limited number of people in 2023 as part of our plans for testing and rolling out the scheme. We will then roll out the scheme across the whole country by the end of 2024.

## ■ Agriculture: Land

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help protect high-grade agricultural land from (a) housing and (b) other non-agricultural developments.

**Mark Spencer:**

We work closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure that planning supports agriculture and food production as well as delivering other goals. This is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework makes clear that local planning authorities should take into account all the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

Where significant development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, planning authorities should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

## ■ Agriculture: Standards

**Selaine Saxby:**

[\[46216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an accreditation body to approve and administer standards for nature markets for the purposes of enabling farmers and land managers to realise new revenue streams.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is committed to scaling up private investment in sustainable farming and nature recovery. Robust standards and accreditation arrangements are already established for some ecosystem service markets, namely through the UK Woodland Carbon Code and UK Peatland Code. We are exploring with the British Standards Institute other opportunities to support standards' development in order to unlock investment for a broader suite of sustainable farming and nature recovery activities.

## ■ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits for a community of being included in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact on farming communities of being located within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**Mark Spencer:**

The power to consider areas for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation lies with Natural England (NE), which then makes an order to be confirmed by the Secretary of State.

NE's designation assessment process includes the consideration of the statutory criterion for AONB designation (outstanding natural beauty), including relevant factors of landscape and scenic quality, relative wildness, relative tranquillity, and the contributions made to natural beauty by natural and cultural heritage features and associations. NE's assessment process also includes working collaboratively with local partners to ensure there are good engagement and consultation opportunities during the process, which will take into consideration the impact of views presented by farmers, local communities, statutory bodies, stakeholder organisations, landowners, and the wider public.

## ■ Bakery Products: Labelling

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[45032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require retailers to display ingredients lists for bakery products that are sold unwrapped.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK has high standards on the information provided on food labels. Existing food labelling rules, including ingredient listing, ensure that food is produced safely and labelled effectively to enable consumers to make informed choices on the food they buy and consume. For practical reasons, there are fewer mandatory labelling rules when food is sold loose. For loose food, the name of the food and allergen information must be made available, and for loose meat products, the amount of meat in those products must be provided.

The Government is committed to optimising the information that is available to consumers, and the Government Food Strategy sets out work that we will be taking forward on consumer information and transparency.

## ■ Beavers: Conservation

**Mr Mark Harper:**

[\[45638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a (a) management plan on protecting farmland in the context of his Department's decision to provide Eurasian beavers with legal protections in England and (b) long-term strategy for beavers.

**Mark Spencer:**

On 2 September 2022, Defra and Natural England published joint guidance on GOV.UK on managing beavers and their impacts, where this is necessary. The guidance sets out a step-wise approach to management and provides information on actions that can be undertaken to protect farmland without a licence such as removing new dams and excluding beavers from certain areas. Natural England has also published information on how landowners can apply for licences to undertake other action, including removal of more established dams. This management regime provides effective options to managing potential issues with beavers, and is intended to minimise the burdens on land managers and farmers, ensuring the process is streamlined and easy to access.

We continue to develop our approach to the release of beaver, including ensuring that any applications to release the species consider and mitigate risks to farmland as appropriate, and that these projects have a local officer to provide advice and support to landowners.

A public consultation was held last year on the national approach to beaver reintroduction and management in England and the summary of responses has been published on GOV.UK. Recognising the range of responses and feedback received, we will continue to undertake further work with Natural England to develop our approach to the reintroduction of beaver in England. Further information, including on criteria for wild releases, will be published in due course.

## ■ Bread

**Derek Thomas:**

[\[44943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of proposals in the Real Bread Campaign's Honest Crust Act to require (a) full ingredient declarations and (b) legal definitions of commonly-used market terms for bread produced by (i) supermarkets and (ii) bakeries.

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[45493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring (a) full ingredient declaration and (b) meaningful, legal definitions of commonly-used marketing terms in its review of the Bread and Flour Regulations.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations committed to carry out a review of Bread and Flour Regulations across the UK. The key proposals for change are outlined in a public consultation published on 1 September 2022 which is open for responses until 23 November 2022. The proposals address the most pressing aspects identified for change including the addition of mandatory folic acid to flour to prevent neural tube defects in fetuses. Full ingredient listing is already required for all prepacked foods with loose foods subject to certain derogations for practical reasons. An update of existing guidance around commonly used marketing terms across all foods is planned for the future.

■ **Bread: Labelling****Navendu Mishra:**[\[47696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps with (a) his Cabinet colleagues and (b) his counterparts in the devolved administrations and their corresponding agencies to ensure that proposals for full ingredient declaration and meaningful, legal definitions of commonly-used marketing terms as set out in the Real Bread Campaign's proposals published on 18 March 2022 for an Honest Crust Act are fully reflected in the public consultation which opened on 1 September 2022 on amending the Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 and the Bread and Flour Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations committed to carry out a review of Bread and Flour Regulations across the UK. The key proposals agreed for change are outlined in a public consultation published on 1 September 2022 which is open for responses until 23 November 2022. These proposals which were agreed across government, and with the Devolved Administrations, address the most pressing aspects identified for change including the addition of mandatory folic acid to flour to prevent neural tube defects in fetuses.

Full ingredient listing is already required for all prepacked foods with loose foods subject to certain derogations for practical reasons. An update of existing guidance around commonly used marketing terms across all foods is planned for the future.

■ **Cereal Products: Labelling****Fleur Anderson:**[\[45009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a mandatory minimum percentage of unrefined grain ingredients in products marketed using the word wholegrain.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations committed to carry out a review of Bread and Flour Regulations across the UK. The key proposals for change are outlined in a public consultation published on 1 September 2022 which is open for

responses until 23 November 2022. The rules on bread flour already place restrictions on the use of the word 'wholemeal' and 'wheat germ'. The use of the term wholegrain covers a much wider range of foods and could be addressed within a planned update of existing guidance on food marketing terms.

## ■ Cereals: Overseas Trade

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[47499]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the impact of the market share of (a) Cargill, (b) Archer Daniels Midland Company, (c) Bunge Limited and (d) Louis Dreyfus Company in the global trade of grain on food resilience; and if he will make a statement.

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[47500]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with representatives of (a) Cargill, (b) Archer Daniels Midland Company, (c) Bunge Limited and (d) Louis Dreyfus Company since December 2021.

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[47504]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to (a) call for (i) Cargill, (ii) Archer Daniels Midland, (iii) Bunge and (iv) Louis Dreyfus to publish information on how much grain those companies hold in reserve, (b) take steps to ensure that those companies are unable to control the supply of grain stocks in ways that unbalance food markets and drive food insecurity and (c) support a windfall tax on large agrifood company profits; and if he will make a statement.

**Mark Spencer:**

It is not for the UK Government to comment on companies' day-to-day commercial decisions, commercially sensitive business information, or their ownership structures.

The UK is instead engaging with likeminded partners through multi-lateral forums including the WTO, UN and G7 to build consensus on the importance of keeping markets open to support global food security.

I am proud to say that the UK's high degree of food security is built on a supply of diverse sources: strong domestic production, as well as imports through stable trade routes. In terms of cereal production, the UK is highly self-sufficient with 88% of cereals consumed in the UK in 2020 produced domestically. The UK also produced 14 million tonnes of wheat in 2021, close to the volume of wheat consumed, and has stocks of 1.7 million tonnes.

I am committed to ensure balanced food markets and ensure food stability, both at home and abroad. Together with the Devolved Administrations, Defra has established the UK Agricultural Market Monitoring Group (UKAMMG), which monitors and assesses the impact of market development across all key agricultural commodities, including grain, enabling it to provide a forewarning of any atypical market movements. Furthermore, the UK's membership in the International Grains Council also allows the Government to monitor global price, volatility, and stock

levels, and we benefit from the regular provision of detailed statistical information and analysis of world grain and oilseed production, demand, and trade.

■ **Cereals: Ukraine**

**Drew Hendry:** [\[44961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for (a) increased seed production and (b) expanded agricultural land acquisition for seed production for grain crops to be provided as aid to farmers in Ukraine.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra officials have been working with a range of businesses and trade associations who have an interest in re-opening and helping export grain and oilseeds out of Ukraine. The recently launched EU - Ukraine business matchmaking platform is just one programme that is helping facilitate logistics operations for exporting and importing goods to and from Ukraine. This tool will connect UK and Ukrainian businesses quickly to find pragmatic solutions to the export of agricultural produce from Ukraine, to support the Ukrainian economy and global trade, and alleviate this threat to food security. Defra officials and ministers have also arranged introductions to the Ukrainian government to facilitate support on a range of products, such as seeds and machinery, and continue to engage with the sector to support a coordinated approach.

**Drew Hendry:** [\[44963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing seed for grain crops as direct aid to farmers in Ukraine.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is in the process of buying Ukrainian grain to ship straight to countries benefitting from its programme. Following close discussions with key seed supplier organisations on the ground in Ukraine, our assessment is that growers are particularly seeking maize and sunflower seed, however they have been currently receiving sufficient supplies of these through countries such as Germany. The UK does not hold significant surplus stocks of these species; however, key seed supplier organisations have confirmed that there are surpluses of other seeds, including for vegetables and cereals, and these have been offered as part of a broader support package to Ukraine. We are also supporting countries on the frontline of the food crisis. In June, the Prime Minister committed £372 million at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (GHOGM) for emergency aid and agricultural innovation. The UK is also a major contributor to the UN's World Food Programme, providing the equivalent of USD 302.3 million to the fund so far this year. We remain committed to supporting Ukraine and we are in constant communication with the Ukrainian government to ensure that any aid is targeted to where it is needed most.

## ■ Dairy Products: Exports

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[48504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Food is GREAT campaign on levels of British dairy exports.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK Government's food and drink promotional activity overseas is led by the GREAT campaign team in Defra and delivered in partnership with the Department for International Trade (DIT). It is active in Japan, China, the USA and UAE.

While there has been a downturn in global exports due to the pandemic, the GREAT Food and Drink campaign has continued to support DIT export objectives through collaborative development of promotional initiatives that convert to export wins.

In the last year the GREAT Food and Drink campaign supported export wins of over £75 million, including dairy exports wins of £25million; a return on investment of 50:1.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[48505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) innovation and (b) domestic processing capacity in the UK dairy industry in order that that industry is able to maximise opportunities presented by emerging markets.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is committed to encouraging a thriving, innovative, and globally competitive dairy industry where farms can be profitable and environmentally sustainable without subsidy. We will always champion our dairy sectors, supporting them to produce, sell, and export more of our great British food.

The Government is supporting investment in productivity-boosting equipment, technology and infrastructure. The Farming Investment Fund, which opened in November 2021, provides grants to farmers, including dairy farmers, that will help their businesses to prosper.

Innovation in agriculture also ensures that British dairy farmers remain globally competitive. Through our £270 million Farming Innovation Programme, dairy farmers in England can apply for funding to develop new, innovative methods and technologies. Amongst others, we are funding projects to develop autonomous livestock monitoring systems and new ways to process slurry to convert it into fertiliser.

## ■ Dairy Products: Labelling

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[48506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with representatives of supermarkets on



encouraging customers to (i) understand the red traffic label in terms of product assurance and (ii) buy British when choosing dairy products.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra regularly engages with retailers and hosts a monthly Retailer Forum. This allows Government to maintain a full picture of the issues affecting the supply chain, discuss retailers' role in delivering Government objectives, introduce emerging policies and address sectoral concerns such as labour supply.

This Government is delivering on its Manifesto commitment for people at home and abroad to be lining up to buy British. British dairy has a great reputation for quality, built on high animal welfare standards, strong environmental protection, traceability and sustainability. These are strong selling points for consumers both at home and abroad. We welcome efforts from all parts of the food chain to promote and source local, British products and it is encouraging that many supermarkets are already taking steps to do so. We are engaging with retailers to identify opportunities to further strengthen their offer on locally sourced food.

The Government is committed to optimising food information so that consumers can make informed choices. Origin information is provided voluntarily for the majority of dairy products, and the Government is exploring ways in which we can strengthen existing origin regulations and provide clearer information to consumers. Industry assurance schemes such as Red Tractor can also help to build consumer confidence in producers who can comply with specific health, welfare or environmental standards. Other voluntary schemes, such as the front of pack traffic light scheme also play an important role in communicating information to shoppers in a way that is easy to understand.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: EU Law**

**Stewart Hosie:**

[\[45596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many officials in their Department are working on Retained EU Law legislation.

**Mark Spencer:**

Coordinating work related to the proposed Retained EU Law (Reform and Revocation) Bill is spread across several teams in Defra, with cumulative staff time spent on this work amounting to approximately three FTE officials. In addition, Defra policy officials and legal officials are supporting this work as part of their normal business activities.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Termination of Employment**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many members of staff have left his Department since 12 December 2019.

**Mark Spencer:**

Since 12 December 2019 to 13 September 2022, 2148 staff have left the department.



## ■ Droughts and Water Supply

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[46194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) mitigate the impact of droughts and (b) improve water security.

**Mark Spencer:**

Despite the dry summer, water companies have assured us that essential water supplies remain resilient across the country. It is their duty to maintain those supplies. Defra ministers have called for water company action in accordance with their pre-agreed drought plans.

The Environment Agency (EA) has activated its drought incident management plans as part of its role to balance the needs of water companies, other abstractors and the environment. EA has implemented restrictions on 270 spray irrigation abstraction licence holders to restrict abstraction to 50% of their licensed quantity. Over 1000 “hands-off” flow constraints are in place to protect the environment and the most critical abstractions.

The National Drought Group, made up of senior decision-makers from the government, the EA, water companies and key representative groups is meeting regularly to agree the actions required to manage the current impacts of the drought and reduce the risks into next year.

The National Framework for Water Resources, published in March 2020, sets out the strategic water needs for England to 2050 and beyond. The Framework sets out how we will reduce demand, halve leakage rates, develop new water supply infrastructure, move water to where it’s needed, increase drought resilience of water supplies and reduce the need for drought measures that can harm the environment.

Water companies are also using the £469 million made available by Ofwat in the current Price Review period (2019-2024) to improve the resilience of England’s water supplies. In the Autumn 2022, water companies will publish their statutory draft Water Resources Management Plans for consultation, which set out how they will secure water supplies in the long term.

## ■ Energy: Prices

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[48317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of rising energy prices on food producers.

**Mark Spencer:**

The food supply chain is under pressure due to multiple and concurrent pressures including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and rising costs for producers (including energy and raw materials). Given sustained pressures, we anticipate food prices continuing to trend upwards in the short term.

UK food supply remains secure and supply chain resilience remains excellent. We are aware of potential impacts of rising energy costs to the food and drinks industry. Defra works closely with industry and other Government Departments to monitor, assess and respond where appropriate to mitigate these pressures. The Prime Minister has made clear that we will deal with energy bills and secure our future energy supply.

## ■ **Farmers: Apprentices**

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[45684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to incorporate farming apprenticeships into its policies on national food (a) security and (b) strategy.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra continues to speak regularly with the agricultural sector and other Government departments, including the Department for Education, and industry bodies to understand labour supply and demand, including both permanent and seasonal workforce requirements, and to ensure there is a long-term strategy for the agricultural workforce.

As announced in the Government Food Strategy in June, the Government has now commissioned an independent review which will consider how automation, domestic labour and migrant labour can contribute to tackling labour shortages in the food supply chain. As part of domestic labour, we will consider recruitment, retention, skills and progression in the food sector. The review will focus on farming, processing, and food and drink manufacturing as sectors which are critical for food production and food security.

There are currently 40 high-quality apprenticeship standards available in the agriculture, environmental and animal care sector, including stockperson, crop technician and horticulture & landscape technical manager.

## ■ **Fertilisers**

**Justin Tomlinson:**

[\[45563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential role of alternatives to fossil fuel dependent fertiliser in ensuring fertiliser availability for the agriculture sector.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is committed to promoting the use of less environmentally damaging fertilisers and better nutrient use efficiency.

The efficient use of organic fertilisers can complement the use of mineral fertilisers, whilst reducing input costs. We know many farmers already use organic fertiliser to complement their nutrient management planning.

Given current fertiliser prices, a priority must be to pioneer new technologies to manufacture more organic-based fertiliser products in future and we will support the development of these through the Farming Innovation Programme. We are providing financial support to help farmers make best use of their manures and slurries, to complement inorganic fertilisers.

We must also look at alternatives to fertiliser, using techniques like nitrogen fixing legumes and clovers. We have therefore announced that the Government will pay farmers, through the Sustainable Farming Incentive, to help them with the costs of sowing nitrogen fixing plants and green manures in their crops - or in advance of their crops - to complement some of their fertiliser requirements.

We aim to streamline current regulation and implement a conformity assessment framework for fertilisers which will valorise fertilisers made from waste materials and provide farmers with a wider choice of more sustainable fertilisers.

### ■ Fertilisers: Prices

**Justin Tomlinson:**

[\[45554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of natural gas prices on fertiliser costs in the UK.

**Mark Spencer:**

Due to the increase in cost of natural gas across the globe, a key feedstock for the production of nitrogen-based fertiliser products including ammonium nitrate, the cost of production of these fertiliser types has increased significantly. It has also affected Europe and the global market with some fertiliser companies halting or reducing production due to high input costs, leading to some countries such as China reducing the export of some fertiliser products to protect their domestic demands.

Britain sources fertiliser from a wide range of countries and also produces fertiliser such as ammonium nitrate domestically. CF Fertilisers continues to produce ammonium nitrate fertiliser from its plant at Billingham, although it has recently announced it will switch to imported ammonia in future, rather producing ammonia domestically. Fertiliser use is determined partly by fertiliser prices, but also by other factors such as commodity prices.

Fertiliser supply in Britain is resilient, although prices are volatile caused by fluctuating gas prices. Defra has hosted Fertiliser Taskforce meetings with key industry figures including the National Farmers Union and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, and will continue to collaborate with industry on fertiliser price transparency. We are continuing to monitor the security and stability of fertiliser and other supply chains, work closely with colleagues across government and devolved administrations and industry figures.

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[45682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to help tackle the impact of rising fertiliser prices on food production.

**Mark Spencer:**

Fertilisers make up around 9% of input costs into food production. Food prices are influenced by a range of factors - from currency fluctuations to commodity prices.

We are monitoring the situation closely, including through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group. Defra is in regular contact with key industry figures including the National Farmers Union, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and the Agricultural Industries Confederation. Defra is also working with these bodies on how fertiliser price transparency can be improved in order to aid farmers with their decision making.

Through the minister led Fertiliser Industry Taskforce, the Government and industry will work together to improve market confidence and help provide farmers with the information needed to make business decisions on fertiliser use.

To support farmers the 2022 Basic Payment Scheme payment will be made in 2 instalments to give farmers an advance injection of cash. Other actions taken include changes to guidance on farmers using manures, and increased grants for farmers and growers, boosting research and development.

## ■ Foie Gras: Imports

**Beth Winter:**

[\[45314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2022 to Question 3523 on Foie Gras: Imports, if he will set out a timetable to bring forward legislative proposals on banning the import of foie gras as set out in his Department's Action Plan for Animal Welfare.

**Mark Spencer:**

As set out in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, the Government is actively considering any further steps that could be taken in relation to UK consumption of foie gras that is produced overseas using force-feeding practices.

No decisions have been made yet in relation to the import and sale of foie gras. The Government continues to build a clear evidence base to inform decisions and will use this to inform any potential action in this area.

## ■ Food Supply

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[901334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure UK food security.

**Mark Spencer:**

Britain has a highly resilient and diverse food supply chain which is well equipped to deal with disruption, as demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 response. British consumers have access, through international trade, to food products that cannot be produced here, supplementing domestic production, and ensuring that challenges such as adverse weather and disease do not affect the British overall security of supply. The Government also engages extensively with industry to monitor and assess all supply risks.

■ **Food: Insects****John Spellar:**[\[45381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help remove obstacles to the growth of the edible insect industry in the UK.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises the role the alternative protein sector could have in contributing to UK growth. As stated in the Government's Food Strategy, through funding we will support progress on a wide range of issues, including alternative proteins. We will also work with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to develop dedicated guidance materials for approval of new alternative protein products while reviewing our novel food regulations. This will ensure they are transparent for innovators and investors, whilst maintaining world-leading consumer safety standards.

In addition, the FSA is aiming to introduce a legislative fix this year to permit edible insect sellers to continue to sell several species while they submit applications for authorisation under the novel food regulations. Novel foods normally require pre-market authorisation but the FSA plans to fix transitional arrangements from the EU retained law to allow necessary time to demonstrate the safety of these products. There are very few restrictions required on the use of insects as feed.

■ **Pesticides: Standards****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[45489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to introduce pesticide risk reduction targets by the end of 2022.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is investigating the role of targets to reduce the risks and impacts of pesticide use, as part of the ongoing work on the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, to be published later this year.

Measuring progress remains key to Defra's pesticides policy – to ensure that we understand the impact of our policies over time and can spot emerging issues. Defra recently published research on the development of a UK Pesticide Load Indicator (PLI), which combines data on pesticide use with information on environmental

toxicity and fate. This is an improvement on the current system, which just considers the amount of pesticides applied, and the PLI trajectory will be one measure of whether we are succeeding in reducing the environmental pressure associated with pesticide use over time.

### ■ River Thames: Sewage

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[901343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that untreated sewage is not discharged into the River Thames.

**Mark Spencer:**

The amount of sewage discharges by water companies is unacceptable. £1.9 billion has been invested in the Thames Tideway Tunnel, which will be completed in 2025. This project will be the largest privately funded infrastructure project in Europe. The tunnel and other improvements will reduce the annual volume of untreated wastewater entering the tidal Thames by 95%, protecting biodiversity and the public health of river users.

### ■ Rural Areas: Broadband

**Gareth Bacon:**

[\[901339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has with Cabinet colleagues to expedite the roll-out of better broadband to rural communities.

**Mark Spencer:**

This Government is already doing a great deal to roll out better broadband in rural areas. Through Project Gigabit, we are spending £5 billion so people in hard-to-reach areas can get ultra-reliable gigabit broadband speeds. We signed our first contract on schedule and have over £690 million of contracts covering rural areas out for tender right now.

### ■ Sewage: Waste Disposal

**Mick Whitley:**

[\[901338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the severity of sewage overflow incidents reported in 2022.

**Mark Spencer:**

The only reason that the Government has been able to take action to reduce storm overflows is because of the increase in monitoring under this Government, from 5% in 2016 to almost 90% of the sewage network. The latest assessment shows sewage discharges cause 7% of waterbodies to fail to achieve Good Ecological Status. This is unacceptable.

Our Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan will prevent waterbodies from failing to meet Good Ecological Status due to storm discharges and will frontload action to protect bathing waters. We take robust action against illegal discharges. The EA and

Owat have launched major investigations into suspected non-compliance at sewage treatment works.

## ■ **Veterinary Medicine: Higher Education**

**Mick Whitley:** [\[44954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of UK nationals being admitted to veterinary school.

**Mick Whitley:** [\[45148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle staffing shortages in the veterinary sector.

**Mick Whitley:** [\[45153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the steps Government could take to increase the number of foreign nationals coming to the UK to work in veterinary care.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises the importance of veterinarians who want to live and work in the UK and make a significant contribution to animal health. It is important that we do not just attract undergraduates but also provide for existing veterinary staff to have a fulfilling and satisfying career. The dropout rate from the profession is concerning. Therefore government officials are considering what can be done to attract and retain staff in the veterinary sector.

We are currently considering the proposals received from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons for a new Veterinary Surgeons Act and are also exploring how best to revise veterinary legislation accordingly.

Following advice from Defra and the veterinary sector, the veterinary profession was added to the Government's Shortage Occupation List in September 2019. This has enabled employers to recruit overseas veterinary surgeons more easily. We will provide expert analysis and advice when the Shortage Occupation List is next reviewed.

## ■ **Water: Standards**

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[901341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help improve water quality.

**Mark Spencer:**

Restoring our nation's rivers and seas by improving water quality is a government priority. We are tackling sewage overflows with the biggest infrastructure programme in water company history; investing in farm infrastructure, advice and action to help farmers tackle run off; restoring riparian habitats; and reviewing our Bathing Water





## ■ **Balochistan: Human Rights**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[45515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help raise the issue of human rights violations against people in Balochistan, Pakistan.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[45725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many meetings she has had on human rights abuses in Balochistan, Pakistan in the last 12 months.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[45726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help promote human rights in Pakistan.

**Leo Docherty:**

We regularly raise our concerns about human rights at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, did so most recently on 23 June, when he met Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar. In February 2022, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan visited Balochistan, where he met the Chief Minister, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, and discussed the protection of human rights. He also discussed the issue of enforced disappearances in Balochistan with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, on 17 June this year. We will continue to engage with the Government of Pakistan on the need to honour its international commitments and obligations throughout its territory.

## ■ **Chile: Constitutions**

**Owen Thompson:** [\[47599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her Chilean counterpart on Chile's national plebiscite on a new constitution.

**Vicky Ford:**

I [Minister Ford] wrote to the Chilean Foreign Minister following the national referendum on a proposed new constitution. The referendum was an excellent example of a peaceful democratic exercise and the UK applauds Chile on its respect for the democratic process and its institutional systems.

## ■ **Development Aid: Food Poverty**

**John McNally:** [\[45312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the International Development Strategy, what assessment she has made of

the role of eliminating malnutrition in unlocking the full potential of women; and if her Department will renew its commitment to reach 50 million women at risk of food poverty.

**Vicky Ford:**

The International Development Strategy highlights our commitment toward ending preventable deaths and improving health outcomes for mothers, babies and children. Tackling malnutrition is critical for reducing preventable deaths and it remains a core focus of our work to deliver the objectives of the International Development Strategy including on women and girls.

Between April 2015 and March 2020, UK Aid reached 55.1 million young children, women and adolescent girls with nutrition support. The UK has pledged to spend £1.5 billion between 2022 and 2030 on: addressing the nutrition needs of mothers, babies and children, tackling malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies and making sure nutrition is central to the FCDO's wider work over the 8 years to 2030.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Expenditure**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £25,000, what the purpose was of the £100,288.65 payment made by her Department to the Cabinet Office on 21 February 2022 under the description Pilot Assessment Centre.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The payment was for the provision of Alternative Leadership Assessments and Staff Engagement Exercises offered via the Senior Civil Servants (SCS) Assessment Service in the Cabinet Office. These are used widely across Government for appointments into the SCS and we introduced them in FCDO in September 2021, as part of our new promotion process.

■ **France: Embassies**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Paris in each year since 2016.

**Gillian Keegan:**

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF					
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021
46072 a)	Paris	120-139	120-139	120-139	140-159	140-159	120-139

## ■ Germany: Embassies

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Berlin in each year since 2016.

**Gillian Keegan:**

	NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF						
Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022
Berlin	80-89	90-99	90-99	100-119	100-119	90-99	80-89

## ■ Jagtar Singh Johal

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[39958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the compatibility of her policy on the case of British national Jagtar Singh Johal with Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Government continues to work with international partners to enhance mechanisms to uphold international law, tackle human rights abuses, and stand up for our shared values. This includes strong support for the Canadian-led Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations which aims to raise awareness and end the use of arbitrary arrest, detention, or sentencing of foreign nationals for the purpose of exercising leverage over foreign governments.

In relation to Mr Johal, the British Government has consistently raised concerns about his case directly with the Government of India, including his allegations of torture and mistreatment and his right to a fair trial. The former Prime Minister raised the case with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi when they met in Delhi on 22 April 2022. The Prime Minister in her previous capacity as Foreign Secretary raised Mr Johal's detention with India's Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, on 31 March 2022, and met Mr Johal's family and MP on 9 June 2022. Ministers and officials have raised Mr Johal's case on almost 100 occasions and will continue to do so.

## ■ Jamaica: Republicanism

**Ruth Jones:** [\[46025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact on UK and Jamaica relations of Jamaica's intention to become a Republic.

**Vicky Ford:**

The decision on whether to become a Republic is one for Jamaica and its people. It is for all Realms to decide their own constitutional arrangements. We have a close relationship with Jamaica, with strong historical connections, friendly people-to-people links, a shared language and legal system. A large share of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) current £400 million multi-country Caribbean programme is invested in Jamaica. We cherish our modern partnership based on common values, shared prosperity, the rules-based international system and close collaboration on climate change deepened through our mutual participation as members of the Commonwealth and look forward to it going from strength to strength.

## ■ Pakistan: Floods

**Ruth Jones:** [\[46059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support Pakistan after the flooding in summer 2022.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK stands shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan, as it faces the consequences of the recent devastating flooding. The UK was one of the first countries to announce funding (£1.5 million) to respond to the humanitarian need. We have now increased this to £16.5 million to support flood relief efforts. The UK contribution is also now over 10% of the joint UN and Government of Pakistan emergency appeal (\$160 million). This flooding demonstrates how climate change is making extreme weather events both more intense and more frequent.

## ■ Ramiro Durán

**Kim Johnson:** [\[45090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the murder of former FARC combatant and peace campaigner Ramiro Durán on 4 July 2022 in Colombia.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK Government remains concerned at the worrying rate of murders of, and threats against former FARC combatants. We will continue to support the Colombian Government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords and ensure the protection and safety of former FARC combatants.

Through our Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF) programme, which has provided £69 million in support of Peace Agreement implementation, security, and stability in Colombia since 2015, we will continue to support programmes that help to protect former FARC combatants and other groups affected by violence.

## ■ Sanctions

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[47489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information sharing agreements her Department has with authorities in the (a) US and (b) EU on sanction designations for (i) human rights abuses and (ii) corruption.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK does not have formal information-sharing agreements with the US and EU but holds regular discussions with these and other partners to cooperate and coordinate on sanctions to ensure their maximum impact. This includes sharing evidence with partners to support joint designations where possible.

## ■ Zimbabwe: Embassies

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Harare in each year since 2016.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Question Location Ref	NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF						March 2022
	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	
46073 a) Harare	70-79	80-89	80-89	80-89	70-79	70-79	70-79

## HOME OFFICE

## ■ Asylum: Applications

**Royston Smith:**

[\[44949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims were undecided (a) at the end of 2019 and (b) in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum and resettlement in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications awaiting an initial decision or further review are published in table Asy\_D03 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#). Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to 30 June 2022. Data as at 30 September 2022 is set to be published on the 24 November 2022.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

**Dan Carden:****[45144]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that asylum seekers awaiting a decision on an asylum application are not drawn into modern slavery.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We understand many asylum seekers have experienced challenging circumstances when making their way to the UK and we take our responsibility towards vulnerable asylum seekers seriously, ensuring that staff are trained to identify and support the most vulnerable as they make their way through their asylum journey.

A key objective of the asylum process is to create a secure and positive environment that supports claimants to disclose as much relevant information as possible, including medical conditions, disabilities, or experience of trauma that may make the person vulnerable.

Asylum claimants are directly asked about their physical and mental health throughout the asylum process. If the responses provided, or the claimant's general demeanour, indicate that they may be a victim of trauma, this information is recorded to ensure appropriate onward routing and management. Depending on the extent of their vulnerability, they may also make a referral to the Asylum Safeguarding Hub.

We work closely with authorities with statutory responsibility for vulnerable asylum seekers, including local authorities and medical practitioners. We make referrals to those agencies where there is a clear need and encourage all asylum seekers to access mainstream healthcare, including mental health provision as appropriate.

**Naz Shah:****[45433]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of how many people have been waiting more than six months for a decision on their asylum claim.

**Tom Pursglove:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2022]:* The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on asylum applications awaiting an initial decision are published in table Asy\_D03 of the 'asylum and resettlement detailed datasets'. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the

'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to 30 June 2022. Data as at 30 September 2022 is set to be published on 24 November 2022.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

## ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Julian Knight:**

[45239]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether visitors to the Ramada Hotel, The Square, Solihull, will be able to use (a) the bowls green and (b) other facilities under the terms of the commercial agreement made between her Department and Subhash Gulati Group relating to the use of that hotel.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The use of hotels is a contingency measure, in order to meet our statutory obligation to house asylum seekers whilst we consider their claim for international protection. The Home Office has continued to see a higher than anticipated intake during recent months, which has meant continued demand for asylum support and accommodation services, which has resulted in service users being accommodated in hotels for longer than we had envisioned. We are however taking steps to resolve this and bring an end to hotel use as contingency accommodation.

The asylum accommodation service providers identify suitable properties and ensure that they conform to the accommodation standards and provision set out in Schedule 2 of the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC). One of those provisions are exclusive use of the hotel.

The hotel is aware that the bowling club have expressed an interest in returning to the hotel to play, and the hotel have taken the position that it would not be possible for the bowls team to continue to play at the grounds.

The grounds are in the centre of the hotel grounds, surrounded by rooms. In order for the participants to be able to play they would have to enter the hotel by either walking through the dining area where service users are located for meals and recreational time, or they would come in through the main entrance and walk along the main corridor which leads to the dining area and then onto the green.

It would be difficult for the hotel and our providers housing officers to control who the individuals are, and control and monitor any events that may occur during the games, whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of customers.

## ■ Care Workers: Visas

**Nadia Whittome:**

[45264]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have entered the UK on the new Health and Care Visa since it was introduced in 2020 as (a) Care Workers and Home Carers and (b) Senior Care Workers.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes data on visas in the [‘Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on the number of granted applications regarding the Health and Care visa are published in table Vis\_D02 of the [entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset.

We do not currently publish figures on individual job roles applied for under the visa.

**■ Dublin Regulations****Emma Hardy:****[47636]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many bilateral agreements she has negotiated and concluded with member states to replace former arrangements that existed under the Dublin III Regulation; and if she will make a statement.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The UK is in discussions regarding the returns of asylum seekers to European Member States. It would not be appropriate to provide a commentary on these negotiations.

Work is underway to secure appropriate return agreements with safe countries. Returns may also be agreed with partner countries on a case-by-case basis without formal agreements. This happened historically, outside of the former Dublin arrangements, and will continue to be part of the approach we apply.

Our inadmissibility provisions in the Immigration Rules give us the legal basis to declare an asylum claim as inadmissible where a person has a connection to, or has passed through, a safe country. The first returns on inadmissible grounds have been successfully carried out.

**■ Electronic Funds Transfer: Fraud****Kirsten Oswald:****[44929]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of push payment fraud there have been in each of the last five years.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

UK Finance publish figures on the number of incidents of Authorised Push Payment (APP) fraud for the UK each year. In 2021, UK Finance recorded 195,996 cases of APP, a 27% increase from 2020. In 2020, UK Finance recorded 154,614 incidents of APP fraud ([data updated 26/08/2022](#)). Figures for years prior to 2020 are not available as these are not directly comparable with current data due to changes in the manner in which APP losses are identified and reported. Please also note UK Finance figures are for the UK and include personal and non-personal account reports.



## ■ HM Passport Office: Staff

**Ian Byrne:** [\[42284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) permanent, (b) fixed term appointment, (c) agency and (d) other staff were employed at HM Passport Office on 1 January 2022.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[42285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) permanent, (b) fixed-term, (c) agency and (d) other staff were working in HM Passport Office on 1 April 2022.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[42286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) permanent, (b) fixed term appointment, (c) agency and (d) other staff were working in HM Passport Office on 1 July 2022.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[42288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) permanent, (b) full-time equivalent, (c) agency and (d) other staff were recruited to HM Passport Office in the period between 1 January 2022 and 31 March 2022.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[42289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) permanent, (b) full-time equivalent, (c) agency and (d) other staff were recruited to HM Passport Office in the period between 1 April 2022 and July 2022 so far.

**Tom Pursglove:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The table below shows the breakdown of workers at HM Passport Office on 30 March 2022

	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS APRIL 2022
Civil servants (Permanent)	3205.99
Civil servants (Fixed-term Appointment)	25.54
Agency Workers	1141.52
Civil Servants Unpaid (Fixed-term Appointment, Loan & Permanent)	51.72

The table below shows the breakdown of workers at HM Passport Office on 1 January 2022

	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS JANUARY 2022
Civil servants (Permanent)	3182.54

	<b>FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTSJANUARY 2022</b>
Civil servants (Fixed-term Appointment)	2.54
Agency Workers	902.64
Civil Servants Unpaid (Fixed-term Appointment, Loan & Permanent)	96.00

The table below shows the breakdown of workers at HM Passport Office on 30 June 2022.

	<b>FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTSJUNE 2022</b>
Civil servants (Permanent)	3379.63
Civil servants(Fixed-term Appointment)	188.43
Agency Workers	1357.50
Civil Servants Unpaid (Fixed-term Appointment, Loan & Permanent)	70.74

The table below shows the breakdown of workers at HM Passport Office on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

	<b>FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTSJANUARY 2022</b>
Civil servants (Permanent)	3182.54
Civil servants (Fixed-term Appointment)	2.54
Agency Workers	902.64
Civil Servants Unpaid (Fixed-term Appointment, Loan & Permanent)	96.00

Her Majesty's Passport Office recruited 720 full-time equivalent staff between 1 April and the 22 July. Of this figure, 390 were permanent staff.

Staffing numbers at Her Majesty's Passport Office has increased by over 1200 since April 2021. Its recruitment will continue to cover any attrition, to ensure the passport service remains fully resourced.

We are committed to ensuring public services are run as efficiently and effectively as possible. Given elevated demand will not continue indefinitely, it is appropriate to have flexible resources available. Therefore, while there has been some recruitment of civil servants, the use of agency workers is appropriate in this context.

**■ HM Passport Office: Telephone Services**

**Nick Gibb:** [\[45443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the customer service provided by Teleperformance, the company contracted to deliver the passport advice line.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Teleperformance have been responding to a formal rectification plan, and the service has significantly improved in response. In August, 98.73% of calls were answered within 30 seconds, exceeding the required service level of 80%.

**Nick Gibb:** [\[45448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that staff operating the passport advice line receive adequate training.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Teleperformance, who operate the Passport Adviceline, carry out a full training programme for all call agents. The training materials used are subject to review and approval by His Majesty's Passport Office.

**■ Home Office: India**

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[48208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many full-time equivalent staff in her Department were based permanently in (a) Gujarat, (b) Delhi and (c) other states in India in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Please find below a table for the number of staff located in India.

	DELHI	OTHER
2018	316	82
2019	328	68
2020	324	54
2021	307	0
2022	318	0

*Source : Metis HO-HR database*

**■ Home Office: Sports**

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[45334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department spent on the cost of the 69th Sport's Day on 29 July 2022.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The annual Home Office Sports Day is organised by the Home Office Sports and Social Association ("ETHOS"). This is a staff network group, not a Home Office managed unit.

Civil Servants pay a monthly subscription to the Civil Service Sports Council ("CSSC") or pay ETHOS a yearly subscription directly. ETHOS is funded by annual grants from the CSSC and direct funding from members.

As such no funding was provided by the Home Office for the 69th Annual Sports Day on the 29th July 2022.

For staff outside of London and Gatwick, the Home Office paid for some staff to travel to the event in line with existing arrangements.

**■ Immigration: EU Nationals**

**Stephen Farry:** **[45300]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is possible for EU Settlement Scheme applicants whose applications are significantly delayed to pay retrospectively to escalate the decision.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The EU Settlement Scheme application route is a fee free route and does not have a priority service option. All applications are treated equally and prioritised in date of receipt order, however there may be a delay if the application is complex.

If a customer who has applied under this route wishes to escalate their case due to urgent and compassionate reasons, then they can contact the Resolution Centre helpline. Further information can be found on the GOV.UK webpage: [Contact UK Visas and Immigration for help - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/contact-uk-visas-and-immigration-for-help).

Each expedite request will be treated on its own merits and all evidence regarding the customer's particular circumstances assessed in the round before any request is agreed to.

**Stuart C McDonald:** **[45846]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions her Department reported data breaches relating to the digital immigration status to the Information Commissioners Office since the launch of the EU Settled Status Scheme.

**Tom Pursglove:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* We have no known data breaches relating to digital immigration status that have been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) since the launch of the EU Settlement Scheme (28 th August 2018).

We handle data breaches extremely seriously and if they occurred, they would be reported and raised with relevant teams in accordance with Home Office data handling procedures. All such incidents would then be referred to the relevant Data

Protection Officer to investigate and assess against the data protection legislation to determine next steps and raise to the ICO if necessary.

■ **London Policing College: China**

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**

[\[45629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the guidance by her Department entitled Overseas Business Risk: China, published on 11 March 2022, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the London Policing College's partnership with Hunan Police Academy on unintentionally facilitating or being otherwise complicit in human rights violations in Xinjiang.

**Jeremy Quin:**

In 2019, the British Council awarded funding to the London Policing College (LPC) as part of a regional programme to improve international teaching standards in police education in target countries. This included efforts to reduce human rights violations. The London Policing College is an external, private company.

The British Council have confirmed that they have never funded any activities involving Xinjiang security bodies and LPC have confirmed that no Xinjiang security bodies were involved in the programme. LPC have never engaged with institutions of any nature from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and they have now ceased all programme partnerships with China.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

**John Penrose:**

[\[45456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to the letters sent to her by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on 21st July 2022 and on 1st August 2022 on behalf of his constituent Ms Iles in relation to a visa under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

**John Penrose:**

[\[45479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will reply to the letters sent to her by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on 12th May 2022, 9th June 2022 and 12th July 2022 on behalf of his constituent Mr Walton in relation to a passport renewal.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded as detailed below:

**PQ 45456** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0387235/22 – The Home Office responded on 29 August 2022.

**PQ 45479** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0342406/22 – The Home Office responded on 5 September 2022.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[45583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton of 8 June 2022, reference AK54051.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[46015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of (a) 20 April, (b) 22 July and (c) 19 August 2022 with reference AK53453.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[46016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of (a) 21 April, (b) 25 May, (c) 15 July, (d) 4 August and (e) 19 August 2022 with reference AK52805.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[46017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of (a) 20 April, (b) 14 July, (c) 28 July, (d) 5 August and (e) 19 August 2022 with reference AK52688.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[46018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton reference AK46217 of (a) 14 April, (b) 1 June, (c) 22 July and (e) 24 August 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded as detailed below:

**PQ 45583** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0333779/22 – The Home Office responded on 31 August 2022.

**PQ 46015** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0314584/22 – The Home Office responded on 26 August 2022.

**PQ 46016** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0286488/22 – The Home Office responded on 8 June 2022

**PQ 46017** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0289514/22 – The Home Office responded on 30 August 2022

**PQ 46018** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0285270/22 – The Home Office responded on 5 September 2022

**Dan Carden:** [\[46008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 7 July 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton on his constituent Andrew Wright.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[46012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the email from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton sent to the Urgent Queries inbox on 11 July 2022 regarding Mehdi Helmiousskoui.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded as detailed below:

**PQ 46008** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0385930/22 – The Home Office responded on 5 September 2022.

**PQ 46012** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0390758/22 – The Home Office responded on 5 September 2022.

## ■ Migrant Help

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[45944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has any plans to increase Migrant Help's access to relevant information and data from other branches of the Home Office which may assist in its efficiency.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office currently shares all relevant data with Migrant Help in order for them to carry out their contractual requirements, through a secure portal. In addition, regular contract governance forums provide a vehicle by which Migrant Help and the Home Office can make improvements to service delivery, including improvement to data sharing.

The Home Office has no plans to alter any data sharing arrangements at this time.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Agriculture

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[45804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the recruitment of overseas workers as farming machinery operatives; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a temporary visa scheme for these workers modelled on the temporary visa scheme for HGV drivers.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Government has no plans to introduce a general immigration route allowing recruitment at or near the minimum wage, with relatively short work-based training requirements, nor will there be another similar visa concession to the HGV temporary scheme.

We have no plans to extend the skills threshold below RQF level 3 unless there are truly exceptional circumstances, such as adding care workers to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). The Government has recently commissioned the Migration

Advisory Committee (MAC) to undertake a review of the SOL. We expect the MAC will shortly launch its call for evidence and we encourage interested stakeholders to respond.

Our immigration system is not aiming to replicate the free movement which previously existed between the UK and the EU. The Government recognises some businesses are needing to adjust, but investment and development of the UK's domestic labour force should take priority, rather than seeing cheap migrant labour as the solution to recruitment difficulties.

Beyond the Points Based System is a wide labour market, which includes UK workers and migrants with general work rights. Businesses should therefore engage with the Department for Work and Pensions in the first instance about the support they can provide.

### ■ Migrant Workers: Tourism

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[45071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the policy paper, New plan for immigration: legal migration and border control strategy, published by her Department on 20 July 2022, what estimate she has made of the potential costs to businesses in the tourism sector of implementing the proposed changes outlined in paragraphs 55-62 of that strategy.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The introduction of an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme will improve the security of the UK border. It also provides a multitude of opportunities to better facilitate tourism, business visits and improve passenger experience.

By knowing more about people in advance of travel, our ambition is to increase automation of passenger clearance at the border, improving the end-to-end customer journey, and promoting the UK as a top destination to do business and for tourism.

The introduction of the ETA scheme is in line with the system that already exists in other countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The EU is also developing a similar system, (European Travel Information and Authorisation System - ETIAS), for those third country nationals who do not need a visa to travel to the Schengen area, which will include UK citizens.

### ■ Passports: Applications

**Justin Madders:**

[\[45876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passport applications were upgraded to the fast-track service due to a failure to maintain the ten week service standard in each month since January 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

In 2022, the data for the number of applications upgraded to the Fast Track service from a standard application is not held in a reportable format.



An upgrade to the Fast Track service will only occur where the applicant needs a passport sooner than ten weeks. Where His Majesty's Passport Office received a standard UK application more than ten weeks previously, the application will be expedited at no additional cost.

## ■ **Passports: British National (Overseas)**

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

**[45413]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding eligibility for British National (Overseas) Passports to British National (Overseas) visa holders who do not hold such passports, in order to allow them to receive British consular support when abroad and to be considered as Commonwealth citizens.

**Tom Pursglove:**

A person is eligible for a British passport if HMPO can confirm their nationality and identity. Only British nationals are eligible for British passports.

Registrations for BN(O) status closed on 1 July 1997 and, as such, no new applications can now be made.

We have no plans to allow BN(O) status to be acquired by descendants of BN(O) status holders or people who have BN(O) visas. BN(O) status cannot be passed on to children.

British National (Overseas) visa holders are eligible to apply for British citizenship if they can meet the requirements, including having resided in the UK for a minimum period and being free from immigration control at the time of their application.

## ■ **Passports: Fraud**

**Stephen Kinnock:**

**[45075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of suspected fraud and related offences were identified by HM Passport Office in each year since 2010; and how many such cases led to enforcement action by the relevant authorities.

**Tom Pursglove:**

HM Passport Office only holds data in the current format since 2014/15. The number of cases of confirmed fraud since the financial year 2014/15 are provided in the table below. The data is drawn from management information.

The figures for Fraudulently Obtained Genuine (FOG) passports are for those which were identified as having been obtained fraudulently following their issue. They were detected in the financial year shown, but the passport was not necessarily issued in that year and may have been still valid or expired.

The pre-issue fraud figure details those applications which were confirmed as fraudulent prior to a passport being issued.

HM Passport Office passes information about confirmed fraud to the police and other enforcement agencies, but holds no data on cases which led to enforcement action by the relevant authorities.

FINANCIAL YEAR	FOG DETECTIONS	PRE-ISSUE FRAUD
2014/15	548	252
2015/16	1,013	595
2016/17	559	1107
2017/18	515	1250
2018/19	488	489
2019/20	742	454
2020/21	436	244
2021/22	780	268

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[45390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many members of staff within HM Passport Office are working primarily on fraud and fraud-related issues as of 2 September 2022; and how many members of staff worked primarily on those issues on average in each year since 2010.

**Tom Pursglove:**

His Majesty's Passport Office's staffing data is not subdivided to identify those working primarily on fraud and fraud-related issues, with all staff involved in the processing of passport applications having a responsibility for the prevention and detection of attempted passport fraud.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[45172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans nationals have arrived in the UK under Pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme as of 31 August 2022.

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[46210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals he estimates will be resettled in the UK under Pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme; and what his Department's anticipated timeline is for their arrival in the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) launched in January, and this will provide up to 20,000 women, children, and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle and re-build their lives in the UK over the coming years.

The ACRS is not application-based. Instead, eligible individuals will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through one of three referral pathways.

Under ACRS Pathway 2, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will refer refugees - who have already fled Afghanistan - for resettlement to the UK. Those referred will be assessed for resettlement by the UNHCR, using their established processes.

We have now begun to receive the first referrals for resettlement under Pathway 2 of the ACRS – which opened in June – from the UNHCR. It is anticipated that we will receive referrals for up to 2,000 refugees during the first year of this pathway, although this number will be kept under review – and we look forward to welcoming the first new arrivals under this pathway in due course.

Further information on UNHCR referrals is available at:

[UNHCR UK Information and Links on Afghanistan Situation - UNHCR United Kingdom](#)

**Refugees: Ukraine****Sam Tarry:****[45082]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure Ukrainian refugees have safe access routes to the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme can be applied for online from abroad and the Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme can be applied for from within the UK.

The UK Government rapidly created three Ukraine visa schemes to support Ukrainians who wish to seek refuge in the UK or extend their existing stay here, each for a 3 year period with full access to benefits and the right to work and rent.

**Roads: Accidents****Bim Afolami:****[45648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the effectiveness of the police investigating road traffic accidents involving drivers of vehicles registered abroad.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Government has not made an assessment of the effectiveness of the police investigating road traffic accidents involving drivers of vehicles registered abroad. Enforcement of road traffic legislation and the investigation of road traffic accidents

are operational matters for the police, however all drivers on UK roads are subject to the same legislation.

### ■ Seasonal Workers: Indonesia

**Stephen Kinnock:** [47557]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with officials from the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority on recent reports of abusive recruitment practices in relation to Indonesian nationals applying for seasonal work visas in the UK.

**Stephen Kinnock:** [47558]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of recent reports of abusive practices in relation to overseas recruitment for seasonal workers in the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office keeps all aspects of the Seasonal Worker route under close and ongoing review, including the welfare of participating overseas workers.

The Government is aware of the allegations of unlawful fees being charged to seasonal workers by overseas recruitment agents. This matter is under active investigation by the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority – the relevant regulatory body. It is not appropriate for Government Ministers to comment on ongoing investigations.

### ■ Undocumented Migrants

**Jim Shannon:** [47535]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the volume of illegal immigration since December 2021.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes data on the number of people recorded being detected on, or shortly after, arrival to the UK on various routes in the [Irregular Migration to the UK](#) quarterly report. The latest data on selected methods of entry are published in table Irr\_01 of the [Irregular migration to the UK data tables](#). The latest data go up to the end of June 2022.

These statistics should not be used to infer the size of the irregular population in the UK, nor the total number of people entering the UK irregularly. For a number of reasons, it is not possible to know the exact size of the irregular population, or the number entering irregularly, and so we have not produced any official estimates for this number.

This is because:

- some irregular migrants will successfully evade border controls and remain in the UK undetected

- some migrants who enter the UK regularly may subsequently become 'irregular' migrants – for example if they overstay a visa (it should be noted that there are a number of ways in which a migrant's departure from the UK may legitimately not be recorded on the system)
- the data sources available count the number of recorded detections - in some instances the same person may be detected multiple times, either on the same route or across different routes (such individuals will be counted multiple times in the statistics)
- some migrants who enter the UK irregularly may subsequently become 'regular' migrants – for example, following a successful asylum application

Figures on detections may be impacted by the levels of operational activity at the border and overseas, so should not be used to infer levels of irregular migration. Changes in detection could be a result of changes in operational activity, as well as changes in the number of people attempting to enter the UK irregularly and recording practices.

#### ■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the reasons for the increase in the number of people reaching the UK via the English Channel in small boats since 2019.

**Tom Pursglove:**

These dangerous and unnecessary crossings are facilitated by people smugglers, putting profits above the lives of vulnerable people. Since 2019, these organised criminal groups have expanded their tactics covering a wider stretch of French coastline, launching over longer timeframes and increasing crossing attempts in riskier weather conditions.

We are determined to tackle illegal migration and to render small boat crossings unviable. Our Nationality and Borders Act is breaking criminals' business model. We have introduced tougher sentences for facilitators of illegal entry and are making arrests under the Act.

This year, over 19,000 crossing attempts have been prevented – around 85% more than to this point in 2021. Our work with the French and our Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda reflects the fact that this is an international problem requiring international solutions.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[48293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of small boat crossings in the English Channel between 6 September 2022 and 1 January 2023.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office does not make forecasts of numbers crossing, given the multiplicity of variables involved. However, in 2021 and 2022 a number of estimations were calculated to help ensure operational plans took account of *potential* levels of crossings. This included the development of best, central, and reasonable worst case scenarios for the numbers crossing by small boat. No likelihood or probability was attached to these scenarios.

■ **Visas: Africa****Ruth Jones:****[45286]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for (a) all visa applications and (b) visa applications from (i) Zimbabwe, (ii) Namibia, (iii) Zambia, (iv) Mozambique, (v) Togo and (vi) Gabon.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Average waiting times are not published for (i) Zimbabwe, (ii) Namibia, (iii) Zambia, (iv) Mozambique, (v) Togo and (vi) Gabon. To capture the requested data would incur a disproportionate cost. The processing times for visas can be found on the GOV.uk webpage:

- Out of country [Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk)
- In country [Visa decision waiting times: applications inside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-inside-the-uk)

The Home Office's performance against its service standard by nationality can be found in our transparency data: [Visas and Citizenship data: Q2 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/transparency-data/visas-and-citizenship-data-q2-2022).

■ **Visas: Applications****Janet Daby:****[45106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the standard processing time for (a) Spouse, (b) Fiancé, and (c) Unmarried Partner visas.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office had been prioritising Ukraine visa schemes applications in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Staff from other Government departments, including DWP and HMRC, have been surged into the department to help with Ukraine work and enable normal visa routes to return to normal service levels in due course.

**Dan Carden:****[46011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of outstanding administrative reviews are without a decision more than six months after application as of 2 September 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Information on the age profile of outstanding administrative reviews is not held centrally and is not currently captured in a publishable form.

Current timescales for processing administrative review applications are set out at [Ask for a visa administrative review: If you're in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ask-for-a-visa-administrative-review-if-youre-in-the-uk), which states: "Currently, it can take 6 months or more to receive the result of the administrative review. If you haven't had a decision on your application within 3 months, the Home Office will contact you with an update."

**Ruth Jones:****[46107]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications for British citizenship her Department has refused in each year since December 2019.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes UK data on applications, grants, and refusals of British Nationality in the ['Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'](#).

Data on applications and refusals of British Citizenship, by year, are published in table Cit\_01 of the [Citizenship summary tables](#) dataset. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2022. Data up to September 2022 will be published on 24 November 2022.

**■ Visas: Married People****Nadia Whittome:****[47717]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve processing times for spousal and partner visa applications.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office had been prioritising Ukraine visa schemes applications in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Staff from other Government departments, including DWP and HMRC, have been surged into the department to help with Ukraine work and enable normal visa routes to return to normal service levels in due course.

**■ Visas: Refugees****Dan Carden:****[46009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what percentage of family reunion visa decisions are being made within the 24 week service standard.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We are currently working outside the 60 day service standard for refugee family reunion applications and processing times are approximately double the expected service standard timeframe.

We are working hard to recover our decision-making timescales and are looking to streamline our processes and secure additional resource to support this work.

We will prioritise applications where there is a particularly urgent or compelling reason to do so.

**Dan Carden:** [46010]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to expediate decisions on family reunion visas over the 24 week service standard.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We are currently working outside the 60 day service standard for refugee family reunion applications and processing times are approximately double the expected service standard timeframe.

We are working hard to recover our decision-making timescales and are looking to streamline our processes and secure additional resource to support this work.

We will prioritise applications where there is a particularly urgent or compelling reason to do so.

#### ■ Visas: Skilled Workers

**Daisy Cooper:** [46154]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Skilled Worker visas are live as of 2 September 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes data on visas in the ['Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'](#). Data on the number of applications and granted applications of the Skilled Worker visa are published in tables Vis\_D01 and Vis\_D02 of the [entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset, respectively.

#### ■ Visas: Voluntary Work

**Stephen Farry:** [46205]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for Tier 5 Visas were received from (a) EU and (b) non-EU nationals seeking to volunteer for charities in the UK as international volunteers in (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021-22.

**Stephen Farry:** [46206]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) EU and (b) non-EU nationals were granted Tier 5 Visas to volunteer for charities in the UK as international volunteers in (i) 2020-21 and 2021-22.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes data on visas in the ['Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'](#). Data on the number of applications and the number of granted applications regarding Temporary Work – Charity Worker visas (previously Tier 5) are published in tables Vis\_D01 and Vis\_D02 of the [entry clearance visas applications and](#)



[outcomes](#) dataset, respectively. This data is broken down by nationality and region, including an EU breakdown.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2022.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ House of Commons: Energy

**John Spellar:**

[\[45709\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the House authorities are taking to reduce (a) temperature settings on the estate and (b) energy use via other means.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

(a) Where possible Parliament follows Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) guidelines for temperature standards in offices to ensure a comfortable working environment. When rooms have temperature controls for the user, there is a small threshold of which temperature can be raised or lowered to ensure rooms are not over cooled/heated.

There are many differing levels of temperature control across the parliamentary estate, with some areas having no temperature control at all.

We review the setpoints for heating and cooling regularly.

(b) Parliamentary authorities take energy efficiency very seriously as part of its commitment to reducing its environmental impacts. Parliament has reduced its electricity consumption by 16.8% and gas consumption by 25.3% since 2008/09.

The Building Management System has been upgraded recently to enable better control of the building services, such as resetting manual temperature changes every night to a CIBSE recommended setpoint.

The Environmental Sustainability Team monitor and report performance energy and water use monthly, and report annually in the sustainability section of the Commission Annual Report.

### ■ Members: Security

**James Wild:**

[\[45066\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission plays a role in the (a) award and (b) monitoring of the contract with ADT for the security of hon. Members.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

The House of Commons Commission has high level oversight of financial management and procurement but delegates the procurement and management of individual contracts to the relevant House officials.

The contract for Members Security Services was awarded in September 2021 following a robust procurement process managed in strict accordance with Public Contracts Regulations 2015. MPs' interests were represented during the evaluation process by members of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) and the Director of the Member Services Team.

The contract is currently managed by the Members' Security Support Service (MSSS) in the Parliamentary Security Department. MSSS monitors the contract through regular review meetings with the contractor company, at which colleagues from IPSA and PPCS (Parliamentary Procurement & Commercial Service) are in attendance.

**JUSTICE****■ Administration of Justice: Digital Technology****Julian Knight:**[\[45387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to support the digital transformation of the legal sector.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Since November 2019 the government has funded the LawtechUK programme, established to support the digital transformation of the UK legal sector. The programme is delivered by Tech Nation and brings together industry, regulators, the judiciary, academia and government to break down barriers to innovation and improve legal professionals' awareness and understanding of technology. It has delivered 15 projects to date, including a sandbox to help innovators fast track transformative ideas into products, educational resources, and a ground-breaking feasibility study for how technology can help small businesses resolve disputes.

In August 2022 the government announced a further £4 million of funding for a second phase of support for lawtech. This funding will be used to build on the work delivered so far to increase innovation and adoption of lawtech in the delivery of legal services, support the growth of the lawtech sector in the UK, and enable English and Welsh law and the UK's jurisdictions to become the foundation for emerging technologies.

**■ Civil Proceedings: Reviews****Alex Cunningham:**[\[47525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Lord Justice Briggs' review of the structure of the civil courts in England and Wales published in 2016, which

recommendations of that review have been (a) implemented, (b) are in the process of implementation and (c) have been rejected.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Lord Justice Briggs' review into the structure of the civil courts made a wide-ranging series of recommendations to improve the structure of the civil courts. It has informed continuing improvements to the civil courts since 2016.

The government has invested £1.3bn to transform the justice system, introducing 21st century technology and online services to increase access to justice, improve efficiency and modernise the courts. The digital reforms and simplified services are removing simple cases from court, cutting down unnecessary paperwork and helping some of the most vulnerable people facing difficult situations get justice as quickly as possible.

The government has legislated to improve the effective running of the civil courts, most recently including the provision of a new Online Procedure Rule Committee in the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 and launching a consultation on proposals to increase the use of mediation.

The judiciary have worked closely in partnership with HMCTS on the design and delivery of the reforms in the civil courts.

■ **County Courts: Judgements**

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of county court judgements in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The government publishes quarterly statistics including data on the volumes of judgments: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-justice-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2022>

Judgment data is categorised by the HMCTS site that the work is processed at and not by the addresses of the Defendant. The vast majority (over 80%) of judgments are processed at National Business Centres and are therefore not included in the Newport or Wales statistics which instead details the significantly smaller volume of judgments arising from a hearing.

Across England and Wales, the number of judgments made in the last six months has remained stable when compared to the previous six months. In Wales, the volumes of judgments made in the last six months is 25% higher than the previous six months with judgments in Newport County Court also showing an increase. This is comparable with the number of hearings increasing during the same time period which has the effect of improving the time taken for an outcome to be reached at Newport for those cases that require a hearing.

## ■ Courts: Energy

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on the Courts in England and Wales of the rising cost of energy.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The potential impact of rising energy costs is mitigated by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) procuring energy (gas and electricity) via the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Supply of Energy framework. Through this framework the vast majority of MOJ's future requirements are traded by the CCS Energy Trading team over a 30-month rolling basis, and to a lesser proportion a 6-month period. This provides flexibility for the CCS team to trade the basket according to an agreed hedging strategy that enables them to wait-out periods of high prices until market conditions become more favourable. More information can be found in this [PQ, answered in July 2022](#).

In addition, HMCTS is working closely with MOJ and energy providers to produce a site-by-site energy forecast for energy usage and costs, we are also working with our facilities management partners to ensure energy consumption in HMCTS sites is as efficient as possible. Our latest financial forecast indicates that HMCTS can absorb the additional costs in fuel and utilities within our delegated budget (year ending 31 March 2023) without negatively impacting frontline delivery in our courts.

## ■ Custody: Fathers

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[45022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of support available to fathers going through custody proceedings.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The Government is aware of the difficulties parents can face in continuing a relationship with their child following parental separation, which is why this Government is committed to ensuring that all parents can get the support they need to access the justice system across England and Wales.

Since 2014 the Ministry of Justice has provided over £20m of grant funding through not-for-profit organisations who provide a range of services to support individuals, including parents involved in private law proceedings.

In July 2022, the Ministry of Justice launched the Help Accessing Legal Support Grant, which will inject £3.2m into the legal advice sector by March 2023. This funding will further support local and regional partnerships to be formed, which have been fundamental in increasing collaboration between neighbouring services to enhance the advice and support available for litigants in person, including parents

## ■ Humanism: Education

**Alex Norris:** [\[45679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his proposed reforms to the Human Rights Act on humanist education.

**Alex Norris:** [\[46005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his proposed reforms to the Human Rights Act on non-religious groups.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

As is the case whenever a new government is formed, we are now looking again at the Bill of Rights to ensure that it meets the government's objectives.

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[45051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has taken recent steps to improve the availability of and access to legal aid.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[45983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of legal aid providers in England.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

In 2021/22, the Department spent £1.6 billion on legal aid to ensure this vital support is accessible.

We have consulted on changes to the Legal Aid Means Test which will mean an additional 2m people in England and Wales will have access to civil legal aid, and 3.5m more will have access to legal aid at the magistrates' court.

Alongside this, we are proposing to invest up to £135m a year into criminal legal aid, following the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review; more than £7m to improve access to housing legal aid; £8m expanding access to immigration legal aid; and we are launching a pilot of early legal advice to get people better support more quickly.

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Domestic Abuse

**Ruth Jones:** [\[46088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of domestic abuse in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The requested information is not held centrally. It is not a requirement for an individual to disclose if they have been a victim of domestic abuse when applying for legal aid unless they are applying for legal aid in connection with a protective order or private family law cases under the domestic violence gateway. Consequently, it is not

possible to specify how much legal aid has been spent across the whole of the legal aid scheme on domestic abuse victims in each of the last three years.

The Legal Aid Agency's published statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/legal-aid-statistics-january-to-march-2022>

contains information regarding volumes of applications granted in connection with applying for protective orders and those applying for legal aid under the domestic violence gateway (see tables 6.1 and 6.8-10).

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Housing

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46063]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made a recent estimate of the number of local authority areas in (a) Wales and (b) England that do not have a housing legal aid provider.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) keeps market capacity under constant review and takes immediate action where gaps appear by tendering for additional services. In England and Wales, legal advice on housing matters is available, wherever people are, through the Civil Legal Advice telephone service.

The LAA procures legal aid services at Procurement Area level, rather than at local authority level. The LAA aims to ensure there is a minimum of one legal aid provider for housing in each Procurement Area. The Government is injecting more than £10m into housing legal aid through our reforms to the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme.

There are six Procurement Areas in which this standard is not met: City of Kingston upon Hull, Cheshire, Shropshire, South Tyneside, Staffordshire, Wigan. Individuals in these areas may access housing advice via the Civil Legal Advice telephone services or via providers in neighbouring Procurement Areas.

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Human Trafficking

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of human trafficking have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of rape in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of crime in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of cyber crime in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of burglary in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of antisocial behaviour in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England have received Legal Aid in each of the last three years.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The requested information is not held centrally. It is not a requirement for an individual to disclose if they have been a victim of a crime or antisocial behaviour when applying for legal aid. Consequently, it is not possible to specify how many applications have been received across the whole of the legal aid scheme from victims of crime or antisocial behaviour in each of the last three years.

Generally, legal aid is not available to victims in connection with criminal prosecutions. Prosecutions are usually bought on behalf of the Crown, by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and victims are not separately represented.

Civil legal aid is available to victims of human trafficking in connection with certain proceedings under paragraph 32 of Schedule 1 of Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. However, as above those individuals may access other civil legal services without disclosing that they have been victims of human trafficking.

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Newport West

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the access to legal aid for families in Newport West constituency.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision of legal aid, in all categories of law, throughout England and Wales. The LAA moves quickly, where issues arise, to secure additional provision and to ensure continuity of legal aid services.

The Legal Aid Agency commissions and monitors legal aid services by 'Procurement Area' as opposed to by constituency. The LAA seeks to award a minimum of 1 contract for each civil category of law for each Procurement Area, save in family law



where the LAA seeks to award 5 contracts per procurement area. The Procurement Area which includes Newport West currently exceeds both standards.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

**Emily Thornberry:** [47415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish his Department's data for spending over £500 using a government procurement card during the financial year 2021-22.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department's last published monthly transparency data for Government Procurement Card spending over £500 was for the months of April to June 2021, published on 6 September 2022. Viewed on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Further data is currently going through the Department's formal clearance process. The Department plans to publish data for July to September 2021 within the next month. Further data will be published in quarterly data sets throughout 2022.

**Emily Thornberry:** [47424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many payments were fraudulently charged to his Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Rachel Maclean:**

It is not possible to provide a response within the disproportionate cost limit because the information is not held centrally.

■ **Powers of Attorney**

**Jessica Morden:** [45444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time taken was to register a Power of Attorney with the Office of the Public Guardian in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) January to July 2022.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The average time taken to register a Power of Attorney with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) was as follows:

- a) April 2019 – March 2020 – 40 days
- b) April 2020 – March 2021 - 58 days
- c) April 2021 – March 2022 – 69 days
- d) 01 April 2022 – 31 July 2022 – 85 days



## ■ Prisoners: Costs

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

**[47618]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the cost was of imprisoning people found to have breached civil injunction orders in each year since 2014.

**Rachel Maclean:**

It is not possible to provide a response within the cost limit because the information is not held in the way required to provide a response.

There is a large variation in costs per place, which is dependent upon many different factors including the size, type and age of the prison. The latest published prison cost data (2020- 2021), including the average cost per prison place, may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-performance-data-2020-to-2021>

## ■ Prisoners: Wales

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

**[45068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of Welsh people in prison based on home address prior to entering custody by establishment for each year between 2007 and 2012.

**Rachel Maclean:**

This information can only be provided from 2009 onwards. The available data can be found in table form below.

DATE	NUMBER OF PRISONERS WITH A WELSH ORIGIN ADDRESS
May-09	4,292
May-10	4,455
May-11	4,466
May-12	4,662

It is not possible to infer from an address in Wales that an individual considers themselves Welsh or English. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) cannot identify English and Welsh prisoners. Someone with an address, for example in London, may consider themselves to be Welsh, while someone with an address in Wales may not. UK nationals have a nationality of British. Therefore, the data shown are not necessarily representative of those who identify as English or Welsh. English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish are not captured on our database as separate nationalities.

## ■ Rape: Trials

**Steve Reed:**

[\[45824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) capital and (b) revenue budgets allocated for each of the pilot specialist rape courts are, as announced on 16 June 2022.

**Rachel Maclean:**

On 16 June 2022, we announced the pilot of Specialist Sexual Violence Support in the Crown Court at three locations: Leeds, Newcastle, and Snaresbrook in London. This is not a rape court, but nevertheless aims to improve the support on offer in court for victims of rape and sexual violence and increase the volume of cases going through the system.

We are committed to supporting these pilots with the right resources to ensure they work successfully. We have been working with local partners since the pilots were announced to understand the exact requirements for each phase of these pilots in the three locations. We hope to conclude this planning work in the coming weeks to inform funding decisions.

## ■ Religious Freedom

**Martyn Day:**

[\[44965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 15 February 2022 to Question 119628 on Religious Freedom and to his Department's consultation entitled Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights, published on 14 December 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill on equality under the law for (a) humanists, (b) atheists and (c) other non-religious people.

**Martyn Day:**

[\[44966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 15 February 2022 to Question 119627 on Religious Freedom and to his Department's consultation entitled Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights, published on 14 December 2021, whether the Bill of Rights Bill will help to ensure that references to religion in (a) legislation and (b) guidance will be interpreted as religion or belief, in the context of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill.

**Martyn Day:**

[\[44967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the judgment in *R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education* [2015] EWHC 3404, to the Answer of 14 February 2022 to Question 119631 on Religion: Education and to his Department's consultation entitled Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights, published on 14 December 2021, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential impact of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill on the Government's policies on the delivery of religious education.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

As is the case whenever a new government is formed, we are now looking again at the Bill of Rights to ensure that it meets the government's objectives.

## ■ Religious Freedom: Telecommunications

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[45644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the judgment in Blackburn (t/a Cornish Moorland Honey) v Revenue and Customs Commissioners [2013] UKFTT 525 and the Answer of 15 February 2022 to Question 119634 on Religious Freedom: Telecommunications, what assessment has been made of the potential effect of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill on the protection offered to persons with a religious conviction against the use of electronic communication; and if he will make a statement.

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[45647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the judgment in Hand v George [2017] EWHC 533 and the Answer of 15 February 2022 to Question 119633 on Succession: Adoption, what assessment has been made of the potential impact of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill on the entitlement of adoptive children to equal inheritance rights in wills made before 1976.

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[45652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the judgments in A (Surrogacy: s.54 Criteria) [2020] EWHC 1426 and X (Parental Order: Death of Intended Parent Prior to Birth) [2020] EWFC 39 and the Answer of 15 February 2022 to Question 119632 on Surrogacy: Human Rights, what assessment he has made of the impact of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill on foreseen changes in the circumstances of the intended parents of a child who was born as a result of surrogacy arrangements.

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[45677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answers of 15 February 2022 to Questions 119629 and 119630, what recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Administration on the potential impact of clauses 3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Bill of Rights Bill on the legal recognition of humanist marriages in Northern Ireland.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

As is the case whenever a new government is formed, we are now looking again at the Bill of Rights to ensure that it meets the government's objectives.

## ■ Sexual Offences: Criminal Proceedings

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[47605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for criminal court hearings involving sexual assault.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Over the next three years, we are investing an additional £477 million to reduce the Crown Court backlog and reduce waiting times. To increase capacity in the criminal justice system, we have removed the limit on sitting days in the Crown Court for the second year in a row, extended 30 Nightingale courtrooms beyond the end of March 2022 and are extending our plans for judicial recruitment to deliver swifter justice for victims and reduce the backlog of cases.

As a result of this decisive action, we have seen the Crown Court backlog fall from 60,400 in June 2021 to 59,000 in June 2022. However, the barrister strike action has begun to undermine this process, disrupting the courts, and seeing victims face further delays.

As part of the Rape Review Action Plan, the Government also set out its action plan to drive improvements across the system; ensuring that victims of rape do not have to wait years to see justice and that our streets are made safer as quickly as possible.

**■ Sexual Offences: Remand in Custody****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[47607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to help ensure that a suspect remanded in custody pending trial for sexual assault will not be released prior to a court hearing; and if he will make statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Bail Act 1976 provides a presumption in favour of bail, which recognises that a person should not be deprived of their liberty unless necessary for the protection of the public or the delivery of justice.

Defendants have a right to apply for bail whilst they are remanded in custody, and at every hearing while a defendant is remanded in custody the court has a duty to consider whether he/she should be granted bail.

The courts decide on a case-by-case basis whether a defendant presents such a bail risk as to warrant custody. Bail can only be refused where there are substantial grounds for believing that the defendant would abscond, commit further offences, interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice. Where a person has been charged with or convicted of a second serious offence such as a serious sexual offence, the presumption in favour of bail does not apply unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Government is working to ensure the courts have all the information they need to make an informed decision about the risk posed by a defendant. We are piloting a Bail Information Service to provide better information than that currently available to the court. This information can help to prevent the release of individuals who pose significant public protection risks. The pilot has been extended until April 2023 to help inform decisions around the design and development of a potentially permanent future dedicated and proactive service in courts and prisons in England and Wales.

## ■ Sexual Offences: Reoffenders

**Jess Phillips:**

[\[45282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in the context of delays to cases of alleged sexual offences reaching trial, what recent estimate his Department has made of the rate of reoffending among people awaiting trial for those offences.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The government does not currently hold data on the behaviours of those who have not yet been convicted of a crime but are nevertheless awaiting trial.

As part of the Rape Review Action Plan, the government also set out its action plan to drive improvements across the system; ensuring that victims of rape do not have to wait years to see justice and that our streets are made safer as quickly as possible.

## ■ Sexual Offences: Trials

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[47553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has plans to allow historical sexual abuse victims to have a character witness during trial.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department does not currently have any plans to allow historical sexual abuse victims to have a character witness during trial. In criminal trials, including those involving accusations of historical sexual abuse, rules of evidence do not permit the admission of evidence of the good character of a prosecution witness in order to bolster their credibility, even when they are the complainant.

## ■ Social Security and Child Support Tribunal: Costs

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[47647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the average cost per disposed case in the Social Security & Child Support Tribunal in each year since 2012-13 for (a) all cases, (b) Work Capability Assessment cases and (c) Personal Independent Payment decision cases.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Regarding part (a) of the question, the estimated average cost per case disposed of by the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal in each year since 2012-13 for all cases was:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Total Cost (£)	139,720,428	87,357,366	92,554,070	105,776,214	121,482,762	117,804,233	121,771,734	104,792,533	100,057,460
Total Dispos	543,609	150,978	156,535	190,071	214,478	206,402	192,352	136,080	91,690

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
als - all cases									
Average Cost per disposal	257	579	591	557	566	571	633	770	1,091

Total disposals include clearances of appeals that take place at hearing, or those cleared without a hearing. This estimated average cost per case is therefore based on all case types and will not be a true indication of unit cost by type.

Financial information is held on the cost of the overall First-Tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support Appeal), which includes the cost of administering Work Capability Assessment cases and Personal Independence Payment decision appeals but is not available at the requested level of granularity to provide an average cost per disposal for individual benefit types.

#### ■ Women's Prisons: Prison Accommodation

**Steve Reed:**

[\[45040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the press notice entitled Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime, published by his Department on 23 January 2021, how much his Department has spent on on building new prison places in existing women's prisons since January 2021.

**Rachel Maclean:**

New places being delivered in the women's estate will be delivered as part of our £3.8bn investment to deliver 20,000 prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s.

New facilities in the women's prison estate will provide up to 500 extra places that are safe, secure, trauma-informed and gender-specific. We will also continue to invest in community-based interventions, to ensure women have an alternative to a custodial sentence where appropriate

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

#### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[48341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will (a) have discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the proportion of

commercial properties in Northern Ireland that are empty and (b) make that matter a priority for discussions when the Northern Ireland Assembly returns.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

Vacant commercial properties are a devolved matter, and related enquiries should be directed to the Northern Ireland Executive Department for Communities.

The Northern Ireland Office wishes to promote growing prosperity for everyone in Northern Ireland. To that end, officials and ministers work closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and we work with all parties to secure the political stability which is essential to the flourishing of communities across Northern Ireland.

■ **Northern Ireland Government**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[47632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on power sharing in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The restoration of fully functioning devolved institutions in Northern Ireland remains our top priority. Northern Ireland Office Ministers are in close contact with Cabinet colleagues on this issue and we will also be speaking to the Political Parties in Northern Ireland to encourage them to form a new Executive as soon as possible.

## SCOTLAND

■ **Scotland Office: Public Expenditure**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the total budget was for his Department in each year since 2010.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

The total budget for the Scotland Office and the Office of the Advocate General since 2010 is show below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET (£M)
2010-11	8.289
2011-12	8.246
2012-13	7.707
2013-14	7.606
2014-15	19.235*
2015-16	23.418*

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET (£M)
2016-17	10.637
2017-18	23.870*
2018-19	11.006
2019-20	13.361
2020-21	13.798
2021-22	12.435

\* included non-voted election costs

### ■ Transport: North West

**Damien Moore:** [\[49764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent progress the Government has made on improving transport connections between Scotland and the North West.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

This Government is committed to forging and strengthening transport bonds that will create a more cohesive and connected United Kingdom. Connections between the North West of England and Scotland are a popular and indeed essential link for citizens on business and enjoying leisure time in many of our great cities and towns. The Government is grateful to Sir Peter Hendy for his independent Union Connectivity Review which details a number of recommendations that would improve links between Scotland and North West England. One example is the A75, a route of significant importance for people and businesses in terms of UK connectivity, linking Northern Ireland and North West England via Scotland.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Jim Shannon:** [\[48348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the (a) adequacy and (b) efficiency of the speed of existing electric vehicle charge points.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government recognises the importance of having a comprehensive electric vehicle charging network, one which is reliable and suitable for all electric vehicles.

To date, Government and industry have supported the installation of over 32,900 publicly available charging devices including more than 6,100 rapid devices – one of the largest networks in Europe. We expect a comprehensive national charging



infrastructure network will include a mix of charging speeds and technologies, depending on the needs of different locations and users. In March, the government committed to mandating a 99% reliability metric across the rapid charging network.

Rapid charging will be crucial for long distance journeys. Government has already committed to support enough new electrical capacity to deliver 6,000 ultra-rapid charge points along motorways and major A-roads by 2035.

For local charging, locally led planning is crucial to ensure the diverse needs of different areas are appropriately considered. Our research shows drivers without off-street parking have varied preferences when it comes to EV charging. Charging speed is important, but proximity to home is a critical factor for many people. The £450 million Local EV Infrastructure Fund will help enable strategic local provision of public EV infrastructure ahead of need to promote a more equitable EV charging experience for those without off-street parking.

#### ■ **A10: West Winch**

**James Wild:**

[\[46166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the Strategic Outline Business Case for the A10 West Winch Housing Access Road submitted to his Department by Norfolk County Council.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Government approved the Strategic Outline Business Case on 7<sup>th</sup> July. This enables Norfolk County Council to develop an Outline Business Case which it plans to submit to the Department in spring 2023. The Department has provided £698,000 as a grant to assist the Council with the costs of developing the business case.

#### ■ **Avanti West Coast: Standards**

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[45916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Schedule 6.2, Clause 10.6 of the West Coast Rail Franchise Agreement, what key performance indicators he agreed with Avanti West Coast; and what quarterly progress has been made against these indicators.

**Kevin Foster:**

Avanti submitted the relevant plans within the contractual timescales. These plans are updated and reviewed quarterly.

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[46184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to issue penalties to Avanti due to the reduction in its services; and if he will make a statement.

**Kevin Foster:**

Avanti notified DfT it would introduce a reduced timetable, in order to reduce reliance on short notice cancellations.

The Department will follow all due legal and contractual processes to determine what action, if any, is appropriate to take regarding Avanti's performance.

### ■ **Avanti West Coast: Timetables**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he had discussions with representatives of Avanti West Coast in advance of the implementation of a reduced timetable by that company.

**Kevin Foster:**

Avanti notified the Department it would introduce a reduced timetable, in order to reduce reliance on short notice cancellations.

Department officials routinely engage with Avanti and its Owing Group over many areas, including all significant timetabling and performance decisions.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Avanti will incur any financial penalties as a result of its implementation of a reduced timetable for Avanti West Coast services.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Department is following all due legal and contractual processes to determine what action is appropriate to take.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the (a) Government and (b) Avanti are liable for the revenue loss resulting from the reduced timetable for Avanti West Coast services.

**Kevin Foster:**

Avanti remains on an Emergency Measures Recovery Agreement, a successor agreement to the Emergency Measures Agreement that was entered into during the Covid pandemic. Therefore, HMG take responsibility for all costs and revenues.

### ■ **Bus Services: Hertfordshire**

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the initial performance of the Demand Response Travel project funded in 2021 in the rural North East of Hertfordshire.

**Karl McCartney:**

Our £20m Rural Mobility Fund is supporting 17 innovative, demand-led minibus trials in rural and suburban areas including in North East Hertfordshire. These pilots are exploring whether Demand Responsive Travel can serve these communities more effectively than traditional public transport solutions alone. While it is too early to

assess the full impact of the pilots, early indications show Hertfordshire County Council have exceeded the journey target they had set for the first year after launch.

#### ■ **Bus Services: Hitchin and Harpenden**

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to improve rural bus services in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

**Kevin Foster:**

Whilst it is for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to determine and prioritise investment in local transport, the Government's National Bus Strategy asked all LTAs to publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covering the full area, including parts with differing needs, such as rural elements. Hertfordshire County Council submitted a high-quality BSIP. On 8 August 2022, the Department wrote to the Council's Transport Director, confirming their funding allocation of up to £29,732,100 (of which £13,190,400 is capital and £16,541,700 is revenue) to support delivery of the BSIP.

We have also announced a further six-month extension to the Bus Recovery Grant to provide up to £130m to continue supporting bus services in England outside London from October until March 2023.

#### ■ **Bus Services: Standards**

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[45927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22, HC 492, published on 20 July 2022, what data will be used to show performance against the priority outcome for the percentage of bus users who were satisfied with their most recent journey.

**Robert Courts:**

The data for the Outcome Delivery Plan metric 'Proportion of bus users satisfied with their most recent journey' is taken from Transport Focus' annual Bus Passenger Survey which was last undertaken in 2019.

New metrics are currently being investigated.

#### ■ **Cars: Insurance**

**Alex Norris:**

[\[48479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Department is taking steps to reduce disparities in car insurance costs between residents of the UK who were born in the UK and those who were born outside the UK.

**Robert Courts:**

Motor insurers are responsible for setting the price of motor insurance premiums based on their underwriting experience, and it is for them to decide the level of risk that they take in issuing any policy to a given applicant.

They use a range of criteria to assess the potential risk a driver poses. This includes the applicant's age, postcode, the type of vehicle and their driving record and experience. It might also include other risk factors such as whether the driver was born in the UK or abroad.

This is a commercial decision for individual insurers and the Government does not intervene or seek to control the market. There are no plans to change this approach.

■ **Department for Transport: Aviation**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's Annual Report 2021-22, how many domestic flights were taken by (a) ministers and (b) officials during the period covered by that report.

**Robert Courts:**

The department does not hold a consolidated record of the specific number of domestic flights taken by ministers or officials. From records currently available, the number of domestic flights taken by representatives of the Department for Transport in 2021-22 was 2,288.

■ **Department for Transport: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many payments were fraudulently charged to his Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Kevin Foster:**

There were no payments fraudulently charged to the Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22.

■ **Department for Transport: EU Law**

**Stewart Hosie:** [\[45749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many officials in their Department are working on Retained EU Law legislation.

**Kevin Foster:**

The information requested could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

■ **Department for Transport: Senior Civil Servants**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Department for Transport Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22, published in July 2022, within which

directorates in his Department does a senior civil servant earning between £260,000-£264,999 work.

**Robert Courts:**

The Department for Transport has one member of staff earning between £260,000 and £264,999 in Passenger Services, part of the Rail Strategy and Services Group.

■ **Department for Transport: Termination of Employment**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many members of staff have left his Department since 12 December 2019.

**Kevin Foster:**

Since December 2019, the number of staff who have left the central Department for Transport is 1,063.

■ **Doncaster Sheffield Airport: Nationalisation**

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[48241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority on public ownership of Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[48242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority on finding investors for Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government is committed to regional airports. They are key to serving our local communities, supporting thousands of jobs in the regions, and they act as a key gateway to international opportunities. While the UK Government supports airports, it does not own or operate them.

The Minister for Aviation recognises the importance of Doncaster Sheffield Airport to the region and has made clear in meetings both with the South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard and the Peel Group the Government's desire to see a viable aviation future for the airport. The Minister has urged Mayor Coppard to work with all parties to find a locally led solution to preserve aviation at Doncaster-Sheffield Airport.

■ **Dover Port**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[44946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is planning to take to prevent queues at the Port of Dover.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government has already taken a number of steps, including helping secure additional booths at the Port of Dover for border checks by the French Border Police. We have also instigated weekly meetings between the UK and French border authorities to share intelligence and detailed resourcing plans to ensure border staffing can meet expected demand at the juxtaposed controls.

We continue to work on improvements to border fluidity and, with the Kent Resilience Forum, to support improvements to existing traffic management plans. These are designed to mitigate the impact of any disruption on the road network.

**■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Income**

**Feryal Clark:** [\[45014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether revenue is generated by the DVLA from private parking companies.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[45015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA is required to pass on personal information to third parties such as private parking companies.

**Robert Courts:**

Regulation 27 of The Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 2002 allows information about the keepers of UK-registered vehicles to be disclosed to third parties in certain limited circumstances, subject to appropriate safeguards. This includes the release of information to help manage parking on private land.

To help ensure that motorists are treated fairly when any parking charges are levied, vehicle keeper information is disclosed only to companies that are members of an accredited trade association and adhere to an enforceable code of practice.

The British Parking Association and the Independent Parking Committee are the relevant accredited trade associations for the parking industry.

Regulations allow the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to charge a fee for releasing information to private parking companies. HM Treasury guidance dictates that fees are set to recover the cost of providing the information and this ensures that the cost is borne by the requester and not passed on to the taxpayer.

**■ Driving Licences**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many drivers medical applications were waiting to be processed as on 1 September (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The table below shows the number of drivers medical cases waiting to be resolved on 1 September 2021 and 1 September 2022. The figures include new applications/notifications and driving licence renewal applications. It is important to

note that the DVLA is often reliant on information from third parties, for example NHS medical professionals, before a decision on whether to issue a licence can be made. Currently, around 47 per cent of cases are awaiting information from a third party.

1 SEPTEMBER 2021	272,838
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1 September 2022	225,843
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The length of time taken to deal with an application for a driving licence where a medical condition must be investigated depends on the condition(s) involved and whether further information or clinical tests are required from healthcare professionals.

To reduce waiting times for customers, the law was changed on 20 July to widen the pool of healthcare professionals who can provide medical information to support an application for a driving licence. The DVLA has also recruited more staff and opened new customer service centres in Swansea and Birmingham which are focused on medical applications.

It is important to note that most applicants will be able to continue driving while their application is being processed, providing they meet specific criteria. More information can be found online [here](#).

## ■ Driving Tests

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[45607]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress has been made by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency to recruit 300 new driving examiners; and how many and what proportion of the examiners that have been recruited are conducting practical driving tests on a full-time basis as at 2 September 2022.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Driver testing services were significantly disrupted during the pandemic, which has led to a high demand for learners who are now wanting to take their driving test. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as it can.

As of 26 August 2022, the total number of new driving examiners (DE) in place and testing was 313. There are 153 new entrant DEs in the process of being trained.

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[47718]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the availability of practical driving tests.

**Kevin Foster:**

Driver testing services were significantly disrupted during the pandemic, which has led to a high demand for learners who are now wanting to take their driving test.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as it can, with several measures in place to do this. These include offering a national recovery allowance and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays and weekends), and resuming the number of driving tests per day to seven for each full-time examiner.

The DVSA is also recruiting more than 300 driving examiners across Great Britain. The DVSA's examiner recruitment campaigns continue to be successful but, like many employers, the DVSA is finding the job market extremely competitive. As it moves through each recruitment campaign, the DVSA will continually review and make changes and improvements to its recruitment and selection process, and training courses.

To reduce the number of driving tests which go to waste, the DVSA has introduced a text messaging service to remind candidates about their test, and has also launched a 'Ready to Pass?' campaign to improve learners' understanding of what it means to be test ready and how they can assess their own readiness.

### ■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

**Pete Wishart:**

**[45735]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in the context of the driving test backlog, if he will take steps to increase the number of driving test slots available, particularly in rural areas.

**Pete Wishart:**

**[45736]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to clear the driving test backlog and reduce test waiting times, particularly in rural areas.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) operates a 24-week booking window for car tests and there are test slots available within this window.

Driver testing services were significantly disrupted during the pandemic, which has led to a high demand for learners who are now wanting to take their driving test. The DVSA is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as it can and has a number of measures in place to do this. These include offering a national recovery allowance and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays and weekends), and resuming the number of driving tests per day to seven for each full-time examiner.

The DVSA is also recruiting more than 300 driving examiners across Great Britain. The DVSA's examiner recruitment campaigns continue to be successful but, like many employers, it is finding the job market extremely competitive. As it moves



through each recruitment campaign, the DVSA will continually review and make changes and improvements to its recruitment and selection process, and training courses.

To reduce the number of driving tests that go to waste, the DVSA has introduced a text messaging service to remind candidates about their test and has also launched a 'Ready to Pass?' campaign to improve learners' understanding of what it means to be test ready and how they can assess their readiness.

**Louise Haigh:**

**[45920]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people were awaiting a practical driving test as on 2 September (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Driver testing services were significantly disrupted during the pandemic, which has led to a high demand for learners who are now wanting to take their driving test. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as it can.

The table below shows the number of people who had a practical car driving test booked and were awaiting to sit that test. Data for 2 September 2022 cannot be provided as reports are generated weekly. Therefore, the closest comparable data has been given.

	MONDAY 30 AUGUST 2021	MONDAY 29 AUGUST 2022
Number of people with a practical car driving booked / awaiting to sit that test	561,959	534,514

## ■ Hybrid Air Vehicles: Loans

**Louise Haigh:**

**[45910]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the decision not to provide a loan to Hybrid Air Vehicles.

**Louise Haigh:**

**[45911]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on Hybrid Air Vehicles.

**Robert Courts:**

The Department for Transport has engaged with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on potential funding options for Hybrid Air Vehicles (HAV). The Secretary of States have not had a specific meeting about HAV.

## ■ Invalid Vehicles

**Drew Hendry:** [\[45337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the inclusion of mobility scooters in road vehicle passing guidance within the highway code.

**Robert Courts:**

Rule H2 of The Highway Code states that pedestrians include wheelchair and mobility scooter users, and Rule 163 of The Highway Code makes it clear that drivers should allow at least 2 meters of space and keep to a low speed when passing a pedestrian in the road.

## ■ Invalid Vehicles: Charging Points

**Drew Hendry:** [\[45523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with manufacturers of electric vehicle charging stations on the potential merits of the inclusion of charging provisions for mobility scooters in stations produced.

**Robert Courts:**

The Department for Transport have not had any discussions with manufacturers of electric vehicle charging stations on the inclusion of charging provisions for mobility scooters.

The law states that Class 2 and Class 3 vehicles may only be used by a disabled person, or by a non-disabled person who is demonstrating a vehicle before sale, training a disabled user or taking the vehicle to or from a place for maintenance or repair. A disabled person in this context is someone with an injury, physical disability or medical condition which means that they are unable to walk or have difficulty in walking. It would therefore be impractical to have charge points which would require mobility scooters to be stationary for long periods leaving the disabled person confined to their mobility scooter when out and about.

## ■ Invalid Vehicles: Speed Limits

**Jessica Morden:** [\[45379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of speed limit for class 2 and class 3 mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs on the safety of (a) users and (b) pedestrians and road users.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government has not made an assessment of the impact of the speed limit for class 2 and class 3 mobility scooters. The safety of all road users is a key priority for the Government and the current speed limit for mobility scooters is based on both safety and mobility considerations and balances the interests of all road users.

## ■ Italy: Driving Licences

**James Daly:**

[\[46204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with his Italian counterpart on the right of former UK residents living in Italy to use their UK driving licence.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Secretary of State for Transport discussed the mutual exchange of driving licences with Minister Enrico Giovannini on 3 May 2022. Further constructive engagement has followed at official level with both sides working at pace to finalise a new bilateral agreement to allow people resident in Italy to exchange their UK licence for an Italian one without needing to take a driving test and vice versa.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Hitchin

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to bring in measures to help alleviate problems with HGVs using unsuitable residential roads in Hitchin.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government believes local authorities are best able to manage traffic on local roads and consider the needs of local residents. Powers given to local authorities under Sections 1 & 2 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 allow for the restriction or prohibition of the use of HGVs on any road, for a wide range of safety and environmental reasons. These measures can be implemented by making Traffic Regulation Orders without reference to the Department for Transport.

The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 provide various signs for authorities to consider if they choose to do this, including signs informing motorists that certain roads are unsuitable for HGVs or if a weight limit is in place. The restrictions are then enforceable by the police.

## ■ M1

**Julian Knight:**

[\[45862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the planned timetable is for completion of National Highways' upgrades of the M1 between junctions 13 and 16.

**Kevin Foster:**

National Highways expects to fully open the M1 J13-16 upgrade before the end of the year.

National Highways is opening the M1 upgrade in links, each of which is opening in phases. Link 1 is between junction 13 and Newport Pagnell Services. It began its phased opening in November 2021 and fully opened on Monday 7 March 2022. Link 2 runs between Newport Pagnell Services and junction 15 (Northampton) and Link 3 runs between junction 15 and junction 16 (Upper Heyford Interchange). National

Highways expects both of these links to begin their phased opening early this autumn and to be fully open before the end of the year.

Safety is National Highways' top priority and it opens all motorway upgrades in a phased way to ensure they are fully tested and operational before they go live and there is a smooth handover from roadworks teams to on and off-road traffic officers.

#### ■ **Motor Vehicles: Air Pollution**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[45664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the roadside vehicle noise measurement scheme to include measurements of air pollution and related harms.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Department has commenced research to understand if the latest 'noise camera' technology can be an effective enforcement tool for police and local authorities. As the trials have not yet completed, it is too early to assess the potential merits of a wider roll out of 'noise camera' technology.

#### ■ **Motor Vehicles: Noise**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[45673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of expanding the roadside vehicle noise measurement scheme after its trial period.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Department does not have plans to expand its 'noise camera' trials to include measurements of air pollution and related harms.

Government already has an extensive network of roadside air quality monitors, covering around 320 locations across the UK. In 2020 the Defra and Department for Transport Joint Air Quality Unit set up a new monitoring network (the UK Urban NO<sub>2</sub> Network) to measure roadside NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations. Many local authorities also undertake their own roadside air quality monitoring for the purposes of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM).

#### ■ **Motorways: Safety**

**Damien Moore:** [\[45109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the safe and effective management of smart motorways.

**Damien Moore:** [\[45133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of fatalities on smart motorways.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government has acted to improve smart motorway safety, ordering a stocktake in 2020 and investing £900 million to equip them with stopped vehicle detection, enforcement cameras, additional signs and emergency areas, while pausing the rollout of new smart motorways to collect more data.

**■ Parking: Private Sector****John Spellar:**[\[48216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the appropriateness of the matter in which the private parking industry is using its access to DVLA records.

**Robert Courts:**

The law allows the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to release vehicle keeper details to third parties in certain limited circumstances, subject to appropriate safeguards. This includes the release of information to help manage parking on private land.

To ensure motorists are treated fairly, the DVLA will only provide information to private parking companies that are members of an appropriate accredited trade association and adhere to an enforceable code of practice. The DVLA audits external data users to ensure information is requested and used appropriately.

**■ Public Transport: Hitchin and Harpenden****Bim Afolami:**[\[45636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a Demand Response Travel project for areas of North Hertfordshire and St Albans District in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

**Kevin Foster:**

Whilst it is for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to determine and prioritise investment in local transport, the Government's National Bus Strategy asked all LTAs outside London to publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covering the full area, including parts with differing needs, such as rural elements. The Strategy encourages new forms of bus provision in areas which are not adequately served by conventional timetabled buses. DRT can play a part in delivering this.

Hertfordshire County Council submitted a high-quality BSIP. On 8 August 2022, the Department wrote to the Council's Transport Director, confirming their funding allocation of up to £29,732,100 (of which £13,190,400 is capital and £16,541,700 is revenue) to support delivery of the BSIP.

## ■ Railways: Accidents

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[47633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Network Rail regarding the provision of supporting evidence to the Office of Rail and Road setting out the steps taken in implementing safety recommendations following the train derailment at Stonehaven, near Carmont, during August 2020.

**Kevin Foster:**

Shortly after the tragic train derailment near Stonehaven in August 2020, Network Rail commissioned Dame Julia Slingo and Lord Robert Mair to recommend improvements that would help better manage extreme rainfall risk. The reports, and Network Rail's improvement programme plan to act on them, were shared with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and Department for Transport (DfT).

In February 2022, the Rail Accident Investigation Branch and a specialist industry team made further recommendations following an investigation into the incident. This additional work has been incorporated within the improvement programme and ORR and DfT officials have received updates as the plan has developed.

Network Rail have maintained regular formal and informal dialogue with ORR and DfT to support their monitoring and keep them aware of the good progress that has been made. In addition, ORR and DfT representatives sit as observers on Network Rail's programme oversight board.

## ■ Railways: Climate Change

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[45018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will undertake a review of standards and engineering of rail infrastructure, in the context of more severe summers and less severe winters brought about by climate change.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Department expects Network Rail to manage the resilience of the rail network to severe weather, taking account of the impacts of climate change, and exploring new technology that could help improve resilience.

Looking ahead, Network Rail is drafting long-term plans, and has in place a weather resilience and climate change strategy to ensure the infrastructure can cope with climate change and short-term periods of extreme weather. The Department continues to support the rail industry in this regard.

## ■ Railways: Finance

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[45989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of the impact of the delay in publishing the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline.

**Kevin Foster:**

We need to ensure the rail projects we take forward reflect demand whilst remaining affordable.

It is important we are able to provide as much clarity and certainty as possible rather than potentially publish a misleading version. The Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) update will be published in due course.

**■ Railways: Greater London****Helen Hayes:**[\[45030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in the context of a proposed reduction in rail service frequency and carriage numbers in London, whether his Department has undertaken modelling of potential modal changes from rail towards (a) private cars and (b) other forms of public transport in (i) London and (ii) the South East.

**Kevin Foster:**

Govia Thameslink Railway is making evidence-based timetable interventions agreed in the 22/23 business plan process that better optimises service levels to balance capacity and demand. The Department will continue to monitor implementation and changes in demand carefully to identify where further interventions may be required in the future.

**Helen Hayes:**[\[45359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in the context of the proposed reduction in rail service frequency and carriage numbers in London, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of that proposal on rail (a) passenger numbers and (b) revenue.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Department has issued all operators with a demand forecast model to track returning demand against forecasts to better match train services to demand.

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), who introduced its latest timetable change on Sunday 4 September 2022, has used this model to ensure demand is best met given the funding available for services across its network.

At present, GTR's operating costs are outstripping revenue. Across the GTR network, demand for services is between 60 to 75 per cent of pre-COVID-19 levels resulting in a significant deficit in the operators' cost base of several hundred million pounds each year at the current level of service provision.

All services are kept under review, and, where appropriate, adjusted to reflect fluctuations in demand by changing the frequency of services or length of trains. The Department will work with GTR to consider what further action is needed where evidence supports the (re)introduction of services or longer trains.

## ■ Railways: Industrial Disputes

**Christian Matheson:** [\[44957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total expenditure budgeted by his Department is for the on-train market research into the impact of recent industrial action on the railways.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Department has commissioned research to investigate the disruptive impacts of rail strikes on passengers, including disruption regarding travel to and from work, school, medical appointments and leisure activities. The research has a budget of £218,000.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[45305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason he plans not to participate in the negotiations between rail operators and unions representing rail workers.

**Kevin Foster:**

It is for unions and employers to resolve industrial disputes.

In this instance the employers are the rail companies, not the Government.

**Michelle Donelan:** [\[45382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to provide minimum service levels on railways during periods of industrial action.

**Kevin Foster:**

Recent strike action on rail has highlighted the need for a fairer approach to providing train services during times of strike action. Minimum Service Levels legislation would, in future, help to ensure an appropriate level of train services would still operate during strike action.

## ■ Railways: Standards

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the (a) performance scores and (b) fees for March 2021 to March 2020 under (i) emergency agreements and (ii) National Rail Contracts.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) and Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA) contracts' performance scores and fees for the evaluation period 1 April 2021 to 18 September 2021 (2021 Rail Periods 01-07) are expected to be published in the Autumn.

For train operators on both i) EMA and ERMA emergency contracts and ii) National Rail Contracts their performance, for the remainder of 2021/22, are being evaluated this summer and the scores and fees are expected to be published by the end of the year.



## ■ Railways: Surveys

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department (a) has and (b) is due to pay to Savanta Group for surveys on the travel patterns of rail passengers since 7 June 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

The research project has a budget of £218,000.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many surveys his Department has commissioned from Savanta to understand rail passengers' travel patterns since 7 June 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

As well as the research to understand rail passengers' travel behaviours during rail strikes, Savanta was awarded a contract in August 2022 to deliver an online Rail Tracker Survey. This will deliver regular data collection for the Department on a wide range of rail topics relevant to rail reform.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Savanta staff have been engaged in carrying out surveys commissioned by his Department to understand rail passengers' travel patterns since 7 June 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

Sampling is being carried out in such a way as to provide a representative coverage of train operating companies (TOCs). The planned total sample size will be of a scale which will allow robust conclusions to be drawn from the data.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many railway stations have been canvassed by staff from (a) his Department and (b) Savanta for the purpose of carrying out surveys to understand rail passengers' travel patterns since 7 June 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

The research project gathers views from passengers onboard trains. No passengers have been canvassed at stations by a) Department staff or b) Savanta since 7 June 2022.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[45926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many railway routes have been canvassed by staff from (a) his Department and (b) Savanta for the purpose of carrying out surveys to understand rail passengers' travel patterns since 7 June 2022; and which routes were canvassed.

**Kevin Foster:**

Departmental staff have not canvassed passengers as part of the research.

To date, Savanta has gathered views from passengers on 140 routes. A final list of routes to be surveyed will be selected with the aim of ensuring that the overall sample is as representative of journeys on each train operating company.

## ■ Railways: Temperature

**Sam Tarry:** [\[45017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to future proof rail lines and infrastructure against extreme heat.

**Kevin Foster:**

Network Rail has well-established operational measures to protect infrastructure and manage services safely during extreme weather events, such as line speed restrictions or diversions.

Looking ahead, Network Rail is drafting long-term plans, and has in place a weather resilience and climate change strategy to ensure rail infrastructure can cope with climate change and short-term periods of extreme weather.

**Sam Tarry:** [\[45038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the capacity of rail infrastructure to handle extreme heats.

**Kevin Foster:**

Network Rail and the wider industry are responsible for managing the effects of any weather-related incidents on the railway, and they have well-established operational measures they implement to protect infrastructure and manage services safely during extreme weather events.

The Department continues to support the rail industry as they develop longer-term plans to improve the resilience of rail infrastructure during periods of extreme weather.

## ■ Railways: Tickets

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[46178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of railway ticket office closures on (a) older people who do not use the internet and (b) other groups who may have difficulty purchasing a ticket online or from a machine.

**Kevin Foster:**

Passengers should have access to a ticketing system that is user-friendly, where help and advice from a trained representative is available and is accessible to all. While no final decision has been taken on ticket offices, station staff will still provide face-to-face services on the railways, which can be crucial for those who need additional support, and cannot or do not want to use contactless or mobile tickets. We want to ensure that railway staff can help all customers where needed and our reforms will

enable us to move staff out of underused ticket offices and provide help where it's most needed in the station.

### ■ Railways: Weather

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[45007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with rail operators regarding extreme weather events and their impact on the rail infrastructure.

**Kevin Foster:**

Network Rail and the wider industry are responsible for managing the effects of any weather-related incidents on the railway, and they have well-established operational measures they implement to protect infrastructure and manage services safely during extreme weather events.

When extreme weather is forecast, the Department maintains particularly close contact with Network Rail to support industry in their preparation as they implement appropriate mitigations.

Looking ahead, Network Rail is drafting long-term plans, and has in place a weather resilience and climate change strategy to ensure the infrastructure can cope with climate change and short-term periods of extreme weather. The Department continues to support the rail industry in this regard.

### ■ Road Traffic Offences: Fixed Penalties

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[48483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of moving from paper notices attached to the vehicle to sending Fixed Penalty Notices for parking offences directly to the registered keeper's address.

**Robert Courts:**

No assessment has been made of dispensing with paper notices. In 2015, Ministers limited the use of CCTV evidence to specific, more serious parking contraventions and, in those cases, penalties may be sent directly to the registered keeper's address. For other parking contraventions, the penalty notice must be fixed to the vehicle. This has the advantage of allowing the driver to understand immediately when and how they have contravened and to record the exact circumstances should they wish to challenge the penalty.

### ■ Road Traffic Offences: Greater London

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[45012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate his Department has made of the amount of money levied by local authorities in London through penalties incurred by motorists entering Low Traffic Networks.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[45462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the appropriateness of local authorities in London using Low Traffic Networks to raise revenue from fines.

**Robert Courts:**

‘Low-traffic neighbourhoods’ have been around for many years but have only recently become known by this name. It describes a collection of measures designed to remove rat-running traffic from streets. The key feature is generally a road closure, which prevents through motor traffic from accessing the road but permits cycling and walking. Access is maintained for residents and their visitors and for essential services.

Closures may be implemented using existing standard traffic management measures such as signed access restrictions to through motor traffic. These are enforceable in the same way and with the same penalties as when used on any other part of the road network. Enforcement of such restrictions is a matter for local authorities, where they have taken up the powers, and as such the Department has made no such estimate of the penalties incurred.

The use of any surplus funds resulting from civil enforcement of such traffic restrictions in London is subject to the requirements set out in Schedule 2 to the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2003, which ring-fences how any surplus may be used.

## ■ West Coast Partnership Rail Franchise

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[45918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the decision on the future of the West Coast Partnership due for expiry on 16 October 2022 will be made.

**Kevin Foster:**

As with all contract awards, the Government will consider all options for when Avanti West Coast’s contract expires on 16 October.

## ■ West Coast Railway Line

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[45915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Schedule 6.2, Clause 10.6 of the West Coast Rail Franchise Agreement, what train driver (a) recruitment and (b) training plans were agreed with his Department.

**Kevin Foster:**

Avanti submitted the relevant plans within the contractual timescales. These plans are updated and reviewed quarterly.

**TREASURY**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Jim Shannon:**[\[48342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the roll-out of the IR35 off-payroll rules on the private sector.

**Richard Fuller:**

HMRC has commissioned external research into the short-term effects of the April 2021 off-payroll working rules reform in the private and voluntary sectors, and fieldwork for this research has been undertaken.

The research will be published in due course.

**Jim Shannon:**[\[48347\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help people manage their household budgets in the context of rising inflation.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The government understands that people across the UK are worried about the rising cost of living and are seeing their disposable incomes decrease as they spend more on the essentials.

On 8 September, government announced that the energy price cap will be superseded with a new Energy Price Guarantee, which means that a typical UK household will pay no more than £2500 a year on their energy bill over the next 2 years from 1 October. The Government will also introduce a six-month scheme to support businesses, charities and public sector organisations.

These measures will save the average household around £1000 a year on current energy prices from October, and protect businesses from soaring energy costs, providing them with the certainty they need to plan their business through the acute crisis this winter.

This announcement comes in addition to the £37 billion of support previously announced, which will see eight million of the most vulnerable households receive £1200 support, with additional support for pensioners and those claiming disability benefits.

As a matter of priority, the Chancellor will set out a package of measures to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to cut taxes and boost growth, laying the groundwork for the change we need in the long term to make our economy stronger.

**Jim Shannon:**[\[48349\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the apprenticeships levy.

**Chris Philp:**

The Apprenticeship Levy is paid by large employers with an annual pay bill of over £3 million.

As apprenticeship and skills policy is devolved, Apprenticeship Levy funds remain available for employers to spend on apprenticeship training and assessment in England for 24 months before beginning to expire. Unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds are used to fund apprenticeships for non-Levy paying employers, who are often SMEs. As a result, the government pays for 95% of the apprentice training costs for non-levy paying employers.

There is no formal review of the Apprenticeship Levy or system at this time.

**Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Rachael Maskell:**[\[47579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the new system of alcohol duties announced in October 2021, what discussions he had had with Cabinet colleagues about the objectives of that new system, and what recent assessment he has made of its potential contribution towards a reduction in alcohol harm.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Chancellor meets with his Cabinet colleagues on a regular basis, to discuss a variety of issues.

Autumn Budget 2021 announced a number of reforms to alcohol duty as part of the alcohol duty review. The aim is to move to a new system that taxes all products in reference to the litres of pure alcohol they contain, as is currently the case for spirits. This will ensure stronger alcoholic products pay duty in proportion to their alcoholic content. The reforms will also introduce a reduced rate of duty for products of a lower alcohol by volume (ABV).

The government will provide an update on the alcohol duty reforms in due course.

**Alcoholic Drinks: Exports****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[49633\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department is taking steps to reduce HM Revenue and Customs paperwork for alcohol exporters.

**Richard Fuller:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given on 6 July 2022 – [UIN26743](#).

**Bank Services: Post Offices****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[48474\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of banking hubs that have opened in the last 12 months.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[48475]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of recent bank and ATM closures on elderly and vulnerable people who rely on cash.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[48476]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the impact of bank branch closures on access to cash in (a) Slough and (b) Berkshire.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[48477]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of banking hubs that will open in (a) Slough and (b) Berkshire in the next five years.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government recognises that cash remains an important part of daily life for millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups or elderly.

In recognition of this, the Government has introduced legislation to protect access to cash as part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill. The Bill intends to establish the Financial Conduct Authority as the lead regulator for cash access and provide it with appropriate powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of withdrawal and deposit facilities.

The FCA has issued clear guidance that 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. For example, for consumers and SMEs wishing to access over-the-counter services, the Post Office Banking Framework allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

Following the Government's commitment to legislate, firms are also working together through the Cash Action Group to develop new initiatives to provide shared services. This includes a process for LINK (which operates the UK's main ATM network) to assess a community's needs in the event of a closure of a core cash service or community request and determine if additional facilities are required, such as a shared bank hub. Industry has announced locations for 23 bank hubs to date, in addition to two existing pilot sites. Further details on the assessment process and locations of each bank hub are available on LINK's website:

<https://www.link.co.uk/initiatives/bank-branch-closures/>.

The Government welcomes the direction set by industry's commitments and looks forward to seeing what results they deliver in protecting facilities for local communities across the UK.

**■ Barclays: Tamworth****Christopher Pincher:** [\[45790\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with representatives of Barclays Bank on that bank's decision to close its Tamworth branch.

**Christopher Pincher:** [\[45791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has had discussions with representatives of Barclays on its decision to close the bank branch in Tamworth.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Treasury ministers and officials regularly engage with Barclays UK on a variety of key policy issues.

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial decision for banks and building societies. However, the Government firmly believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered, and mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have appropriate access to banking services.

The largest banks and building societies have been signed up to the Access to Banking Standard since 2017, which commits them to ensure that 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 close 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 that 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 99% of personal banking and 95% of business banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

**■ Blackmore Bond: Insolvency****Catherine West:** [\[48462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will call for an independent inquiry into the Financial Conduct Authority's handling of the collapse of Blackmore Bonds.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is responsible for securing an appropriate degree of consumer protection across a broad range of financial services products. However, it does not regulate all financial services firms and products. Blackmore



Bond Plc was not authorised by the FCA and the sale of the 'mini-bond' product it offered was not an activity regulated by the FCA. The FCA does not have power to investigate a firm that is unauthorised and not carrying out any regulated activities. The Government therefore has no plans to commission an independent inquiry into the FCA's handling of the collapse of Blackmore Bond plc.

## ■ Business: Energy

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[45940\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide backdated support for businesses struggling with high energy bills.

**Felicity Buchan:**

We recognise that many businesses are exposed to increased energy costs, driven by global factors.

On 8 September the Government announced a new six-month scheme for businesses and other non-domestic energy users (including charities and public sector organisations like schools). This is a temporary, time-limited measure that will protect them from soaring energy costs and provide them with the certainty they need to plan through the acute crisis this winter. It will provide them with the time they need to transition and adjust their business models accordingly.

More specific details will be announced shortly and we expect the scheme to be up and running this Autumn.

## ■ Charging Points: VAT

**Tracey Crouch:**

[\[45579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT on public electric vehicle charging points to five per cent, in the context of (a) the VAT rate for domestic energy and (b) encouraging people to buy electric vehicles.

**Richard Fuller:**

In order to keep costs down for families, the supply of electricity for domestic use, including charging an electric vehicle (EV) at home, attracts the reduced rate of VAT (five per cent). However, electricity supplied at EV charging points in public places is subject to the standard rate of VAT (twenty per cent).

The Government has not specifically introduced a reduced rate for charging EVs at home. However, the practical challenges of differentiating between the electricity used at home for general domestic purposes, and electricity used to charge EVs currently mean that the reduced rate is effectively being applied to EV charging at home.

Harmonising the rate of VAT on electricity for public and domestic charging points for electric vehicles would require the Government to expand the existing VAT relief on

electricity for domestic use (that is also used to charge EVs at home) to electricity for use at public EV charge points and this would come at a cost.

The Government has committed £2.5 billion since 2020 to support the transition to zero emission vehicles, which funds targeted vehicle grants and the rollout of EVs and charging infrastructure.

## ■ Corporation Tax

**Sam Tarry:** [\[42273\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact on the UK economy of (a) cancelling his planned corporation tax rise from 19% to 25% and (b) reducing that rate to 15%.

**Richard Fuller:**

The UK's main rate of Corporation Tax is currently legislated to increase from 19 per cent to 25 per cent from April 2023. The Prime Minister has committed to cancel this rate increase. The Chancellor will set out any plans on tax and implementation in due course.

## ■ Cost of Living: Hitchin and Harpenden

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45547\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help support people in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency with rises in the cost of living in the period between August 2021 and August 2022.

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45691\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of rises in the cost of living on people in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help support people in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency with rises in the cost of living in the period after August 2022.

**Chris Philp:**

The government understands that people across the UK are worried about the rising cost of living and are seeing their disposable incomes decrease as they spend more on the essentials.

On 8 September, government announced that the energy price cap will be superseded with a new Energy Price Guarantee, which means that a typical UK household will pay no more than £2500 a year on their energy bill over the next 2 years from 1 October. The Government will also introduce a six-month scheme to support businesses, charities and public sector organisations, which will protect them

from soaring energy costs and provide them with the certainty they need to plan their business through the acute crisis this winter.

This announcement comes in addition to the previously announced support. Eight million of the most vulnerable households, including those in Hitchin and Harpenden, will see £1,200 extra support in Cost of Living Payments, provided in instalments across the year, with additional support for pensioners and those claiming disability benefits. This includes the £400 support through the Energy Bills Support Scheme – available to all households.

We continue to monitor a range of cost of living pressures and their impacts, and later this month the Chancellor will set out a package of measures to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to cut taxes and boost growth, laying the groundwork for the change we need in the long term to make our economy stronger.

### ■ **Cost of Living: Wales**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46119\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with Ministers in the Welsh Government on the rising cost of living.

**Chris Philp:**

HMT Ministers regularly meet with representatives from the Welsh Government and recent meetings have focussed on the cost of living. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury is the Minister with responsibility for devolved administration funding.

The former Chief Secretary to the Treasury discussed the UK and devolved governments' approaches to cost of living on a number of recent occasions, including at the Finance Interministerial Standing Committee (F:ISC) meeting on 15 June and at the Interministerial Standing Committee (IMSC) meeting on 29 June.

### ■ **Council Tax: Appeals**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[45650\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of council tax challenges submitted to the Valuation Office Agency have been (a) checked and (b) reviewed within the service level agreement in each of the past 12 months for which there is data.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has an internal target to clear 98 per cent of Council Tax proposals and informal Council Tax band reviews within two months. The statutory deadline to clear proposals is four months, and currently 98 per cent of cases are cleared within this deadline.

Following the former Chancellor's announcement around the Council Tax rebate in February, the volume of Council Tax work has substantially increased. In particular, the VOA has seen an increase in demand for band reviews of over 75 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

The VOA is working hard to reduce volumes as quickly as possible and has assigned additional staff resource to this activity. The VOA is prioritising reducing the number of outstanding older cases first. The impact of this is that, on average, it is currently taking the VOA around two and a half months to clear proposals, and just under three months to clear band reviews.

The tables below show the number and percentage of proposals and band reviews resolved within two months of receipt, and proposals resolved within the statutory deadline.

#### Council Tax Proposals

	RECEIVED	TOTAL RESOLVED	RESOLVED WITHIN 2 MONTHS OF RECEIPT	% WITHIN 2 MONTHS (98% INTERNAL TARGET)	% WITHIN 4 MONTHS (STATUTORY DEADLINE)
				Cumulative	
Sep-21	2,460	2,240	2,220	97%	99%
Oct-21	2,700	2,210	2,190	97%	99%
Nov-21	2,340	2,790	2,750	97%	99%
Dec-21	1,730	2,270	2,200	96%	99%
Jan-22	2,200	2,350	2,030	94%	99%
Feb-22	2,680	1,920	1,790	94%	99%
Mar-22	3,410	2,330	2,010	92%	99%
Apr-22	2,450	1,670	1,000	86%	100%
May-22	2,630	2,250	690	75%	100%
Jun-22	2,450	2,420	390	69%	100%
Jul-22	2,420	2,140	460	64%	98%
Aug-22	2,280	2,190	390	60%	98%

## Informal Council Tax Band Reviews

	RECEIVED	TOTAL RESOLVED	RESOLVED WITHIN 2 MONTHS OF RECEIPT	% WITHIN 2 MONTHS (98% INTERNAL TARGET)
				Cumulative
Sep-21	640	660	610	80%
Oct-21	750	730	650	80%
Nov-21	900	640	570	81%
Dec-21	550	560	510	79%
Jan-22	930	670	550	76%
Feb-22	3,460	820	650	76%
Mar-22	4,870	2,170	1,570	75%
Apr-22	2,790	1,660	890	65%
May-22	2,770	2,310	520	45%
Jun-22	1,880	1,690	220	39%
Jul-22	1,400	1,480	210	36%
Aug-22	1,190	1,550	160	34%

## ■ Customs

**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[48384\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much public money has been spent on the building of inland border facilities as of 6 September 2022.

**Richard Fuller:**

Inland Border Facilities (IBFs) were introduced to help facilitate the flow of trade at the border following the UK leaving the EU, and to provide support to ports that were unable to provide the infrastructure required. HMRC ensure all build costs associated with IBFs represent value for money. HMRC monitor the performance at all IBF locations and continuously work to ensure a proactive, continuous improvement approach across the IBF network.

Since April 2020, when HMRC spend on building IBF's commenced, to the end of August 2022, HMRC has spent around £100 million on the building of IBFs. This includes temporary sites such as Manston, Waterbrook, Birmingham, North Weald, Warrington, and Ebbsfleet that became operational from January 2021 in time for the

UK leaving the EU. This also includes an enduring site at Holyhead, as well as early development costs at Dover before a decision was made to not to continue with the build.

Further investment is currently underway to complete the Holyhead IBF.

It is worth noting that the enduring site at Sevington was delivered by the Department for Transport, and so HMRC do not hold these costs.

## ■ **Disguised Remuneration Loan Charge Review**

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[45310]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Independent Loan Charge Review: report on the policy and its implementation, published in December 2019, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of access to information given to Lord Morse to enable him to report on HMRC's approach to implementing the Loan Charge.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Independent Loan Charge Review, led by Lord Morse, drew upon all the available evidence and expert advice to consider the appropriateness of the Loan Charge as a policy response, and its impact on individuals, reflecting the main concerns that had been raised by MPs and campaigners. Lord Morse had full discretion over how the review was run, which stakeholders he engaged with, and the recommendations he made.

The Government recognised the concerns raised by the Review and accepted all but one of the Review's 20 recommendations. The Government implemented a number of changes to the Loan Charge which were enacted in Finance Act 2020. On 3 December 2020, HMRC published a full report to Parliament on the implementation of the review recommendations. This report set out how HMRC has delivered the 19 recommendations which were accepted by the Government.

## ■ **Domestic Visits: Northern Ireland**

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46121]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many times he has visited Northern Ireland since July 2022.

**Felicity Buchan:**

In his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nadim Zahawi visited Northern Ireland once since July 2022 on 10 August 2022.

## ■ **Domestic Visits: Wales**

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46120]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many times he has visited Wales since July 2022.

**Felicity Buchan:**

In his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nadim Zahawi visited Wales once since July 2022 on the 12 August 2022.

**Economic Situation: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[46117\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives from the Welsh Government on the state of the UK economy.

**Chris Philp:**

HMT Ministers meet regularly with representatives from the Welsh Government to discuss the state of the UK economy. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury is the Minister with responsibility for devolved administration funding.

The former Chief Secretary to the Treasury attended a Finance Interministerial Standing Committee meeting on 15 June and a meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on 29 June, together with Welsh Government Ministers, where discussions covered the latest economic outlook. The former Chief Secretary to the Treasury also held a bilateral meeting with the Welsh Government Minister for Finance and Local Government ahead of the F:ISC meeting on 15 June where economic and fiscal matters were raised.

**Electronic Funds Transfer: Fraud****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[44930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the value of funds lost to push payment fraud in each of the last five years.

**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[44931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what (a) value and (b) proportion of funds lost due to push payment fraud have been repaid to consumers in each of the last five years.

**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[45864\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of which banks have been impacted by push payment fraud (a) as a percentage of the impact as a whole, (b) over each of the past five years, in terms of (i) being host to the accounts where funds have been lost to this fraud, and (ii) being the host bank of accounts perpetrating this fraud.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government recognises the growing threat posed to consumers by Authorised Push Payment (APP) fraud, with increasingly sophisticated scams that can be detrimental to people's lives. The Government is committed to tackling fraud within payments networks. That is why the Government has introduced legislation as part of the Financial Services & Markets Bill to enable the PSR to require payment service providers to reimburse APP scam victims. The Government believes this will ensure more consistent and comprehensive reimbursement for future APP scam victims.

Currently, data relating to the amounts lost and returned following APP scams is collected by the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) and by UK Finance. The latter regularly issues this data in publications such as its Annual Fraud Report: in 2021 for instance, UK Finance recorded gross annual losses of roughly £583 million, an increase of 39% by value over 2020, of which roughly £271 million (46%) was returned to victims. Due to changes in how APP scams are identified and reported, UK Finance note that data for years prior to 2020 is not directly comparable. More comprehensive data on APP scams can be found in UK Finance's 2022 Fraud Report:

[www.ukfinance.org.uk/policy-and-guidance/reports-and-publications/annual-fraud-report-2022](http://www.ukfinance.org.uk/policy-and-guidance/reports-and-publications/annual-fraud-report-2022)

More specific data regarding the impact of APP scams on individual payment service providers does not usually form a part of these publications. However, as detailed in its 2021 consultation on APP scams, the PSR has proposed requiring the 12 largest groups of UK payment service providers (including the main High Street banks) to publish a balanced scorecard of APP scam data on a six-monthly basis, setting out their individual performance in relation to APP scams. This would include their APP scam rates, their rates of reimbursement for customers scammed, as well as comparative data on the providers receiving APP scam payments. The PSR expect the provision of this data to provide strong reputational incentives on payment service providers to reduce APP scam losses incurred by consumers, both through preventing APP scams and reimbursing those who are scammed. The PSR will respond to this consultation in due course.

## ■ Energy: Taxation

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[45061\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to backdate the Energy Profits Levy for oil and gas producers to 2021.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Energy Profits Levy (EPL) was introduced from 26 May 2022 and is expected to raise around £5 billion in its first year.

The legislation also includes a sunset clause, effective at the end of December 2025. In future years, if oil and gas prices return to historically more normal levels, the Government will phase out the EPL.

As with all our taxes, the Government will keep the EPL under review.

## ■ England Illegal Money Lending Team: Finance

**John Spellar:**

[\[48217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide additional resources to the England Illegal Money Lending Team to tackle the threat of illegal money lending.



**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government recognises the dangers of illegal money lending, and that is why the Treasury funds the Illegal Money Lending Teams (IMLTs) across the UK via an industry levy collected by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

Since taking over funding of the IMLTs in 2017, the Treasury has increased their annual funding by 37%. For the 2022/23 financial year, the Treasury increased funding for the England Illegal Money Lending Team by over 6% compared to 2021/22.

HMT officials regularly meet the IMLTs to understand the latest intelligence and monitor how funding is being deployed. These discussions will inform decisions about the appropriate levels of funding for the next financial year.

**Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation****Emma Hardy:**[\[49244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that people affected by the Equitable Life scandal are compensated.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Equitable Life Payment Scheme closed to claims in 2015. There are no plans to reopen the Payment Scheme or review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it. Further guidance on the status of the Payment Scheme after closure is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equitable-life-payment-scheme#closure-of-the-scheme>.

**Finance: Ukraine****Emma Hardy:**[\[48482\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that financial support provided to (a) the Ukrainian Government and (b) NGOs involved in Ukraine is being used for its intended purposes; and whether he plans to make that information available publicly.

**Chris Philp:**

The UK is one of the largest aid donors to Ukraine, committing over £3.8 billion in assistance. This comprises approximately £2.3 billion in military assistance, and £400 million in economic and humanitarian grant support, including a £220 million package of humanitarian aid. The £3.8 billion package also includes a commitment of approximately £1.3 billion in loan guarantees to support Multilateral Development Banks, particularly the World Bank, to scale up their lending to support the Government of Ukraine's delivery of essential services. The World Bank has robust financial and risk management systems that ensure support is well-targeted and effectively delivered.

The UK government pledges to support Ukraine are published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The UK is also the largest donor to the United Nation's (UN) Ukraine Humanitarian Fund which grants funding to Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Our support through this fund will help reach over 2.1m people in need in Ukraine. Inside Ukraine, we are providing support directly to the Government of Ukraine and through the UN, Red Cross and NGOs, including with in-kind assistance. This support is delivered in accordance with the [FCDO's programme management standards](#) to minimise risk and ensure compliance of partners. The UK funds trusted international partners like Mercy Corps and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, through whom we can identify suitable local responders and organisations to provide assistance to communities most in need of support. These organisations have processes to ensure that local responders meet FCDO standards on financial management and preventing exploitation, as well as ensuring they have sufficient capacity to deliver the project to ensure good value for money. We are also conducting independent monitoring to provide assurance that funds are well spent

The UK government remains determined to continue to work with international partners, multilateral institutions, and civil society organisations to support Ukraine and its government, by ensuring pledged economic support reaches the country and those affected by the conflict as rapidly as possible.

#### ■ Financial Services: Regulation

**Fleur Anderson:**

[45033]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help ensure the independence of financial services regulators.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The legislative framework underpinning financial services regulation in the UK provides for the regulators to be independent of government in their operational decisions.

Following the Future Regulatory Framework Review the regulators will take on significant new rulemaking responsibilities. It is important to balance these new responsibilities for the independent regulators with clear accountability, appropriate democratic input, and transparent oversight. Through the Financial Services and Markets Bill the government is bringing forward measures to achieve this balance.

#### ■ Fuels: Excise Duties

**Bim Afolami:**

[45258]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that retailers pass on the savings from the reduction in Fuel Duty to consumers.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government has been clear that it expects all those in the supply chain to pass through the fuel duty cut to consumers buying fuel at the pump.

This summer, the independent Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) undertook an urgent review of the market for road fuel. Their initial findings suggest that the fuel

duty cut appears to have been largely passed through. The Government will await further findings from the CMA.

## ■ Help to Buy Scheme

**Mike Kane:**

[45825]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to review the Help to Buy ISA maximum level which was set at £250,000 for properties outside London back in 2015, given the rise in the average costs of property.

**Andrew Griffith:**

As first-time buyers tend to buy smaller (and therefore cheaper) properties, the Help to Buy: ISA's property price cap of £250,000 for properties outside London (£450,000 within London) allows the Government to target support more precisely at the people the scheme is intended to help.

While the Government keeps all savings policy under review, individuals with a Help to Buy: ISA can transfer their savings to a Lifetime ISA without incurring any penalties. The Lifetime ISA allows first-time buyers to benefit from the Government bonus when purchasing properties up to £450,000 anywhere in the UK.

Further information on the Lifetime ISA together with a comprehensive list other forms of home purchase support schemes can be found on the Government's website below:

<https://www.ownyourhome.gov.uk/>

## ■ Investment: Classification Schemes

**Alexander Stafford:**

[47715]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his timetable is for the publication of the consultation on the UK's Sustainable Investment Taxonomy in the context of the energy crisis.

**Andrew Griffith:**

It is important to get this policy right for the UK. The UK Green Taxonomy Consultation is under review and the Government will be setting out next steps in due course.

## ■ Minimum Wage: Non-payment

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[48361]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many reports from (a) employees and (b) third parties involving suspected non-compliance of employers with the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 and related legislation were received by HMRC in each year since 2015.

**Richard Fuller:**

HMRC considers all complaints from workers, conducts a program of proactive compliance activities, and delivers a program of educational activities to support employers to get it right.

Anyone not being paid what they are entitled to can complain online at: <https://www.gov.uk/minimum-wage-complaint> or can contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service on 0300 123 1100. HMRC will not tell an employer who complained without the person's consent.

YEAR	WORKER COMPLAINTS	THIRD PARTY INFORMATION
2015/16	1,516	418
2016/17	2,573	789
2017/18	6,027	2,154
2018/19	4,924	2,351
2019/20	3,332	2,413
2020/21	2,771	2,286
2021/22	3,310	2,944

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[48362\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many investigations involving suspected non-compliance by employers with the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 and related legislation were carried out by HMRC in each year since 2015; and how many and what proportion of those investigations led to (a) financial penalties, (b) criminal prosecutions and (c) other enforcement action.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[48363\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many employers were issued with a financial penalty for non-compliance with the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 and related legislation; and what the total value of those penalties was in each year since 2015.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) receives it.

HMRC balances recovering NMW arrears for workers as quickly as possible along with a robust approach to enforcement using a range of tools, including civil sanctions and the issuing of Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings (LMEUs), and Labour Market Enforcement Orders (LMEOs).

HMRC's approach to compliance means they go beyond undertaking investigations and issuing penalties. HMRC also works with businesses to help them understand their obligations. Ultimately, HMRC want employers to get it right. It is far better for businesses and workers if an investigation is never needed.

The use of criminal prosecutions is reserved for the most serious of cases.

The outbreak of COVID-19 meant HMRC had to adapt and take pragmatic decisions about where and how to deploy resource in the most effective manner to ensure both customers and staff were protected whilst still ensuring that workers were receiving the money they were due. HMRC continued to consider all worker complaints and take enforcement action as appropriate.

The below table provides numbers for investigations, penalties, value of penalties, prosecutions, and employers from 2015-16 up to 2021-22.

YEAR	NUMBER OF INVESTIGATIONS	INVESTIGATION S WHERE ARREARS ENFORCED	INVESTIGATION S WHERE A PENALTY WAS CHARGED	VALUE OF PENALTIES ISSUED	NUMBER OF PROSECUTIONS	NUMBER OF LMEUs	NUMBER OF LMEOs
2015/16	2,667	958	815	£1,780,467	0	0	0
2016/17	2,674	1,134	822	£3,892,976	4	0	0
2017/18	2,402	1,016	810	£14,070,621	1	0	0
2018/19	3,018	1,357	1,008	£17,134,737	0	8	0
2019/20	3,376	1,260	992	£18,453,289	1	19	0
2020/21	2,740	994	575	£14,064,688	0	5	0
2021/22	2,835	898	696	£13,173,062	3	40	1

## ■ National Insurance Contributions: Overseas Workers

**Emma Hardy:**

**[46006]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) the requirement for British nationals living overseas requesting a NI38 document for National Insurance contributions to do so by telephone and to return signed paper documents to the Department and (b) moving the entire process online.

**Richard Fuller:**

The NI38 document is freely available on gov.uk, guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-security-abroad-ni38>. Once the NI38 is reviewed online, if appropriate, the customer should complete the CF38 form and return it to HMRC.

No comparative assessments have been made and the CF38 form is not on the digital migration plans at this time.

## ■ Northern Ireland Protocol

**Stephen Farry:** [45260]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will set the timescale for the implementation of tariff reimbursement scheme in relation to movements covered by the Northern Ireland Protocol.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Government remains committed to establishing a reimbursement scheme for goods which have attracted a tariff upon entering Northern Ireland that can subsequently be shown to have remained in Northern Ireland or the rest of the UK.

Traders can use the customs duty waiver scheme where they are eligible. Further guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-waiver-for-duty-on-goods-that-you-bring-to-northern-ireland-from-great-britain>.

## ■ Nuclear Power: Government Securities

**Alexander Stafford:** [47714]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the statement in the Green Finance Framework published on 30 June 2021 that the Government will not finance any nuclear energy-related expenditures under that Framework, when he next plans to review that Framework; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of including nuclear energy in the scope of a revised Framework on (a) progress towards achieving Net Zero and (b) energy security.

**Andrew Griffith:**

As set out in the Green Financing Framework, the government recognises that nuclear is, and will continue to be, a key part of the UK's low-carbon energy mix alongside solar and wind generation and carbon capture and storage. All these technologies are important in tackling climate change and diversifying the UK's supply, contributing to the UK's energy security and sustainable growth.

HM Treasury will review the Framework on a regular basis. It may be amended from time to time to take account of any changes that HM Treasury considers appropriate.

## ■ Off-payroll Working

**Julian Knight:** [45854]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department will publish a summary of the responses to its November 2021 consultation on the umbrella company market.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Government ran a Call for Evidence on the umbrella company market to ensure it has a detailed and up to date understanding of the market. This Call for Evidence, which was issued jointly by HM Treasury, HMRC, and the Department for Business,

Energy, and Industrial Strategy, closed on 22 February 2022. Government officials across the three departments are working closely together to consider the evidence submitted and will publish the Government's response in due course.

## ■ Public Sector: Energy

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[45771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for (a) Health and Social Care, (b) Education and (c) Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the levels of funding required to ensure that (i) schools, (ii) nurseries, (iii) colleges, (iv) hospitals, (v) providers of social care and (vi) other providers of essential public services are able to afford the increased cost of energy; if he will make it his policy to provide additional funding to help those public services meet their energy costs; and if he will make a statement.

**Chris Philp:**

We recognise that many private and public sector organisations are exposed to high energy costs driven by global factors.

The Government will introduce a six-month scheme to support businesses, charities and public sector organisations, comparable to the scheme being provided for consumers.

This will protect them from soaring energy costs through the acute crisis this winter and provide them with the certainty they need to plan.

## ■ Public Sector: Workplace Pensions

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[47544\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of people expected to be affected by the Pensions Increase (Review) Order 2022 (S.I. 2022/333) in the 2023/24 financial year.

**Chris Philp:**

Section 59 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 (as amended) read with the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 (as amended) provides for public service pensions to be increased annually by the same percentage as State additional pensions (State Earnings Related Pension and State Second Pension). State additional pensions were increased by 3.1 per cent from April 2022, in line with the increase in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in the 12 months from September 2020 to September 2021. From 11 April 2022, most public service pensions in payment were also increased by the same percentage, with pro-rata increases for those in payment for less than a year.

The Pensions Increase (Review) Order 2022 covers “official pensions,” which are those pensions listed in Schedule 2 of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971. This covers most public service pensions. There are, however, also a small number of other schemes (which are not official pensions) where the benefits are increased by analogy with official pensions under the rules applying to those schemes.



Official pensions are increased as specified within the annual Pension Increase (Review) Orders, and the Order applies to a pension that began before or during the 12 months before the date that the Order commences and where the pension satisfies a condition qualifying for pension increases to be paid. The pensions increase is therefore usually paid to recipients aged 55 and over, or those aged less than 55 who are in receipt of a survivor's pension, or a pension paid on account of ill health.

Pensions increases also apply to pensions in deferment, although the entitlement arises only when the pension comes into payment and the recipient satisfies a qualifying condition. Members currently accruing further pension benefits in schemes covered by these indexation provisions will also be entitled to receive increases under Pension Increase Orders and some who retire in future, particularly in the next few years, might be entitled to increases under the Pensions Increase Order 2022.

Those affected by the Pension Increase (Review) Order 2022 in the 2022/23 financial year are therefore likely to equal:

1. Total public service pensions in payment;
2. Total public service pensions in deferment, most of which would be affected in due course;
3. A proportion of total public service pensions still accruing, where some future pensions in payment and deferment might in due course be affected by the 2022 Order. That proportion cannot be readily assessed as it will depend on many variable and unknown factors, including future decisions by members about careers and retirements.

Table 2 of the last ONS Occupational Pension Schemes Survey, assessing data up to 2019, estimated that there were then 5.3 million public sector pensions in payment; 4.7 million deferred public sector pensions; and 6.6 million active members of public sector pension schemes. However, this data will also include a small proportion of members who, for example, have defined contribution pensions and are not in arrangements necessarily affected by the Pension Increase (Review) Order 2022.

In addition to those noted above, some private sector scheme rules provide that the defined benefit pensions of some or all members will increase in line with increases applying to official pensions.

A further Pensions Increase (Review) Order will be made for the 2023/24 financial year, which would allow for movements in prices since the previous assessment based on September 2021 CPI.

## ■ Remote Working: Tax Allowances

**Alex Sobel:**

**[47640]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to increase the maximum tax relief claim for job expenses for working from home, in the context of rising gas and electricity costs.



**Richard Fuller:**

Eligible employees can claim tax relief on the allowance of £6 per week without the need to provide evidence of expenditure. The amount was increased from £4 per week in April 2020.

As with all aspect of the tax system, the Government keeps tax reliefs under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken in the context of the wider public finances.

Employees who are eligible for tax relief for working from home can claim relief on the actual amount of additional household costs, providing they can provide evidence of the increased amount.

**Retail Trade: Business Rates****Marsha De Cordova:**[\[49262\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that business rates bills do not cause high street shops in (a) Battersea and (b) the rest of the UK to close.

**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[49263\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support local businesses in Battersea through reforming the business rates system.

**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[49266\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on reducing the headline rate of business rates.

**Richard Fuller:**

The most recent review of business rates concluded at Autumn Budget 2021. The review reaffirmed the importance of business rates for raising revenue for essential local services and announced a £7 billion package of measures to support business over the next 5 years.

This includes a freeze to the business rates multiplier in 2022-23, which will support all ratepayers, large and small, meaning bills are 3 per cent lower than without the freeze. The Government has also introduced a new temporary relief for retail, hospitality, and leisure in 2022-23, worth almost £1.7 billion to the sector. These measures will support the businesses that make our high streets and town centres successful.

As with all taxes, HM Treasury keeps business rates under review.

**Revenue and Customs and Treasury: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution****Emily Thornberry:**[\[47425\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many payments were fraudulently charged to the budgets of (a) his Department and (b) HM Revenue and Customs using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (i) 2019-20, (ii) 2020-21 and (iii) 2021-22; and

what was the total value of fraudulent payments (A) made and (B) recovered in each of those years.

**Felicity Buchan:**

We have identified no fraudulent payments made by HM Treasury or HM Revenue and Customs using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (i) 2019-20, (ii) 2020-21 or (iii) 2021-22.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Finance and Staff**

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[48360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total (a) annual budget and (b) full time equivalent workforce allocated to HMRC's National Minimum Wage teams was in each year since 2015.

**Richard Fuller:**

HMRC's National Minimum Wage (NMW) compliance work is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who are responsible for NMW legislation and policy. The funding for HMRC's work on NMW has increased from £13.2 million in 2015-16, to £26.4 million in 2021-22.

The following table provides a yearly breakdown of the NMW budget and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff numbers from 2015-16 up to 2021-22.

YEAR	BUDGET	FTE
2015-2016	£13.2 million	251
2016-2017	£20 million	352
2017-2018	25.3 million	413
2018-2019	25.2 million	429
2019-2020	26.3 million	442
2020-2021	26.4 million	420
2021-2022	26.4 million	390

To note, there are also additional staff across HMRC who contribute to enforcing the NMW including lawyers, technical advisers, and those specialising in criminal investigations, who have not been included in the FTE figures provided in the table.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Flexible Working**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[45419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing HMRC's working from home allowance in the context of rising energy prices; and if he will make a statement.

**Richard Fuller:**

Eligible employees can claim tax relief on the allowance of £6 per week without the need to provide evidence of expenditure. The amount was increased from £4 per week in April 2020.

However, employees who are eligible for tax relief for working from home can claim relief on the actual amount of additional household costs, providing they can provide evidence of the increased amount.

As with all aspect of the tax system, the Government will keep tax reliefs under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken in the context of the wider public finances.

**Revenue and Customs: Repayments****Jim Shannon:****[47537]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the time taken by HM Revenue and Customs to pay tax refunds and the impact on individuals and businesses awaiting those refunds; and if he will make a statement.

**Richard Fuller:**

Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

HMRC performance data is published on a monthly basis here:

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

Quarterly data can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>.

**Royal Ulster Constabulary: Museums and Galleries****Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:****[45594]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the funding his Department committed for the establishment of a Royal Ulster Constabulary museum in Northern Ireland is still available.

**Chris Philp:**

Over the Spending Review 2021 period, the Northern Ireland Executive is receiving an average of £1.6 billion per year of additional funding through the Barnett formula on top of its £13.4 billion annual baseline.

It is for the Northern Ireland Executive to decide how to allocate their funding across their devolved responsibilities, including how to provide support to the culture sector.

**Small Businesses: Finance****Alexander Stafford:****[45186]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help unlock capital for SMEs in Britain.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government has a wide range of levers to help SMEs across the country access the capital they need to thrive and grow.

The British Business Bank brings together a range of programmes, spanning debt and equity finance as well as regional funds, which help ensure that financial markets are working for SMEs. These programmes are supporting over £10.8 billion of finance to over 93,000 SMEs across the UK.

The Government provides three tax-advantaged venture capital schemes: the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS), Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) and Venture Capital Trusts (VCTs). These schemes are designed to encourage investment in higher-risk, early-stage companies which face some of the biggest challenges in accessing growth capital.

The Government is also working with industry to identify and address barriers to institutional investment into a broader range of assets, which could help unlock more capital for UK SMEs and improve returns for pension savers.

**■ Small Businesses: Taxation****Julian Sturdy:****[45799]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the average financial cost for small businesses of following the Making Tax Digital rules.

**Richard Fuller:**

I refer the hon. Member for York Outer to the answer that was given on the 8 February 2022 to the Question UIN 116919.

HMRC's assessment of impacts on businesses was shown in the Tax Information and Impact Note published on 23 September 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extension-of-making-tax-digital-for-income-tax-self-assessment-to-businesses-and-landlords>.

HMRC has undertaken significant engagement with business and accountancy representative bodies, as well as software developers, to understand the associated costs of Making Tax Digital mandate.

Additional detail offering a more detailed look at the cost implications was published on 23 September 2021 here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-costs-and-benefits-for-the-next-phases-of-making-tax-digital](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-costs-and-benefits-for-the-next-phases-of-making-tax-digital).

**■ Solar Power: Tax Allowances****Drew Hendry:****[45899]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the reach of the tax super-deduction for the installation of solar panels so that the deduction can be used by a broader range of businesses including domestic landlords.

**Richard Fuller:**

Solar panels are classified as special rate assets in the capital allowances system. This means that, until 31 March 2023, they qualify for the 50 per cent first-year allowance for special rate assets that was announced alongside the super-deduction.

Solar panels also qualify for the Annual Investment Allowance which provides 100 per cent relief for plant and machinery investments up to a limit of £1 million, until 31 March 2023.

Property businesses investing in plant and machinery for use in dwelling-houses cannot claim capital allowances on that expenditure. Therefore, expenditure incurred on solar panels by a domestic landlord is unlikely to qualify for capital allowances.

To help households improve energy efficiency, at Spring Statement 2022, the Government announced the expansion of the VAT relief on the installation of energy saving materials (ESMs) to residential accommodation in Great Britain. Qualifying installations, including solar panels and heat pumps, will benefit from a VAT zero-rate until April 2027. Overall, this represents an additional £280 million of support for investment in ESMs over the next five years.

To support businesses to improve energy efficiency, at Autumn Budget 2021, the Government also announced new business rates support for green technology which is expected to be worth around £170 million over the next five years, to support the decarbonisation of buildings, including rooftop solar panels.

**■ Southern Africa: Debts****Patrick Grady:**[\[45883\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the context of remarks made by Anglican Bishops at the recent Lambeth Conference, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of cancelling debts owed by countries in southern Africa that are facing food shortages.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government recognises the significant debt vulnerabilities in developing countries and the critical challenge posed by food insecurity and is working closely with international partners to address these issues.

The UK, along with the G20 and Paris Club, agreed a new Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI (CF), which was designed to help deliver a long-term, sustainable approach for supporting low-income countries facing debt vulnerabilities. 73 of the most vulnerable countries are eligible to request a debt treatment under the Framework and our priority is to work with our G20 partners to implement it quickly for those who have requested it and support new countries who come forward.

The UK also continues to work with the international community to directly support countries affected by the food security crisis. For example, the UK played a leading role in securing the World Bank's commitment of \$12 billion of new projects in the

next 15 months to respond to the food security crisis, on top of \$18 billion of existing projects.

■ **Sunscreens: VAT**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[45210\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to remove VAT on sun screen products.

**Richard Fuller:**

Under the current VAT rules, sun protection products are subject to the standard rate of VAT. High-factor sunscreen is on the NHS prescription list for certain conditions and therefore is provided VAT free when dispensed by a pharmacist.

The Government's approach to this matter is to support safety campaigns that ensure that sunscreen is placed within its proper context; as one of the precautions that people can take against the harmful rays of the sun, but one that does not provide 100 per cent protection. Advice from leading cancer charities recommends a range of steps people can take for protection, which includes avoiding long periods of exposure, staying in the shade at peak hours, and protecting themselves with a hat and sunglasses.

The Government keeps all taxes under review and welcomes representations to help inform future decisions on tax policy.

■ **Taxpayer Protection Taskforce**

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[45129\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many full time equivalent officials were deployed to the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce in the financial year 2021-22; and what the staff complement is for that taskforce as at 1 September 2022.

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[45187\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many prosecutions have resulted from the investigations of the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce as of 1 September 2022; and how many investigations have been concluded and are waiting to be progressed by the courts.

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[45851\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the overall budget for the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce was in financial year 2021-22 for (a) staffing, (b) operations and (c) legal and court proceedings; and what the budget projections are for financial year 2022-23 for each of those categories.

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[45852\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value of loans is that have been recovered by the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce through successful prosecutions in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

**Douglas Chapman:**

**[45853]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many suspected fraud cases have been investigated by the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce; how many of those cases (a) have since been dropped or (b) will not result in prosecution; and what the value is of loans unpaid which will not be recovered in relation to the cases which have been dropped.

**Richard Fuller:**

At the Spring Budget 2021 the Government announced a £100 million investment to form the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce. This enabled HMRC to significantly extend work to tackle fraud and error in the COVID-19 support schemes that HMRC administered (Self Employment Income Support Scheme, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Eat Out to Help Out). These payments are grants rather than loans. HMRC does not administer or undertake compliance of other COVID-19 financial support packages, such as Bounce Back Loans.

The £100 million funding covers backfilling the staff used to resource the taskforce.

In 2021-22 the taskforce had £41million allocated to the staffing budget and is forecasting £59 million in staffing for 2022-23.

During 2021-22, the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce consisted of 1,147 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) compliance officers, reassigned from other teams across HMRC. As of 31 July 2022, there are 1,203 FTE in the taskforce.

HMRC designed the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Eat Out to Help Out schemes to prevent fraud, both in the eligibility criteria and the claim process itself. HMRC also put in place a series of checks on claims before they were paid, blocking those that were highly indicative of criminal activity.

The Government and HMRC are taking tough action to tackle fraudulent behaviour. Anyone who keeps grant money despite knowing they were not entitled to it faces having to repay up to double the amount they received, plus interest, and potentially face criminal prosecution.

The Taxpayer Protection Taskforce undertakes one-to-one investigations where there is a suspected overpayment of an HMRC administered COVID-19 grant. These overpayments may be due to error or fraud, therefore the total number of investigations opened and concluded does not distinguish between error and fraud.

As of 31 July 2022, the total number of investigations opened since the start of the schemes is over 45,000, of which c. 31,000 have been concluded. The taskforce opened over 32,000 one to one investigations in addition to the c. 13,000 one to one investigations opened prior to the taskforce being formed. These investigations are carried out using HMRC's civil powers and do not involve prosecution. By 31 March 2022, HMRC have recovered around £762 million of overclaimed grants. This is in addition to £425 million prevented from being paid out incorrectly and £970 million returned by claimants because they did not need the grant or they identified they had overclaimed without HMRC taking action.

In addition, HMRC carries out criminal investigations in the most serious cases of fraud. As of 31 July 2022, there has been 1 successful prosecution for fraud on the HMRC administered COVID-19 support schemes. HMRC also has 30 active criminal investigations that involve suspected COVID-19 scheme fraud and the final decision on whether to prosecute in these cases will be made by independent prosecution partners.

**Douglas Chapman:**

**[45850]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the grading structure applied to the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce is; and how many employees were in each grade as of 1 September 2022.

**Richard Fuller:**

At the Spring Budget 2021, the Government announced a £100 million investment to form the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce. This enabled HMRC to significantly extend work to tackle fraud and error in the COVID-19 support schemes that HMRC administered (Self Employment Income Support Scheme, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Eat Out to Help Out). These payments were grants rather than loans. HMRC does not administer or undertake compliance of other COVID-19 financial support packages, such as Bounce Back Loans.

The taskforce was funded for 1,265 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff selected from those who have tax training and compliance experience. Once they joined, the taskforce staff were provided with additional training on the COVID-19 schemes.

As of 31 July 2022, there were 1,203 FTE in the taskforce made up of the below grades:

GRADES	FTE
SCS	1.2
G6	8.04
G7	30.73
SO	121.46
HO	487.76
O	511.01
AO	42.64
CCG Total	1202.84



## ■ Tobacco: Taxation

**Damien Moore:**

[\[45123\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Government's response to the Science and Technology Committee's report on e-cigarettes, published in December 2018, whether it continues to be the Government's policy that taxation on smoking-related products should directly correspond to the health risks presented to encourage less harmful consumption.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government believes that e-cigarettes are an effective way of encouraging smokers to switch to less harmful alternatives.

Non-tobacco nicotine and vaping products, such as e-cigarettes, are currently taxed as a consumer product with the VAT rate being 20%. They are not subject to excise duty. Medicinally regulated products are subject to the reduced rate of VAT at 5%.

## ■ Treasury: Buildings

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47406\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the figures supplied by his Department for the Cabinet Office's weekly publication of civil service headquarters occupancy data, what estimate of the daily capacity of the 1 Horse Guards Road office was used to calculate the percentage of employees working in that building since February 2022.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The current capacity estimate for HMT's occupancy at 1 Horse Guards Road is 996.

## ■ Treasury: EU Law

**Stewart Hosie:**

[\[45580\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many officials in their Department are working on Retained EU Law legislation.

**Andrew Griffith:**

We can confirm that HM Treasury does not hold information within the scope of your request.

HMT holds a large body of Retained EU Law (REUL), primarily in relation to Financial Services. A number of officials from across HMT work on REUL legislation. This work is carried out as part of officials' normal business activities, and we do not record the amount of staff time spent specifically on this work.

## ■ Treasury: Termination of Employment

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many members of staff have left his Department since 12 December 2019.

**Felicity Buchan:**

As at 6th September 2022, for staff who would be included in HM Treasury's overall reported full time equivalent headcount figures, there have been 879 leavers between 12/12/2019 and 06/09/2022.

**■ UK Infrastructure Bank****Stephen Hammond:**[\[49112\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made for the implication of his policies of the Institution of Civil Engineer's recommendation that the National Infrastructure Strategy should be on a statutory footing to provide more clarity and guidance on where the UK Infrastructure Bank should focus.

**Andrew Griffith:**

As the Prime Minister set out earlier this month, the government is committed to delivery of infrastructure commitments – including those set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) – to improve the UK's energy security, transport networks and digital connectivity. There are no plans to legislate for the NIS.

The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) was established in June 2021. Since then, it has entered into 10 deals worth a total of £1 billion, investing to drive economic growth and to strengthen the UK's energy supply. The former Chancellor wrote to the UKIB on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022 to set out his strategic priorities for the Bank. This letter has been published and is available on gov.uk.

**■ UK Infrastructure Bank: Staff****Alex Sobel:**[\[47639\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many UK Infrastructure Bank staff have been appointed to be based in (a) Leeds and (b) rest of the UK as of 5 September 2022.

**Andrew Griffith:**

At 5 September 2022, the UK Infrastructure Bank has a total workforce of 160, including interim contractors and government secondees. More than 40% of this total workforce are based in Leeds.

Of these, 15 are permanent employees of which 10 are contracted to Leeds and 5 are contracted to London. All those contracted to London transferred on their existing terms from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority. The Bank's Chief Executive and the permanent Executive Directors are all contracted to Leeds.

The Bank is now recruiting its permanent workforce. By late 2023, it is intended that 90% of the Bank's staff will be based outside of London, with the majority of those in Leeds.

**VAT****Alan Brown:**[\[45232\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the total VAT receipts contained in the (a) March 2021, (b) November 2021 and (c) March 2022 budgets for each financial year for the remaining parliamentary term.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is the Government's official forecaster, with responsibility for providing independent analysis of the public finances.

The forecast for VAT receipts for each financial year in the remaining parliamentary term are from the OBR's Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO) in March 2021, October 2021, and March 2022. These forecasts are as follows:

**FORECAST FOR VAT**

RECEIPTS (£BN)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
March 2021 EFO	145.6	149.7	155.1
October 2021 EFO	155.0	159.1	163.1
March 2022 EFO	154.2	160.0	164.7

**FORECAST FOR VAT**

RECEIPTS (% OF GDP)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
March 2021 EFO	6.1	6.1	6.1
October 2021 EFO	6.2	6.2	6.1
March 2022 EFO	6.1	6.1	6.0

**VAT: Inflation****Drew Hendry:**[\[45092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of lifting the VAT registration threshold in line with inflation.

**Richard Fuller:**

The UK has the highest VAT registration threshold in the OECD and as compared to EU Member States at £85,000. This keeps the majority of UK businesses out of VAT altogether.

Whilst the Government keeps all taxes under review, it was announced at Budget 2021 that the VAT threshold will be maintained at its current level of £85,000 until 31 March 2024.

**■ Veterinary Services: VAT****Tracey Crouch:** [\[45772\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment on the potential merits of (a) removing and (b) reducing VAT on (i) veterinary services and (ii) animal medications.

**Richard Fuller:**

As with all taxes, the Government keeps VAT on veterinary services and animal medications under review.

**■ Zambia: Debts****Patrick Grady:** [\[45884\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with UK-based private creditors and financial institutions that have bought debt owed by Zambia as part of its recent debt restructuring process.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Common Framework was agreed in November 2020 by the UK, along with the G20 and Paris Club, to help deliver a long-term, sustainable approach for supporting low-income countries to tackle their debt vulnerabilities. Zambia is one of three countries – along with Chad and Ethiopia - to have so far requested the Common Framework.

Private sector participation in the Common Framework is critical. Under the terms of the Common Framework, a debtor country that signs an MoU with participating official creditors will be required to seek from all private creditors a treatment at least as favourable. Accordingly, once Zambia signs an MoU for its case it will need to engage its private creditors to ensure their participation on comparable terms.

The Government engages private sector creditors on international debt issues in a number of fora and will work closely with its international partners to ensure private creditors fully play their part in Zambia's restructuring.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Civil Servants: Training****Emily Thornberry:** [\[47416\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to Section 109(4) of the Equality Act 2010, whether the provision of mandatory training for civil service staff regarding their obligations under the Equality Act has been cited as a defence against Section 109 proceedings by (a) a Government department and (b) other public sector body since the commencement of that Act.

**Amanda Solloway:**

This information is not held centrally. Proceedings under the Equality Act 2010 are brought against individual Government departments, or the employing public sector body.

**Equal Pay****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[44972\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Answer of 7 March 2022 to Question 129064 on Equal Pay, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of prohibiting employers from requesting salary history from new employees.

**Amanda Solloway:**

There is growing evidence to show that, when pay is negotiable, asking applicants to disclose previous earnings and not including salary information in the advert increases the risk that historic disparities will be replicated. Research from the Fawcett Society suggests that questions about salary history particularly disadvantage women's confidence in pay negotiations.

On International Women's Day this year, we called on all employers to provide salary information in all of their job adverts, and to stop asking about previous salary during recruitment.

We recognise that some employers may find it challenging to take these steps, due to historic pay decisions and lack of clarity in pay processes. That is why we also announced that we will work with employers to develop and pilot a methodology to support them to adopt these measures. The first meeting of the methodology working group took place at the start of this month.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****Access to Work Programme****Jessica Morden:**[\[45613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time was for an Access to Work grant application to be processed in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) 2022.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The average processing times are shown below.

*Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.*

2018/19 13.2 days

2019/20 25.5 days

2020/21 28.1 days

2021/22 28.3 days

**Jessica Morden:**

**[45614]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to review the service standard Access To Work application timescales from application to approval.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Access to Work has received significant increase in applications over the last year and have recruited new staff to meet the increased demand and reduce the time it takes to make decisions. We are also transforming the Access to Work service through increased digitalisation, that will make the service more efficient, will make the application process easier, and improve the time taken from application through to decision.

**Jessica Morden:**

**[45618]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of the efficacy of the system whereby people in receipt of support through Access to Work have to reapply for that support if they change job, even in cases where their need for support has not changed; and if she will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Access to Work (AtW) is committed to transforming the service, disabled people receive and improving customer experience. The AtW Transformation Programme is progressively digitising the AtW service to enable customers to apply for and claim AtW payments more conveniently online. As part of this we are exploring streamlining current processes including reviewing the circumstances and frequency where new applications are required.

A flexible application has been introduced to support disabled people to access freelancer and contractor opportunities and remove the need for them to re-apply for Access to Work every time a new period of employment begins. The flexible application offers greater flexibility for disabled people to move between jobs and helps to reduce the need for repeated holistic assessments where their needs remain the same.

**Jessica Morden:**

**[45622]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potentials merits of extending Access To Work support to the newly self-employed, in the context of an individual not have an income straight away.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Access to Work already offers support for newly self-employed disabled people operating a business. Access to Work can provide funding for in-work support needs for up to 3 years. At the end of this period the individual must have a business

turnover which meets the Access to Work Lower Earnings Limit, currently £6,396. If this is not possible, Access to Work funding will stop.

For self-employed freelancers and contractors, as long as their contract value is equivalent to the National Minimum Wage and they satisfy the Access to Work eligibility criteria, grant funding can be provided for their in-work support needs for the length of the contract.

To support self-employed freelancers and contractors, Access to Work has introduced a Flexible Application to provide greater flexibility for disabled people to take up time limited contracts and freelance opportunities. The flexible application helps to avoid the need for re-applications for Access to Work every time a new period of employment begins and removes the need for repeated holistic assessments where the individual's needs are unchanged.

**Drew Hendry:**

**[45901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure support for individuals currently employed under the Temporary Employment Support Grant under Access to Work programs continues to move forward.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Transitional Employer Support Grant is a flat-rate time-limited grant paid by Access to Work to fund the in-work support needs of disabled individuals working in Supported Businesses who previously delivered the Work Choice programme. This grant is providing transitional protection for disabled employees while a long-term funding model is developed. A new more personalised funding model is currently being piloted which offers disabled employees more tailored support and recognises the adaptations the employer has made. If the new model is successful it is expected to replace the Transitional Employer Support Grant.

**Drew Hendry:**

**[45902]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the (a) evidence and (b) definition of in-work support required for a supported employee is clearly outlined to employers who employ people under Access to Work Plus.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Access to Work Plus is testing whether providing additional support for employers who are willing to do more and flex job roles for employees who need more than standard Access to Work, can help unlock more employment opportunities for disabled people. Access to Work will use its contracted supplier who have suitably qualified assessors to identify the employees in-work support needs and the adaptations the employer has made to the workplace and the job role to accommodate the employee.

Access to Work already provides general advice on workplace adjustments for employers who employ disabled people, however, is unable to provide personalised advice as it is dependent on individual need. The Access to Work holistic assessment

builds on this advice and considers the employee's working environment, including any adjustments the employer has made. The assessment is carried out in the workplace with the employee and the employer present, the assessment will make tailored recommendations for the disabled employee and offer advice for employers on the support they can provide for their employee.

The Access to Work case manager will use the assessments recommendations to determine if the employer satisfies the Access to Work Plus criteria.

To help build employer understanding of Access to Work Plus and the process used to determine eligibility, a series of communications have been developed and shared with a range of stakeholders, including Disability Confident employers and Jobcentre Plus. The reaction to these communications will be monitored to help inform further communication products and amended as necessary.

### ■ Attendance Allowance

**Beth Winter:** [\[45610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of simplifying the Attendance Allowance claim form.

**Victoria Prentis:**

All DWP claim forms are under continuous review, using insight from DWP colleagues and external customer groups such as Age UK. Recent improvements have included changes to questions around Power of Attorneys and falls/stumbles.

### ■ Beer: Air Pollution

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[45076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of the Health and Safety Executive strengthening regulation regarding the monitoring of air quality around clean-in-place systems in breweries.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[45101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of legal safety standards for the use of clean-in-place systems in the brewing industry; and if he will make it his policy to mandate the placing of leakage detecting air testing devices around those systems in breweries.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) already has in place an effective regulatory regime to protect employees from substances hazardous to health in the workplace under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002. The regulations place duties on employers, including those running clean-in-place systems in a brewery, to assess the risk of exposure to substances hazardous to health arising from their activities. HSE publishes Workplace Exposure Limits to help employers define the standard they need to meet. Arising from this, employers are required to put in place appropriate controls to prevent or control exposure of



employees to those substances hazardous to health by inhalation, ingestion etc. in the workplace.

The COSHH Regulations 2002 also set out a hierarchy of control measures that should be applied when assessing the effective prevention or control of exposure to substances hazardous to health. Any requirement for an individual brewery to use leakage detection devices should be identified in the risk assessment process and provided by the employer.

## ■ Carer's Allowance

**John McNally:**

**[45603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason it is her Department's policy that pensioners are not eligible to claim carers allowance; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility of carers allowance to carers who are pensioners.

**Victoria Prentis:**

I refer the honourable member to the answer my colleague, Chloe Smith, the Minister for Disabled People gave on 20 April 2022 to question UIN [154461](#)

It should be noted that Carer's Allowance is a devolved benefit in Scotland. However, while the Scottish Government builds its capacity to deliver a replacement, DWP Ministers have agreed that the Department should continue to administer Carer's Allowance on behalf of the Scottish Ministers under an Agency Agreement, on the same basis as it is administered in England and Wales.

## ■ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Stephen Farry:**

**[46209]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to progress the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Government policy.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are fully committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which we ratified in 2009.

The UK as a general principle does not incorporate international treaties into domestic law. However, the rights of disabled people under this Convention are largely reflected and given effect in existing domestic policies and legislation, including the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland.

## ■ Cost of Living Payments

**James Daly:**

**[41005]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Cost of Living Payments have been processed since 14 July 2022.

**David Rutley:**

Since the 14<sup>th</sup> July, the government has processed around 8.4m cost of living payments, worth around £2.7 billion, to eligible claimants who are due to receive the £326 support from DWP or HMRC. There will be some cases – such as those who gained entitlement to the DWP or HMRC cost of living payment at a later date – that will be paid later.

Over 7.2m payments have been processed by DWP and over 1.1m payments have been processed by HMRC. Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

**■ Cost of Living Payments: Self-employed****Claire Hanna:**[\[47702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2022 to Question 36137 on Cost of Living Payments: Self-employed, how many gainfully self-employed claimants who (a) were in a start-up period and (b) were otherwise exempt from the minimum income floor.

**David Rutley:**

During the qualifying period for the first Cost of Living Payment there were 219,340 gainfully self-employed Universal Credit claimants in a start-up period.

It is not possible to provide the number of claimants who were otherwise exempt from the minimum income floor, as to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

This figure is from internal Management Information subject to retrospective changes and is rounded to the nearest 10.

**■ Cost of Living Payments: Universal Credit****Claire Hanna:**[\[47699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the decision taken that Universal Credit claimants will not be eligible for the cost of living payment if they had their Universal Credit award reduced to zero by the minimum income floor and did not receive a Universal Credit payment during the qualifying month; and if her Department will publish statistics to show how many claimants will be affected by that policy.

**David Rutley:**

No assessment has been made,

We have deliberately kept the rules for these payments as simple as possible. This is the only way we can ensure that we can develop the systems and processes required to make these payments. The cost-of-living payment is being made in two payments which have different qualifying periods, this will mean that some people may not receive the first payment but may receive the second payment.

Information showing the number of claimants that may be affected by this Policy is not readily available, and this would only be possible at a disproportionate cost.

Should people find that they need further support, they may wish to approach their Local Authority to ask about support under the Household Support Fund. For further information please see [Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living-payment)

The following PQ regarding the MIF and Universal Credit may be of interest [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

**Claire Hanna:**

**[47700]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department made before introducing the Social Security (Additional Payments) Bill of the potential impact on Universal Credit claimants, including those working in the performing arts and entertainment industries who have fluctuating earnings, of the policy that Universal Credit claimants would not be eligible for the cost of living payment if they had their Universal Credit award reduced to zero by the minimum income floor and did not receive a Universal Credit payment during the qualifying month.

**David Rutley:**

No assessment has been made.

We have deliberately kept the rules for these payments as simple as possible. This is the only way we can ensure that we can develop the systems and processes required to make these payments. The cost-of-living payment is being made in two payments which have different qualifying periods, this will mean that some people may not receive the first payment but may receive the second payment.

Should people find that they need further support, they may wish to approach their Local Authority to ask about support under the Household Support Fund. For further information please see [Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living-payment)

The following PQ regarding the MIF and Universal Credit may be of interest [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

**Claire Hanna:**

**[47701]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2022 to Question 36138 on Cost of Living Payments, how many Universal Credit claimants who had the minimum income floor applied to them during the qualifying period for the first round of cost of living payments; and how many claimants (a) had a zero payment, (b) earned below the minimum income floor and (c) earned above the minimum income floor.

**David Rutley:**

During the qualifying period for the first Cost of Living Payment there were 67,350 gainfully self-employed Universal Credit claimants subject to the minimum income floor. Of these:

- a) 8,820 had a zero payment.
- b) 33,520 earned below the minimum income floor.
- c) 33,830 earned above the minimum income floor.

Numbers with a zero payment (a) are not excluded from numbers above (b) or below (c) the minimum income floor.

Note: the figures in (a), (b) and (c) do not sum to the total number of gainfully self-employed as some individuals will have a zero payment and earn above or below the minimum income floor.

These figures are from internal Management Information subject to retrospective changes and are rounded to the nearest 10.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Consultants

**Neale Hanvey:**

**[42246]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has spent on external consultants in each of the last five years; and if she will publish a breakdown of (a) the amount paid to each consultancy contracted, (b) the name of each consultancy contracted, (c) the specific matters on which they were consulted and (d) whether each contract was subject to usual Government procurement rules.

**Julie Marson:**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publishes details about headcount and payroll costs for permanent staff and contractors on GOV.UK, monthly.

[DWP workforce management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-workforce-management-information)

The DWP consultancy spend for the financial years ending 2018 through to 2022 is shown below.

2017/18 £7,200,259

2018/19 £4,446,169

2019/20 £4,570,665

2020/21 £1,284,861

2021/22 £1,041,058

DWP publishes individual contract data on all contracts valued at £10,000 and over on

[Contracts Finder - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/contracts-finder)

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[47419]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many payments were fraudulently charged to her Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Julie Marson:**

There were no fraudulent payments charged during (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22. Pre- and post- payment checks, along with additional compliance checks by

budget holders are done on a monthly basis and have not identified any fraudulent payments.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Labour Turnover

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[40899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the staff turnover rate in her Department was in the last 12 months; and what recent assessment she has made the potential impact of staff turnover rates on her Department's ability to deliver its services.

**Julie Marson:**

Turnover is defined as the rate at which employees leave the department for reasons outside of DWP's control (i.e. resignations, retirements, transfers, dismissals) and excludes managed exits (all types) and fixed term appointment (FTA) staff who leave at contract end. The DWP turnover rate for the last twelve months (July 2021 to June 2022) is 12.1% for all staff.

The turnover rate has been impacted by numbers of fixed-term and temporary colleagues in the underlying workforce as we have found turnover rates for these colleagues are significantly higher than permanent staff. However, that impact is expected to reduce due to activity to stabilise our workforce.

We have agreed, and continually review, comprehensive workforce plans across the business for the year that take into account a number of factors impacting headcount, including turnover. These plans ensure that future recruitment will maintain our headcount at the required level to meet our Strategic Objectives and continue to deliver our services to a high standard.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[47641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has spent on staffing costs for (a) mandatory reconsideration and (b) appeals against Work Capability Assessment decisions for Employment Support Allowance in each year since 2012-13.

**Julie Marson:**

The information for the financial years covered by the request are detailed in the tables below:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
ESA (WCA)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)
Mandatory Reconsiderations	£0.0	£5.2	£18.4	£11.5	£11.1	£15.0	£7.7	£4.8	£0.6	£0.5
Appeals	£24.4	£37.1	£9.4	£6.5	£7.9	£14.6	£8.4	£6.0	£0.8	£0.8

Cost figures are rounded to the nearest £0.1m

Data Source: ABM

The cost figures quoted are estimated DWP level 1 operating costs, including both direct delivery staff and non-staff costs. Non-staff costs are only those costs incurred in local cost centres, relating to direct delivery staff.

Please note that the data supplied is from the Departmental Activity Based Models. This data is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standards. It should therefore be treated with caution. The Departmental Activity Based staffing models are a snapshot of how many people were identified as undertaking specified activities as assigned by line managers.

Figures quoted exclude ESA Non-WCA costs.

Appeals costs relate to the costs of processing the Appeals and include expenditure related to DWP Presenting Officer who attend some Tribunals.

2013/14 costs for ESA Reconsiderations are only part-year due to the introduction of the Reconsideration process (hence the reduction in Appeals costs from 2014/15).

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[47644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department spent on staffing costs for contract management for contracts to deliver (a) Personal Independence Payment assessments and (b) Work Capability Assessments in each year since 2012-13.

**Julie Marson:**

Available information on the cost of DWP staff managing the contracts for a) Personal Independence Payments and b) Work Capability Assessments is as follows:

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
	£m	£m	£m	£m
PIP	1.146	1.055	1.132	1.360
WCA	1.150	1.268	1.340	1.590

Information for earlier years is not available due to changes in the Finance systems used and how they are structured, limiting our ability to specify the cost of similar, comparable cohorts of DWP staff.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[47645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department spent on staffing costs for the preparation of Contract Notice 2021/S 000-028407 (Functional Assessment Services (FAS) 2023).

**Victoria Prentis:**

Activity to procure new Functional Assessment Services is underway as part of the Health Transformation Programme's broader work to modernise health and disability benefit services. New contracts will bring together current Health and Disability Assessment Services and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments under single geographic contracts. These will form a building block for a new integrated Health Assessment Service, which is being developed by the programme. This work involves a broad range of staff from across the programme and from other parts of DWP and, as such, it is not possible to isolate the amount spent on staffing costs for the preparation of the contract notice alone.

**■ Disability****Virginia Crosbie:**[\[47712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which policies have been paused by the Government following the High Court declaration on the National Disability Strategy.

**Chloe Smith:**

In January 2022, the High Court declared that the Strategy was unlawful because the UK Disability Survey, which informed it, was held to be a voluntary consultation that failed to comply with the legal requirements on public consultations

We strongly disagree with the finding and the Work and Pensions Secretary of State has sought permission to appeal the High Court's declaration. We are awaiting the Court of Appeal's decision on whether permission to appeal is granted.

To comply with the High Court's declaration pending the outcome of the appeal, the Government has paused the delivery, implementation and communication of some policies, activities, and actions that are contained in the Strategy. The Work and Pensions Secretary of State wishes to minimise the risk of acting inconsistently with the declaration. This means that out of over 100 policies in the strategy, we have paused 14. A full list of these policies is as follows:

- BEIS will publish proposals to ensure that every disabled person who wants to start a business has the opportunity to do so.
- BEIS and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments - by summer 2022.
- DWP will work with the Disability Confident Professional Advisers Group (PAG) and the Business Leaders Group this year to review and strengthen levels 2 and 3 of the scheme, to support employers to increase disabled people's employment opportunities.



- DCMS will build the evidence base about the nature and scale of the inaccessibility of private sector websites, and explore how the government can effectively intervene including possible legislative options.
- MOD will explore how to increase opportunities for disabled people to serve as part of the Armed Forces reserves by the end of 2023, including guaranteeing interviews for disabled reservists who meet the minimum requirements when recruiting for those roles.
- DHSC will establish a new disability data working group in 2021 to look at health and social care datasets and address priority areas where there are gaps in the data.
- DU will publish an annual report which summarises the progress we have made in implementing the strategy.
- DU will oversee the implementation of the 5 elements featured in the strategy and report on progress.
- By summer 2022 the Disability Unit will publish, following engagement with disabled people, a set of indicators and a dashboard to track the impact of the National Disability Strategy.
- DU will review the way the UK government engages with disabled people, in discussion with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities.
- The Disability Unit will invest up to £1 million in 2021 to 2022 to develop a new Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology, reporting on progress by summer 2022.
- Cabinet Office will consult on workforce reporting on disability for large employers, exploring voluntary and mandated workplace transparency, and publish a set of next steps.
- Cabinet Office will appoint a Disability Crown Representative to help unlock the innovation and economic benefits of disability inclusion through the government's commercial activities.
- Cabinet Office will consider how we can best support those standing for public office and those who hold public office.

I will set out further detail in a letter and I will place a copy in the House library.

## ■ Disability: Playgrounds

**Justin Tomlinson:**

**[45528]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper entitled National Disability Strategy: Part One: practical steps now to improve disabled people's everyday lives, published on 28 July 2021, what recent progress her Department has made on making playgrounds more inclusive as part of widening access to arts, culture, sport and the great outdoors.



**Victoria Prentis:**

Ensuring that playgrounds are accessible is an important part of driving forward inclusion for disabled children. The National Disability Strategy included an action to publish a new National Model Design code, supported by guidance, to stress the importance of providing accessible and inclusive play spaces and equipment for all. The new Code was published by the government in July 2021.

It is vitally important for all local authorities to consider their duties and legal obligations under the Equalities Act of 2010 and ensure that new and refurbished play areas are accessible and inclusive.

I have continued to meet regularly with Ministerial Disability Champions across government to drive progress on priority areas for disabled people, including on accessible playgrounds.

**■ Discretionary Housing Payments****Justin Madders:**[\[45866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with Local Authorities on the Government's decision to cut the Discretionary Housing Payment budget from £140 million in 2021/22 to £100 million for 2022/23.

**David Rutley:**

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has not met Local Authorities (LAs) to discuss Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding for 2022/23.

Officials at the Department for Work and Pensions engage with LAs through regular forums, and those LAs were informed of a reduction in funding prior to the publication of the full allocations for 2022/23.

LAs are notified annually of the total amount of DHP funding and how much funding has been allocated to each LA.

**■ Employment and Support Allowance****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[45008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total value of compensation payments made following underpayment of Employment Support Allowance.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[45034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report entitled An investigation into the Department for Work and Pensions' handling of Ms U's migration to Employment and Support Allowance, published by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on 13 January 2022, for what reason her Department has not

implemented the recommendation to pay compensation to people who were underpaid Employment Support Allowance beyond the arrears owed.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Department carefully considers all recommendations made by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). This case is no different, and following the publication of the report, we took swift action to apologise unreservedly to Ms U for the failures made in her case and paid her the recommended consolatory payment plus interest on the arrears that were paid in 2017 as recommended in the PHSO report.

With regards to the other systemic recommendations on compensation made in the report the Department does not consider these to be a reasonable or proportionate course of action to take. We have ensured people have been rightly reimbursed arrears of Employment and Support Allowance owed as part of the special exercise, making 118,000 benefit arrears payments in full.

Where an individual feels their circumstances are exceptional and they may be eligible for a Special Payment, they can contact the Department and set out their reasons. All requests received will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[45037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has taken steps to to identify and inform claimants affected by underpayment of Employment Support Allowance of the right to request compensation.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Employment and Support Allowance underpayment exercise was completed in June 2021. We have ensured people have been rightly identified and reimbursed arrears owed, making 118,000 benefit arrears payments in full.

Given our duty to protect public money the decision was taken not to award blanket compensation for these cases. However, where an individual feels their circumstances are exceptional and they may be eligible for a Special Payment, they can contact the Department and set out their reasons. All requests received will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[45951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people contacted her Department to request compensation for the underpayment of Employment Support Allowance since December 2017.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The information requested is not available.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[45952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of requests made to her Department for compensation for the underpayment of Employment

Support Allowance were (a) granted, (b) rejected and (c) still under consideration as on 2 September 2022.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Jobcentres: Disability**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost of deploying (a) screen readers, (b) speech recognition software and (c) screen magnification software to customer computer kiosks in jobcentres.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to provide disabled jobseekers with access to (a) screen readers, (b) speech recognition software and (c) screen magnification software.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to take steps to improve the provision of assistive technology in jobcentres.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Department offers support to disabled jobseekers who require assistive technology in order to look for work and who cannot afford the cost of buying that technology.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobcentres have specialist assistive technology installed on their customer computer kiosks.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in how many jobcentres are each of the following forms of specialist assistive technology installed for customer use: (a) Screen reader (b) Speech recognition software (c) Screen magnification software.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We do not hold the information requested around costs for deployment of screen readers, speech recognition software and screen magnification software to our computers for use by customers. This is because the computers contain these products as a standard feature and were not purchased separately. These products are kept up to date and maintained in line with updates to the system as a whole.

DWP has completed an upgrade of all Customer Computers across the whole Jobcentre network which means that all devices provided for use by customers have the standard accessibility features available such as being able to change the screen

size & colour, replacing sounds with screen alerts, converting sounds to text and using the screen reader to read text.

We now have over 7973 devices across our estate, registered with these accessibility features. The numbers of computers available for customers to use in jobcentres will differ between larger and smaller offices. We also constantly review the number of computers available and have capacity to increase the number of devices quickly, if the need arises.

The software in use on these machines is continually upgraded as and when required to ensure their continued use for customers. In addition to this further support is available to customers where reasonable adjustments are identified and recorded. Each Jobcentre District Office has been provided with the following items for use by customers if requested:

- A keyboard with larger keys
- A large trackball mouse
- Headphones. However, many people will want to use their own

We have opened a number of new sites across the estate to support delivery of face to face public services. As part of this work, Customer Computers are available in these sites.

We have also improved access to our Wi-Fi services in all jobcentres, allowing customers to use their own personal devices if they prefer, to access internet services.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[48252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate the Department has made of the average waiting time to see a disability employment adviser.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs) work alongside Jobcentre Work Coaches to support claimants - providing expert knowledge on how to support customers who have a health condition or disability and building the skills and capability of Work Coaches. DEA's can also directly support customers with health conditions and disabilities where this can benefit the customer. Every Work Coach in every Jobcentre has access to a DEA.

We do not collect data on average waiting times, however, customers will have regular contact with their Work Coach who can case conference with a DEA to discuss how best to support the customer and arrange access to the DEA at the earliest availability.

## ■ Jobcentres: Email and Internet

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[48497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to introduce either (a) direct email addresses or (b) a contact webform to allow claimants of

social security benefits other than Universal Credit to (i) notify their local Job Centre Plus office of a change of circumstances and (ii) request a call back from a benefits advisor.

**David Rutley:**

DWP is currently working with Digital colleagues to develop a contact webform for customers to notify changes of circumstances regarding their benefits.

■ **Jobseeker's Allowance: Health**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has held recent discussions with the Welsh Government on requirements to attend the Jobcentre for people with health problems.

**Julie Marson:**

Although there have been no recent discussions with the Welsh Government concerning Jobcentre attendance for people with health conditions, there is a well-established working relationship between the Department and the Welsh Government, ensuring that we work together on devolved and reserved areas effectively.

Our Work Coaches personalise the support provided for each individual claimant and vary the frequency and method of contact in line with the claimant's needs, circumstances, and capability, including the use of digital and telephone channels where appropriate.

■ **Long Covid**

**Catherine West:**

[\[47620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the answer of 27 June 2022 to Question 21271 on Long Covid, what progress her Department has made on investigating whether COVID can be classified as an occupational disease.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council ("IIAC") advises Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on matters related to occupational diseases which may qualify for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. IIAC has reviewed the evidence relating to the long-term consequences of COVID-19 infections and hopes to publish a report in the next few months focusing on those post-COVID complications arising from both COVID directly and/or treatment and for which there is sufficient evidence of loss of faculty and potential long-term disability.

■ **Low Incomes: Solihull**

**Julian Knight:**

[\[45858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take to help low-income families in Solihull constituency with the cost of living.

**David Rutley:**

This government is committed to supporting those on low incomes. We will spend over £242bn through the welfare system in Great Britain in 2022/23 including £108bn on people of working age and over £134 billion on pensioners. Of the total amount, around £64 billion will be spent on supporting disabled people and people with health conditions.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The new “Energy Price Guarantee” will mean a typical UK household will now pay up to an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years from 1 October, saving the average household in Great Britain at least £1,000 from October. This is in addition to the over £37bn of cost-of-living support announced earlier this year which includes the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This includes a £650 cost of living payment (paid in 2 lump sums of £326 and £324) which has been designed to target support at more than 8 million low-income households on means-tested benefits. The payment of £326 was paid between the 14 July and the 31 July for most people and the payment of £324 will be made in the Autumn. In addition, 6 million eligible disabled people will receive a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 from 20 September and pensioner households will receive a one-off payment of £300 through and as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment from November.

Most customers with a domestic electricity meter will benefit from the £400 support being provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme, which will help around 29 million households across Great Britain. This support is in addition to the £150 Council Tax rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A-D, which was announced in February, and which millions of households have already received. This is on top of the support already provided by increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour and raising the National Insurance threshold to £12,570 from 6 July 2022, which is a saving of over £330 for a typical employee.

The government is also providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials, on top of what has already been provided since October 2021, bringing the total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England this will take the form of an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £421m, running from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. The current Household Support Fund is already providing £421m of support for the period 1 April - 30 September, at least a third (£140m) will be spent on families with children. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council has been allocated £1,408,359.07.

## ■ **Motability**

**Gerald Jones:**

**[45000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the value for money of the Government's funding of Motability in the context of waiting times for recipients entitled to Motability Allowance to be assessed for a licence renewal.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Department works closely with Motability, and is responsible for the disability benefits that provide a passport to the Motability Scheme. Motability is an independent charitable organisation that is wholly responsible for the terms and the administration of the Scheme, along with oversight of Motability Operations. Motability benefits from government support through tax concessions and the direct payment of mobility allowances.

There have been several external reports, including one by the National Audit Office (NAO) in December 2018, on the Motability Scheme. The Department agrees with the NAO's finding that the Motability scheme provides an excellent service and that the Scheme is focused on delivering value for money. The Department continues to work with Motability the charity, who set the strategic policies and direction of the Scheme, to ensure that disabled people receive a value for money service with high standards for customer service.

The Department is unable to comment on waiting times for licence renewal as this is outside our remit.

## ■ **Payment Exception Service**

**Jessica Morden:**

**[47482]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the maximum payment amount that can be collected in a single transaction using the Payment Exception Service at a Post Office or pay point outlet is set at £100 requiring some claimants to make multiple transactions to access the full amount of their benefits or pension.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The most secure way to receive payment is through a bank account. For those customers who are unable to open or manage a bank, building society or credit union account, the DWP's new Payment Exception Service has been designed as a simple service to ensure customers have access to cash. Vouchers are uploaded to a card or sent electronically via SMS text or email. A customer can print their emailed vouchers and present them to the retailer. The maximum amount of a voucher is £100 so a customer may receive more than one voucher on their payment due date. Customers must cash the full amount of the voucher but do not have to cash all of their vouchers at the same time. This is a similar process to when customers used to be issued with Order Books and Girocheques.



Payment Exception Service vouchers can be encashed at over 26,000 PayPoint outlets nationally as well as Post Offices nationwide. The service provided by this contract meets DWP's statutory requirement to ensure all customers can access payments, including where standard banking is not available to them.

The £100 voucher amount represents a value that protects vulnerable customers from being required to withdraw and carry large sums and is one that the PayPoint Retailer network can support.

## ■ Pension Credit

**Damien Moore:**

[\[45104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that applications for Pension Credit are processed in a timely manner.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The success of the recent Pension Credit campaign together with the Cost of Living Crisis is driving the volume of Pension Credit claims being submitted to an all time high.

Additional resources are being deployed to ensure we deal with the increase as quickly as possible. We are also working closely with stakeholders and service providers to identify

potential process enhancements that will drive efficiency and reduce processing times.

Successful claims and arrears are backdated and paid accordingly, to ensure those who are entitled do not miss out.

## ■ Pension Protection Fund

**Beth Winter:**

[\[45392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which organisations her Department has (a) received representations from and (b) held discussions with regarding the 2.5 per cent limit on the annual rise in Pension Protection Fund payments in the last 12 months.

**Victoria Prentis:**

**In May of this year, the Secretary of State received representations from the Prospect trade union in respect of the indexation of payments from the Pension Protection Fund although no discussions have been held with organisations regarding this matter in the last 12 months.**

**Beth Winter:**

[\[45503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the increase in the (a) Bank of England interest rate and (b)



rate of inflation on the value of (i) the Pension Protection Fund and (ii) payments made from it over the last 12 months.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The information required to carry out such an assessment is not readily available and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs. The Secretary of State has therefore made no such assessment and does not intend to do so at this time.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[45517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the maximum annual increase to payments made from the Pension Protection Fund above 2.5 per cent on a (a) temporary and (b) permanent basis.

**Victoria Prentis:**

**While all legislation is kept under review as a matter of course, there are currently no plans to review the legislation relating to the indexation of payments from the Pension Protection Fund and the Secretary of State has made no such assessment at this time.**

#### ■ Pensioners: Cost of Living

**Alison Thewliss:**

[\[42057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that people who are on the State Pension and are not eligible for the Cost of Living Payment are being supported in the context of the increased costs of living.

**Julie Marson:**

In 2022/23, we will spend over £134bn on benefits for pensioners in GB. This includes spending on the State Pension which is forecast to be over £110bn. The full yearly basic State Pension is now over £2,300 higher, in cash terms, than in 2010 which is around £720 more than if it had been up-rated in line with prices.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living. This is why we are providing £37bn of support this year which includes a one-off payment of £300 to pensioner households as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment. All households with a domestic electricity bill will also benefit from the £400 support being provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

We are also providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials, on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing the total funding for this support to £1.5 billion.

#### ■ Pensioners: Newport West

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of rising energy costs on pensioners in Newport West constituency;

and if she will meet the hon. Member for that constituency at the earliest opportunity to discuss that matter.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government announced on 26 May a cost-of-living package which included a pensioner cost of living payment of £300 per household to be paid alongside the winter fuel payment this coming winter increasing the amount to £500/£600 depending on age. Once added to the non-repayable £400 discount on energy bills this autumn for domestic electricity customers this will result in all pensioners households in Great Britain receiving £900 for households with someone of state pension age and under 80 and £1,000 for households with someone aged 80 or over to help with increased fuel costs.

Cold Weather Payments are also available to help vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet additional heating costs, during periods of unseasonably cold weather between 1 November and 31 March. This includes older people in receipt of Pension Credit. Those eligible will continue to automatically receive £25 when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days.

In winter 2022/23, the Warm Home Discount Scheme has been extended to provide a £150 rebate on energy bills to around 3 million households. Around one million households on Pension Credit guarantee credit will receive a rebate each winter, and the majority will receive their rebate automatically, without the need to claim.

■ **Pensions: Inflation**

**Catherine West:**

[\[48451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2022 to Question 18980 on Pensions: Inflation, what her Department's timetable is for paying benefits in line with Consumer Prices Index inflation.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is required by law to undertake an annual review of State pensions and benefits. The outcome of that review will be announced later this year, and the new rates will enter into force from 10 April 2023.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Long Covid**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[45877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people with long covid have been awarded the Personal Independence Payment (a) daily living standard, (b) daily living enhanced, (c) mobility standard and (d) mobility enhanced rate since March 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The latest available data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decisions split by type of decision (i.e. whether the claim was awarded, disallowed or withdrawn), main disabling condition, and Daily Living and Mobility award, can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#).

The relevant categorisation is 'Coronavirus Covid-19' and can be found under the disability subcategory 'Viral diseases' which is under the main disability category of 'Infectious disease'.

Data is based on primary disabling condition as recorded on the PIP computer systems. Claimants may often have multiple disabling conditions upon which the decision is based but only the primary condition is available for statistical purposes and shown in these statistics. Therefore there may be other claimants where the ongoing impact of a Covid infection has influenced the award of PIP.

Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found [here](#).

### ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

**Sir Peter Bottomley:**

**[45697]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of when the average waiting time for a Personal Independence Payment assessment will return to that prior to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Prentis:**

**We do not forecast Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment waiting times.**

**In February 2020, pre-covid, the median waiting time for a PIP assessment was 9 weeks for new claims, and 10 weeks for reassessments. In April 2022 (the latest available data) the median times waiting for a PIP assessment was 12 weeks for new claims and 11 weeks for reassessments.**

**Time waiting for a PIP assessment is defined as the time from the date an application was referred to the provider from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to the date the assessment was completed and referred back to DWP. Where claimants are outstanding, the assessment is not yet complete.**

**Median waiting times for each stage of the claimant process can be found in [published stats](#).**

**Sir Peter Bottomley:**

**[45698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) 20th, (b) 40th, (c) 60th and (d) 80th percentile of average waiting times was for receiving the outcome of a Personal Independence Payment assessment in each month since May 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

This information is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[45839]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to take steps to reduce the number of Personal Independence Payment assessments that remain outstanding prior to increasing the rate at which legacy benefit recipients are moved onto Universal Credit.

**Victoria Prentis:**

PIP assessments and decisions are made independently of other benefits and have no impact on the pace at which legacy benefit recipients are moved onto Universal Credit.

We are seeing a gradual improvement in PIP journey times. The latest statistics show that the end-to-end journey for new and renewal claimants has steadily reduced from 26 weeks in August 2021 to 20 weeks at the end of April 2022.

In May 2022 Universal Credit started to bring a small number of claimants across the country into the mandatory migration process. We will continue to develop our processes and systems to scale the migration process and complete by 2024.

**Personal Independence Payment: Overpayments****Drew Hendry:**[\[45371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a time limit on the (a) re-assessment and (b) removal of previously granted Personal Independence Payment awards in order that claimants are not in debt for overpayments of awards where the evidence base her Department has available to it for the original provision of that award has altered.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Overpayments may arise due to official error or the claimant misrepresenting their circumstances or failing to report an adverse change of circumstances in time. All potential overpayments are considered on the facts with recovery being decided on a case-by-case basis. There are no plans to introduce a time-limit to recovery of an overpayment. We are committed to making assessment decisions in a timely way and ensuring that the right outcome is reached.

**Poverty: Children****Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[45171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle child poverty in Barking constituency.

**Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[45272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of its policies in tackling child poverty in Barking constituency.

**Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[45373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to (a) create measures that target families with children in poverty and (b) reassess universal credit deductions that affect children living in poverty.

**David Rutley:**

No specific assessment has been made relating to Barking constituency. However, the latest statistics on the number and proportion of children who are in low income families by local area, covering the seven years, 2014/15 to 2020/21, can be found in the annual publication: Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2021 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2021>

This Government is committed to reducing child poverty and supporting low-income families, and believes work is the best route out of poverty. While we keep all our policies under continuous review, our clear priority with 1.27 million vacancies across the UK is to support parents to move into and to progress in work wherever possible. This approach is based on clear evidence about the importance of parental employment - particularly where it is full-time – in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty and in improving long-term outcomes for families and children.

The latest available data on in-work poverty shows that in 2019/20, children in households where all adults were in work were around six times less likely to be in absolute poverty (before housing costs) than children in a household where nobody works. In 2020/21, there were 200,000 fewer children in absolute poverty before housing costs than in 2009/10.

To help parents into work, our Plan for Jobs continues to provide broad ranging support for all jobseekers with our Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP), Job Entry Targeted Support and Restart scheme. Through a staged roll-out, which started in April 2022, around 2.1m low-paid benefit claimants will be eligible for extended support through our Jobcentres to progress into higher-paid work. This is on top of the support already provided by increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour, giving nearly 1.7 million families an extra £1,000 a year (on average) through our changes to the Universal Credit taper and work allowances; and the Universal Credit childcare offer which allows working parents to claim back up to 85% of their registered childcare costs each month (up to a maximum cap).

In recent years, we have helped hundreds of thousands of Universal Credit claimants to keep more of their benefit income by reducing the standard deductions cap from 40% to 30% of the Standard Allowance in October 2019, and again, to 25% in April 2021. From 1st April 2022, a temporary change also means that for 12 months, only benefit claimants themselves can ask DWP to pay their energy bills (on going consumption) directly from their benefit or alter an existing arrangement. This ensures claimants are fully empowered to make decisions about how significant amounts of their benefit are spent.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The new “Energy Price Guarantee” will mean a typical UK household will now pay up to an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years from 1 October, saving the average household in Great Britain at least £1,000 from October. This is in addition to the over £37bn of cost-of-living support announced earlier this year which

includes the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This includes an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials, on top of what has already been provided since October 2021, bringing the total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England, the current Household Support Fund is already providing £421m of support for the period 1 April – 30 September 2022, at least a third (£140m) will be spent on families with children. London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council has been allocated £2,162,051.52.

## ■ Refugees: Ukraine

**Bim Afolami:**

**[45550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on providing support to Ukrainian refugees to help find employment.

**David Rutley:**

DWP Ministers meet regularly with their counterparts in the Home Office to discuss the ongoing support being provided to those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

Ukrainian evacuees on either Homes for Ukraine or the Family Scheme have immediate access to the full range of DWP employment support and services at the point of a successful claim to benefit.

DWP Work Coaches are supporting individuals to identify suitable roles and access appropriate training through our Sector based work academies and other provision, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) training, and support through the range of Plan for Jobs provision.

A large number of employers have come forward in response to the situations in Afghanistan and Ukraine with job vacancies which are open to any potential applicant. These vacancies are shared across the Job Centre network and with Refugee Employment Network (REN) a charity who support organizations who help refugees find work.

Support from Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders and Visiting Officers is also available where complex needs are identified.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Debts

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[45229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to pause deductions from benefit payments which aim to recover a claimant's debts.

**David Rutley:**

Whilst there are currently no plans to suspend recovery of benefit debts, DWP remains committed to working with anyone who is struggling with benefit debt repayments.

In April 2021, we reduced the cap on standard deductions to 25% of a claimant's Universal Credit Standard Allowance. This followed an earlier reduction from 40% to 30% in October 2019.

Where a person feels they cannot afford the proposed rate of recovery, and the debt has not arisen as a result of fraud, they are encouraged to contact DWP's Debt Management team to discuss a temporary reduction in their rate of repayment.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Dyslexia

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[45093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will (a) review and (b) increase the support it offers to claimants with dyslexia.

**Victoria Prentis:**

People whose capability for work is affected because they are disabled or have a health condition, including people who have dyslexia, may be eligible for New Style Employment and Support Allowance and/or Universal Credit, subject to satisfying their eligibility conditions. The Work Capability Assessment determines an individual's capability for work. For people found to have limited capability for work, their Jobcentre work coach uses their discretion to set work-related activity, appropriate to the claimant's circumstances and capability, to help them prepare to start work when they are able. People who have limited capability for work and work-related activity are not required to carry out any work-related activity but can do so if they wish.

People who have dyslexia may also be eligible for Personal Independence Payment, to help meet the extra costs of living faced by disabled people and people with health conditions.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Encephalitis

**Michelle Donelan:**

[\[45056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides to benefit claimants who (a) are suffering from Encephalitis and (b) have limited capacity for work.

**Victoria Prentis:**

People whose capability for work is affected because they are disabled or have a health condition, including people who have encephalitis, may be eligible for New Style Employment and Support Allowance and/or Universal Credit, subject to satisfying their eligibility conditions. The Work Capability Assessment determines an individual's capability for work. For people found to have limited capability for work, their Jobcentre work coach uses their discretion to set work-related activity, appropriate to the claimant's circumstances and capability, to help them prepare to start work when they are able. People who have limited capability for work and work-related activity are not required to carry out any work-related activity, but can do so if they wish.



People who have encephalitis may also be eligible for Personal Independence Payment, to help meet the extra costs of living faced by disabled people and people with health conditions.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

**Lee Anderson:**

**[45567]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to provide additional financial support to people receiving end of life care in the context of the cost of living crisis.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government wants to do all it can to alleviate the pressures on those nearing the end of their lives, and on their families

The main way that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does this is through special benefit rules, sometimes referred to as “the Special Rules”. These enable people who are nearing the end of their lives to get faster, easier access to certain benefits, without needing to attend a medical assessment, serve waiting periods and in most cases, receive the highest rate of benefit. For many years, the Special Rules have applied to people who have 6 months or less to live and now they are being changed so they apply to people who have 12 months or less to live.

These changes are well underway. From 4 April 2022, the Government changed the eligibility for the Special Rules in Universal Credit (UC) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The Social Security (Special Rules for End of Life) Bill, currently being debated in Parliament, aims to make similar changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA)

Once the change has been fully rolled out across all benefits, each year, between 30,000 and 60,000 people may benefit from these changes to the Special Rules. This will mean that the Government is spending approximately £115 million a year more on people who are nearing the end of their lives.

**Beth Winter:**

**[46188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2022 to Question 112701 on Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses, what plans her Department has to bring forward further legislative proposals to implement changes to the Special Rules for Terminal Illness in Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Department introduced the Social Security (Special Rules for End of Life) Bill into the House of Lords on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The Bill will enable people who are thought to be in the final year of their life to get fast-tracked access to Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Attendance Allowance (AA). The measures will amend the definition of end of life in existing legislation, which is based



on the claimant having six months or less to live, by replacing it with a new twelve-month definition that aligns with the end-of-life approach taken across the NHS.

The Bill has completed all Lords stages and the Commons stages took place on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022. This follows similar changes the Department made by secondary legislation to implement the 12-month approach in Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance in April 2022.

## ■ **Social Security: Canada**

**Sir George Howarth:**

[\[45728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the viability of Canada's recent request to discuss a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

There are two separate social security arrangements in place between the UK and Canada, made in 1995 and 1998. The UK Government has no plans to change the social security relationship with Canada.

## ■ **State Retirement Pensions**

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[47543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who will receive their state pension for the first time in the 2022-23 financial year.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The latest forecast of people who will receive their State Pension for the first time in the 2022/23 financial year is 738,300.

## ■ **State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**

**Martyn Day:**

[\[45949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support UK pensioners living overseas in countries without a reciprocal uprating agreement with the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide to those who meet the qualifying conditions. Entitlement is based on an individual's national insurance record. State Pensions are up-rated abroad where there is a legal requirement to do so – for example where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating.

There is information available in leaflets and on GOV.UK on how to claim State Pension from overseas and on what the effect of going abroad will be on a person's UK State Pension.

**■ State Retirement Pensions: Canada****Sir George Howarth:** [\[45055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the recent incident on UK pensions living in Canada where their state pensions were suspended.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We understand that some customers in Canada did not receive life certificate forms sent to them by the Department. Our outbound postal supplier has confirmed that the life certificates were issued and dispatched from the UK.

In line with the process for all overseas state pension recipients, the Department suspended payment for those customers who did not return their form within the 16-week window. After being alerted to the failure to deliver within Canada, we reinstated all suspended payments and issued any arrears owed.

We have also extended the time period for Canadian customers to return their life certificate forms, having confirmed that certificates are now being delivered.

**■ State Retirement Pensions: Commonwealth****Sir George Howarth:** [\[45729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the compatibility of her Department's policy not to uprate annually pensions in 48 commonwealth countries with the Government's Global Britain vision.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide and is up-rated annually in countries where there is a legal requirement to do so. This is a longstanding policy, which has been supported by successive governments for over 70 years. The Government has no plans to change the policy.

**■ State Retirement Pensions: Females****Lee Anderson:** [\[45216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to provide women affected by changes to State Pension age with compensation.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into communication of changes to women's state pension is ongoing. Section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

It would be inappropriate to comment on these issues whilst the investigation is ongoing.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on support for people represented by the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign.

**Victoria Prentis:**

State Pensions age issues have been debated extensively in the House over many years. There have been no recent Cabinet conversations relating to support for people represented by the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign.

## ■ Terminal Illnesses

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[45566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in the context of the rising cost of (a) food and (b) domestic bills, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional targeted support to people with terminal illnesses.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government wants to do all it can to alleviate the pressures on those nearing the end of their lives, and on their families

The main way that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does this is through special benefit rules, sometimes referred to as “the Special Rules”. These enable people who are nearing the end of their lives to get faster, easier access to certain benefits, without needing to attend a medical assessment, serve waiting periods and in most cases, receive the highest rate of benefit. For many years, the Special Rules have applied to people who have 6 months or less to live and now they are being changed so they apply to people who have 12 months or less to live.

These changes are well underway. From 4 April 2022, the Government changed the eligibility for the Special Rules in Universal Credit (UC) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The Social Security (Special Rules for End of Life) Bill, currently being debated in Parliament, aims to make similar changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA)

Once the change has been fully rolled out across all benefits, each year, between 30,000 and 60,000 people may benefit from these changes to the Special Rules. This will mean that the Government is spending approximately £115 million a year more on people who are nearing the end of their lives.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[45577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons it is her policy that there should be a managed migration of legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

**David Rutley:**

Migrating the remaining legacy benefits over to Universal Credit ensures that the advantages of Universal Credit for claimants are fully realised.

■ **Universal Credit: Newport West****Ruth Jones:**[\[46109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claimed Universal Credit in Newport West constituency in each of the last four years.

**David Rutley:**

Monthly statistics on the number of people who are on Universal Credit, by Westminster parliamentary constituency, from May 2013 to July 2022, can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ **Visual Impairment: Cost of Living****Daisy Cooper:**[\[45619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the rise in the cost of living on people who are blind and partially sighted.

**Victoria Prentis:**

While there has been no formal assessment of the impact of the rise in the cost of living on people who are blind and partially sighted, my colleague the Minister for Disabled People has commissioned officials to investigate the lived experience of disabled people resulting from the rising cost of living.

Over the summer a number of meetings and focus groups have taken place to hear disabled people's experiences, including one which was set up jointly with RNIB.

Alongside this officials are building the evidence base on how cost of living is impacting disabled people. This information will feed into the Government's considered response.

■ **Way to Work Scheme: Hitchin and Harpenden****Bim Afolami:**[\[45688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Way to Work scheme in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

**Julie Marson:**

We are unable to provide the number of movements into work during the Way to Work campaign for the Hitchin and Harpenden constituency as to produce this would incur disproportionate cost.

Whilst we cannot provide data at a constituency level, we can provide this data at a Jobcentre Plus (JCP) district geographical area. Hitchin and Harpenden constituency falls within Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire JCP District, we have therefore provided the movements into work that took place within that area during the campaign period. These will include movements that took place in other constituencies that fall within the same JCP district.

We estimate that 12,030 unemployed Universal Credit claimants in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire JCP District, moved into work during the Way to Work Campaign between 31 January and 30 June 2022.

This does not include movements into work from JSA claimants as they cannot be broken down to Jobcentre Plus District level. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics but is provided in the interests of transparency and timeliness

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment

**Beth Winter:**

[\[45609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of revising the eligibility date of 25 September 1956 to qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment.

**Victoria Prentis:**

There are no plans to change the qualifying criteria for Winter Fuel Payments at this time.

Winter fuel payments are an age-related payment made to those who have reached state pension age.

For winter 2022/23 a person has to have reached State Pension age (which means a person must be born on or before 25 September 1956) on or before the end of the September qualifying week.

## ■ Working Conditions: Weather

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[45054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to consult relevant stakeholders on the health and safety implications for workers of working in extreme weather.

**Victoria Prentis:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer to PQs (UINs: [42271](#) and [42272](#)) on 5 September 2022.

Officials at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) keep emerging scientific and economic evidence under review, including working with other organisations to share knowledge and, where necessary, refresh the guidance published on its website.

In August, HSE released a [press release](#) highlighting the need for employers to prepare for a warmer future. The press release underlined the measures that employers should begin to take to ensure workplaces are comfortable for workers as elevated temperatures become more frequent.

■ **Working Tax Credit: Newport West**

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who did not receive housing benefit were in receipt of (a) the childcare element and (b) other elements of Working Tax Credit in Newport West constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

**David Rutley:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.