



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 November 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:40 P.M., 23 November 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Business: Cost of Living**

Bill Esterson:

[\[90786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to help support businesses owned by BME people during the cost of living crisis.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is aware of the challenges faced by ethnic minority businesses and is taking action to support them. Since its launch (2012) the Start Up Loans programme has issued around 20% of its loans to Black, Asian, and Ethnic-minority business.

BME owned businesses will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, which will save SMEs approximately £4,200 on average. Government has cut fuel duty for 12 months and brought in the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, protecting small businesses from high energy costs over the winter. In addition, the Recovery Loan Scheme is available to SMEs across the UK.

■ **Business: Ownership**

Bill Esterson:

[\[89797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the number of businesses in Sefton Central constituency that are BME owned.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government does not hold regional information on the proportion of BME-owned businesses in Sefton Central. The Government is aware of the challenges faced by ethnic minority businesses and is taking action to support them. The British Business Bank's (BBB) Alone Together report (2020) found access to finance is a major barrier for ethnic minority entrepreneurs. We are working with stakeholders to agree interventions to improve access to finance. Since its launch (2012) the Start Up Loans programme has issued around 20% of its loans to Black, Asian, and Ethnic-minority business.

We are also delivering actions set out in the Inclusive Britain report (2022), which aim to support ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Ministers regularly engage with ethnic minority business leaders and networks to better understand the issues facing them.

■ Business: Sefton Central**Bill Esterson:****[90787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of businesses that are owned by women in Sefton Central constituency.

Kevin Hollinrake:

In the UK in 2021, 19% of SMEs with employees (a three-percentage point increase on 2020) and 20% of firms with no employees (21% in 2020) were female-led. The Government does not hold regional information on the proportion of female-led businesses.

The Start-Up Loans Company provides funding and intensive support to new entrepreneurs. Since 2012 the Start-Up Loans programme has delivered over almost 99,000 loans with an aggregate value of more than £922m (average loan size of £9,338), as of October 2022. And since 2012 40% of Start Up Loans have gone to women, worth over £341m (October 2022).

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Pilot Schemes**Cat Smith:****[86515]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to The University of Manchester's report Capturing the Carbon Opportunity, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of a nationwide pilot programme to (a) identify additional Carbon Capture and Storage sites and (b) help increase the UK's skills and infrastructure in relation to sub-surface storage.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises that having sufficient carbon dioxide storage sites is essential to meeting its net zero ambitions with carbon capture and storage. That is why, the North Sea Transition Authority recently launched the UK's first-ever carbon storage licensing round with 13 potential areas available.^[1]

Skills are at the core of the North Sea Transition Deal, which includes a commitment to facilitate the reskilling of existing parts of the oil and gas workforce to ensure that people and skills are transferable across the wider energy sector, including in relation to sub-surface storage.

^[1]<https://www.nstauthority.co.uk/news-publications/news/2022/bids-invited-in-uk-s-first-ever-carbon-storage-licensing-round/>

■ Construction: Licensing**Bill Esterson:****[89796]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an estimate of the number of construction businesses in Sefton Central constituency that are licensed.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Construction businesses in the UK are not required to be licensed, although individuals undertaking certain kinds of work are required to be members of competent persons schemes. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy does not collate data on licensed construction businesses, or membership of competent persons schemes.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Ministerial Changes**Sarah Olney:**[\[58884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who the Minister for Small Business is.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I am the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business.

District Heating**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[84809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the development of (a) local heat networks and (b) industrial heat connections.

Graham Stuart:

As set out in the Heat and Buildings Strategy, we are investing £338 million over 2022/23 to 2024/25 into a Heat Network Transformation Programme to scale up low-carbon heat network deployment and to enable local areas to deploy heat network zoning, which will create a step-change in low-carbon heat network market growth. This programme includes support for heat being supplied from industrial waste or recoverable heat sources and this is outlined further in our National Comprehensive Assessment for heat networks published in 2021.

Ms Harriet Harman:[\[89687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to provide financial support to people who receive their heat through communal heat networks, in addition to the £400 energy bill discount; and what plans he has to provide further targeted support.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: Through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, the Government is effectively introducing a cap on the price that heat networks buy energy at, which is a much more targeted approach and ensures support gets to customers as quickly as possible.

Energy supplies to communal systems use commercial contracts. These will benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) which will enable the Government to provide financial assistance for all eligible non-domestic customers to ensure they are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [\[89794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises are receiving the correct level of support from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme in Sefton Central constituency.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme has been designed to ensure that all eligible businesses receive an appropriate level of support, based on a 'government supported price' for the wholesale cost of energy. This is underpinned by scheme regulations and rules set out in law, with associated guidance published on gov.uk. BEIS continues to work with energy suppliers, delivery partners and the energy regulators in Great Britain and Northern Ireland to ensure all recipients are receiving the correct level of support. Robust enforcement action can be taken if energy suppliers are not passing on the EBRS discount correctly.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Mark Tami: [\[84819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the financial impact of the delay in issuing the Energy Bills Support Scheme payments for (a) park home residents and (b) other households without a direct energy supply contract on those households.

Graham Stuart:

The Department has made no such assessment. The Government is working to deliver this support through the EBSS Alternative Funding as soon as possible.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters

Sara Britcliffe: [\[88033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase (a) the take up of the Energy Bill Support Scheme, (b) public awareness of the voucher scheme in operation, (c) the deadline for redeeming vouchers and (d) ensuring energy companies pass on the vouchers for people with pre-payment meters.

Graham Stuart:

Households in Great Britain should have automatically received the first instalment of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) in October. There is no need for customers to claim the discount. Traditional prepayment meter customers should have received their first EBSS discount voucher. EBSS credit is applied automatically to smart prepayment meters.

Suppliers have an obligation, and must be able to evidence, that they have attempted to make a minimum of three attempts by at least two different methods to contact

customers who have not redeemed their voucher. Replacement vouchers can be issued until the scheme closes on 30 June 2023.

■ Energy Supply: Expenditure

Sir Bill Wiggin: [\[84820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to (a) fund and (b) resource the Energy Supply Taskforce.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Supply Taskforce (ESTF) is part of the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, and it therefore provides the funding and resources currently required by the ESTF.

■ Energy: Conservation

Bill Esterson: [\[87826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, What steps his Department is taking to increase energy efficiency measure installations in homes in Sefton Central constituency.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: The Government is committed to improving the energy performance of homes across the country, including in Sefton Central. That is why we are investing £12 billion in 'Help to Heat' schemes to ensure households can benefit from energy efficiency measures.

The Government recently announced an additional £1billion to deliver further energy efficiency improvements through the Energy Company Obligation. ECO+ is a complementary obligation, which will help hundreds of thousands of households across Great Britain take action to reduce their energy bills.

■ Energy: Fees and Charges

Jonathan Edwards: [\[87816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether energy suppliers receive a fee for administering the Government's energy support measures.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: The Government is not providing energy suppliers a fee for administering the Government's energy support measures.

■ Energy: National Grid and Storage

Fleur Anderson: [\[88013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to (a) expand and improve Britain's energy storage systems and (b) improve the resilience of the national grid.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises the need to have energy storage in place to provide system flexibility.

All possible options are considered to maintain security of gas supply, and that includes the future of natural gas storage if required. We are exploring options to store clean energy, such as hydrogen and electricity, through the UK Hydrogen Strategy and the Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan.

The Government works with the energy industry, regulators and others to continually improve the resilience of energy infrastructure, networks and assets.

■ Energy: Prices**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[84824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what energy bill support the Government plans to make available for (a) housing associations and (b) vulnerable and low-income residents beyond April 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has committed to carrying out a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme by the end of the year to inform decisions on future support after March 2023, with any future support for those deemed eligible commencing on 1st April 2023 without a gap. The findings of the review will be published by the end of the year.

Alex Sobel:[\[84996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of OFGEM's increase of the Headroom Allowance.

Graham Stuart:

The setting of the energy price cap is a matter for the independent regulator Ofgem. Therefore BEIS has made no assessment.

Rebecca Long Bailey:[\[87859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential relationship between consumer energy costs and the profits made by distribution network operators.

Rebecca Long Bailey:[\[87860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has had recent discussions with Ofgem on the distribution network operator pricing consultation entitled Network Price Controls 2021-2028 RIIO-2; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reopening the consultation.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[87861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of (a) capping and (b) further regulating the profits of distribution network operators.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem, as the independent energy regulator, uses the price control process to set the amount that Network Operators can spend and the returns that they can make on investment, in a way that allows the funding needed for a more resilient, low-carbon network while protecting consumers from excessive costs. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem and the network companies throughout the development of the price controls. The next electricity distribution network price control will commence in April 2023, with Final Determinations from Ofgem expected shortly.

Cherilyn Mackrory:

[\[88045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to (a) implement the provisions of the Energy Prices Act and (b) increase the use of renewable energy.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Prices Act gained Royal Assent on 25 October 2022. The Department has laid a number of statutory instruments to ensure the effective implementation of the energy support schemes brought forward by the Act.

The acceleration in renewable deployment will be supported by the UK's main renewable energy scheme, Contracts for Difference. The latest round delivered almost 11GW of new renewable projects, almost double achieved in the previous round. Future CfD rounds will be run annually to drive further deployment.

■ Energy: Profits

Amy Callaghan:

[\[85021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) capping or (b) greater regulation of the profits of Distribution Network Operators to help give consumers greater confidence in the equity of energy bills.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem uses the price control process to set the amount that Network Operators can spend and the returns they can make on investment, in a way that allows the funding needed for a more resilient, low-carbon network while protecting consumers from excessive costs. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem and the network companies throughout the development of the price controls. The next electricity distribution network price control will commence in April 2023, with Final Determinations from Ofgem expected shortly.

Dan Carden: [\[90879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) capping and (b) increasing regulation of the profits of Distribution Network Operators.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem, as the independent energy regulator, uses the price control process to set the amount that Network Operators can spend and the returns they can make on investment, in a way that allows the funding needed for a more resilient, low-carbon network while protecting consumers from excessive costs. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem and the network companies throughout the development of the price controls. The next electricity distribution network price control will commence in April 2023, with Final Determinations from Ofgem expected shortly.

■ Environment Protection: Employment

Bill Esterson: [\[87827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people in Sefton Central are employed in a green job.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: The Department not collect Green Jobs data at constituency level. There are around 430,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains across the country. This includes an estimated 68,000 jobs supported since the launch of the Ten Point Plan a Green Industrial Revolution in November 2020. Sefton benefits from £30m pa of devolved investment funding in the Liverpool City Region MCA, to support local priorities including Green Growth.

Bill Esterson: [\[87828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the number of green jobs in Sefton Central constituency.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: The Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution incorporates £12 Billion and sets out our plans to work with industry to create the skilled workforce needed to transition to a green economy. The Green Jobs Delivery Group has already supported 68,000 jobs within the green economy and a total of 430,000 green jobs generating an estimated turnover of £41.2 billion. Sefton also benefits from several streams of devolved funding through the Liverpool City Region MCA, including £30m pa to support local priorities including Green Growth.

■ Environment Protection: Job Creation

Bill Esterson:

[\[88863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published on 18 November 2020, how many jobs have been created in Sefton Central constituency as a result of the implementation of that plan.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The Government do not collect Green Jobs data at constituency level. Since the launch of the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution in November 2020 an estimated 68,000 jobs have been supported nationally. This forms part of the around 430,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains across the country. Sefton benefits from several streams of devolved funding through the Liverpool City Region CA, including £30m per annum to support local priorities including Green Growth.

■ Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[86656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has been made with the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[86657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the expected timescales are for the allocation of funding under the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[86678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the expected phases will be of the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has set an ambition to deliver up to 5GW of floating offshore wind by 2030. The Government is engaging with stakeholders and analysing feedback following the launch of the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme Request for Information earlier this year and next steps will be set out in due course.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[87852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to maintain funding for the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The next steps on the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme will be set out in due course, following the completion of the Request for Information process.

■ Foreign Companies: Registration**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[88896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many members of staff at Companies House are currently working exclusively or primarily on processing registration applications for the Register of Overseas Entities.

Kevin Hollinrake:

There are 8 staff currently working exclusively on registrations. There are an additional 20 staff who are fully trained and offer flexible support according to workload.

■ Gas Fired Power Stations**Sir Bill Wiggin:** [\[86411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has held discussions on increasing the size of existing Liquefied Natural Gas re-gasification plants in the United Kingdom.

Graham Stuart:

The Government engages regularly with a range of businesses operating in the energy sector, including the operators of the UK's liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals. Decisions on expansion of these terminals are a commercial decision for the operators.

■ Gas Fired Power Stations: Location**Sir Bill Wiggin:** [\[84822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the locations that are (a) being considered and (b) no longer being considered for new Liquefied Natural Gas re-gasification plants in (i) England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

Graham Stuart:

The proposed location for a new Liquefied Natural Gas plant is a matter for the developer, and any application would be dealt with through the planning system in the normal way, dependent on which part of the UK the application is made.

■ Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme**Bill Esterson:** [\[90788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 78699 on Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme: Sefton, when he plans for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme to complete delivery.

Graham Stuart:

The Green Homes Grant is now closed to delivery with both Phase 1 and Phase 2 completed delivery on 30 September 2022.

Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 delivery will continue until March 2023.

■ Horizon Europe

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the Memorandum of Understanding on science and innovation signed between the UK and Switzerland on an agreement with the EU on the UK's participation in Horizon Europe; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

Being a science superpower means deepening our international relationships with leading research and innovation economies like Switzerland.

Association to EU programmes would not change this strong bilateral relationship: the Government's preference remains association to Horizon Europe and the Government continues to do everything to secure this. But the UK cannot wait forever. The priority is to support international collaboration in science and R&I – Government want to strengthen the valuable and long-standing partnerships between UK and European researchers whilst expanding the UK's global partnerships regardless of whether we associate to Horizon Europe.

■ Housing: Energy

Bill Esterson:

[\[89795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which wards in Sefton Central constituency have the highest number of homes with retrofitting measures installed.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS estimates that under the [Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\)](#) and [Green Homes Grant \(GHG\)](#) government schemes, the ward in Sefton Central with the highest number of energy efficient measures installed is Molyneux. The order from highest to lowest is as follows:

1. Molyneux;
2. Blundellsands;
3. Manor;
4. Sudell;
5. Ravenmeols;
6. Park;
7. Harington.

■ Liquefied Natural Gas

Sir Bill Wiggin: [\[84823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what Government departments will be involved in approving any recommendations put forward by the Energy Supply Taskforce for securing the long-term supply of Liquefied Natural Gas.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Supply Taskforce (ESTF) is part of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and therefore reports to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The ESTF will provide advice to the Secretary of State on commercial options. In line with all decisions related to the deployment of public money, any recommendation to pursue gas contracts would be subject to internal scrutiny within BEIS and involving HM Treasury, including to ensure that they represented good value for public money.

Sir Bill Wiggin: [\[86412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had about increasing the number of locations for LNG re-gasification plants in the United Kingdom.

Graham Stuart:

The Government engages regularly with a range of businesses operating in the energy sector, including firms considering new energy investments in the UK. Any decisions on developing new LNG terminals are a commercial decision for the proponents of any such project.

■ Liquefied Natural Gas: Business

Lee Anderson: [\[85008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of future trends in the growth of the global liquefied natural gas market on UK businesses over the next ten years.

Graham Stuart:

The Government expected a significant growth in global LNG supply in the coming years, particularly from 2025 onwards, as large amounts of new supply, particularly from the US and Qatar, become available to the global market. The United Kingdom has one of the largest LNG import infrastructures in Europe, so much of this is likely to be available to the UK.

■ Minerals

Alexander Stafford: [\[88038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including hafnium on the list of critical minerals.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[88039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising prices of hafnium on UK superalloy producers.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[88040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre plans to update the list of critical minerals; and whether it will include hafnium on that list.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Many minerals, such as Hafnium, have important uses but, by necessity of focus, only some are “critical”. These “critical minerals” are not only vitally important: they are also experiencing major risks to their security of supply. These risks can be caused by combinations of factors including, but not limited to, rapid demand growth, high concentration of supply chains in particular countries, or elevated levels of price volatility.

Earlier this year, BEIS commissioned the British Geological Survey to carry out the UK’s first criticality assessment and it defined 18 critical minerals with the highest supply risk and economic importance; it did not identify Hafnium as a critical mineral on this basis.

The Government has not made an assessment of the impact of rising prices of Hafnium on UK superalloy producers. However, we recognise that the UK need on critical minerals and its international markets can change, and therefore the assessment will be reviewed regularly through the Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre (CMIC). The next review will be completed in Spring 2023.

For many minerals, we will continue to rely upon and champion an effective and efficient market. Where the market already provides a responsible and resilient supply, we see no case to interfere. Where the markets are less developed, are less transparent or have issues, we want to work with business and international partners to make markets more resilient for the long term.

■ Nuclear Power: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[86673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of progressing nuclear energy for Northern Ireland.

Graham Stuart:

As outlined in the British Energy Security Strategy, the Government’s long-term ambition is to increase its plans for the deployment of civil nuclear power by 2050. To facilitate this, the Government has committed to a number of nuclear ambitions, including developing an overall siting strategy for the long term.

■ Ofgem

Wera Hobhouse: [\[87933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on reform of Ofgem's remit.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem's primary statutory duty is to protect the interests of existing and future consumers in relation to gas conveyed through pipes and electricity conveyed by distribution or transmission systems. The Government, together with the expertise of Ofgem as the independent market regulator, is continuing to look at reforms to energy markets to ensure that they deliver secure, low carbon and low-cost energy to all consumers.

The Government is also working to develop its Strategy and Policy statement (SPS) for energy policy in Great Britain. This key document will provide Ofgem with a strategic framework to deliver the Government's energy policy ambitions.

■ Post Offices: Energy Bill Relief Scheme

Drew Hendry: [\[89856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to extend the Energy Bill Relief Scheme for Post Offices after March 2023.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The Government has committed to carrying out a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to inform decisions on future support after March 2023. Over the course of the review, the Government will be engaging widely to understand those who are most in need of further support. The Government cannot confirm which sectors will receive further support after 31st March 2023 until the review has concluded. The findings of the review will be published by the 31 st December 2022.

■ Postage Stamps: Prices

Emma Hardy: [\[87961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of conducting a review into postage stamp prices.

Kevin Hollinrake:

As a private business, Royal Mail's management sets the prices for its services. The Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's commercial decisions.

In setting prices Royal Mail must observe the regulatory framework set by Ofcom, the independent regulator. This framework imposes price caps, 'safeguard caps', on certain second-class products to ensure a basic universal service is available to all at affordable prices and users of postal services, especially vulnerable consumers, are protected from on-going price rises.

Ofcom plans to review the safeguard caps with a consultation and statement during 2023/24.

■ **Public Buildings: Energy**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[86416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to (a) improve the energy efficiency of (b) implement energy-saving measures in public buildings.

Graham Stuart:

As set out in the Net Zero Strategy, the Government aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from public sector buildings by 75% by 2037. To support this, £2.5 billion is being invested through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme over the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25 to provide grants for public sector bodies in England to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures.

The Government Property Function on 15 November published its Government Property Strategy, which commits to delivering a range of measures designed to create a smaller, better, and greener public estate.

■ **Public Houses: Energy**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[90752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the beer and pubs sector with energy bills beyond the initial six-month period of Government financial support.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government has committed to carrying out a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme by the end of the year to inform decisions on future support. We cannot confirm which sectors will receive further support after 31st March 2023 until the review has concluded.

■ **Renewable Energy: Sefton Central**

Bill Esterson:

[\[89798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to increase funding for renewable energy sources in Sefton Central constituency.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 15th November 2022 to Question [83612](#).

■ **Small Businesses: Ministerial Responsibility**

Sarah Olney:

[\[59956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which Minister in his Department is responsible for small business.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I am the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business.

■ **Tourist Attractions: Energy****Ruth Jones:**[\[87982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help tackle the impact of the rising cost of (a) gas and (b) energy on tourist attractions in Newport West constituency.

Ruth Jones:[\[87983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the rising cost of (a) fuel and (b) energy on small businesses in Newport West constituency; and what steps he is taking to help tackle those impacts.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme came into force on the 1 November and will provide a discount on energy bills for all eligible non-domestic customers, including small businesses on non-domestic tariffs and businesses running tourist attractions, whose current gas and electricity prices have been significantly inflated in light of global energy prices. Small businesses that are on domestic tariffs will receive support through the domestic Energy Price Guarantee scheme.

The schemes will initially run for 6 months covering energy use from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 and will help support growth, prevent unnecessary insolvencies and protect jobs.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Julian Assange****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[89036\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) he or (b) officials in his Department have met with US officials to discuss Julian Assange.

Jeremy Quin:

I have not met with US officials to discuss Julian Assange.

The Government has discussed aspects of this matter as part of our routine diplomatic engagement with a number of countries, including the US. Cabinet Office officials routinely meet with US counterparts to discuss a range of issues, which may, in the past, have included Mr Assange. The Cabinet Office does not hold a central record of meetings between officials and their US counterparts.

Extradition cases are handled by the Home Office.

■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

Henry Smith:

[\[83603\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what additional support the Government is providing to Armed Forces charities to help increase the capacity and delivery of (a) mental health and (b) suicide prevention initiatives for veterans.

Johnny Mercer:

This government will continue to prioritise supporting veterans with their mental health needs. There is a range of statutory support for veterans across the UK, including the bespoke mental health service for veterans in England: Op COURAGE.

Charities continue to play a vital role in helping veterans with their mental health, and I pay tribute to them for all they do. The Government provided £20m in 2021 to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to support Service charities comprising the £10m annual allocation plus extra £10m announced in the 2021 Budget. In addition, we provided £5m through the Afghanistan Veterans' Fund. These funds included provision for initiatives to improve capacity in mental health and wellbeing provision, and suicide prevention.

■ Veterans: Suicide

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[82332\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the new ONS method for recording and reporting veteran suicide, whether he plans to regularly publish this data.

Johnny Mercer:

The Office for National Statistics will trial a new method of recording veteran suicide from early 2023 by working closely with the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. As part of a 10-year retrospective study, analysis of veteran suicide data is expected to be completed by the ONS in 2023. Details on how and when this data might be published will be finalised following agreement between the MOD, ONS and OVA.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Complaints

John Healey:

[\[90748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints have been made to the Armed Forces Service Complaints Process for allegations of a) racism, b) bullying, c) sexism, and d) harassment, in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the UK Armed Forces are committed to taking action to eradicate unacceptable behaviour. All allegations of illegal or unacceptable behaviour are taken extremely seriously and investigated thoroughly. Service personnel have a number of routes to raise issues, either with the police, within the

Chain of Command or with Diversity and Inclusion Advisers. MOD has mandated Active Bystander training so that personnel have the skills to challenge any witnessed unacceptable behaviour effectively when it does occur.

Information on the number of complaints made due to alleged racism or sexism is not readily available and an answer could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Allegations of racism or sexism are captured through various systems, including internal and external disciplinary proceedings, the Service Complaints system, informal complaints and the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey. Defence is working to improve its data capture of all unacceptable behaviour across the department.

The Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces (SCOAF)'s annual report cites the issue of overrepresentation by ethnic minorities within the complaints system, but these complaints do not only concern racial discrimination. However, information from the single Services' annual statistical returns on Service Complaints to the SCOAF indicates that in 2019, five per cent of all bullying, harassment or discrimination Service Complaints concerned racial discrimination; this reduced to three per cent in 2020 and 2021.

Information on the numbers of Service Complaints concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination is available through the SCOAF's annual reports (2016 to 2021) and the Service Complaints Commissioner's annual reports (2010 to 2015), all of which are available at the following website: www.scoaf.org.uk/annual-reports

■ **British Overseas Territories: Military Aid**

Andrew Rosindell:

[87781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is taking steps to provide military support to the British Overseas Territories in the context of the decision by the Russian Federation to include all British Overseas Territories on a so-called unfriendly list.

James Heapey:

The UK is responsible for the defence and security of all British Overseas Territories and takes these responsibilities incredibly seriously. The Ministry of Defence routinely monitors for hostile activity and will take appropriate action in response to any legitimate threat to the UK or our British Overseas Territories.

■ **Defence Transition Services**

Rachel Hopkins:

[89937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) veterans and (b) families of veterans have contacted the Defence Transition Services requesting housing support in each month of 2022.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[89938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) veterans and (b) veterans' families have contacted the Defence Transition Services requesting mental health support in each month in 2022.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[89939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) veterans and (b) veterans' families have contacted the Defence Transition Services requesting finance, debt and benefits support in each month of 2022.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[89940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) veterans and (b) veterans' families have contacted the Defence Transition Services requesting training, education and employment support in each month in 2022.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

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

I can confirm that 435 referrals have been made to the Defence Transition Service between 1 January 2022 and 22 November 2022. Of these, six were for a service leavers spouse or partner.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts**

John Healey: [\[89740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the £1.6 billion contractual value for the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme will be adjusted for inflation before the final contract is signed.

Alex Chalk:

No, it will not.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[89765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract, how many subsystems of the Team Resolute bid will be procured in Spain.

Alex Chalk:

The prime contract for the Fleet Solid Support ships has not yet been awarded and thus no sub-contracts have been awarded for sub-systems. The ships will primarily be built in the UK to protect the UK's essential security interests. It is estimated that 25 UK small and medium enterprises are set to benefit from the contract including the provision of specialist systems, software and equipment.

John Healey: [\[90732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an estimate of the amount of money that his Department will pay to companies based outside the UK as part of the Fleet Solid Support ships contract.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence has no plans to make payments to companies based outside the UK under the Fleet Solid Support ship manufacture contract. All the constituent companies of Team Resolute are UK-registered.

John Healey:[\[90734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has appointed a lead contractor for the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given in response to Question 88807 on 21 November 2022.

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts [UIN 88807.docx]

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Deployment**John Healey:**[\[88819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of when each of the Fleet Solid Support ships will be at sea.

John Healey:[\[88820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) integrated and (b) full operated capability dates are for the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme.

Alex Chalk:

On current plans, all three ships are expected to be in operational service by 2032, which delivers the Full Operating Capability for the Fleet Solid Support programme.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Employment**John Healey:**[\[89739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK-based (a) graduate placements and (b) apprentices will Team Resolute take on each year until the completion of the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme.

John Healey:[\[89741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK jobs will be directly supported by his Department's expenditure on the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme in (a) Belfast, (b) Appledore, (c) Methil, (d) Arnish and (e) Bath.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[89756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an estimate of the number of jobs that will be supported by the Fleet Solid Support Ship Contract for over one year.

Alex Chalk:

The Fleet Solid Support ship contract will create a significant number of new jobs, including around 1,200 high quality manufacturing jobs, and hundreds of graduate placements and apprenticeships. The precise distribution of these jobs between UK sites through the duration of the contract is a matter for Harland & Wolff and BMT.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Intellectual Property**John Healey:**[\[89742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the intellectual property for the design of the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme will be based in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

The ships have been designed in the UK by BMT, a leading firm of Naval Architects. Intellectual Property (IP) in the design rests with BMT. The Ministry of Defence does not generally seek to acquire ownership of IP created by contractors undertaking work for the Department but rather to acquire free-user rights that permit the Department to use, modify and manage equipment as it sees fit through life without infringing IP rights or incurring fees.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Repairs and Maintenance**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[89760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the Fleet Solid Support Ships will be maintained.

Alex Chalk:

Royal Fleet Auxiliaries are not base ported at a specific location. The in-service support arrangements for Fleet Solid Support ships will be decided and contracted ahead of the class coming fully into service.

■ Gurkhas: Pensions**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[90780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will make an estimate of the potential cost to the public purse of equalising (a) pensions and (b) all other pay, allowances and entitlements for Gurkha soldiers to the British Army standard.

Mr Virendra Sharma:[\[90781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to increase existing Gurkha medical pensions to the British Army rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Virendra Sharma:[\[90782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on uprating Gurkha pensions.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Government greatly values the unique contribution that the Gurkhas have made and continue to make to the UK, and remains committed to providing Gurkhas a fair pension, including uplifts determined by formal review processes.

Gurkha terms and conditions of service were initially set by the 1947 Tripartite Agreement and were altered as the Brigade's circumstance changed over the years. Since 2007 Gurkhas have served on the same basis as the remainder of the British Army apart from specific conditions to maintain the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Since 2007, Gurkhas have also received the same pension under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) as the rest of the UK Armed Forces. Gurkhas who had served beyond 1997 were given the option to transfer to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme. For those who served prior to 2007, the 1948 Gurkha Pension Scheme (GPS) provides a pension over their lifetime at least as good, and in many cases better, than that given to their British counterparts with identical periods of service. Whilst GPS pensions are smaller, most are paid for longer; from as early as age 33, whereas the AFPS pays a pension only from age 60/65.

The Defence Secretary has not had discussions with Cabinet colleagues regarding uprating legacy Gurkha pensions as retrospective changes or improvements generally are not made to public service pension schemes. This policy applies across the whole of the public sector.

The GPS remains linked to the Indian Army pension scheme. Changes are introduced every 10 years when the Indian Central Pay Commission (CPC) adjusts the levels of pay and pensions for personnel in the Indian Army. A public consultation in 2020/2021 sought views on how the 7th CPC should be implemented in relation to the GPS.

Following the consultation, Ministers decided that 140% of the Indian rates, with a minimum of 10% for those already above 140%, was the most appropriate level to implement the 7th CPC for the GPS.

When the 7th CPC changes were implemented, the government also implemented new groupings and structures for disability pensions. Full information on legacy GPS Disability Pensions is available in the Gurkha Pension Scheme Manual, Chapter Three, available on gov.uk.

The government has also chosen to work with a charity, the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT), to provide healthcare for its veterans and their families in Nepal. The GWT is part-funded by a grant-in-aid from MOD, and in 2018, the Army made a grant of £25 million over ten years to the GWT, specifically to improve the provision of healthcare, including secondary care, for our veterans in Nepal.

■ Julian Assange

Kenny MacAskill: [\[89038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether (a) he or (b) officials in his Department have met with US officials to discuss Julian Assange.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Government has discussed aspects of this matter as part of our routine diplomatic engagement with a number of countries, including the US. Extradition cases are handled by the Home Office. The Secretary of State for Defence has not held any meetings with US officials to discuss Julian Assange, nor am I aware of any meetings between Defence officials and their US counterparts on the same issue.

■ Mali: Peacekeeping Operations

John Healey: [\[87747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he discussed UK withdrawal from Mali with his counterparts in the Sahel region before the announcement on 14 November 2022.

James Heappey:

The Transitional Government of Mali were notified of the announcement by our Embassy in Bamako before the Statement in the House.

John Healey: [\[87749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the withdrawal of UK troops from Mali will be completed.

James Heappey:

Following the announcement in the House, the order to begin the withdrawal of the Long Range Reconnaissance Group contribution to the MINUSMA mission has been activated. Coordinating with international partners for our departure is underway and will continue over the coming weeks. I will not provide an exact timeline for withdrawal of UK troops, but I can say that we will not generate a sixth rotation of the UK Task Group to the MINUSMA mission and therefore the Scots Dragoon Guards will be the last rotation.

■ Mali: Wagner Group

John Healey: [\[87745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of Wagner mercenary group activities on the civilian population in Mali since January 2022.

James Heappey:

Since January 2022, Wagner Group alongside the Malian armed forces and on their own, have repeatedly violated the human rights of Mali's civilian population, including mass extra-judicial killings, rape and disappearances.

UK Ministers have called for transparent and independent investigations including by the MINUSMA mission and reiterated the importance of compliance with International Humanitarian Law during counterterrorism operations.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Departmental Responsibilities**

Rachel Hopkins: [\[88043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the responsibilities are of the (a) Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families and (b) Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families is responsible for all policy matters relating to Ministry of Defence (MOD) civilian and service personnel including reserves, cadets, and armed forces families. This includes (but is not limited to) recruitment and retention, accommodation, remuneration, health and wellbeing, education and training, service complaints and the Service Justice System, diversity and inclusion, transition and the Armed Forces Covenant. The Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families is also responsible for MOD provided veteran services including Veterans UK and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees (VAPCs), and the Veterans Welfare Service.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs attends Cabinet and has responsibility for coordinating cross-Government support for our veterans, through the Office for Veterans' Affairs in the Cabinet Office. This includes (but is not limited to) developing and assuring delivery of the Veterans Strategy and Action plan; commissioning research and improving evidence and data on the veteran community; developing and supporting policy and delivery by other Government Departments; and communications of support for veterans and their positive contribution to society.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Disclosure of Information**

John Healey: [\[87737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has established a disinformation unit.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence has not established a disinformation unit. The Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport Counter Disinformation Unit leads the domestic operational and policy response for countering disinformation across HMG. Defence continues to support HMG efforts to recognise and respond to disinformation globally including support to this unit.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Small Businesses**

John Healey: [\[89728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the commitment in his Department's policy paper, Opportunity and Innovation: The Defence Small and Medium-

sized Enterprise (SME) Action Plan, published on 27 January 2022, to introduce a revised Industrial Participation policy, whether his Department has published such a policy.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) revised Industrial Participation policy was set out in the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy. We will pilot this revised Industrial Participation Policy on an initial set of MOD programmes, asking companies to set voluntary targets for UK content in defence procurement in order to maximise the opportunities for the UK supply-chain. We are currently engaging with industry ahead of initiating these pilots, and will publish details of the policy at the conclusion of the pilot phase.

John Healey:

[89729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the commitments made in his Department's Opportunity and Innovation: The Defence Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Action Plan published on 27 January 2022, whether his Department has published proposals in a Command Paper laying out how his Department will drive desired outcomes through prime suppliers.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence recently undertook a comprehensive review of the Single Source Contract Regulations concluding with a Command Paper proposing a series of reforms, which was published on 4 April 2022. Implementation of these reforms will support delivery of the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy.

A copy of the paper can be found at the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-and-security-industrial-strategy-reform-of-the-single-source-contract-regulations>

John Healey:

[89730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the commitments made in his Department's Opportunity and Innovation: The Defence Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Action Plan published on 27 January 2022, whether his Department has published revised guidance to support teams in adopting an agile approach to delivery.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence is committed to enabling agile delivery. A range of guidance, tools and training is available to support project teams and we continue to work to develop agile approaches.

Agile guidance for digital projects has recently been made available on the department's Defence Digital Delivery Hub. The guidance will support teams in planning and executing projects using agile methodology where this is appropriate, while meeting the needs of Defence Digital's governance and assurance processes.

In Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), an Agile Practitioner role has been established to support the roll out of Agile within DE&S. This will include training and provide a coherent approach to agile management.

■ RAF Odiham: Housing**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[89869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the standard of accommodation available to RAF Odiham personnel; and whether his Department has taken recent steps to improve the quality of that accommodation.

Alex Chalk:

The condition of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties is formally assessed against the Decent Homes (DH) Standard. The DH standard is a technical standard for public housing, defined by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). More than 98% of SFA meet this standard; properties below it are not allocated to Service personnel.

In financial year 2021-22, investment to improve SFA at RAF Odiham included the installation of new windows and doors for 106 homes and an additional 20 homes were refurbished. Over the course of this financial year, a further 34 homes will benefit from new roofs.

The launch of the Defence Accommodation Strategy in October 2022 introduced a Defence Minimum Standard for Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and informs the future investment of SLA.

In financial year 2021-22, kitchen and utility rooms in four SLA blocks at RAF Odiham were upgraded and ablutions were refurbished in one SLA block. Further improvement work to SLA is also taking place, which includes painting and decorating, improving the shared ablutions areas and cooking facilities.

■ Robert Swara Seurei**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[90887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November to Question 86616 on Robert Swara Seurei, what were the (a) conclusions and (b) outcomes of his Department's investigation into the death of Robert Swara Seurei.

James Heappey:

The investigation concluded that Mr Seurei, a Locally Employed Civilian (LEC), removed an explosive from the range (that he reportedly described as a candle), which he later attempted to ignite with tragic results.

The investigation identified a number of contributing factors, including: Mr Seurei had not understood the safety briefings and the dangers of removing items from the range (due to language barriers); inadequate supervision; premature removal of safety posts marking the hazardous area (before a thorough daylight check had taken place); and incorrect fitting of a safety fuse, which meant that the explosive did not ignite as intended during the exercise.

The report made a number of recommendations to prevent reoccurrence, all of which are closed. These included: document that a full safety brief must take place for LEC

personnel employed on ranges (using an interpreter as required) and, where possible, provide a practical demonstration of the dangers; the requirement to conduct a daylight clearance of the area (before removing hazardous area markings) and clarifying the minimum rank for a Battle Noise Simulation Safety Supervisor.

■ **Turks and Caicos Islands: Gangs**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support the UK Armed Forces are providing to the Turks and Caicos Islands to help tackle gang-related violence in that territory.

James Heappey:

The UK Government is supporting the Turks and Caicos Government to protect the safety and security of people on the islands to help tackle violent crime.

This has included support from UK Police, the National Crime Agency and UK Border Force, as well as an FCDO-funded serious crime team which will provide investigative capacity to the TCI Police. In support of this wider Government response, RFA TIDEFORCE deployed to Turks and Caicos Islands in October and, with its embarked WILDCAT helicopter, provided direct support to local operations.

■ **UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali**

John Healey:

[\[87748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he discussed UK withdrawal from Mali with officials in the UN before the announcement on 14 November 2022.

James Heappey:

Yes. Officials from the British Embassy, Bamako, the UK Permanent Mission to the UN in New York and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office informed UN officials of the UK's intent to withdraw the UK Long Range Reconnaissance Task Group from Mali prior to the announcement on 14 November 2022.

■ **USA: Armed Forces**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[89042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons his Department release information on the number of US military personnel in Britain and not at the Sovereign Base Areas of Cyprus.

James Heappey:

As a UK overseas territory run and administered by the MOD, the Sovereign Base Areas are unique within Defence. For operational and security reasons, we do not release details of US personnel participating in current or future operations in this specific location.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: North of England****Gill Furniss:****[83698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the amount of funding awarded by the Arts Council to cities in the North of England compared to cities in other regions of England.

Stuart Andrew:

Arts Council England, which distributes public funding at arm's length from His Majesty's Government, is committed to supporting arts and culture across the whole country. Over the next three years, Arts Council England will distribute over £380 million in funding to 282 organisations across the North of England. This follows the request by HM Government to ensure that funding is spread more equitably across England. As a result, 78 organisations based in the North of England are new to the portfolio, including the Liverpool Lighthouse, Bradford Museums and Galleries, Company of Others dance ensemble in Newcastle, and Utopia Theatre in Sheffield.

Cities across the North of England will therefore receive increased investment. For instance, 11 organisations in Sheffield will receive a share of £11 million over three years. This increase in funding is also reflected across South Yorkshire, which will receive an additional £1.8 million per year, totalling £21.2 million over the three years 2023–26.

This shift meets the ambitious targets more fairly to distribute funding for culture to support levelling up objectives by increasing funding to areas outside London, and increasing Arts Council England funding to 109 places identified by the Arts Council and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as Levelling Up for Culture places (LUCPs). These Levelling Up Culture Places – which include cities in the North of England like Doncaster, Preston and Sunderland – will see investment almost double (a 95% increase). I would also like to draw the Hon. Member to the [Written Ministerial Statement](#) from the Secretary of State on 7 November 2023 which provides further information and which may be of interest.

■ English National Opera**Dr Matthew Offord:****[86456]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the outcome was of discussions she had with the Chief Executive of English National Opera, Stuart Murphy, on 10 November 2022; and if she will make a statement.

Stuart Andrew:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport met Stuart Murphy, the Chief Executive of English National Opera on 10 November at his request. This meeting was to discuss the work of the organisation and its plans for its future.

■ **Football: Loans**

James Wild:

[\[87999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what was the (a) total value of loans made to football clubs, (b) number of loans made and (c) amount of the highest loan made as part of the Sport Winter Survival Package.

Stuart Andrew:

Throughout the pandemic the government went above and beyond through the Sports Survival Package to provide all sports clubs with generous financial support to ensure their survival throughout the difficult period. Many clubs would have failed without that support.

The Sport Survival Package distributed a total of £264.8 million funding (loan and grant funding) to over 1,685 organisations across 15 sports. The Government issued £13.3 million in loans to 34 non-league football clubs.

The value of individual loans are commercially sensitive. Each loan was tailored to the specific needs of the loanee.

■ **Local Broadcasting and Local Press**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[89003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the impact on communities of local (a) radio stations and (b) newspapers.

Julia Lopez:

Local radio stations are a vital part of the communities they serve, providing trusted news, entertainment and companionship to listeners in different communities in all parts of the UK. In recognition of this, we have committed to bring forward a package of changes to update the rules on commercial radio licensing, including strengthening local news and information requirements. We intend to bring forward legislation in this area when Parliamentary time allows.

The community radio sector also provides an important service, with around 300 Ofcom-licensed stations having been launched since 2005. The Government continues to make funding available to support the growth of the sector, by way of the Community Radio Fund (CRF). The Fund distributes £400,000 on an annual basis to help fund the core costs of running licensed community radio stations and enable the sector to move towards self-sustainability. Furthermore, in the last two financial years, we have supported the CRF to go beyond this core funding, with significant uplifts targeted on tackling loneliness and to reflect the sector's important contribution to the Government's ambitions on levelling up.

Local newspapers also play an invaluable role in the fabric of our society - in supporting communities and local democracy, holding power to account, keeping the public informed of local issues and providing reliable, high-quality information. They remain uniquely placed to undertake the investigative journalism and scrutiny of public institutions, including local councils and our courts, that is vital to helping

ensure a healthy democracy at a local level. And Government-commissioned research into the importance of newspapers to local communities found that changes in news provision and consumption over time had a direct impact on participation levels in local elections in England.

The Government has taken a number of steps to support this vital sector, including through the extension of business rates relief for local newspapers in England for an additional five years; the investment of £2 million in the Future News Fund; the zero-rating of VAT on e-newspapers; the 2021 publication of an Online Media Literacy Strategy; and our work through the Mid-Term Review of the BBC Charter, exploring how the BBC seeks to act as a complement, rather than a substitute for, local commercial news outlets.

The Government was also pleased to see the BBC conduct a thorough review of the Local Democracy Reporting Service in 2020, and we would support any efforts by the BBC to grow the scheme. Most importantly, we are introducing a new, pro-competition regime for digital markets. The regime, which aims to address the far-reaching power of the biggest tech firms, will help rebalance the relationship between publishers and the online platforms on which they increasingly rely. This will make an important contribution to the sustainability of the press at both local and national level. We continue to consider all possible options in the interest of promoting and sustaining the sector.

■ **Sport Winter Survival Package: Football**

James Wild:

[88000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the repayment terms are for loans made to football clubs under the Sport Winter Survival package.

Stuart Andrew:

The Sport Survival Package operated a standard repayable loan facility on a 10-year term with a two-year holiday and repayments over eight years at an interest rate of 2%, with the ability to offer 20 year-terms with up to a four-year repayment holiday subject to the individual circumstances of the borrower.

We are unable to comment on individual cases given their commercial sensitivity. Disclosing sensitive financial information to the open market puts the clubs at a competitive disadvantage.

EDUCATION

■ **Childcare: Pay**

Rachael Maskell:

[88924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effect of levels of pay of those working in child care on recruitment and retention in that sector.

Claire Coutinho:

Research carried out in 2021 found that some early years group-based setting managers reported that staff were moving to similar jobs and sectors that had higher rates of pay. More information about this can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1072062/SCEYP_thematic_report- April 2022.pdf.

The majority of the early years sector is made up of private, voluntary and independent organisations who set their own rates of pay. The department acknowledges the concerns raised by the sector regarding workforce recruitment and retention, including the perceived impact of salary rates.

Supporting this workforce continues to be a priority for the department, and we are working proactively with the sector and local authorities to build our understanding of the situation and how the sector can be supported in this area.

■ Children in Care**Rachael Maskell:****[88926]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure that young people in care receive a comprehensive package of support as they transition to independence.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is committed to supporting care leavers to succeed. Our policies provide a package of support on education, training, housing, employment and maintaining relationships. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care published its final report on 23 May 2022. The department is rapidly working up an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy in response to the review's recommendations.

The department is providing £36.4 million over the next three years for personal advisors to support care leavers up to age 25. This will help them to navigate services such as housing, health or benefits, and provide practical or emotional support to help them prepare for living independently.

Care leavers starting an apprenticeship are entitled to a £1,000 bursary and local authorities must provide a £2,000 bursary for care leavers who go to university. The department has launched the care leaver covenant, which has resulted in over 350 businesses offering opportunities to care leavers, including John Lewis, Sky and Amazon. We have also established the Civil Service Care Leaver Internship Scheme, which has led to over 800 care leavers taking up paid jobs across government.

The department is also providing £99 million to local authorities over the next three years. This will help care leavers stay with their foster families after they turn 18 in a 'Staying Put' arrangement, so they can continue to benefit from a stable and secure family setting as they transition to independence. We are providing £36 million to extend the Staying Close pilot so that more care leavers leaving children's homes will be supported with move-on accommodation and support from a trusted adult. An

additional £3.2 million is being given to local authorities this year to provide extra support to care leavers at highest risk of rough sleeping.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[88928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is she taking to help reduce the number of placements for children in the care system.

Claire Coutinho:

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care made a series of recommendations that aim to reduce the number of children in care, including creating more options for children to remain safely within their family networks. The department is rapidly working up an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy. The department will consider the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and Market Authority study into Children's Social Care Placements.

Early help services continue to play an important role in promoting safe, stable and resilient families, thus reducing the need for intervention, including care placements. The government recently announced over £1 billion for programmes to improve early help services from birth to adulthood. This includes delivering on Family Hubs and helping families through the Supporting Families programme and Holiday Activities and Food programme.

The government recognises the importance of reducing the number of placements for children in the care system. However, placements can be the right option for some children. Where placements are needed, local authorities have a statutory duty to make sure that there is sufficient provision in their area to meet the needs of the children in their care.

■ European University Institute: Finance

Matt Western:

[\[87944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to ringfence the 5.34 million euros contribution made by the UK to the European University Institute for providing scholarship funding to UK students.

Robert Halfon:

There are no plans to apply a ringfence to the UK contribution to the European University Institute within the Department for Education.

Matt Western:

[\[87945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to redistribute the UK's contribution to the European University Institute of 5.34 million euros within the existing Department for Education's budget.

Robert Halfon:

Any plans to redistribute amounts that the UK would no longer be contributing to the European University Institute would be a matter for the Department for Education's internal financial planning processes.

■ Foster Care

Rachael Maskell:

[\[88929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is she taking to help increase the number of foster carers; and how she assesses the effectiveness of initiatives to do so.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is working with local authorities to recruit more foster carers. This will include local recruitment campaigns that build towards a national programme, to help ensure children have access to the right placements at the right time. The department is working through how we will assess our future initiatives.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Naz Shah:

[\[89845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to release advance information on GCSE and A Level Exams in 2023.

Nick Gibb:

On 29 September, the Department and Ofqual confirmed examinations will largely return to well-established, pre-pandemic arrangements in summer 2023.

The Department confirmed that advance information will not be provided for any examinations taken in summer 2023. The Department has, however, decided that formulae and equation sheets for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined sciences examinations should be provided in summer 2023, as was the case for examinations in 2022. Ofqual has also confirmed a return to pre-pandemic grading in 2023. To protect pupils against the disruption of recent years, and in case pupils' performance is slightly lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic, senior examiners will use the grades achieved by previous cohorts of pupils, along with prior attainment data, to inform their decisions regarding where to set grade boundaries.

These decisions reflect that while the 2023 cohort may have experienced some disruption due to the pandemic over the course of their qualifications, it has not been as significant as that experienced by pupils who received qualifications in 2022.

Pupils will, for example, have had more time to cover the curriculum, practise assessments and use education recovery programmes and interventions.

■ Grammar Schools

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[89066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 80958 on Grammar Schools, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing legislative restrictions on the establishment of new grammar schools; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Department maintains a diversity of schools and wants grammar schools to continue to play an important role within the education system.

The Department's priority is to concentrate on ensuring that as many children as possible, whatever their ability, have access to an outstanding education, rather than creating more grammar schools.

■ Higher Education: German Language

Matt Western: [\[87938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many German courses were offered by higher education providers in England in 2010.

Matt Western: [\[87939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many German courses were offered by higher education providers in England in 2022.

Matt Western: [\[87940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many French courses were offered by higher education providers in England in 2010.

Matt Western: [\[87941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many French courses were offered by higher education providers in England in 2022.

Matt Western: [\[87942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Italian courses were offered by higher education providers in England in 2010.

Matt Western: [\[87943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Italian courses were offered by higher education providers in England in 2022.

Robert Halfon:

Information on specific courses offered by higher education (HE) providers in 2010 and 2022 is not held by the department.

■ Higher Education: Languages

Matt Western: [\[87937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide additional support to higher education institutions to protect their modern foreign language departments from closure.

Robert Halfon:

Higher education providers are autonomous bodies, independent of government. It is for the governing body and management of each provider to determine how to ensure that it meets its aims and is financially sustainable. This includes decisions on the provider's curriculum offer.

■ Higher Education: STEM Subjects

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to encourage students to study STEM subjects at university.

Robert Halfon:

The department is investing an additional £750 million over the next three years to support high-quality teaching and facilities including in science and engineering. This includes the largest increase in government funding for the higher education sector in over a decade and will support students and teaching.

Twelve Institutes of Technology have already been established, with a further nine announced in December 2021. Institutes of Technology are designed to be prestigious, high-quality education providers created through innovative collaborations between further education colleges, universities, and employers. They provide higher technical education and training in key science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sectors, such as digital, construction, advanced manufacturing, and engineering.

There are also over 350 apprenticeship standards available in STEM, many of which are at degree level and delivered by universities, such as civil and manufacturing engineering apprenticeships. These offer another way for people to study STEM subjects at university whilst also earning a salary with a STEM employer.

■ Office for Students: Complaints

Matt Western:

[\[87948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Office for Students on responding in a timely manner to complaints.

Robert Halfon:

The Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education is the independent body set up to review student complaints. The Office for Students (OfS) does not have the power to review student complaints.

■ Scholarships

Matt Western:

[\[87946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress she has made on the establishment of the UK national state scholarship announced in February 2022.

Matt Western:

[\[87947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects the UK national state scholarship, announced in February 2022, to be open for applications.

Robert Halfon:

The department is grateful to those who responded to the Higher Education Reform consultation and shared their views about a National State Scholarship. We are now considering these responses and will provide further information in due course.

Schools: Food**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[88964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Food Strategy Report published in July 2021, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of updating the School Food Standards to remove the mandatory servings of (a) meat including fish and (b) dairy as suggested in that report.

Nick Gibb:

The Department believes that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils continue to receive high quality and nutritious food that builds healthy eating habits for life.

The Department's current focus is on promoting compliance with the School Food Standards, and it will keep this under review. In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined what the Department is doing to strengthen adherence. This includes piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, funding of up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their websites setting out their whole school approach to food.

The Department will consider the National Food Strategy Report's recommendations in future updates.

Alex Sobel:[\[89017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of updating the School Food Standards to remove the mandatory servings of meat, including fish, and dairy.

Nick Gibb:

The Department believes that the current school food standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high quality and nutritious food. The framework should build healthy eating habits for life.

The Department's focus is on promoting compliance with the school food standards. The Department is keeping this under review. In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined several measures the Department is implementing to strengthen adherence. These include piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme, and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites setting out their whole school approach to food.

■ Schools: Sefton Central**Bill Esterson:****[86465]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant of the Answer of 27 September to Question 44953 on Schools: Finance, how much funding schools in Sefton Central have received in the 2021-2022 academic year as of 14 November 2022; and what estimate he has made of his expected expenditure in those schools in that constituency in the 2023-24 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

Schools in Sefton Central attracted over £68.6 million in the 2021/22 financial year, based on the schools National Funding Formula. This is an extra £2.6 million compared to the 2020/21 financial year. This represented an increase of 3.5% per pupil for their pupil-led funding compared to the 2020/21 financial year. Constituency figures are based on an aggregate of school allocations.

Core schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year; and the additional funding announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement means it will rise by another £3.5 billion next year. Taken together, that means a 15% increase in funding in two years. The Department will set out its plans for allocation of the additional funding provided by the Autumn Statement shortly.

Information on school expenditure for maintained schools can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-local-authority-school-finance-data>, and here for academies:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-sector-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

Bill Esterson:**[86466]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has held discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding for schools in Sefton Central constituency.

Nick Gibb:

The Department engages regularly with His Majesty's Treasury on a number of matters, including on school funding.

The Government is prioritising further funding for schools, including those in the Sefton Central constituency. The Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools' budget of £2.3 billion for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting to account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published in the 2021 Spending Review. Schools funding is already £4 billion higher this year than last year, and this additional funding means that it will rise by a further £3.5 billion next year. Combined, that means a 15% increase in funding within two years.

The Department will set out plans for the distribution of the additional funding provided through the Autumn Statement in due course.

■ Schools: Sports

Steve McCabe:

[\[88803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps her Department has taken to help increase the number of children playing sport at school.

Nick Gibb:

Through the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium, the Department has devoted over £2 billion of ringfenced funding to primary schools to improve PE and sport since 2013.

The premium supports primary schools to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE and sport. The Government has announced that the £320 million primary PE and sport premium and funding for School Games Organisers will continue for the 2022/23 academic year.

The Government is supporting schools to open their sports facilities beyond the school day to offer more opportunities for pupils and communities to play sport and be physically active. Building on an initial £1.6 million in 2020, £10.1 million of extra funding has supported schools across England to open their sports facilities outside of the school day. In October 2021, the Government announced that it will spend nearly £30 million per year to fund phase three of the Opening School Facilities programme, as well as to improve the teaching of PE and sport at primary school.

The Government is updating the cross-Government School Sport and Activity Action Plan. This will be published in due course, to align with timing of the Government's new sport strategy.

■ Students: Loans

Fleur Anderson:

[\[88019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of trends in the level of interest on student loans on people repaying those loans during the cost of living crisis.

Robert Halfon:

No student loan borrower will be paying more per month as a result of changes to interest rates. Monthly repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the relevant repayment threshold and do not change based on interest rates or the amount borrowed.

The mechanism for setting student loan interest rates is set out in legislation. Interest rates for post 2012 (Plan 2) and Postgraduate (Plan 3) loans are set annually with reference to the Retail Price Index (RPI) from the previous March. The rates take effect from 1 September each year.

Student loans offer unique protections to borrowers. Monthly student loan repayments are calculated by income rather than by interest rates, or the amount borrowed. If income is below the relevant repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, then they do not have to make repayments at all. Any outstanding debt,

including interest accrued, is written off at the end of the loan term, or in case of death or disability, at no detriment to the borrower. There are no commercial loans that offer this level of protection.

To further protect borrowers, the government, by law, must cap maximum student loan rates to ensure the interest rate charged on the loan is in line with market rates for comparable unsecured personal loans. The government monitors student loan rates against the Bank of England's data series for the effective interest rates on new and existing unsecured personal loans.

In June 2022 the government set interest rates at a maximum ceiling of 7.3%, for the duration of the 2022/23 academic year, in line with forecast market rates, to protect student loan borrowers on Plan 2 and Plan 3 loans. The government confirmed that should the actual Prevailing Market Rate (PMR) turn out to be lower than forecast, a further cap would be implemented to reduce student loan interest rates accordingly. From 1 September 2022 to 30 November 2022, reflecting a lower than forecast PMR, the maximum interest rate is set at 6.3% for all Plan 2 and Plan 3 borrowers.

On 9 November it was further announced that from 1 December 2022 to 28 February 2023 the maximum interest rate will be set at 6.5% for all Plan 2 and Plan 3 loans, reflecting the most recent PMR.

From the 2023/24 academic year, student loan borrowers starting new courses will benefit from interest rates of RPI only. This change ensures that, under the new Plan 5 loan terms, new borrowers will not repay more than they originally borrowed, when adjusted for inflation.

■ Teachers: Vacancies

Conor McGinn:

[90830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) teacher and (b) teaching assistant positions are vacant in (i) St Helens, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) England.

Nick Gibb:

Information on the state funded school workforce in England, including the number and rate of teacher vacancies by school each November, is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistics release, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>. Data for November 2022 will be published in summer 2023.

In November 2021, there were three teacher vacancies in St Helens, 29 in Merseyside and 1,564 in England.

Information on teaching assistant vacancies is not collected centrally.

■ Young People: Education

Catherine West:

[88979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the Commission on Young Lives entitled Hidden in Plain Sight published in November 2022,

what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations in that report.

Claire Coutinho:

Departmental officials regularly met with Anne Longfield during the development of the Commission's report, and are considering their findings. The department is clear that safety from abuse, neglect and exploitation is a fundamental right for every child. We have made an additional £4.8 billion available up to 2025 for local authorities, who are responsible for protecting vulnerable children, to deliver key services.

The department is investing more than £1 billion to improve early help services, through a network of Family Hubs, programmes supporting thousands of families to stay together safely, and to provide support with their mental health and healthy food and activities during the school holidays. We are also strengthening the links between social care and education and providing targeted support to keep the children most at risk of exploitation engaged in their education.

To support long term change, the department is rapidly working up an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy in response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, including in relation to children who face harm outside the home.

The department is also providing targeted support through Alternative Provision and Support, Attend, Fulfil, Succeed (SAFE) taskforces, to keep vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation, serious violence and crime engaged in their education and on the right track. The Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme (2019-2023) continues to work with local areas to improve responses to safeguarding young people from exploitation and extra familial risk.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ African Swine Fever: Agriculture

Dan Jarvis:

[\[75927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to protect the British agricultural sector from the potential threat of African Swine Fever.

Mark Spencer:

Following a risk assessment by the Animal and Plant Health Agency regarding the threat of African Swine Fever (ASF), on 31 August we announced new controls restricting the movement of pork and pork products into Great Britain to help safeguard Britain's pig population. Travellers from the EU are no longer allowed to bring pork or pork products weighing over two kilograms into GB, unless they are produced to the EU's commercial standards. The new controls, which came into force on 1 September, will strengthen GB's biosecurity in relation to the standards for bringing pork and pork products into GB from the EU and EFTA states.

A UK-wide exercise that simulated an outbreak of ASF was carried out in 2021 to test government contingency plans to contain and eliminate the disease in the event that it reached the UK. The aim of the exercise was to help improve the UK's animal disease response capabilities through testing plans, instructions and the structures employed in managing an outbreak.

■ Agriculture: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Caroline Lucas:

[87811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2022 to Question 68522 on Environmental Land Management Schemes: Greenhouse Gas Emissions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the projected reduction in agricultural emissions on the requirement in the Net Zero Strategy for emissions from agriculture and land use to fall by at least 12MtCO₂e p.a. by 2037 in England.

Mark Spencer:

We previously published our assessment of outcomes expected to be delivered by the Environmental Land Management Schemes at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-schemes-outcomes/environmental-land-management-schemes-outcomes>

Further to this we will also continue to pursue further opportunities through the schemes to support farmers and land managers' contribution to delivering our Carbon Budgets, including through tree planting and peat restoration.

Caroline Lucas:

[87812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer 30 October to Question 68522 on Environmental Land Management Schemes: Greenhouse Gas Emissions, whether her Department has taken steps to scale up existing land management policies to close the gap between the estimated emissions reductions from agriculture and land use in England of (a) 6 MtCO₂e p.a. in Carbon Budget 6 for 2033-37 and (b) 12MtCO₂e p.a by 2037 in England as set out in the Net Zero Strategy; and if she will make a statement.

Mark Spencer:

In October 2021 we published our Net Zero Strategy, including indicative sector pathways to meet net zero targets, including for the agriculture, forestry and other land use sector. As published in January 2022, we anticipate the collective actions of farmers under our environmental land management scheme agreements, together with our other farming offers such as the Farming Investment Fund, will decarbonise agricultural emissions by a total of up to 6 MtCO₂e p.a. in Carbon Budget 6 (2033-37) in England.

The existing Countryside Stewardship scheme offer land managers a range of grants which support net zero ambitions. This includes the creation, management and restoration of habitats beneficial for carbon sequestration such as peatlands, grasslands, moorlands, woodlands and hedgerows, reducing emissions through

organic conversion and management, actions to improve air quality, and slurry management.

We are designing the new environmental land management schemes so that farmers will be paid to deliver climate change mitigation alongside other public goods.

■ **Cereals: Public Private Partnerships**

Stephen Hammond: [\[87801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a public private partnership for whole grain on improving health outcomes.

Mark Spencer:

The Government's longstanding recommendations on fibre are based on the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), which advises the Government on nutrition related matters. As part of its horizon scanning processes in June 2022, the committee agreed to undertake an overview and initial assessment of existing definitions of wholegrain and wholegrain foods for consideration and agreement by SACN, before consideration of any further work in this area.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Redundancy Pay**

Emily Thornberry: [\[77344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what total amount of money has been paid out by her Department in severance payments for former (a) Ministers and (b) special advisers since 29 June 2022; how much of that money has subsequently been repaid to her Department as a result of individuals (A) rejecting the payment or (B) returning to new roles; and in how many cases where individuals were in post for (I) 0-3 months, (II) 3-6 months, (III) 6-12 months and (IV) more than 12 months has their full severance payment been retained as of 2 November 2022.

Mark Spencer:

The provision of severance payments for Ministers is set out in legislation. Details of the severance payments made to Ministers when leaving office are published in departments' annual reports and accounts.

Similarly, the provision of severance payments for special advisers is set out in the Model Contract, which is available on gov.uk, including provisions for repayment of severance if reappointed. The cost of severance payments made to special advisers across government is published annually by the Cabinet Office.

■ **Flood Control: Rural Areas**

Julian Sturdy: [\[87829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect rural communities from flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

Government is investing £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027, providing around 2,000 flood defences to better protect communities and properties across England, including those in rural areas, from flooding and coastal erosion.

This is invested where flood risk and the benefits of action are greatest, and this assessment includes economic impacts on agriculture. As a result, at the end of 2021/22 the Environment Agency reported that 28,093 hectares of agricultural land had been better protected.

On 26 July 2022, government announced the creation of a new £100m Frequently Flooded Allowance (FFA) to support communities that have experienced repeated flooding. This seeks to address some of the specific challenges faced by frequently flooded communities, particularly those that are smaller and more isolated or rural and therefore struggle to secure the funding they need to improve their resilience to flooding. We expect to publish more information later this year on the first projects to benefit.

We are also investing £200m for the Flood and Coastal Innovation programme to support local places including coastal and rural communities. This meets key government commitments to develop and test new approaches to tackle the threat of flooding and coastal change.

Farmers and land managers also have an important role to play in reducing the risk of flooding and coastal erosion to both rural and urban areas. Through the new Environmental Land Management schemes, farmers and other land managers will be supported to improve the environment and help manage environmental hazards, such as flood risk.

■ Floods: Housing**Jim McMahon:**[\[89881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many houses were damaged by flooding in each year since 2010.

Jim McMahon:[\[89882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many businesses have had properties damaged by flooding in each year since 2010.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) records properties (homes and businesses) affected by large flood events, through information provided during incidents, or through working with communities recovering from flooding. The EA does not distinguish between homes and businesses for large flood events. The table below provides the EA estimates for the number of properties flooded, but not necessarily damaged, during significant flood events since 2010.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities or Lead Local Flood Authorities may hold more detailed information for smaller scale events, and events

where surface water was the major cause of flooding. Where Lead Local Flood Authorities hold more information, they publish this through Section 19 reports.

Between April 2015 and March 2021, the Government invested £2.6 billion in its first 6-year flood and coastal defence programme for England. This programme exceeded its target of better protecting 300,000 homes. The Government announced in 2020 that the amount invested in the 2021-2027 investment programme would be doubled in England to £5.2 billion, providing around 2,000 flood defences to better protect communities across England. Every English region is forecast to receive more investment in flood and coastal defences in this programme compared to the previous 2015 to 2021 investment programme.

YEAR	FLOOD EVENT	PROPERTIES FLOODED	PROPERTIES PROTECTED
2010	Cornwall (Nov)	250	Data not available
2012	Nationwide (Mar -Dec)	7,900	200,000
2013/14	Nationwide / East Coast (Dec -May)	11,000	1.4 million
2015/16	North of England (Dec - Jan) Storms Desmond, Eva and Frank	17,000	23,400
2018	South East/ Midlands - Thunderstorms (May)	600 (+300 unconfirmed)	Data not available
2019	East / Midlands/ South East (June)	383	Data not available
2019/20 (winter)	Nationwide (Nov-Feb)	4,500	130,000
2019	Yorkshire & N England (7-22 Nov)	1,100	22,275
2019	Cornwall and South (19-23 Dec)	100	22,658
2020	Storm Ciara (9-14 Feb)	1,346	23,415
2020	Storm Dennis (16-23 Feb)	1,569	25,109
2020	Late Feb (24-29)	516	35,740

YEAR	FLOOD EVENT	PROPERTIES FLOODED	PROPERTIES PROTECTED
2020	Storm Bella (14-17 Dec) and Heavy rain (17- 31 Dec) Buckingham, Newport Pagnell, Northampton, Rugby	400	9,000
2021	Storm Christoph (18- 20 Jan) North Wales and northern England	675	49,000
2022	Storm Dudley, Eunice, Franklin (15-22 Feb)	372	35,000

■ Food

Stephen Hammond:

[\[87802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to publish draft legislation following the production of the Food Strategy White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mark Spencer:

The Government Food Strategy set out our plan to transform the food system to ensure it is fit for the future and we are focussed on implementing the plans and policies we announced in the strategy. Recently this has included publishing plans for our Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain, running a call for evidence on methane suppressing feed additives, and completing our consultations on improved reporting of food waste by large food businesses and public sector food and catering policy.

We are confident that most policies in the Food Strategy can be implemented using existing primary powers. We will continue to review the legal powers needed for our policies and will seek new legislation only where needed.

■ Food: Health

Stephen Hammond:

[\[87804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact to consumer diets of (a) delaying the food strategy and (b) focusing on policies on food deemed high in fat, sugar or salt.

Mark Spencer:

The Government Food Strategy sets out our plan to ensure the food system is fit for the future and supports healthy and sustainable diets and are focussed on

implementing the measures in this strategy. We have committed to report on how we are taking forward our actions under the strategy alongside the next UK Food Security Report.

DHSC have published impact assessments alongside all of our regulatory policies on products high in fat, salt or sugar. Restrictions on the promotion by location of products high in fat, salt or sugar in large retail settings came into force on 1 October and are expected to accrue health benefits of over £57 billion and provide NHS savings of over £4 billion, over the next 25 years. We are also working with the food industry to ensure it is easier for people to make healthier choices and increase progress on the reformulation of products.

■ Horticulture: Recruitment

Esther McVey:

[87834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has taken recent steps to help support ornamental horticulture nurseries to access the workforce they need to meet (a) market demand and (b) environmental targets.

Mark Spencer:

Defra recognises the importance of the domestic ornamental horticulture sector in promoting people's health and wellbeing, as well as to the economy – UK ornamental production being worth £1.6 billion in 2021. Our highly skilled growers enable us to grow a wide range of top-quality fresh flowers and plants for much of the year. Defra regularly meets with the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group, who last year published their 'Unlocking green growth: A plan from the ornamental horticulture & landscaping industry', an action plan which explores opportunities to accelerate the sector's growth and sets out the industry's potential contributions to the environmental challenges facing the UK. Where Government can help, we will support the opportunities outlined in the plan.

On 24th December 2021, HM Government announced that the Seasonal Worker visa route has been extended until 2024 to allow overseas workers to come to the United Kingdom for up to six months to harvest both edible and ornamental crops.

As announced in the Government Food Strategy in June, an extra 10,000 visas have been released for the Seasonal Worker visa route, with 8,000 of these going to the horticulture sector and 2,000 to the poultry sector. This brings the total number of visas for the horticulture sector, including ornamentals, to 38,000 for 2022. The new Government is carefully considering the position on visa quotas for 2023 and we will say more in due course.

During 2021, Defra undertook a review of automation in horticulture, covering both the edible and ornamental sectors in England. We published the [Review](#) on 27 July 2022 and a response from HM Government to the Review's recommendations will follow soon. The government response will work alongside the extended and expanded Seasonal Worker visa route and Defra's efforts to attract more residents of

the United Kingdom into agricultural work – to support the overall aim of reducing the sector's dependency on seasonal migrant labour.

All ornamental horticultural businesses are encouraged to advertise roles through the Department for Work & Pensions' (DWP's) Find A Job website, where they can upload and manage their vacancies. DWP do not charge for this service and it is available across the United Kingdom.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Stella Creasy: [\[69615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Walthamstow and the hon. Member for Bristol East of 25 April 2022.

Rebecca Pow:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 15 November 2022, with apologies for the extended delay in responding.

■ **Peat Bogs: Biofuels**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[88834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the land area of UK peatlands in hectares that is used for the production of crops for biofuels.

Mark Spencer:

In 2020 just under 36,000 hectares of British crops consisting of wheat and sugar beet were used for biofuels supplied to the British road transport market. This equates to 0.6% of the total arable area of the United Kingdom. However, HM Government does not have data on the land area of peatland used to produce crops for the biofuel market.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Academic Technology Approval Scheme**

Joanna Cherry: [\[90825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November to Question 86512 on Academic Technology Approval Scheme, how many applications are awaiting decision; and for how many days the oldest outstanding application has been waiting for a decision.

Joanna Cherry: [\[90826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of universities and colleges on the Academic Technology Approval Scheme.

Joanna Cherry:

[\[90827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent estimate of the number of post graduate international students unable to commence their course of studies in the UK due to delays in applications being processed under the Academic Technology Approval Scheme; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of delays in processing these applications on the UK's reputation as a destination for (a) international students and (b) academic research.

Leo Docherty:

So far in 2022 we have received over 45,000 applications. We currently have 3382 applications under consideration, including those within the target processing time; the oldest outstanding application is 324 days. FCDO staff have regular meetings with the Higher Education Sector to discuss a variety of topics relating to the protection of sensitive research and that includes ATAS. In addition, FCDO works closely with other government departments to ensure that ATAS policy is fully understood and communicated in their conversations with the sector. It is not possible to make a calculation of the impact of delays to course start dates as a result of ATAS assessments because not all ATAS applications lead to a visa application and courses start throughout the year.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Climate Change Convention and United Nations**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help increase representation for the British Overseas Territories at (a) the United Nations, (b) COP27 and (c) other global bodies.

Leo Docherty:

We are committed to representing the Overseas Territories in international fora in line with our constitutional responsibilities and to supporting their priorities, including climate change and security. Representation of the Overseas Territories increased at COP26 and COP27. The Territories continue to represent themselves at relevant UN meetings, including the recent UN Fourth Committee. The UK has a modern relationship with all of its Overseas Territories based on partnership and shared values. The Territories have a large measure of internal self-government, subject only to the UK retaining powers to carry out its obligations under international law.

■ **British Overseas Territories: EU Trade**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives of the UK Overseas Territories Association on (a) the potential impact of EU trade tariffs on levels of trade

with and (b) proposals for the lifting of EU trade tariffs on UK Overseas Territories; and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

The frequency of discussions between the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and representatives of the UK Overseas Territories Association regarding EU trade tariffs will be determined by each territories' respective interests and their request for discussions. The UK Government does not plan to make a statement on this issue.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Infrastructure**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funds his Department has ringfenced for the purpose of supporting long term infrastructure development for each of the British Overseas Territories.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has an obligation to ensure that the needs of Overseas Territories are met, including provision of key infrastructure and services. Access to high quality infrastructure services is necessary to meet long term economic and social development goals across the Overseas Territories. We have ongoing infrastructure investment commitments of up to £161.8 million, in St. Helena, Montserrat, and Anguilla. This capital investment is enhanced by technical assistance and financial aid where relevant, to maximise social and economic benefits. We will continue to invest on a needs basis, and to work with territories to design future infrastructure interventions.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Russia**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the decision by the Russian Federation to include all British Overseas Territories on a so-called unfriendly list; and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

International sanctions are having a significant impact on Putin's war machine. The Russian Federation has introduced a range of retaliatory measures. British Overseas Territories have been added to a list of countries and territories who have committed "unfriendly actions" - a response to their support for sanctions. This places a number of restrictions on the operations and transactions of entities from these territories within Russia and with Russian firms. Neither this nor any other measure will deter us or our partners - including the Overseas Territories - from our steadfast support of Ukraine.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives of the British Overseas

Territories on the decision by the Russian Federation to include all British Overseas Territories on a so-called unfriendly list.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government is proud of the principled stand that the Overseas Territories, as part of the UK family, have taken in relation to sanctions. UK sanctions apply in all Overseas Territories and the elected leaders of the Territories have publicly committed to implementing sanctions against Russia following its illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia noted the Territories support of UK sanctions in their decision to include all Territories alongside the UK on a so-called unfriendly list. We are in regular contact with the Overseas Territories and will continue to discuss the impact of the implementation of sanctions including Russia's designations.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Visits Abroad**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to visit the British Overseas Territories.

David Rutley:

Discussions are ongoing about the next visits to the Territories following the recent appointment of the Minister for Overseas Territories, Lord Goldsmith.

■ **Commonwealth: Environment Protection**

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[87835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help support environmentally-friendly development in (a) Gabon and (b) other Commonwealth nations.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government supports environmentally friendly development in Gabon through our Forests, Governance, Markets and Climate programme. This supports the implementation of national forest governance reforms prioritised by the Government of Gabon, including the sustainable growth of the forest sector, traceability and transparency systems to ensure legality and sustainability, and strengthening multi stakeholder capacity in-country to follow up on the reform process. We are actively considering further work in the country, including through the new Biodiverse Landscapes Fund.

Environmentally sustainable development is a priority for the UK Government and across the Commonwealth we are delivering this through a wide portfolio of programmes. Our contributions to multilateral institutions focused on the environment and development, such as the Central African Forests Initiative, the Global Environment Facility, and the Green Climate Fund, are an important part of this effort.

■ Development Aid

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the practice of other G20 countries using overseas development aid domestically.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

No assessment has been made of the potential implications for the Foreign Secretary's policies of the practice of other G20 countries using overseas development aid domestically. The UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend is in line with rules set by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

■ East Africa: Food Supply

Fleur Anderson:

[\[88011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much the UK has contributed to the East Africa hunger crisis in each year since 2019.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is a major humanitarian donor to the East Africa region and continues to play an active role in responding to the worsening humanitarian and hunger crisis. From 1 April 2019 to March 2022, the UK has provided £1.1 billion in humanitarian assistance to the East Africa region. This includes £451 million in financial year 2019/20, £430 million in 2020/21 and £221 million in 2021/22. In financial year 2022/23, the UK intends to provide approximately £156 million in humanitarian assistance across the region.

■ Mali: Security

Ruth Jones:

[\[87978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Mali.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Instability in Mali is rising. The Malian partnership with Wagner Group is counterproductive to long-term stability. We are tracking the surge in human rights abuses and violations since Wagner Group deployment in December 2021. UK Ministers have called for transparent and independent investigations and reiterated the importance of compliance with International Humanitarian Law during counterterrorism operations. Instability is also impacting on the humanitarian situation. A third of the population in Mali need humanitarian assistance, including 1.8 million people in food crisis or emergency. On 14 November, the Minister for Armed Forces informed Parliament that the UK will withdraw from the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) earlier than the previously planned date of December 2023. The UK remains committed to supporting regional security and the people of Mali including through our humanitarian, development, and stabilisation programmes.

■ **Russia: Terrorism**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[88866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will classify Russia as a terrorist state.

Leo Docherty:

The UK does not have a power to proscribe a country as a "State Sponsor" of Terrorism. The UK and our allies condemn the Russian government's unprovoked and premeditated invasion of Ukraine. We have considerable powers to sanction the Russian Government, which we have used with our allies for significant effect. We have implemented the strongest set of economic sanctions ever to debilitate Russia's economy and degrade funding for Putin's war.

■ **South Africa: Shipping**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in South Africa regarding the passage of a vessel owned by Alexey Mordashov.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK and our international partners have implemented the most severe package of economic sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. Since the invasion of Ukraine, we have constrained Putin's War Machine by designating over 1,200 individuals and 120 entities with global assets worth over £145 billion. Alexey Mordashov is subject to a UK asset freeze and travel ban. Third countries, including South Africa, have no legal obligations to abide by and implement sanctions imposed by the UK and others. While I hope to regularly talk to my South African counterpart, including regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I have not discussed the suggested passage of a vessel owned by Alexey Mordashov.

■ **Turks and Caicos Islands: Organised Crime**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands on gang-related violence within that territory; and whether his Department has provided recent support to the Turks and Caicos Islands to help tackle gang-related violence.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is committed to the security of the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) and is supporting their response to the recent increase in serious crime. The FCDO speaks regularly with the Governor, and this issue was raised by the previous Minister for the OTs on a visit to TCI in October.

UK support has included deployment of a Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship and from the National Crime Agency. The UK has confirmed a package of longer-term support, including rolling deployments of specialist police officers and an FCDO-funded serious crime team to provide permanent investigative capability to the TCI police.

■ **Ukraine: Energy**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the resilience of Ukraine's energy sector in the context of recent Russian attacks on energy infrastructure.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is committed to shoring up Ukraine's energy and wider resilience despite Russia's latest barbaric attacks. To date, our assistance to Ukraine's energy sector includes £22 million of support, partly to increase resilience in the face of Russian attacks on infrastructure. This includes £7 million for over 850 generators to ensure vital facilities have power; £10 million to the Energy Community's pooled support fund to help Ukraine's efforts to repair infrastructure and reconnect households and facilities to electricity and gas supply; and £5 million for safety and security equipment for the civil nuclear sector.

■ **Ukraine: State Visits**

Liam Byrne:

[\[89754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the visit of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Ukraine to Eton College on 16 November 2022 was conducted in a public or private capacity.

Leo Docherty:

Melinda Simmons was invited to speak at Eton College on 16 November 2022 by the Eton College Politics Society about the work of the British Embassy Kyiv in Ukraine. In her capacity as His Majesty's Ambassador to Ukraine, Melinda Simmons spoke for 15 minutes and took 45 minutes of questions.

■ **UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali**

John Healey:

[\[87746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment has he made of the humanitarian impact of the UK withdrawal from the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA in Mali.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK remains troubled about rising instability in Mali and the wider Sahel and the impact of this on the humanitarian situation. A third of the population in Mali need humanitarian assistance, including 1.8 million people in food crisis or emergency. The UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) has a key role to play in creating a secure environment for the safe, civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance and, as a

Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, the UK will continue to support the mission in fulfilling its objectives. The UK remains committed to supporting those most in need, last year we spent around £300 million in the Sahel, including in Mali. The UK recently announced new support for 2022 which provides vital food, water and sanitation assistance for people in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, focused on areas where conflict, climate change and extreme hunger are causing the most suffering.

■ United Nations: Sustainable Development

Fleur Anderson: [\[88014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of potential impact of the 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent reduction in aid spending on the UK's ability to work with the international community to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fleur Anderson: [\[88015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps the Government has taken to work with the international community towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 as affirmed in the International Development Strategy. We continue to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to do so including government partners, civil society and the private sector. All UK aid continues to be spent in line with international rules on what constitutes Official Development Assistance (ODA) set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. The FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities, which are closely aligned with the SDGs. Aid alone is not enough to achieve the SDGs. Mobilisation of domestic resources and private finance is critical. We are focusing on delivering honest, reliable investment, empowering women and girls, stepping-up our life-saving humanitarian work and taking forward our commitments on climate change, nature and global health.

■ Vladimir Kara-Murza

Brendan O'Hara: [\[89841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implication for his policies of the steps the Canadian government has taken in imposing Magnitsky sanctions on those responsible for the unlawful arrest and detention of a British citizen in Russia, Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[89842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to engage his Russian counterparts on the situation of a British citizen unlawfully arrested and detained in Russia, Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Leo Docherty:

British Embassy officials have attended Vladimir Kara-Murza's court hearings with other international partners, the last hearing being 24 October. We remain vigilant to attempts by the Russian government to exclude diplomats from future court hearings following Mr Kara-Murza's additional treason charge. HMA Moscow raised the issue of consular access with the Russian MFA. In May, the Foreign Secretary met Mr Kara-Murza's wife, in his previous role as Minister for Europe, and emphasised his determination to continue raising Mr Kara-Murza's case at multilateral fora, including the OSCE. We note the Canadian government's sanctions relating to Mr Kara-Murza. We do not comment on future sanctions designations.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Adult Social Care Discharge Fund****Rachael Maskell:****[90832]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Departments plans to formally allocate funds from the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to social care providers.

Helen Whately:

As announced on 16 November 2022, the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund will be provided to integrated care boards and local authorities. These funding allocations are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-discharge-fund>

The first tranche of funding will be distributed in December 2022 and the second at the end of January 2023.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**Dan Carden:****[R] [89015]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2nd November 2022 to Question 72439 on Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse, what steps the Department has taken to implement the effective policies mentioned in Public Health England's evidence review: The Public Health Burden of Alcohol and the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies, published in 2016, to reduce the public health burden of alcohol.

Neil O'Brien:

Public Health England's evidence review recommended a range of evidence-based policies which could be effective at reducing alcohol harm, including those related to taxation, regulating marketing and clinical interventions.

The Government is reforming alcohol duty to tax all alcohol according to strength, which will be implemented from 1 August 2023. The Government is currently reviewing how online advertising is regulated in the United Kingdom, including age-

restricted or potentially harmful content, such as alcohol advertising. The consultation closed on 8 June 2022 and a response will be issued in due course.

Local authorities and the National Health Service are responsible for the provision of high-quality services to prevent, mitigate and treat alcohol-related health harm. This includes the identification of people at risk and brief advice, an alcohol risk assessment in the NHS Health Check and specialist services for dependent drinkers. Information and brief advice is also included at new general practitioner registrations and within the standard contract for secondary care. Through the drugs strategy, the Government is investing £532 million into local authority commissioned substance misuse treatment services in England, which include treatment for both drug and alcohol addiction.

■ Alcoholism and Drugs: Rehabilitation

Dan Carden: [R] [89012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much of the additional for funding for drug and alcohol treatment promised in From harm to hope: A 10 year plan to cut crime and save lives is being spent on family support services.

Dan Carden: [R] [89013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the policy paper by his Department entitled From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives, published on 6 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the additional funding for drug and alcohol treatment has been spent on family support services as of 16 November 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

The cross-government 10-year drugs strategy commits £532 million for local authorities in England to improve the treatment and recovery system in the next three years, in addition to the annual Public Health Grant. Indicative funding allocations for each local authority in 2022/23 were published on 13 April 2022.

Local authorities will determine which interventions can augment the current local treatment system. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities continues to support local authorities to invest in interventions focussed on or which will benefit children and families. We provide oversight of local delivery and continue to monitor implementation against the aims of the drug strategy.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards

Dr Matthew Offord: [92168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure ambulances can off-load their patients at hospitals within 15 minutes of arrival.

Will Quince:

NHS England is providing targeted support to some hospitals facing the greatest delays in the handover of ambulance patients into the care of hospitals, to identify

short and longer-term interventions. This is in addition to a new national Winter Improvement Collaborative programme to assist trusts to identify the causes of delays and implement best practice.

The National Health Service will increase capacity by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, improving patient flow through hospital and reducing waiting times in transferring ambulance patients to accident and emergency (A&E). In 2020/21, £450 million was invested to upgrade A&E facilities in over 120 NHS trusts, which is increasing physical capacity, reducing overcrowding and facilitating timely ambulance handovers.

■ **Blood: Shortages**

Wes Streeting:

[\[62908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate she has made of the number of operations that will need to be cancelled due to the shortage of blood supplies in NHS England.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 20 October 2022]: No estimate has been made. NHS England is currently exploring options to identify the impact of blood supplies on the elective waiting list. NHS Blood and Transplant is deploying measures to increase capacity for blood collections, ensure stocks remain available for emergencies and urgent surgeries in the immediate term and increase future resilience to similar or new challenges, such as staff absences. These measures include fast-track training for new staff, use of agency staff to support frontline donation centres in the short term and plasma collection capacity has been converted to use for blood collections. NHS Blood and Transplant is encouraging existing donors to book an appointment to donate.

■ **British Dental Association**

Feryal Clark:

[\[89073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on contract negotiations with the British Dental Association; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

On 19 July 2022, we announced improvements to the National Health Service dental system, negotiated with the British Dental Association (BDA). These improvements, which are supported by the sector, will ensure that dentists are more fairly rewarded for NHS care delivered and that NHS dentistry is a more attractive place to work for dentists and their teams. NHS England is currently holding further discussions involving the BDA, other dental stakeholder groups and patients.

■ Clinical Trials

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[89694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason his Department has not yet responded to the public consultation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on proposals for legislative changes for clinical trials, published on 17 January 2022; and what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure that the transparency expectations of regulators are met.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The response to the public consultation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on proposals for legislative changes for clinical trials will be published shortly.

All arm's length bodies, including those which fulfil a regulatory role, are expected to be transparent, including in the obligation to publish annual reports and accounts, adhering to the framework agreement documents and regular accountability meetings with the Department.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: EU Law

Emily Thornberry: [\[88850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on staff activity related to the review of retained EU laws within his Department's areas of responsibility since 1 September 2021; and what funding his Department has allocated for these purposes for the rest of the 2022-23 financial year.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Activity relating to the review of retained European Union law is carried out as part of officials' normal business activities and there is no specific funding allocated.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Wes Streeting: [\[87915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of NHS waiting lists on the UK's economy.

Wes Streeting: [\[87916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings he has held with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the impact of NHS waiting lists on the UK's economy.

Wes Streeting: [\[87917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of working age people economically inactive as a result of waiting for NHS treatment.

Wes Streeting: [\[87918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of (a) NHS waiting lists on the UK economy and (b) the number of working age people who are economically inactive as a result of waiting for NHS treatment.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: No formal assessment has been made. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues relating to the health and care sector.

■ **NHS****Alex Norris:** [\[87959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by which date he intends to publish the NHS Long Term Plan refresh.

Will Quince:

Following the autumn statement, the Department and NHS England will prepare detailed financial and delivery plans for future years, including in relation to the NHS Long Term Plan. Further information will be available in the new year.

■ **NHS Digital: Cybersecurity****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[84939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the cyber incident that is affecting the NHS Digital Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics occurred.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: The incident took place on 4 August 2022.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[84940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he was informed about the cyber incident that is affecting the NHS Digital Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: We were informed of the cyber incident on 4 August. We received further information on 9 November regarding the impact on the Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[84941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any (a) patient sensitive and (b) other confidential data was compromised in the cyber incident that is affecting the NHS Digital Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: The confidentiality of data held by mental health providers has not been compromised by the cyber incident. A small number of social care organisations were affected by a data breach. The software supplier

recovered the limited data obtained from its systems and believe the likelihood of harm to individuals is low. The organisations affected have been notified.

■ **NHS: Long Covid**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[88841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on long-COVID-affected NHS staff.

Will Quince:

This information is not held in the format requested. While the Office for National Statistics has published estimates of the proportion of those self-reporting the long-term effects of COVID-19 infection by employment sector, this does not identify National Health Service staff.

■ **NHS: Pay**

Dan Carden: [\[90874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increasing NHS worker pay would have on NHS (a) efficiency, (b) staff recruitment and (c) staffing shortages.

Will Quince:

The independent Pay Review Body process is the established mechanism for determining pay increases in the public sector, including for staff working in the National Health Service.

In forming its recommendations, the independent Pay Review Bodies consider a range of evidence, including the cost of living, inflation, recruitment, retention, morale and value for the taxpayer. The Department provides evidence as part of this process, including the latest data on the number of staff in the workforce, joiners, leavers and vacancies. The Pay Review Bodies also receive evidence from a range of stakeholders including NHS system partners and trade unions.

While pay is a contributory factor in staff recruitment and retention, any decisions by NHS staff about their employment are taken due to a variety of reasons.

■ **NHS: Plastics**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[87821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to help reduce single use plastics in NHS services.

Will Quince:

In October 2020, NHS England published 'Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service', in which the National Health Service set out its ambitions to meet net zero emissions by 2045, including a 10% reduction in clinical single-use plastics in the short term. The NHS will work with suppliers on the introduction of lower carbon products.

■ NHS: Staff

Caroline Lucas: [\[87805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2022 to Question 37529 on Health Professions: Parkinson's Disease, what his planned timetable is for the publication of an NHS workforce plan to support and care for people with (a) Parkinson's Disease, (b) other long-term conditions and (c) all other health needs; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan. The plan will consider the number of staff and the roles required and will set out the actions and reforms needed to improve workforce supply and retention.

The plan is currently being developed by NHS England. The Government has committed to publishing a comprehensive workforce plan next year which will include independently verified forecasts for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals required, taking full account of improvements in retention and productivity.

■ NHS: Standards

Andrew Gwynne: [\[92141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to announce which NHS targets that will be removed.

Will Quince:

There will be an independent review into integrated care system accountability, targets and performance, which will report in the new year.

■ Pharmacy

Feryal Clark: [\[89072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will respond to the consultation on Hub and Spoke dispensing.

Neil O'Brien:

We are currently reviewing, clarifying and analysing the submissions received to the consultation and a response will be published shortly.

■ Physiotherapy

Feryal Clark: [\[89075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help expand the size of the physiotherapy workforce.

Will Quince:

As of July 2022, there were 21,838 full-time equivalent physiotherapists working in National Health Service hospital trusts and commissioning bodies in England. This is an increase of 3.2% since July 2021.

The Government has made a non-repayable training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year available to all physiotherapy students, in addition to those studying nursing, midwifery or any other allied health profession course, with further financial support available to students for childcare, dual accommodation costs and travel. In 2021, 2,730 students were accepted onto a physiotherapy course in universities in England, compared to 2,145 acceptances in 2019. Health Education England also offers a physiotherapy apprenticeship pathway, providing an 'earn as you learn' route to a physiotherapy career in the NHS.

Feryal Clark:**[89077]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the NHS (a) has sufficient physiotherapists and physiotherapy support staff to meet demand for and (b) is prepared for additional pressure on rehabilitation services during winter 2022/23.

Will Quince:

As of July 2022, there were 21,838 full-time equivalent (FTE) physiotherapists working in National Health Service hospital trusts and commissioning bodies in England. This is an increase of 3.2% since July 2021. There were 4,778 FTE physiotherapy support staff in July 2022, which is an increase of 3.5% since July 2021.

Since September 2020 we have made a non-repayable training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year available to all eligible students studying a nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course, which includes physiotherapy, with further financial support available to students for childcare, dual accommodation costs and travel. In 2021, 2,730 students had been accepted onto a physiotherapy course in universities across England. Health Education England has also established an apprenticeship pathway for physiotherapists, providing an 'earn as you learn' route to a career in the National Health Service. We have commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan and its conclusions will be available in due course .

The NHS has committed to providing an additional 2,500 virtual ward beds by 31 December 2022, supported by an investment of up to £450 million by 2023/24, to address additional demand during the winter, allow patients to safely recover at home safely and maintain bed capacity in hospitals. As set out in the NHS Long Term Plan, we will ensure that all areas are delivering reablement care to patients within two days of referral by 2024.

■ **Physiotherapy: Vacancies**

Feryal Clark:

[\[89076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of NHS physiotherapy workforce vacancies in England; and what steps he is taking to fill such vacancies.

Will Quince:

No specific estimate has been made, as this information is not held centrally.

Since September 2020 we have made a non-repayable training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year available to all eligible students studying a nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course, which includes physiotherapy, with further financial support available to students for childcare, dual accommodation costs and travel.

Health Education England has also established an apprenticeship pathway for physiotherapists, providing an 'earn as you learn' route to a career in the National Health Service. We have commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan and its conclusions will be available in due course.

■ **Radiology: Consultants**

Sir Robert Neill:

[\[89779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the 28 per cent shortfall of interventional radiology consultants as identified in the Royal College of Radiologists' clinical radiology workforce census 2021.

Sir Robert Neill:

[\[89782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of Radiologists' Clinical radiology census report 2021, what assessment he has made of the conclusion that 55 per cent of clinical directors reported that they do not have enough interventional radiologists to deliver safe and effective patient care.

Will Quince:

No specific assessment has been made. Individual employers are responsible for ensuring the appropriate staff are available and trained to undertake their duties. There has been an increase of 63% in entry points in clinical radiology specialty training places from 2016 to 2021. In addition, through the Spending Review there has been an increase in funding for ST6 year for interventional radiologists for 20 places in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

As of July 2022, there were 5,040 full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors working in the National Health Service in England in the sub-specialism of clinical radiology. This is an increase of 5.7% since July 2021 and 55.4% since July 2010 and includes doctors in training grades, specialists and doctors on other contracts. The consultant clinical radiologist workforce has increased by 4.3% since July 2021 and 53.7% since July 2010. Health Education England is implementing the priorities identified in the cancer workforce plan phase 1 and is investing an additional £50 million in 2022/23 to

expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce, including postgraduate medical training of cancer-related medical professions, such as interventional radiologists.

■ **Surgery: Medical Equipment**

Sir George Howarth:

[\[80606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to utilise proven medical technology to (a) reduce the backlog in elective surgeries and (b) improve patient outcomes; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

We have committed £5.9 billion from 2022 to 2025 for new beds, equipment and technology, including medical technologies such as diagnostic scanning. This is in addition to £8 billion over the next three years and £1 billion in 2021/22 to increase and protect elective activity. This aims to ensure that the National Health Service in England can deliver approximately 30% more elective activity by 2024/25 than before the pandemic.

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' includes the expansion of surgical capacity, separating low complexity surgical pathways, improving outcomes for patients and reducing pressure on hospitals. Utilising medical technology such as artificial intelligence and automation aims to improve patient outcomes by reducing waiting times and offering improved care. Digital technology can assist healthcare workers to complete non-clinical tasks and increase the time spent on patient care.

■ **York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Staff**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with representatives from York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust on hotel rooms used by NHS staff.

Will Quince:

There have been no specific discussions.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Anti-Social Behaviour: Urban Areas**

Tom Hunt:

[\[87994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support local authorities in deterring anti-social behaviour in town centres.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and the wider community.

We provided the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. The Home Office published statutory guidance to support local areas to make effective use of these powers. The guidance sets out the importance of focusing on the needs of the victim and the local community, as well as ensuring that the relevant legal tests are met.

The Home Office announced in March this year that ASB would be one of the primary crime and issue types being targeted in the next rounds of the Safer Streets Fund. This funding goes towards local projects aimed at increasing the safety of public spaces for all with a particular focus on addressing neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour and tackling violence against women and girls. At the end of July, we announced the outcome of Round Four of the Safer Streets Fund, investing an additional £50 million and supporting 111 projects across England and Wales.

We are committed to ensuring that policing has the resources it needs to cut crime and increasing the number of police officers by 20,000 by March 2023. These 20,000 additional officers will be on top of recruitment to cover retirement and those leaving the police.

Police forces in England and Wales have recruited 15,343 additional uplift officers as at 30 September 2022, through the Police Uplift Programme, 77% of the 20,000 officer target by March 2023.

It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives respectively, to decide how best to respond to local.

■ **Crime: Rural Areas**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[89931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the effectiveness of current legislation in dealing with (a) all rural crime, (b) the unauthorised use of off-road vehicles on farmland (c) poaching, (d) hare coursing and (e) theft of farm equipment.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office regularly keeps legislation under review and where gaps are identified we will work to consider potential solutions. For example, the changes we introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 empowers and equips the police and courts with the powers they need to combat hare coursing.

■ Drugs: Crime**Andrew Rosindell:****[87764]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many drug offences were committed in Havering between 2019 and 2022.

Chris Philp:

The number of drug offences recorded by the police is published by the Home Office on a quarterly basis with breakdowns at Community Safety Partnership level including 'Havering'. This data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>.

■ Hate Crime: LGBT+ People**Dawn Butler:****[87783]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the rise in hate crimes against trans people in England and Wales.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Government takes all forms of hate crime seriously.

We welcome the apparent greater willingness to report hate crimes to the police and that the police are better at identifying them. That helps to explain the increase seen in hate crime this year.

Our priority is to get more police onto our streets, cut crime, protect the public and bring more criminals to justice. We are supporting police by providing them with the resources they need, including recruiting 20,000 extra police officers.

■ Home Office: Ministers' Private Offices**Emily Thornberry:****[90763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Annex A of the contract awarded by her Department to Prenax Limited on 15 November 2022 with procurement reference C23896, which hard copy newspapers are required to be delivered to her ministerial private office.

Chris Philp:

The ministerial private office hard copy requirements are:

Daily Express

Daily Mail

Daily Mirror

Daily Telegraph

Financial Times

Guardian

Private Eye Magazine

The Sun

The New Statesman

The Spectator

The Times

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [\[90764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist with obtaining a response to a letter from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire to the Director General for UKVI of 8 September 2022, reference ZA60587, relating to an asylum claim.

Rosie Cooper: [\[90766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist with obtaining a response to a letter from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire to the Director General for UKVI of 23 September 2022, reference ZA60638, relating to a missing biometric residency card.

Rosie Cooper: [\[90767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist with obtaining a response to a letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire to the Director General for UKVI of 23 September 2022, reference ZA60639, relating to a Biometric Residency Card.

Rosie Cooper: [\[90768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist with obtaining a response to a letter from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire to the Director General for UKVI of 3 October 2022, reference ZA60660, relating to an asylum claim.

Rosie Cooper: [\[90771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist with obtaining a response to a letter from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire to the Director General for UKVI of 3 October 2022, reference ZA60458, relating to an asylum claim.

Robert Jenrick:

MPAM/0429720/22 - The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 21 November 2022.

MPAM/0442836/22 - The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 21 November 2022.

MPAM/0442475/22 - The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 21 November 2022.

MPAM/0451237/22 - The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 21 November 2022.

MPAM/0450378/22 - The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 21 November 2022

■ **Motor Vehicles: Crime**

Alexander Stafford: [\[89929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle criminal use of off-road vehicles in South Yorkshire.

Alexander Stafford: [\[89930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of recording the number of off-road vehicles seized by police under section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises that the criminal use of off-road bikes is a serious problem which can cause nuisance and distress to communities. The police have the power under section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 to seize vehicles, including off-road vehicles being used in a criminal manner.

No assessment has been made on the merits of recording the number of off-road vehicles seized by the police under section 59 powers.

Enforcement of road traffic law is an operational matter for the Chief Constable in conjunction with local Police and Crime Commissioners to determine based on local policing priorities.

■ **Police**

Ruth Jones: [\[87973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a mandatory common set of standards and rules for police officers in England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

Police officers are governed by a statutory set of standards of professional behaviour, as set out in schedule 2 to the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020.

Breaches of these standards can lead to disciplinary action and they are underpinned by the College of Policing's Code of Ethics

■ **Police: Females**

Ruth Jones: [\[87976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle misogyny in police forces in England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

The Government remains determined to tackle misogyny in the police. That is why His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

was tasked with reviewing vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in policing across England and Wales looking in particular at what forces are doing to identify and deal with misogynistic behaviour.

The inspectorate's findings were published on 2 November and whilst we welcome the report's conclusion that culture is improving, the findings about adverse attitudes towards women are unacceptable and we expect all forces to take action in response as a matter of urgency.

We also expect the second part of the Angiolini Inquiry to further examine some of the issues raised by the inspectorate related to policing and the safety of women.

■ Police: Merseyside

Conor McGinn:

[90829]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) police officers, (b) police community support officers and (c) civilian staff there were in Merseyside in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-statistics).

Information on the number of police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and police staff in England and Wales broken by Police Force Area (PFA) as at the 31st March each year since 2007 can be found in the 'Police Workforce Open Data Table' available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-open-data-tables>.

While the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin remains the key measure of the size of the police workforce, as part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme, the Home Office also publishes a quarterly update on the number of officers (headcount terms only) in England and Wales, broken down by PFA. Data are available here: [Police Officer uplift statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-statistics).

■ Police: Racial Discrimination

Ruth Jones:

[87975]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle racism in police forces in England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

The government published the Inclusive Britain strategy which sets out a series of actions across policing to improve transparency, accountability, and effectiveness across recruitment, police training and use of police powers.

Reforms to the police complaints and discipline systems, introduced by the Government in 2020, strengthened the independent police "watchdog" - the

Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) – which plays a vital role in investigating the most serious and sensitive allegations. By law, all allegations of misconduct aggravated by discrimination, must be referred to the IOPC by forces.

■ **Police: Vetting**

Ruth Jones: [\[87974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the vetting process for new police recruits in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

The framework for police vetting is set by the College of Policing through its statutory vetting code of practice and vetting authorised professional practice (APP) guidance, which forces are expected to adhere to. The guidance is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The Home Office does not currently collect data on vetting processes for individual forces or regions. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) regularly inspects the effectiveness of forces' vetting arrangements across England and Wales. The recent inspection report on vetting, misconduct and misogyny - published on 2 November 2022 – highlighted a number of concerns with vetting practices and made recommendations for improvement. We expect policing to address all of its relevant recommendations in full.

■ **Police: Wales**

Ruth Jones: [\[87977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Ministers in the Welsh Government about improving the standards of behaviour in police forces across Wales.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office engage closely with the whole of the policing sector to improve standards across England and Wales. That is why the Home Office recently announced a review into the process of police officer dismissals, ensuring that improvements are made across all forces.

■ **Retail Trade: Crime Prevention**

Steve McCabe: [\[88804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to tackle retail crime in the West Midlands.

Chris Philp:

The Government is working closely with retailers, trade organisations, police and enforcement partners across England and Wales via the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to ensure the response to crimes affecting the retail sector

is as robust as it can be. This group includes representation from West Midlands Police who are involved in a number of crime prevention initiatives, including the Offender to Rehab Programme which is helping to reduce crimes like shoplifting by supporting prolific offenders with substance misuse issues through rehabilitation.

On a national level, we continue to work closely with the police-led National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) to understand the crimes affecting businesses and help ensure businesses and police are working effectively together. The NBCC launched a week of action in October involving a number of police force areas, including West Midlands, holding targeted operations in towns and city centres and engaging with local businesses to raise awareness of the impact of business crime and how to prevent it. The week of action has encouraged more effective partnership working and highlighted the importance of reporting crimes when they occur.

The Government has also recently taken significant action to tackle violence and abuse by introducing a statutory aggravating factor for assault against all public facing workers. This legislative change ensures the courts treat the public-facing nature of a victim's role as an aggravating factor when considering the sentence for an offence. Section 156 of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 commenced in June and sends a very clear message that assaults of this kind are unacceptable.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Portcullis House: Trees

Mr John Baron:

[\[86409\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans there are to use the space previously occupied by fig trees in the Portcullis House Atrium.

Sir Charles Walker:

The trees in Portcullis House were removed as they had become root bound, and as a result were no longer viable.

House teams are developing plans for the space in the Portcullis House atrium now the trees have been removed. The Administration Committee will be consulted later this year on the plans as they evolve.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Disclosure of Information

Layla Moran:

[\[86586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many (a) non-disclosure and (b) other confidentiality agreements relating to (i) employment, (ii) bullying, (iii) misconduct and (iii) harassment cases have been agreed by their Department in each

year since 1 January 2010; and how much money from the public purse has been spent on (A) legal costs and (B) financial settlements for such agreements in each year since 1 January 2010.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for International Trade has not agreed to any non-disclosure or other confidentiality agreements of the nature described in your question since its establishment in July 2016. This response also includes UK Export Finance.

■ **Department for International Trade: USA**

Ruth Cadbury:

[87858]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 November to Question 67063, how much of the £243,892.79 spent on flights and accommodation between April 2022 and September 2022 related to costs incurred by officials.

Nigel Huddleston:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: The Department is unable to separate the cost of officials' or ministers' flights and accommodation from other types of travel related expenditure as to do so would represent a disproportionate cost.

However, the details, including the cost of all DIT Ministerial travel, can be found on www.gov.uk - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dit-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

■ **Dual Use Goods and Technologies: Russia**

Drew Hendry:

[89855]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that dual use technologies from the UK that have been used by Russia in its war in Ukraine are (a) rapidly identified and (b) prevented from being sent to Russia via intermediary trading.

Nigel Huddleston:

Following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Government legislated to prohibit UK exports to Russia of controlled dual-use technology and many critical industry goods. The Government continues to review licence applications for the export of dual-use equipment and assess the risk that these items will be diverted to an undesirable end-user or for an undesirable end-use. We continue to work with international partners to tighten export controls; to broaden, deepen and sharpen our collective sanctions; and to limit Russia's ability to circumvent restrictions.

■ **Import Duties**

Gareth Thomas:

[89690]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to Section 5.31 of the Autumn Budget 2022, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, whether the proposed

two-year suspension of certain tariffs will include the suspension or removal of any trade remedies applied to affected goods.

Nigel Huddleston:

The tariff suspensions announced in the Autumn Budget will not include the suspension or removal of any existing trade remedies. Where suspensions coincide with an anti-dumping duty, that trade remedy will remain in force.

■ **Trade Agreements**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[71282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when Government (a) Ministers and (b) Officials last held discussions with representatives of (i) the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) and (ii) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on inclusion of (A) labour clauses or chapters and (B) the protection and promotion of human rights in trade agreements.

Greg Hands:

The Government has high regard for workers' rights, and we are clear that there will be no reduction in UK labour protections in signing up to new Free Trade Agreements. The UK takes our commitments to the International Labour Organization very seriously and encourage our partners to do the same.

Furthermore, the UK is a leading advocate for human rights around the world and we remain committed to the promotion of universal human rights. This is usually undertaken separately to negotiations on free trade agreements.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[71283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps the Government is taking promote the right to (a) health care, (b) education, (c) food, (d) water and sanitation and (e) employment within trade agreements.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[71285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what additional steps the Government is taking to embed human rights within its trade policy.

Greg Hands:

The UK is a leading advocate for human rights around the world and we remain committed to the promotion of universal human rights. This is usually undertaken separately to negotiations on free trade agreements.

JUSTICE

■ **Child Contact Centres: Finance**

Louise Haigh:

[\[87893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress he has made on setting the levels of funding for children's contact centres; and if he will make a statement.

Louise Haigh:

[87894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason some child contact centres have had their grants reduced by ten per cent.

Edward Argar:

The Government values the work of child contact centres and acknowledges the important role they play in providing neutral places for contact between children and their family members.

Until April this year, the Ministry of Justice provided small value grants, via Cafcass, to support the running of child contact centres. The Ministry of Justice is in the final stages of agreeing the funding arrangements for this year's grants and information will be made publicly available once this process is complete. Decisions on allocations of grant funding to individual centres will be determined once the new administration arrangements are in place.

■ **Veterans: Repossession Orders**

Rachel Hopkins:

[89936]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October to Question 68037 on Veterans: Repossession Orders, how many veterans moved from their settled home due to being evicted on a (a) fault and (b) no fault basis in each month since 1 January 2021.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice does not collect or hold any data on the occupation or previous occupations of defendants at any stage of possession proceedings up to and including eviction, nor whether parties to possession proceedings have served in the armed forces.

Official published statistics on possession volumes can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics>.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities holds CORE Social Housing Lettings data on households in new social housing lettings in England. This includes how many veterans moved from their previous settled home into a new social housing letting due to being evicted on a (a) fault and (b) no fault basis. This data was provided in our previous response to PQs 68036 & PQ68037. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities does not hold data on the reasons for leaving last settled home for veterans entering any other type of accommodation, outside of social housing.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Absent Voting****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[88022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of postal votes which were received by (a) domestic and (b) overseas electors too late to return them by election day in each local authority area at the last (i) general and (ii) local elections.

Lee Rowley:

The data requested is not held centrally. Individual Returning Officers keep records of postal votes they receive after the close of poll.

■ Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[90729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2022 to Question 72914, when the external assurance review of BCP Council's governance and finance arrangements will begin; who will conduct the review; whether local Members of Parliament will be able to give evidence; whether the hearings will be in public and whether the report will be published.

Lee Rowley:

The Department continues to make progress on the necessary arrangements for an assurance review of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council's governance and finance arrangements and an assessor will be appointed in due course. I will write to local MPs once the appointment has been made and the review has started.

BCP's external assurance review will be led by a sector expert and, whilst the review will not be conducted through public hearings, the assessor will speak with key officers and members, review relevant documentation and consider any representations from other sources (as they deem necessary) – I expect and will ask for the assessor to contact members of parliament as part of this process. The final report will be publicly available and published on GOV.UK.

■ Capital Investment**Chi Onwurah:**[\[90800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to paragraph 5.70 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, with which local stakeholders will the government be working.

Lee Rowley:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will work closely with mayors, devolved administrations, local authorities, businesses and other local partners as appropriate to consider how best to identify and support these clusters.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Disclosure of Information**Layla Moran:** [\[86587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many (a) non-disclosure and (b) other confidentiality agreements relating to (i) employment, (ii) bullying, (iii) misconduct and (iii) harassment cases have been agreed by their Department in each year since 1 January 2010; and how much money from the public purse has been spent on (A) legal costs and (B) financial settlements for such agreements in each year since 1 January 2010.

Dehenna Davison:

The information requested is not held centrally. The department however acts in line with published Cabinet Office guidance including, in particular [paragraph 7](#).

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Redundancy**Angela Rayner:** [\[89827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to introduce a voluntary exit programme for civil servants serving in his Department.

Dehenna Davison:

Any announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**Angela Rayner:** [\[90819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether photographic student ID will accepted as valid ID to vote under the Elections Bill 2022.

Angela Rayner: [\[90820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Answer of 1 July 2021 to Question 23232 on Elections: Proof of Identity, if he will make an estimate of the cost of training polling station staff to administer the voter ID requirements in the Elections Act 2022.

Angela Rayner: [\[90821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Answer of 1 July 2021 to Question 23232 on Elections: Proof of Identity, if he will make an estimate of (a) how many and (b) what the cost will be of privacy screens that will be required under voter ID requirements at the next general election.

Angela Rayner: [\[90822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of introducing voter identification in each of the next five years.

Angela Rayner:[\[90823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of introducing voter identification at local elections.

Lee Rowley:

The Government remains fully committed to addressing the serious issue of fraud in elections. Building on the introduction by the then Labour Government in 2001 of a requirement for photographic identification for elections in Northern Ireland, the 2022 Elections Act introduces a similar requirement for elections across Great Britain.

The Elections Act 2022 lists accepted forms of identification, including student identity cards covered by the PASS scheme.

The Government has published a Voter Identification [Impact Assessment](#) which includes details on training, and privacy screens and other equipment. It is anticipated that a privacy screen will only be required when there is no private room or area in the polling place to carry out identification checks. However, as the proportion of polling places with private areas is unknown, cost estimates assumed one privacy screen per polling station and are therefore over estimates.

■ First Time Buyers: Government Assistance**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[87766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support first-time buyers to purchase their first home.

Lucy Frazer:

Getting people on the housing ladder realising their dream of owning a home has been a long held conservative value. I am proud that since Spring 2010, over 800,000 households have been helped to purchase a home through Government-backed schemes, including Right to Buy and shared ownership.

And the annual number of first-time buyers was at a 20-year high in 2021.

■ Homelessness: Death**Owen Thompson:**[\[87907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many homeless people have died in each of the last ten years.

Owen Thompson:[\[87908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of trends in the level of local government funding for homelessness on the number of deaths among homeless people.

Felicity Buchan:

In September, we published our Rough Sleeping Strategy for England to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This demonstrates our clear commitment to end

rough sleeping in this Parliament and we will continue our work to support the most vulnerable in society and end rough sleeping for good. The UK Government is determined to work with the devolved administrations and local authorities across the country to address this important issue.

The Office for National Statistics publishes estimates for England and Wales, which can be found [here](#) and National Records Scotland publishes statistics, available [here](#). Estimates of homeless deaths in different parts of the UK are not yet comparable due to methodological differences.

■ Homelessness: Finance

Paula Barker: [\[88027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department will take to support homelessness services with rising costs in winter 2022.

Paula Barker: [\[88028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of (a) inflation and (b) other rising costs on budgets for homeless services commissioned by local authorities.

Paula Barker: [\[88029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing homelessness charities that offer accommodation services with additional financial support for energy costs.

Paula Barker: [\[88031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has had recent discussions with homelessness charities that provide frontline services on (a) budgetary pressures and (b) the provision of services into the 2023-24 financial year.

Felicity Buchan:

I refer the Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN [84910](#) on 21 November 2022.

■ Housing Associations: Rents

Hilary Benn: [\[86405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of introducing rent caps of (a) 3 per cent, (b) 5 per cent and (c) seven per cent on the ability of housing associations to (i) build new homes and (ii) decarbonise existing homes.

Dehenna Davison:

We announced on 17 November 2022 that the rent cap on social housing rents from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 will be 7%. To ensure its financial viability and critical role in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our society, supported

housing will be excepted from this new cap. We urge landlords to consider setting lower increases where possible.

We published an impact assessment as part of our consultation [here](#). A final version of our impact assessment will be published in due course.

■ **Housing Associations: Service Charges**

David Warburton:

[\[86547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support housing association tenants with the rising cost of service charges.

Dehenna Davison:

Following our recent consultation on social housing rent increases, the Government announced at Autumn Statement that it will cap the increase in social rents at a maximum of 7% in 2023-24. In line with the proposal set out in our consultation, we will amend the policy statement to encourage providers to apply the 7% limit to service charge increases in 2023-24.

Our policy statement also states that tenants should be supplied with clear information on how service charges are set, and in the case of social rent properties, providers are expected to identify service charges separately from the rent charge.

■ **Housing First: Liverpool City Region**

Paula Barker:

[\[90892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many clients on the Liverpool City Region Housing First pilot are currently housed in (a) hostels and (b) other forms of temporary accommodation.

Paula Barker:

[\[90893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many clients on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Housing First pilot are in (a) hostels and (b) other forms of temporary accommodation.

Paula Barker:

[\[90894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many clients on the West Midlands Combined Authority Housing First pilot are housed in (a) hostels and (b) other forms of temporary accommodation.

Felicity Buchan:

The department does not hold the data requested.

■ **Housing Supply: Young People**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of housing for young people.

Lucy Frazer:

Further to the answer to Question UIN [89802](#) on 22 November 2022, we recognise that younger people are often more likely to rent, which is why the Affordable Homes Programme will deliver significant volumes of affordable home-ownership properties, supporting aspiring young homeowners to take their first step on to the housing ladder.

■ Housing: Greater London Authority**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[87820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the £3.15 billion funding to the Greater London Authority for the delivery of 90,000 housing starts by the 2020-21 financial year announced in the Autumn Statement 2016, how many and what proportion of these starts have been delivered as of 15 November 2022.

Lucy Frazer:

Greater London Authority (GLA) housing statistics are published quarterly and can be found [here](#).

■ Housing: Mental Health**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[86694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to improve access to secure housing for people with complex mental health needs.

Dehenna Davison:

The Government is committed to improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly for people who experience worse outcomes than the general population. This is a key part of our commitment to 'level up' and address unequal outcomes and life chances across the country.

Local authorities are responsible for drawing up and operating their allocation scheme for social housing. In doing so they must give 'reasonable preference' to specific groups including people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds. This will include people with mental health needs. Statutory guidance advises local authorities to consider giving additional preference (high priority) to those who need to move urgently because of a sudden disability.

In addition, people with acute enduring mental health issues may also be able to access specialist supported housing provision with personal care, through local adult social care system commissioning.

Furthermore, the White Paper People at the Heart of Care published in December 2021 set out Government's ambition to ensure people, including those with complex mental health needs, have the choice and control to remain independent in the community.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Alex Norris:

[\[90872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the answer of 18 November 2022 to Question 87956 on Levelling Up Fund, what proportion of the money awarded to successful bids in the first round of the Levelling Up Fund (a) has been transferred and (b) is awaiting transfer.

Dehenna Davison:

Further to the answer given on 18th November, £1.7 billion was allocated to 105 bids through the Levelling Up Fund and successful first round bids have received £242 million to date. The remainder of their allocation will be paid in line with their financial and delivery plans.

■ Local Government: Assets

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[90731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will ensure that any local authority in England which offers for sale an asset in its ownership does so in an open and transparent way which enables external organisations to bid and best value to be obtained.

Lee Rowley:

Local authorities are responsible for their own financial management and remain responsible to their electorate for their decisions. This includes how they manage and dispose of their assets. However, they must comply with the best value duty, which is clear that a local authority should have regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness when exercising its functions

Where a local authority (and other public bodies) are disposing of land, they should generally dispose of surplus land at the best possible price reasonably obtainable. The Government recognises, however, that disposing of land at less than best consideration can sometimes create wider public benefits, such as supporting delivery of initiatives or facilitate regeneration projects that deliver new housing. Where land is disposed of at an undervalue, the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is required - either through a specific application or under a general consent

The Government expects authorities to demonstrate high standards of financial management and transparency, and authorities must appropriately comply with relevant rules and guidance. Practices followed by authorities should be subject to internal scrutiny, and external auditors annually review whether a council has proper processes in place for achieving value for money as part of their statutory engagement.

■ Planning Permission: Darlington**Peter Gibson:**[\[87990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential impact of nutrient neutrality on planning applications in Darlington.

Lucy Frazer:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed. On 18 November 2022, the Government laid an amendment to the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill that aims to drive down nutrient pollution in nutrient neutrality catchments; allowing us to deliver the homes that this country needs, whilst protecting our precious environment.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Devolution**Amy Callaghan:**[\[87993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on the levelling up agenda for the devolved Nations.

Dehenna Davison:

Our Levelling Up White Paper sets 12 national missions to level up the whole of the country including across all four home nations. We are taking action to ensure the benefits are felt in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including putting local voices at the heart of decision making through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, launching an Innovation Accelerator in Glasgow City Region, and establishing a UK National Academy to provide a first-class education to every child in the UK. Ministers in this department are working closely with parliamentarians and other leaders from all parts of the UK. We are also investing £1.49 billion in City and Growth Deals in every part of Scotland, £791 million across Wales, and £617 million for deals covering the whole of Northern Ireland, helping to create jobs and boost local economies right across the UK.

The Levelling Up Fund will bring further meaningful investment to every part of the UK. Round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund saw over £341 million awarded to 29 successful projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Results for round 2 of the Fund, which will provide even more vital investment, will be announced by the end of the year.

■ Supported Housing**Wes Streeting:**[\[87920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to implement the recommendations in the report by the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee entitled Exempt Accommodation, HC 21, published on 27 October 2022.

Wes Streeting:[\[87923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many providers of exempt accommodation are registered with the Regulator for Social Housing in Ilford North constituency.

Felicity Buchan:

The Regulator for Social Housing collects a range of data from registered providers about their stock, but it does not collect data on 'exempt accommodation'.

The Government recently supported the Supported Housing Bill at second reading and welcomes the publication of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee's report on the issue of poor-quality supported housing. We are carefully considering its findings and will respond in due course.

TRANSPORT**■ Airports: Railways****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[89008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of trends in the number of passengers travelling by rail to airports in each of the last five years.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[89009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of the potential (a) environmental and (b) economic implications of poor rail connectivity to airports.

Huw Merriman:

The Government's position, as set out in the 2013 Aviation Policy Framework, is that airports should have surface access strategies including an analysis of existing surface access arrangements and targets for increasing the proportion of journeys made to the airport by public transport by passengers and employees.

■ Cycling and Walking: Expenditure**Cat Smith:**[\[88913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department plans to spend on active travel in the period between 2020-21 and 2024-25.

Jesse Norman:

The total projected spend on active travel from multiple cross-Government funding streams between 2021-22 and 2024-25 is outlined in the Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), published on 6 July 2022. This estimate is due to be updated in the next CWIS Report to Parliament, expected to be published in 2024.

The period 2020-21 was part of the CWIS1 funding period which covered the period between 2016-17 and 2020-21. The total estimated investment in active travel during

this period was over £3bn, as outlined in the Second CWIS Report to Parliament which was also published on 6 July 2022.

■ **Cycling and Walking: Finance**

Rachael Maskell: [\[90833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of walking and cycling for saving money, in the context of rising transport costs.

Jesse Norman:

The Government agrees that walking and cycling are an inexpensive and healthy way of getting around and an excellent way of helping people save money on their everyday travel costs, which is why we have already invested £600 million since the start of the pandemic in enabling more people to make these choices for their local journeys.

Rachael Maskell: [\[90834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to (a) maintain and (b) build on the £3.8 billion investment into walking and cycling to help people access essential services during the cost of living crisis.

Jesse Norman:

Walking and cycling are among the cheapest and healthiest ways to get around and that's why this government has made record amounts of funding available since the start of the pandemic for schemes to help more people to do so.

The department is continuing to examine future spending plans following the Autumn Statement.

■ **Great British Railways**

Rachael Maskell: [\[88931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to bring forward (a) legislative proposals on the establishment of Great British Railways and (b) a Transport Bill.

Huw Merriman:

We are working closely with the Great British Railways Transition Team and the sector to tackle the challenges set out in the Plan for Rail. We will bring forward legislation to reform our railways and enable new transport technologies when Parliamentary time allows.

Rachael Maskell: [\[88932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential cost to his Department of delaying the establishment of Great British Railways beyond the initial expected timetable.

Huw Merriman:

We are committed to working with the sector to tackle the challenges Keith Williams set out in the Plan for Rail White Paper and that have faced the railway as it recovers from the pandemic. We will bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allows.

Ahead of legislation, we are working closely with the Great British Railways Transition Team and the sector to improve journeys for passengers and create a better, more modern railway. The cost of establishment and ongoing operations of Great British Railways will be confirmed in the final business case in 2023.

Rachael Maskell:[\[88933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of delaying the establishment of Great British Railways beyond the initial expected timetable on rail services.

Huw Merriman:

We are committed to working with the sector to tackle the challenges Keith Williams set out in the Plan for Rail White Paper and that have faced the railway as it recovers from the pandemic. We will bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allows.

Ahead of legislation, we are working closely with the Great British Railways Transition Team and the sector to improve journeys for passengers and create a better, more modern railway. The cost of establishment and ongoing operations of Great British Railways will be confirmed in the final business case in 2023.

Rachael Maskell:[\[88934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of delaying the establishment of Great British Railways beyond the initial expected timetable on the introduction of a single ticketing offer.

Huw Merriman:

The Plan for Rail sets out our aim to improve rail online retail, ending the current confusion passengers face with multiple train operating company websites. We are continuing to work with the sector to tackle the challenges set out in the Plan for Rail, including improving online retail for the benefit of passengers, and will introduce rail reform legislation as soon as possible, when Parliamentary time allows.

Julian Sturdy:[\[90902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for how long he plans to retain the shortlist of potential headquarters for Great British Railways announced on 5 July 2022.

Huw Merriman:

The competition to decide on the location of the headquarters for Great British Railways (GBR) launched on 5 February 2022, generating expressions of interest from 42 locations across the country. These were assessed against a range of criteria to generate a shortlist of six locations, which were then put to a public vote. During the six-week voting period more than 200,000 votes were cast for the

shortlisted locations, which the previous Rail Minister visited during July and August 2022. A decision on the final location will be announced shortly.

■ Heathrow Airport: Railways

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[89004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of building the Western Rail Link to Heathrow.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[89005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Government supports the proposed Western Rail Link to Heathrow.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[89006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of the potential impact of building the Western Rail Link to Heathrow on economic growth.

Huw Merriman:

This Government remains committed to improving rail access to Heathrow Airport and recognises the importance of the improved rail connectivity that a Western rail link could provide. We need to ensure that the projects we take forward reflect the changed shape of rail demand and are affordable. Following the Autumn Statement on 17 November we are in the process of reviewing the Rail National Enhancements Portfolio and will make the outcome public once that work is complete.

■ M25: Demonstrations

Andrew Rosindell: [\[87768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce disruption from protests on the M25.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department works closely with National Highways, which is responsible for operations on the Strategic Road Network as the relevant highway authority. As of November 7, 2022, National Highways have two High Court injunctions in force; one specifically relating to structures and gantries on the M25 until December 10, 2022, and one covering the M25, the M25 feeder roads, and major roads in Kent and around the Port of Dover until May 20, 2023.

■ Motor Vehicles: Registration

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg: [\[90792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that motorists who dispose of a vehicle are not subject to repeated police enquiries when the buyer has not returned a V5 form; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Richard Holden:

The person disposing of a vehicle is legally required to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) that they no longer have the vehicle. They are also required to provide the details of the person or company who has taken possession of the vehicle. If the person disposing of the vehicle does not inform the DVLA, their details will remain on the vehicle record and they may receive enquiries related to the vehicle.

The easiest way to inform the DVLA is to use the online service available on GOV.UK. Where a person has been contacted by the police or other authority about a vehicle for which they are no longer the keeper, they should inform the DVLA. I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss the V5 form and the transfer of vehicle ownership further.

Rail Partners: Finance**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[88021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much financial support her Department has provided to Rail Partners since 20 July 2022.

Huw Merriman:

None.

Railway Stations: Tickets**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[87972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether train operating companies are required to publish equality impact assessments of proposals to (a) close ticket offices and (b) reduce ticket office opening hours at the same time that such proposals are opened for public consultation.

Huw Merriman:

Under the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, when proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours (including closures), operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled and include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups. We would also expect operators to consider other equality related needs and make this clear in their consultation.

Railways: Access**Peter Gibson:**[\[87988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to undertake a review of the restrictions on (a) access to the rail network and (b) the ability to stop at specific stations applicable to open access train operators.

Huw Merriman:

Access to the rail network is a matter for the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) in its role as independent regulator for the rail industry. The ORR will continue to play a central role in ensuring industry processes and applications for track access are treated fairly and transparently going forward. The ORR's role includes approving access contracts and access appeals in relation to open access operators. The ORR works with Network Rail to assess suitability of proposed station stops, and decisions are made on the basis of available capacity. The Government remains committed to exploring the scope for open access where spare capacity exists to make best use of the network and grow new markets for rail.

Railways: Costs

Stephen Hammond: [\[90774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to enable private train operators to increase revenues to help reduce the cost of the railway to the taxpayer.

Huw Merriman:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rail industry faces a more challenging financial position. The Department has developed and implemented an annual business planning process for all train operators which ensures the industry delivers for passengers while also improving financial performance and driving revenue growth in order to reduce the cost of the railway for taxpayers.

Railways: East of England

Tom Hunt: [\[87995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many times the London to Ipswich rail service has been disrupted by weekend engineering works in the last 12 months.

Huw Merriman:

In 2022, there have been eight single days (two Saturdays and six Sundays) of disruption due to weekend engineering works and 11 full weekends of disruption.

There will also be disruption from a blockade from 27 December 2022 to 3 January 2023 (with five days in 2022). This means in 2022 there will have been a total of 35 days of disruption due to weekend engineering works.

Railways: Finance

James Wild: [\[88002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline update.

Huw Merriman:

Following the Autumn Statement on 17 November we are in the process of reviewing the RNEP and will make the outcome public once that work is complete.

Louise Haigh: [\[88944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of the £1.5 billion in annual savings identified by his Department from the Rail Transformation Programme derive from workforce changes.

Huw Merriman:

In the Plan for Rail the Department committed to the delivery of annualised savings of £1.5bn by 2026/27. The delivery of these savings comes through a new commercial model, an improvement in fares ticketing and retail, and a new industry structure. The largest share of these savings are anticipated to be from workforce reform - and in delivering a sustainable railway fit for the future they will help to ensure the railways offer sustainable, well-rewarded, jobs into the future.

■ Railways: Midlands

Dr Luke Evans: [\[89044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of constructing the Midlands Rail Hub for people in (a) Bosworth constituency and (b) Leicestershire.

Huw Merriman:

The Department for Transport received the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Midlands Rail Hub on 14th November. We will now assess the contribution of the scheme to our objectives – including the benefits for the people of Bosworth and Leicestershire – alongside value for taxpayer money, and affordability.

■ Railways: Timetables

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[89067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer on 7 November 2022 of Question 80959 on train timetable changes, how many rail operators requested derogations from the requirement to consult on train timetable changes in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[89068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer on 7 November 2022 of Question 80959 on train timetable changes, how many rail operators were granted derogations from the requirement to consult on train timetable changes in (a) 2020, (b) 2021, and (c) 2022.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[89069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer on 7th November 2022 of Question 80959 on train timetable changes, for what reasons his Department grants a derogation from the requirement to consult on train timetable changes.

Huw Merriman:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Operators have been working at pace to respond to changing passenger travel patterns since the pandemic, as it is crucial that the industry stays alert to fluctuations in demand and responds accordingly. While demand patterns remain unstable and operators need to remain agile in responding to changes, it is not possible to offer meaningful consultations.

Where operators do not have sufficient certainty, they may request a derogation from the requirement to consult. One operator requested a formal derogation from the requirement to consult and was granted it.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[90730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2022 to Question 73788 on Roads: Repairs and Maintenance, which highway authorities in England do not adopt a risk-based whole-life asset management approach to their highways maintenance programme; and if he will make it his policy that funds awarded for highway maintenance are conditional upon the adoption of such an approach.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport (DfT) allocates to local highways authorities is through a formula based on road length, number of bridges and number of streetlights.

£125 million (11%) of the highways maintenance funding is allocated via an incentive-based element conditional on local authority self-assessment of their highways maintenance practices. Question 5 specifically interrogates the extent to which each respondent is undertaking lifecycle planning as part of its highway infrastructure asset management.

■ Southeastern: Timetables**Louise Haigh:**[\[87903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many services were operated by Southeastern in September 2019; and how many services will be operated by that provider each month following the proposed timetable changes in December 2022.

Huw Merriman:

Southeastern operated 1988 services on a typical weekday in September 2019 with 1722 on a typical Saturday and 931 on a typical Sunday. Following the upcoming timetable change on 11 December 2022 on a typical weekday Southeastern will operate 1686 services with 1392 on a typical Saturday and 835 on a typical Sunday.

The pandemic has changed travel habits and we have seen substantial changes in customer demand for rail travel.

Louise Haigh:[\[87904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 83686, on Southeastern Trains: Timetables, whether any other rail

operators have been issued with a formal derogation against the requirement to consult in relation to the December 2022 timetable changes.

Huw Merriman:

Operators have been working at pace to respond to changing passenger travel patterns since the pandemic, as it is crucial that the industry stays alert to fluctuations in demand and responds accordingly. While demand patterns remain unstable and operators need to remain agile in responding to changes, it is not possible to offer meaningful consultations.

Where operators do not have sufficient certainty, they may request a derogation from the requirement to consult. One operator requested a formal derogation from the requirement to consult and was granted it.

■ **Stansted Airport: Railways**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[89007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment has he made of the adequacy of the frequency of rail services running between Stansted Airport and London Liverpool Street.

Huw Merriman:

It is important that customers have a frequent service between Stansted and Liverpool Street.

Greater Anglia is working closely with Network Rail and Manchester Airport Group, who manage Stansted Airport, and continues to monitor passenger demand to ensure service levels are adequate.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Olivia Blake:

[R] [\[89922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Marine Accident Investigation Branch will conclude its inquiry into the 32 deaths in the Channel on the 24 November 2021.

Mr Richard Holden:

The MAIB anticipates that it will circulate its draft report of the investigation for consultation early in the New Year and aims to publish its final report later next year.

Olivia Blake:

[R] [\[89923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the French coastguard's call logs from 24 November 2021 relating to fatalities in the Channel; and if he will launch a public inquiry into that incident.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch announced on 3 February that they were commencing an investigation into the tragic events of 24 November 2021.

The Government has confirmed to the families that it is committed to ensuring that a full and thorough investigation is carried out into the tragic 24 November incident. We await the report from the MAIB's investigation to consider the scope and form of any further investigation.

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[87763\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed increase on alcohol duty rates on (a) pubs and (b) breweries.

James Cartlidge:

The Government keeps duty rates under review during its yearly budget process and aims to balance the impact on businesses with its public health objectives.

The alcohol duty uprating decision and interactions with the wider reforms to alcohol duties will be considered in due course.

At Autumn Statement 2022, the government announced it would extend and increase the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief from 50 per cent to 75 per cent, up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business in 2023-24. This is a tax cut worth over £2 billion which is expected to benefit around 12,000 pubs.

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[90754\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential merits of reinstating the freeze in alcohol duty for draught beer and cider.

James Cartlidge:

The Government keeps the duty rates under review during its yearly budget process and aims to balance the impact on businesses with its public health objectives.

The alcohol duty uprating decision and interactions with the wider reforms to alcohol duties will be considered in due course.

The next steps of the Alcohol Duty Review announced in the Growth Plan will continue as planned. This includes the introduction of the new lower duty rate for draught beer and cider due to be implemented from 1 August 2023.

■ Business Rates: Tax Allowances

Fleur Anderson:

[\[88016\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his to continue business rates relief beyond the 2022-2023 financial year.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has announced a package of support worth £13.6 billion for businesses over the next five years. Together with the revaluation, this package

ensures bills will more accurately reflect current market values whilst protecting businesses from large bill increases.

Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector will receive a tax cut worth over £2 billion in 2023-24. Eligible properties will receive 75% off their business rates bill, up to a cap of £110,000 per business, an increase from the 50% relief last year.

The Government has also committed to freezing the multiplier for a further year, which is a tax cut worth £9.3 billion to businesses over the next 5 years and means all bills are 6% lower, before any reliefs or supplements, than without the freeze.

To protect businesses from large bill increases on 1 April 2023, the Government announced a 3 year Exchequer funded Transitional Relief (TR) scheme worth £1.6 billion. This will support around 700,000 ratepayers in England, as they transition to their new bills. The reformed TR scheme will also allow ratepayers whose rateable values have fallen to benefit from the full reduction in their business rates bills on 1 April by abolishing downwards caps, delivering a key stakeholder ask.

An extended Supporting Small Business (SSB) scheme will provide over £500 million of support over the next three years to businesses losing all or some of their Small Business or Rural Rate Relief, due to the 2023 revaluation, at £50 per month. This is worth five times more than the previous scheme, and will support five times as many properties.

■ Energy: Prices

Rachael Maskell:

[\[90835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons disabled people spend have been less support with energy costs than people in pension poverty.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[90836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he take steps to implement an additional allowance for disabled people who use energy (a) for equipment for home dialysis, (b) for oxygen concentrators and (c) to keep their home warm due to ill health.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that the rising cost of living has presented additional financial challenges to many people, and especially to the most vulnerable members of society, such as disabled people and people with long-term health conditions – who may have additional energy costs. That is why the Government is taking decisive action to support households while ensuring we act in a fiscally responsible way.

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced that it will provide a further Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 in 2023/24 to people in receipt of extra-costs disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is additional to the £150 payment for recipients of disability benefits in 2022 already announced as part of the Cost of Living package in May.

Pensioners are more likely to be living in harder to heat homes and suffer disproportionately from adverse health effects from living in a cold home. Many pensioners rely primarily on their State Pension for income and have limited scope to increase their income through work. There will be disabled people (or other family members) in working-age households who may be able to supplement their incomes through work.

However, the Government recognises that there are also many disabled people who cannot increase their incomes through work and who receive means-tested benefits. Individuals who have limited or no ability to work because of their disability or long-term health condition, and are in receipt of means-tested benefits such as income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the Universal Credit Health top up, will therefore also receive the Cost of Living Payments for households on means-tested benefits, namely the £650 payment announced in May and the additional £900 payment announced at Autumn Statement.

Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions will also benefit from other forms of non-means-tested support which the Government is providing to assist with household energy bills. We have taken decisive action to support millions of households with rising energy costs through the Energy Price Guarantee, which limits the price suppliers can charge customers for units of gas and electricity. In addition to the Energy Price Guarantee, millions of the most vulnerable households will receive further support this year through the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme. The £150 Council Tax rebate will also mean that all households in Council Tax bands A-D will receive a rebate, and 99% of eligible households have already received this.

■ Food Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[90837]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of a fall in household disposable income of 7 per cent on levels of food poverty; and what additional steps he is taking to support households with rising costs of living.

John Glen:

HM Treasury does not prepare formal forecasts for household income or the outlook for the UK economy, which are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

The government has announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost of living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities.

This action taken by the government means that over 8 million of the most vulnerable households across the UK will continue to be supported through next winter via additional Cost of Living Payments. And the government is continuing to provide support to all households through the Energy Price Guarantee, which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

This support for 2023-24 is in addition to the generous support already in place to support households this winter. In addition to the Energy Price Guarantee, the government has announced £37 billion of support for the cost of living in 2022-23.

■ Food: VAT

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[90753\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential merits of reducing the VAT charged on food and drink served in pubs.

Victoria Atkins:

The Chancellor regularly engages with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a range of issues.

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of around 150,000 businesses and protect over 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors. On 1 October 2021, a new reduced rate of 12.5 per cent was introduced for these goods and services to ease affected businesses back to the standard rate. The relief ended on 31 March 2022.

The VAT reduced rate for the hospitality sector was a temporary measure designed to support the cash flow and viability of sectors that have been severely affected by COVID-19. It was appropriate that as restrictions were lifted and demand for goods and services in these sectors increased, the temporary tax reliefs were first reduced and then removed in order to rebuild and strengthen the public finances.

VAT is the UK's third largest tax forecast to raise £157 billion in 2022/23 helping to fund key spending priorities such as important public services, including the NHS and policing. In addition, this request should be viewed in the context of over £50 billion of requests for relief from VAT received since the EU referendum.

While there are currently no plans to reduce the rate of VAT for the hospitality industry, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Industry: Economic Growth

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.69 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November, who will have oversight of delivery on (a) digital technology, (b) life sciences, (c) green industries, (d) financial services, (e) advanced manufacturing and (f) other key growth industries.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90801\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.69 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November, what steps in addition to reviewing retained EU law the Government is planning to take to increase growth in (a) digital technology, (b) life sciences, (c) green industries, (d) financial services and (e) advanced manufacturing.

Chi Onwurah: [\[90804\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.69 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, what retained EU law the Government has identified as a barrier to growth in (a) life sciences, (b) digital technology and (c) advanced manufacturing.

Chi Onwurah: [\[90809\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.69 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, how the five key growth industries were identified.

Chi Onwurah: [\[90810\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his statement of 17 November 2022, Official Report, col 853, which aspects of silicon valley his Department seeks to replicate in the UK.

James Cartlidge:

Silicon Valley is respected across the world as a dynamic centre of technology innovation that creates jobs and high wages. Our ambition is to enable similar world-leading growth industries to succeed in the UK.

At the Autumn Statement, to help remove barriers to growth, the government committed to move rapidly to review retained EU law including in named key growth industries. The government committed to identify changes that can be made over the next year.

In addition to regulation, the Autumn Statement announced numerous measures to support key growth sectors, for example, recommitting to increasing publicly funded R&D to £20 billion by 2024-25. Regulation plays an important role in the sectors named in the Autumn Statement, and, in general, these sectors are around 20% of UK output and have driven around 30% of UK growth since 1998. They have above average productivity, and cover goods and services where the UK has a relatively high share of world exports.

By moving rapidly to review EU law to identify changes that can be made over the next year with the greatest potential to unlock growth, the government will be supporting key growth industries to be even more dynamic.

Leeds General Infirmary: Construction**Kim Leadbeater:** [\[89081\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on funding for the construction of a new hospital building at the Leeds General Infirmary.

John Glen:

At Spending Review 2020, the New Hospitals Programme received £3.7bn of funding up to 2024/25. At the Autumn Statement, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to the New Hospitals Programme, which includes Leeds General Infirmary.

I have not discussed the specifics of this case with the Secretary of State, though I look forward to discussions with him about the New Hospitals Programme, and wider health policy issues, in the coming weeks and months as part of the Treasury's ongoing engagement with DHSC on these matters.

■ NHS: Pay**Dan Carden:**[\[90873\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the wage of NHS workers by 9.7 per cent.

John Glen:

The government hugely values and appreciates NHS staff and we have committed to give NHS workers a pay rise in 2023/24, asking the independent pay review bodies for recommendations on pay for staff in scope.

This year, over one million staff under the Agenda for Change contract, including nurses, have benefited from a pay rise of at least £1,400 backdated to April 2022. This is on top of the 3% pay rise they received last year, despite a wider public sector pay pause. The average basic pay for nurses has increased from around £35,600 as of March 2022 to around £37,000 and the basic pay for newly qualified nurses has increased by 5.5%, from £25,655 last year to £27,055. This follows the acceptance of last year's recommendations in full which saw the lowest earners in the NHS receive a 9.3% pay rise.

■ PAYE: Employment Agencies**Jim Shannon:**[\[86655\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is taking collect PAYE tax from agencies who use registered contractors.

Victoria Atkins:

Under section 44 of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003, most contractors supplying services via agencies must be treated as employees for income tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) purposes by the agencies that pay them.

These agencies are required to make deductions of income tax and employee NICs, where these are due, from the workers' pay through Pay As You Earn in the same way and at the same level as with direct employees. The agencies will also be liable to pay employer NICs, where these are due, in respect of payments to the workers.

HMRC has a risk-based approach towards compliance activities and will investigate evidence of non-compliance or avoidance. Where HMRC finds that an agency has failed to account for tax and NICs, it will seek to recover unpaid amounts due.

■ Public Houses: Business Rates

Fabian Hamilton: [\[90755\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of reforming of the business rates system for pubs.

Victoria Atkins:

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced a package of support worth £13.6 billion over the next five years. Together with the revaluation, this package ensures bills will more accurately reflect current market values whilst protecting businesses from large bill increases.

The retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will benefit from over £2 billion in support in 2023-24, with eligible properties receiving 75% off their bills, up to a cap of £110,000 per business. The Government is also delivering significant reform with an Exchequer funded Transitional Relief scheme worth £1.6 billion over the next three years. This will protect an estimated 700,000 properties from large bill increases and will also enable around 300,000 ratepayers with decreasing rateable values to benefit from a full fall in their bill on 1 April 2023.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Chi Onwurah: [\[90794\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the oral contribution of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 17 November 2022, Official Report, col. 854, how he defines left-behind areas; and what specific financial support he will provide for those areas.

John Glen:

With regards to Investment Zones, the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities will work with local stakeholders to determine the most appropriate locations for Investment Zones and develop a package of interventions, which will be announced in due course. More generally, the government already offers support to a wide range of left-behind places through the Levelling Up Fund and Towns Fund, each of which has its own public allocation methodology.

■ Research: Investment

Chi Onwurah: [\[90796\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it remains Government policy to increase public investment in R&D to £22 billion a year by 2026-27.

James Cartlidge:

The Government is strongly committed to supporting R&D and innovation, which make a significant contribution to economic and productivity growth and will help us tackle wider societal challenges such as Net Zero. This is why, despite the fiscal challenges, the Government is increasing public spending on R&D to £20bn a year by 2024-25. This represents a cash increase of around a third compared to 2021/22 and is the largest ever increase over an SR period. Spending decisions covering the next SR period will be taken in due course.

■ Research: Tax Allowances**Chi Onwurah:****[89804]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, published on 17 November 2022, whether the £1.340 billion stated to be gained by the Treasury in 2027-28 through adjustments to research and development Tax Credit relief includes a decrease in the (a) total and (b) percentage of fraudulent claims under both (i) SME scheme and (ii) businesses claiming Research and Development Expenditure Credit scheme.

Chi Onwurah:**[89805]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the planned adjustment of research and development tax credit relief in the Autumn Statement 2022, how many and what proportion of claims were estimated to be fraudulent in the (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28 financial years.

Chi Onwurah:**[89806]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what ratio of public to private research and development spending his Department has used in the projections for tax gains from adjustments to research and development tax credit relief set out in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Chi Onwurah:**[89807]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paras 3.25 and 5.70 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, how his Department estimated the revenue that would be gained from research and development tax credit rebalancing.

Chi Onwurah:**[89811]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022, whether the £1.340 billion stated to be gained by the Treasury in 2027-28 through adjustments to R&D Tax Credit relief, include a decrease in the total and percentage of fraudulent claims under both (a) SME scheme and (b) businesses claiming Research and Development Expenditure Credit scheme.

Chi Onwurah: [\[89812\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, published on 17 November 2022 and the planned adjustment of R&D tax credit relief, what percentage of claims are estimated to be fraudulent for the years (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28.

Chi Onwurah: [\[89813\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, published on 17 November 2022, what ratio of public to private R&D has his Department used in the projections for tax gains from adjustments to R&D tax credit relief.

Chi Onwurah: [\[89814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, published on 17 November 2022, and the planned adjustment of R&D, what assessment his Department has made on the current definition of R&D and the potential implications this may have for SMEs conducting research and development.

Victoria Atkins:

At Autumn Statement 2022 the Chancellor announced that as part of the ongoing review of R&D tax reliefs, the Government is reforming the reliefs to ensure taxpayers' money is spent as effectively as possible. The R&D expenditure credit (RDEC) is better value than the SME scheme but has a rate that is less internationally competitive. Also, there is significant error and fraud in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) scheme, with the generosity of the relief making it a target for fraud. The Government is therefore rebalancing the rates of the reliefs.

For expenditure on or after 1 April 2023, the RDEC rate will increase from 13 per cent to 20 per cent, the SME additional deduction will decrease from 130 per cent to 86 per cent, and the SME credit rate will decrease from 14.5 per cent to 10 per cent. These Autumn Statement 2022 rate changes will be legislated for in the Autumn Finance Bill 2022.

This reform will save £1.3 billion per year by 2027-28. A description of the methodology used to estimate the revenue impact of changes to R&D tax relief policy can be found on pages 28 and 49 of the Autumn Statement policy costings note: [Autumn Statement 2022 Policy Costings .pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#). The forecasts of policy change impacts are based on R&D expenditure by businesses qualifying for R&D tax reliefs and do not refer to a ratio of public to private R&D.

The OBR-certified forecasts of the Exchequer impact of rebalancing the generosity of reliefs include an estimate for reductions in error and fraud. Based on HMRC estimates, error and fraud in the SME scheme is adjusted downwards from the current 7.3 per cent to around 6 per cent in future years, reflecting an expected reduction in error and fraud due to the change in rates and resulting in savings of £200m to £300m over the scorecard. Work is currently being undertaken by HMRC to better understand error and fraud in R&D tax reliefs and this could show current level of error and fraud are underestimated.

To qualify for R&D relief, the work must be part of a specific project to make an advance in science or technology. The Government has assessed the R&D definition used for the purpose of claiming tax reliefs as part of the R&D tax relief review, launched in 2021. At Spring Statement 2022, the Government announced that from April 2023, the R&D definition will expand to include pure mathematics. This is to support the growing volume of R&D underpinned by mathematical advances. The definition and its expansion to include pure mathematics applies to both RDEC and the R&D SME scheme.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90799\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) percentage of the total R&D budget and (b) monetary amount that R&D tax reliefs will be over next five financial years.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90805\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, over what timeframe will the Government seek to merge the SME scheme towards a single RDEC-like scheme for all R&D Tax relief.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90806\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, what assessment has his Department made of the potential impact of increasing the RDEC rate from 13% to 20% on the number of businesses investing in R&D.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 in the Autumn Statement, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of decreasing the SME additional deduction rate from 130% to 86% on the number of SMEs conducting R&D.

Victoria Atkins:

At Autumn Statement 2022 the Chancellor announced that as part of the ongoing review of R&D tax reliefs, the Government is reforming the reliefs to ensure taxpayers' money is spent as effectively as possible. The R&D expenditure credit (RDEC) is better value than the SME scheme but has a rate that is less internationally competitive. Also, there is significant error and fraud in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) scheme, with the generosity of the relief making it a target for fraud. The Government is therefore rebalancing the rates of the reliefs.

For expenditure on or after 1 April 2023, the RDEC rate will increase from 13% to 20%, the SME additional deduction will decrease from 130% to 86%, and the SME credit rate will decrease from 14.5% to 10%. These Autumn Statement 2022 rate changes will be legislated for in the Autumn Finance Bill 2022.

Following reforms announced at the Autumn Budget 2021 and the Autumn Statement 2022, the Treasury has estimated the forecasted cost of R&D tax reliefs using OBR determinants. On a receipt basis the R&D tax reliefs are estimated to cost the exchequer: £7.5 billion in 2022/23, £7.7 billion in 2023/24, £7.6 billion in 2024/25, £7.9 billion in 2025/26, £8.5 billion in 2026/27 and £9.2 billion 2027/28. The reliefs are forecast to support £60 billion of R&D by businesses in 2027-28, a 60% increase from 2020-21.

The Government further aims to merge the schemes into one RDEC like scheme which may result in revised forecasts depending on the final policy design.

Despite a challenging fiscal environment, the Government is protecting the commitment to increase public spending on R&D to £20bn a year by 2024-25. This represents a cash increase of around a third compared to 2021/22 and is the largest ever increase over an Spending Review period.

The Treasury has estimated R&D tax reliefs will comprise of approximately 28% of total Government support for R&D in 2024/25.

The Government will consult on the design of a single scheme, and ahead of Budget work with industry to understand whether further support is necessary for R&D intensive SMEs, without significant change to the overall cost for supporting R&D. Details on the proposed design of the single scheme and the timeline for merging will be published in due course.

■ Social Security Benefits and State Retirement Pensions: Upating

Rachael Maskell:

[\[90838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his proposals in the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022 on upating pensions and other social security payments in April 2023, whether he plans to provide additional financial support for people in receipt of those schemes as a means of support through winter before April 2023.

John Glen:

The Government understands that the rising cost of living has presented additional financial challenges to many people, and especially to the most vulnerable members of society. That is why the Government is taking decisive action to support households while ensuring we act in a fiscally responsible way.

In addition to the Energy Price Guarantee, the Government has announced £37 billion of support for the cost of living in 2022-23. As part of this, millions of the most vulnerable households will receive £1200 of support this year through the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme, £150 Council Tax rebate and one-off £650 Cost of Living Payment for those on means-tested benefits, with additional support for pensioners and those claiming disability benefits.

For households that are not eligible for Cost of Living Payments or for families that need additional support this winter, the Government has provided £500 million to help

deliver the Household Support Fund (HSF) between October 2022 to March 2023. The Government has also committed £1 billion to extend the HSF through to March 2024, bringing the total provided to deliver HSF to £2.5 billion.

The Government has announced cost of living support worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities.

■ **Trader Support Service**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[90759\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the estimated total cost was to (a) the public purse and (b) businesses of the Trader Support Service between August 2020 and October 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

The cost to HMRC of running the Trader Support Service (TSS) between August 2020 and October 2022 was £318.7m.

TSS continues to be a free-to-use service for businesses.

■ **Treasury: Digital Assets**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[89040\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has ever purchased (a) bitcoin, (b) other cryptocurrencies and (c) other digital assets.

Andrew Griffith:

HM Treasury can disclose it has not bought or held any digital assets in the UK government official reserves. The gross official reserves, held in the Exchange Equalisation Account (EEA), are comprised of foreign currency assets (cash, bonds, and notes), gold assets and net positions of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDR). Under the EEA Act 1979, the EEA may invest in cash or securities denominated in the foreign currencies represented in the IMF SDR basket.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Business: Equality**

Feryal Clark: [\[89071\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that businesses are complying with all parts of the Equality Act 2010.

Stuart Andrew:

It is the responsibility of all businesses to ensure that they are aware of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) to their customers and employees. To help them in this, Government and relevant independent bodies offer a range of technical guidance and statutory codes of practice that clearly explain what

businesses should and should not do to ensure that their conduct is lawful and not discriminatory.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is the public body responsible for enforcing the Act. The EHRC provides guidance to assist businesses, including service providers, to help ensure compliance with all parts of the Act. The guides explain how businesses can avoid the different types of unlawful discrimination, against customers and employees, including those with disabilities.

Guidance for any organisation providing a service can be found here:

<https://equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-businesses>

Guidance for employers can be found here:

<https://equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-employers>

Tailored advice is also available to both businesses, employees and service users through two helplines. The Equality and Advisory Support Service (EASS) is a Government-funded helpline and the initial point of contact for anyone with discrimination concerns. The EASS provides free bespoke advice and also supports businesses and their customers to resolve issues using alternative informal dispute resolution. The EASS can also advise people who wish to take their complaint further on their options.

Acas offers a similar service to employers and employees, both information and early conciliation, where it is hoped that disputes can be resolved before progression to tribunal. Like the EHRC, Acas has also published guidance for employers to help them to behave in accordance with Equality Act requirements, for example their "What discrimination is by law" pages, that can be viewed at:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law>

■ Equality: Surveys

Emily Thornberry:

[90762]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the contract awarded by The Equality Hub to the National Centre for Social Research on 10 October under procurement reference CCZZ22A10, what are the 27.5 items proposed for inclusion in the 2022 British Social Attitudes survey.

Stuart Andrew:

The 27.5 items relate to 12 main questions, 28 sub-questions and associated answer options that the Equality Hub have included in the 2022 British Social Attitudes Survey. They provide useful information on public attitudes on equalities issues including over long-term trends. The questions cover areas of gender, sexuality, disability and social mobility.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cost of Living Payments

Olivia Blake: [\[89925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to increase the qualifying period for future cost of living payments to help fluctuating earners; and if he will make it his policy to backdate cost of living payments for fluctuating earners who did not qualify for these payments due to usually high income in the original qualifying period.

Mims Davies:

In determining eligibility for 2022/23 Cost of Living Payments, the qualifying periods have been chosen to reflect the nature of the passporting benefits and have remained simple to ensure these payments can be made to those who qualify and at scale to support millions of people on low incomes. We have no plans to consider making backdated payments for those who have fluctuating earnings and did not qualify for payments due to unusually high income in the original qualifying period.

Qualifying periods related to the 23/24 cost of living payments will be announced in due course.

■ Housing Benefit: Supported Housing

Wes Streeting: [\[87921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was spent on housing benefit for supported exempt accommodation in Ilford North constituency in 2021-22.

Wes Streeting: [\[87922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much his Department reimbursed the London Borough of Redbridge for housing benefit spent on supported exempt accommodation in 2021-22.

Mims Davies:

Providing the requested is not available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Jobcentres: Staff

Alison McGovern: [\[86688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many work coaches were employed by her Department as of 11 November 2022.

Guy Opperman:

We have dedicated work coaches across the country providing tailored support to help people, in all circumstances, into work and to increase their hours. Staff numbers are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

■ Kickstart Scheme**Alison McGovern:**[\[87830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2022 to Question 15187 on Kickstart Scheme, what the total number of work placements provided by the Kickstart Scheme was as of 15 November 2022.

Guy Opperman:

As of 15 November 2022, over 163,000 Kickstart jobs had been started by young people.

■ Local Housing Allowance**Paula Barker:**[\[88030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the effect the freeze on Local Housing Allowance on claimants during rising private sector rents.

Mims Davies:

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are not intended to meet all rents in all areas. For Great Britain in May 2022, 55% of the households on LHA had rents higher than the LHA rates. For these households the average gap was £146 per month.

In April 2020 LHA rates were increased to the 30th percentile of local rents. This investment of nearly £1 billion provided 1.5 million claimants with an average £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received.

LHA rates have been maintained at their increased levels since then, so that everyone who benefitted from the increase will continue to do so.

For those who require additional support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available from local authorities. Since 2011 we have provided almost £1.5 billion in DHPs. This is alongside the £421 million Household Support Fund which has been extended from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Paula Barker:[\[90891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of not increasing Local Housing Allowance in line with inflation on levels of (a) homelessness and (b) the number of Section 21 notices.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

The causes of homelessness are multi-faceted and often complex, they interact dynamically making it difficult to isolate the relative importance of individual factors.

The Government is providing £316 million in Homelessness Prevention Grant funding to local authorities for 2022/23. This is part of £2 billion in funding which we have pledged to tackle homeless and rough sleeping over the next three years.

The Government has committed to a ban on section 21 'no fault' evictions to protect tenants and will introduce a Renters Reform Bill in this Parliament.

In April 2020 investment in LHA rates was boosted by nearly £1 billion, providing 1.5 million claimants who rent in the private sector with an average £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. Rates have been maintained at their increased 2020 levels since then so that claimants continue to benefit from the significant increase. LHA rates are not intended to cover all rents in all areas.

For those who require additional support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available. Since 2011 we have provided nearly £1.5 billion in funding for DHPs. This is alongside the £421 million Household Support Fund which has been extended from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

■ **Local Housing Allowance: Homelessness**

Beth Winter:

[\[89058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of retaining Local Housing Allowance rates at 2020-21 levels on homelessness numbers.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

The causes of homelessness are multi-faceted and often complex, they interact dynamically making it difficult to isolate the relative importance of individual factors.

The Government is providing £316 million in Homelessness Prevention Grant funding to local authorities for 2022/23. This is part of £2 billion in funding which we have pledged to tackle homeless and rough sleeping over the next three years.

In April 2020 investment in LHA rates was boosted by nearly £1 billion, providing 1.5 million claimants who rent in the private sector with an average £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. Rates have been maintained at their increased 2020 levels since then so that claimants continue to benefit from the significant increase. LHA rates are not intended to cover all rents in all areas.

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■ **Local Housing Allowance: Rhondda Cynon Taf**

Beth Winter:

[\[89059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the numbers of advertised properties in the Taff Rhondda broad rental

market area that were wholly affordable at the Local Housing Allowance rate in the last year.

Beth Winter: [\[89061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish data held by her Department on the local authorities where Local Housing Allowance rates have not covered (a) any advertised private rents and (b) less than 10 per cent advertised private rents in the past year.

Mims Davies:

The Department does not collect data on numbers of advertised private rents.

■ Social Security Benefits

Ms Karen Buck: [\[88784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if it remains his Department's policy to not publish the evaluation of the lowered Benefit Cap completed in Spring 2019.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State's initial priorities have included very urgent decisions relating to the recent Autumn Statement. The Secretary of State will be receiving further advice regarding the evaluation of the lowered Benefit Cap, and he will make decisions about its publication in due course.

■ Social Security Benefits: Uprating

Rachael Maskell: [\[86527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing social security in line with the September 2022 rate of inflation.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has completed his annual up-rating review and State Pension and benefit rates will increase in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for the year to September 2022. This means that they will increase by 10.1% from 10 April 2023.

■ Unemployment

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[90815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the terms of reference are for his Department's review on rising levels of economic inactivity; and when he plans to publish that review.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is examining workforce participation and economic inactivity. This work will continue into next year.

■ Universal Credit**Jonathan Ashworth:****[90814]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to uprate Universal Credit work allowances for the 2023-24 financial year in line with consumer price index inflation from September 2022.

Guy Opperman:

Subject to Parliamentary approval, Universal Credit Work Allowances will increase by September's CPI figure of 10.1%. The current rates of £344 and £573 will increase to £379 and £631 respectively from 10 April 2023.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum

Jim Shannon:

[86487]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of the inadmissibility process on (a) the speed of asylum decision making and (b) the provision of asylum accommodation and support.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Robert Jenrick:

~~This system will not introduce significant delays either for individuals entering the asylum system, or the asylum system as a whole.~~

~~In recent years we have made progress in prioritising older claims, high harm cases, those cases with extreme vulnerability, children and new flow cases following the introduction of the Nationality & Borders Act, whilst those in receipt of support are a priority for caseworkers considering legacy cases.~~

~~The significant increase in dangerous journeys across the Channel is placing unprecedented strain on our asylum system and it has made it necessary to continue to use hotels to accommodate some asylum seekers. The use of hotels is a short-term solution and we are working hard with local authorities to find appropriate accommodation.~~

Statistics relating to supported asylum seekers temporarily residing in contingency accommodation are published here: [Asylum and resettlement datasets](#).

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates the number of asylum seekers accommodated in specific types of accommodation, or the number at specific stages of the asylum process. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost. Further information on the inadmissibility process can be here: [Inadmissibility: safe third country cases](#).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ UK Earth Observation

Minister of State (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation) (George Freeman):

[\[HCWS380\]](#)

The government is announcing today a package of **up to £200m funding** to invest in the UK Earth Observation sector to protect the future of UK talent and industry in earth observation and mitigate the impact of ongoing delays to UK participation in the EU Copernicus programme, while the EU continues to block our association.

Earth observation (EO) is a vital science and a growing industry. This is the right time to time to invest in projects which benefit our planet and grow our economy – EO supports the UK to become a science superpower and prioritises our space and Net Zero ambitions – more than half of key climate data comes from space.

The UK has a vibrant landscape of world leading EO academic and industrial organisations and a well-founded reputation for excellence in EO. For example, in climate science, leading UK research institutions have been measuring Sea and Land Surface Temperature from space for over three decades (Oxford University, RAL Space, Reading University and Leicester University); this data is used by meteorological agencies around the world to improve weather forecast accuracy – helping to save lives, infrastructure and crops.

In the National Space Strategy, HMG committed to remain at the forefront of earth observation technology and knowhow. The investments announced today will deliver an essential funding boost to recognise the importance of this work/market and will benefit academia and industry and build our national capability. The funding is spread across 17 projects delivered through the following government partner organisations:

- £137.6m UK Space Agency (UKSA)
- £19.3m Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- £14.7m Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)
- £11.7m Met Office
- £4.2m Innovate UK

These projects will deliver benefits across the UK and include a broad range of activities from measuring wind speeds to improving the accuracy of climate data, and from funding SME projects to additional PhD places. Some projects will involve new or extended collaborations with international partners such as Australia.

Investing in the UK EO sector is a vital part of achieving our ambitions in space and with the range of applications of EO data including Net Zero targets, but it is just the first step.

Over the last few months, my officials have begun discussions with the earth observation community about the longer term plans for the sector. The package announced today provides an interim response to what we have been hearing are their biggest challenges. We will continue to work with the sector to identify strategic priorities to keep building on the world-leading excellence in UK earth observation.

These investments are UK wide and will provide targeted support during this time of uncertainty. They aim to support the retention of talent and firms across the sector, and we have particularly focused on how to ensure both academia and industry can benefit from these projects.

Context

The EU has now delayed our association for nearly two years. The UK has done everything it can to secure association, including entering into formal consultations to encourage the EU to implement their obligations.

The Government remains ready to discuss association with the EU, but with the EU continuing to refuse our request to formalise association, we cannot wait forever. Our priority is to invest in the UK's EO sector, and protect our knowledge and capabilities.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Publication of the UK Joint Fisheries Statement**

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):
[\[HCWS382\]](#)

The UK Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) has been published today that sets the direction of fisheries management in the UK over the coming years.

The four fisheries Administrations have worked together to develop shared policies which as a package, will deliver or contribute to delivering the eight objectives set out in the Fisheries Act 2020.

A copy of the JFS has been placed in the library of both Houses and is available on GOV.UK.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Health Update**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) (Maria Caulfield): [\[HCWS383\]](#)

Yesterday, NHS England announced an independent review will be taking place regarding the unacceptable incidents which took place at the Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust this year. It will focus on how these incidents were able to happen and why the failings were not picked up.

The abhorrent treatment of vulnerable people at the Edenfield Centre shown in the Panorama episode was completely unacceptable. Every patient has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, in a caring and therapeutic environment where their rights are upheld, their needs are met, and they feel supported and listened to.

This is why I welcome the steps taken by colleagues in the NHS to investigate these events. As my Honourable friend, Will Quince MP, stated in Parliament on 13 October 2022, this should not have happened. Therefore, it is vital that we get to the bottom of what went wrong so that we can make sure we do better in the future. As I said at the dispatch box, I have also instructed my officials to consider what is needed on wider issues for mental health inpatient care, separately to this independent review. I will give an update on this in due course.

TREASURY

■ Notification of Contingent Liability

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Jeremy Hunt):

[\[HCWS381\]](#)

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England (“the Bank”) decided at its meeting ending on 3 February 2022 to reduce the stocks of UK government bonds and sterling non-financial investment-grade corporate bonds held in the Asset Purchase Facility (APF) by ceasing to reinvest maturing securities. The Bank ceased reinvestment of assets in this portfolio in February 2022 and has since commenced sales of corporate bonds on 28 September 2022, and sales of gilts acquired for monetary policy purposes on 1 November 2022.

The then Chancellor agreed a joint approach with the Governor in an exchange of letters on 3 February 2022 to reduce the maximum authorised size of the APF for asset purchases every six months, as the size of APF holdings reduces.

On 4 November the Governor and I agreed to reduce the maximum size of the APF from £966bn to £886bn to reflect the unused portion of the recent financial stability related APF expansion. Since 05 May 2022, the total stock of assets held by the APF for monetary policy purposes has fallen from £866.6bn to £851.6bn. In line with the approach agreed with the Governor, the authorised maximum total size of the APF has therefore been reduced to £871bn.

The risk control framework previously agreed with the Bank will remain in place, and HM Treasury will continue to monitor risks to public funds from the APF through regular risk oversight meetings and enhanced information sharing with the Bank.

There will continue to be an opportunity for HM Treasury to provide views to the MPC on the design of the schemes within the APF, as they affect the Government’s broader economic objectives and may pose risks to the Exchequer.

The Government will continue to indemnify the Bank, the APF and its directors from any losses arising out of, or in connection with, the facility. If the liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal supply procedure.

A full departmental Minute has been laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.