



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 21 March 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Clyde Naval Base	12
ATTORNEY GENERAL	7	■ Ministry of Defence: TikTok	13
■ Coroners: Legal Representation	7	■ RAF High Wycombe	14
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	EDUCATION	15
■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries	7	■ Academies: Admissions	15
■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries	7	■ Childcare: Costs	15
■ Post Offices: Closures	8	■ Childcare: Fees and Charges	16
■ Small Businesses: Finance	8	■ Childcare: Finance	17
CABINET OFFICE	8	■ Childcare: Labour Turnover and Recruitment	17
■ Departmental Coordination	8	■ Childcare: Staff	18
■ Government Departments: Contracts	9	■ Climate Change: Education	18
■ Government Departments: Procurement	9	■ Free School Meals: Disability	18
■ Prime Minister: Visits Abroad	10	■ Performing Arts: Education	19
CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	10	■ Performing Arts: Extracurricular Activities	20
■ Games and Sports	10	■ Physical Education: Females	21
■ Hillsborough Stadium: Safety	11	■ Pre-school Education: Finance	21
■ Loneliness and Voluntary Work: Finance	11	■ Pre-school Education: T-levels	22
DEFENCE	12	■ Pupils: Absenteeism	23
■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Fires	12	■ Schools: Buildings	23
■ Artillery: Procurement	12	■ Science and Technology: Equality	25
		■ Students: Mental Health and Safety	26

■ Teachers: Private Life	27	■ Convention on Biological Diversity	38
ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	27	■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Technical Assistance	39
■ Carbon Capture and Storage	27	■ Dogs: Animal Breeding	39
■ Electricity Generation	27	■ Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories	39
■ Electricity: Standing Charges	28	■ Fisheries: Carbon Capture and Storage	40
■ Energy Bill Support Scheme	28	■ Fishing Vessels: Marine Protected Areas	40
■ Energy Bills Rebate	28	■ Furs: Trade	40
■ Energy: Housing	29	■ Litter	41
■ Energy: Leisure	29	■ Marine Protected Areas	41
■ Energy: Meters	30	■ Nature Conservation: British Overseas Territories	41
■ Energy: Prices	30	■ Neonicotinoids: EU Law	42
■ Energy: Solihull	31	■ Norfolk Broads: Ecology	43
■ Fuel Poverty: Housing	31	■ Rivers: Environment Protection	43
■ Nuclear Power: Finance	31	■ Seas and Oceans: Pollution Control	44
■ Power Stations	32	■ Swimming	45
■ Pre-payment: Meters	32	■ Thames Water: Fines	45
■ Renewable Energy: Northern Ireland	32	■ Tree Planting	45
■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund	33	■ Water Companies: Disclosure of Information	46
■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme	33	■ Water Companies: Regulation	46
■ Warm Home Discount Scheme	33	■ Water: Conservation	47
■ Wind Power	34	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	48
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	35	■ British Virgin Islands: Tax Avoidance	48
■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers	35	■ Cyprus: Aviation	48
■ Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill	36	■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Religious Freedom	49
■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control	36		
■ Coastal Areas: Environment Protection	37		
■ Coastal Erosion	37		

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace	49	■ Eyes: Surgery	61
■ Kenya: Food Supply	50	■ Genomics: Health Services	61
■ Occupied Territories: Violence	51	■ Health Professions: Workplace Pensions	61
■ Tunisia: Civil Liberties	51	■ Healthy Start Scheme	62
■ Tunisia: Democracy and Human Rights	51	■ Hepatitis: Health Services	63
■ Tunisia: Politics and Government	52	■ Hospitals: Discharges	63
■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland	52	■ Hospitals: Private Finance Initiative	63
■ Windsor Framework: Impact Assessments	53	■ Hospitals: Sexual Offences	64
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	53	■ Influenza: Vaccination	64
■ Antibiotics	53	■ Kidney Diseases: North West	65
■ Arthritis: Surgery	54	■ Kidney Diseases: West Midlands	66
■ Cancer: Medical Treatments	54	■ Leukaemia: Health Services	67
■ Carers	54	■ Medicine: Students	68
■ Clinical Psychologists: Training	55	■ Members: Correspondence	68
■ Concussion: Dementia	56	■ Mental Health Services	68
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Hikvision	56	■ Mental Health Services: Ambulance Services	69
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Public Expenditure	57	■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People	69
■ Diabetes: North West	57	■ NHS England: Consultancy	69
■ Doctors: Workplace Pensions	58	■ NHS: Data Protection	70
■ Drugs and Vaccination: Clinical Trials	59	■ NHS: Databases	70
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Children	59	■ NHS: Staff	70
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Children and Young People	59	■ Obesity: Children and Young People	71
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Health Hazards	60	■ Ophthalmic Services	72
■ Exercise	60	■ Prisons: Blood	72
		■ Public Health: Working Hours	72
		■ Sleep	73
		■ Social Services: Digital Technology	73

■ Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016	73	■ Prisons: Electronic Government	84
■ Transplant Surgery: North West	74	■ Prisons: Staff	85
HOME OFFICE	74	■ Trials: Greater London	85
■ Afghan Pro Bono Initiative	74	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	87
■ Asylum: Children	75	■ Buildings: Fire Prevention	87
■ Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry	75	■ Buildings: Safety	89
■ Illegal Migration Bill	76	■ Capital Investment	90
■ Illegal Migration Bill: Impact Assessments	76	■ Energy Performance Certificates	90
■ Immigration Controls: British Overseas Territories	77	■ Housing: Construction	90
■ Immigration Removal Centres: LGBT+ People	77	■ Housing: Equality	91
■ Legal Profession: Monitoring	78	■ Levelling Up Fund	91
■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse	78	■ Local Government: Remote Meetings	91
■ Radicalism: Children	78	■ Property Development: Carbon Emissions	91
■ Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund	79	■ Property Development: Nature Conservation	92
■ Refugees: Afghanistan	79	■ Property Management Companies: Regulation	92
■ Refugees: LGBT+ People	80	■ Social Rented Housing: Complaints	92
■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel	81	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	93
■ Violent and Sex Offender Register	81	■ Intellectual Property	93
■ Visas: Seasonal Workers	82	■ Science and Technology	93
■ Visas: Young People	82	■ Science and Technology: Equality	94
JUSTICE	83	■ UK Intellectual Property Office: Standards	94
■ Care Proceedings	83	■ Ultrasonics: Breast Cancer	94
■ Chelmsford Prison: Fire Prevention	83	SCOTLAND	95
■ Prisoners' Release	84	■ Scotland Office: Special Advisers	95
■ Prisoners' Release: Drugs	84		

TRANSPORT	95	TREASURY	107
■ Avanti West Coast: Tickets	95	■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption	107
■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions	96	■ Arts: Government Assistance	107
■ Aviation: Cyprus	96	■ Bank Levy	108
■ Aviation: Disability	97	■ Banks: Surcharges	108
■ Cycling and Walking: Finance	97	■ Beer: Excise Duties	108
■ Cycling and Walking: York Central	98	■ Business Rates	109
■ Euston Station: High Speed 2 Line	98	■ Car Allowances	109
■ High Speed 2 Line	98	■ Duty Free Allowances	110
■ High Speed 2 Line: Procurement	99	■ Electricity Generation: Taxation	110
■ Liverpool Port	100	■ Energy: Prices	111
■ London Bridge Station: Overcrowding	100	■ Fiscal Policy: Carbon Emissions	111
■ P&O Ferries	100	■ Fraud	112
■ P&O Ferries: Conditions of Employment and Redundancy	101	■ Hospitals: Construction	113
■ P&O Ferries: Redundancy	101	■ Individual Savings Accounts	113
■ Railway Stations: Bicycles	102	■ Insurance: Cancer	113
■ Railways: Bicycles	102	■ Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency: Finance	114
■ Railways: Bradford	102	■ Pensions: Tax Allowances	114
■ Railways: Fares	103	■ Pensions: Workplace Pensions	114
■ Railways: Infrastructure	103	■ Research and Development Tax Credit	115
■ Railways: North East	103	■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services	116
■ Railways: Tickets	104	■ Silicon Valley Bank UK	116
■ Shipping: Registration	104	■ Sizewell C Power Station: Finance	117
■ Southeastern Trains: Standards	105	■ Spirits: Excise Duties	117
■ Southeastern Trains: Timetables	106	■ Swimming Pools: Finance	117
■ Train Operating Companies: Staff	106	■ Tax Avoidance	118
■ Train Operating Companies: Vacancies	106	■ Tobacco: Excise Duties	119

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	119	■ Workplace Pensions: Advisory Services	128
■ Equality Act 2010	119	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	130
■ Women and Equalities: Written Questions	120	DEFENCE	130
WORK AND PENSIONS	120	■ Afghanistan: Refugees	130
■ Cost of Living Payments	120	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	130
■ Disability Unit	121	■ Fenwick Hospital	130
■ Employment Schemes: Disability	121	■ Health and Care Professions Council: Registration	131
■ Jobcentres: Training	122	■ NHS England: Thompson	131
■ Pensioners: Gloucester	123	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	132
■ Pensions: Telephone Services	124	CABINET OFFICE	132
■ Personal Independence Payment	124	■ Publication of the Fraud Landscape Report	132
■ Postal Services: Wolverhampton	125	■ Update on procurement exclusion	133
■ Social Security Benefits	125	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	134
■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification	126	■ Publication of the Tourism Recovery Plan Update Report	134
■ Support for Mortgage Interest	126	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	135
■ Unemployment: Coventry North East	126	■ Clinical trials consultation response	135
■ Universal Credit	127	TRANSPORT	136
■ Universal Credit: Childcare	127	■ Rail reform update	136
■ Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment	128		

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Coroners: Legal Representation

Steve Reed:

[\[167126\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much her Department has spent on legal representation at inquests in each year since 2018.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Attorney General's Department has had no expenditure on legal representation at inquests since 2018.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries

Bill Esterson:

[\[167091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an estimate of the number of jobs that are supported (a) directly and (b) indirectly by gigafactories.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government continues to work with industry to unlock private investment in our EV supply chain via the Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF). Securing gigafactories is a priority, with further targeted investment in battery materials, electric drive units and hydrogen fuel cells required.

ATF funding has already helped secure major investments in the UK, including Envision AESC's investment in July 2022 to create a gigafactory in Sunderland. This will support 750 new jobs.

■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Matt Vickers:

[\[166393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support UK car manufacturing.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

DBT Secretary of State and her ministerial team regularly engage with Cabinet colleagues to discuss measures to support the UK automotive sector's successful transition to electric vehicles.

The Government is committed to securing investment into the automotive sector, which will play an important role in levelling up across the UK and driving down emissions to net zero by 2050.

The Government supports an industry-led transition to Net Zero and it continues to work with global investors via the Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF) to unlock private investment to build an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain.

■ Post Offices: Closures

Julian Sturdy: [\[163785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to mitigate the effects of the closure of Post Office collection points.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I believe that my Honourable Friend is referring to Royal Mail customer service points rather than Post Office collection points. I understand that Royal Mail has completed the first stage of its review of customer service points and decided to maintain the current estate.

Decisions on the provision of Royal Mail customer service points are an operational matter for the business, provided they meet Ofcom's regulatory requirement on Royal Mail, as the Designated Universal Service Provider, to provide access points for the universal postal service.

■ Small Businesses: Finance

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[166153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2023 to Question 161242 on Small Businesses: Finance, if he will provide a breakdown of how the £70 million for a Northern Ireland Investment Fund is being allocated.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The £70 million Investment Fund for Northern Ireland is on course to be launched by the British Business Bank in autumn 2023. The fund will offer a range of commercial finance options with loans from £25,000 to £2 million and equity investment of up to £5 million, increasing the supply and diversity of early-stage finance for smaller businesses in Northern Ireland. The Bank is currently inviting proposals from potential fund managers to operate the new fund.

Finance will be allocated based on the commercial merits of the proposals received.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Departmental Coordination

Julian Knight: [\[163796\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment his Department made of the adequacy of the Shared Services Strategy to improve Whitehall efficiency.

Alex Burghart:

The Strategy will create modern, user friendly and joined up back office systems across government. Breaking down red tape and freeing up civil servants to deliver for citizens. The new services and systems will be smarter, cheaper and faster, all at a lower cost to the tax payer.

Government departments and other bodies are clustering together into just five shared service centres. Current estimates suggest this could realise around £1.8 billion of benefits. Without the Strategy, costs may have nearly doubled by replacing systems in individual departments.

Clusters, with much greater buying power are now engaging with eager suppliers to procure cutting edge, expert systems and services. This avoids civil servants having to patch or develop one size fits all systems centrally for all departments.

■ Government Departments: Contracts**Justin Madders:**[\[167155\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to update the Contracts Finder platform from the beta phase.

Alex Burghart:

The Government's Procurement Bill will create new legislative requirements for the publication of procurement notices. Once this work is completed, further consideration will be given to the development of Contracts Finder, including moving it from 'Beta' to 'Live'.

■ Government Departments: Procurement**Angela Rayner:**[\[167131\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the level of compliance by (a) Government Departments, (b) Executive Agencies and (c) non-departmental public bodies with the guidance set out in Procurement Policy Note 01/22: contracts with suppliers from Russia and Belarus.

Alex Burghart:

The illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has been met with unprecedented global condemnation. The UK is proudly standing shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine and has introduced tough financial and investment sanctions, to push Russia to cease its illegal and destabilising actions.

In March 2022, Cabinet Office published PPN 01/22 which set out the government's commercial policy and guidance, recommending that public bodies immediately seek to identify any contracts with Russian and Belarusian companies and, to switch suppliers with minimal disruption, pursue legal routes of cancelling them. In all cases, contracting authorities must be proportionate and take a risk-based approach. The final decision to terminate a contract rests with the contracting authority with responsibility for the contract.

In the case of the Cabinet Office's own commercial activities, since the publication of PPN 01/22, there have been no instances where a Russian/Belarusian supplier has bid, and therefore been excluded from a procurement. Other departments will hold their own records on such matters.

■ Prime Minister: Visits Abroad

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[164027\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will provide (a) the length in miles of each official trip the Prime Minister has taken by (i) train, (ii) plane, (iii) helicopter and (iv) car since 25 October 2022, (b) the length of time each of those trips took in minutes and (c) the start and end points for each of those trips.

Jeremy Quin:

It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to publish granular information relating to the official movements of protected individuals and those accompanying them within the United Kingdom. The location of official Prime Ministerial visits is published each quarter on gov.uk.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Games and Sports

Alex Sobel:

[\[163887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has a process for designating an activity as either a sport or a game.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government's arm's length body (ALB) for grassroots sport, Sport England, has a process for recognising activities. The objective of the recognition process is to identify sports that Sport England may wish to work with and the national bodies that govern them. The process is run jointly with the other three Home Country Sports Councils and UK Sport.

When deciding if an activity can be recognised, the Sports Councils refer to the definition of sport contained within the Council of Europe's European Sports Charter. This states that:

"Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels."

As an example of this process, the English Chess Federation made an application for recognition in 2008, but this was turned down as the Sports Councils did not consider chess to be a physical activity. Therefore, it did not meet the Council of Europe's definition.

■ Hillsborough Stadium: Safety

Chi Onwurah:

[\[167102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has had recent discussions with (a) Sheffield Wednesday FC, (b) Newcastle United FC, (c) Sheffield City Council, (d) the FSA, and (e) the SGSA on the implementation of safety review recommendations at Hillsborough Stadium.

Stuart Andrew:

DCMS has remained in contact with the Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA) in relation to the concerns that were raised by Newcastle United supporters who attended the FA Cup third round tie at Hillsborough Stadium on 7th January 2023.

Local authorities issue safety certificates for relevant football stadia within their boundaries, and are responsible for local engagement and assessment. Sheffield City Council convened a Safety Advisory Group meeting following the concerns raised by Newcastle United supporters.

The minutes from the Safety Advisory Group meeting have been published and Sheffield City Council have taken action and significantly reduced the capacity in the upper and lower West Stands to address the safety concerns that were raised.

The SGSA were engaged throughout this process and have reported this appropriate response back to DCMS.

■ Loneliness and Voluntary Work: Finance

Julian Knight:

[\[163797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding her Department is allocating to tackle (a) loneliness and (b) support volunteering.

Stuart Andrew:

Volunteering is vital for society and Government recognises this. It benefits volunteers and the organisations involving them and has transformational impacts on beneficiaries and their communities. Government aims to remove barriers to getting people involved.

We are supporting efforts to tackle loneliness and in the current financial year (2022/23), DCMS has invested almost £800,000, including for our national loneliness campaign, building the loneliness evidence base, and supporting the Tackling Loneliness Hub.

We have invested £7.4 million to support people to overcome barriers to volunteering since 2021. DCMS' Volunteering Futures Fund opened up volunteering opportunities for thousands of young people, people with disabilities, those experiencing loneliness and other barriers. DCMS is also supporting the Vision for Volunteering, a ten-year initiative that aims to make volunteering more equitable, diverse and inclusive. In March 2023, DCMS launched the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund of up to £30 million, with £19 million of funding from Government, to widen participation in

volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. The fund will run until 2025.

DEFENCE

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Fires

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[167239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022, published on 14 July 2022, where the wildfire occurred which destroyed jackal vehicle and equipment and incurred a loss of £537,000.

James Heappey:

The wildfire that destroyed a Jackal vehicle and equipment, incurring a loss of £537,000 occurred 35 miles north of Menaka in Mali.

■ Artillery: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[167049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on the procurement of 14 Archer heavy artillery systems from Sweden.

Alex Chalk:

The UK has agreed a government-to-government sale with Sweden for the procurement of Archer artillery systems to replace the AS90 platforms Granted in Kind to Ukraine. The contract will be signed shortly, and until that point the value of the Archer programme will not be finalised. Once agreed, the contract will include other elements such as ammunition, support and training packages.

■ Clyde Naval Base

Luke Pollard:

[\[167222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of HM Naval Base Clyde.

Luke Pollard:

[\[167224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Royal Naval Armaments Depot Coulport.

Luke Pollard:

[\[167226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of HMS Collingwood.

Luke Pollard:

[\[167228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of HMS Excellent.

Luke Pollard: [\[167230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of HMS Temeraire.

Luke Pollard: [\[167232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Horsea Island.

Luke Pollard: [\[167234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of the Institute of Naval Medicine.

Alex Chalk:

HM Naval Base Clyde is 127.372 hectares in size.

Royal Naval Armaments Depot Coulport is 657.141 hectares in size.

HMS Collingwood is 73.917 hectares in size.

HMS Excellent is 31.796 hectares in size.

HMS Temeraire is 1.225 hectares in size.

Horsea Island is 30.842 hectares in size.

The Institute of Naval Medicine is 5.038 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of these sites, as they have not been identified for disposal.

■ Ministry of Defence: TikTok

Angela Rayner: [\[167132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department will shut down its TikTok account.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) TikTok account has been implemented to communicate globally the ongoing efforts of the UK Armed Forces, including our work with nine partner nations, to train Ukrainian soldiers and prepare them for frontline combat.

In order to deliver our messages internationally we must leverage the largest digital platforms available to us with the most significant reach and scale. Whilst we have been effective with our digital communications, in particular with our daily Defence Intelligence updates on Twitter which have been read over 400 million times, we must do more to reach audiences worldwide.

Robust processes are in place to control publishing to social media from within the MOD. Communications on social media are delivered by separate systems through a small number of communications staff. TikTok communications, like all social media

publishing, are delivered via third-party software and no government devices are being used to publish or monitor the platform directly.

■ **RAF High Wycombe**

Luke Pollard: [\[166349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of RAF High Wycombe.

Luke Pollard: [\[166351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of RAF Welford.

Luke Pollard: [\[166353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of RAF Weston-on-the-Green.

Luke Pollard: [\[166355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Fairford.

Luke Pollard: [\[166357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF St Mawgan.

Luke Pollard: [\[166359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of HMS Gannet.

Luke Pollard: [\[166361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of RM Condor Arbroath.

Alex Chalk:

RM Condor Arbroath is 206.533 hectares in size.

HMS Gannet is 7.634 hectares in size.

RAF St Mawgan is 208.706 hectares in size.

RAF Fairford is 514.226 hectares in size.

RAF Weston-on-the-Green is 132.104 hectares in size.

RAF Welford is 297.935 hectares in size.

RAF High Wycombe is 79.627 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of these sites, as they have not been identified for disposal.

EDUCATION**■ Academies: Admissions****Chi Onwurah:**[\[167100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2023 to Question 132392 on Admissions: Academies, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of granting local authorities the power to direct academies to admit pupils in periods of (a) short term and (b) acute demand for school places.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is not currently considering giving Local Authorities a power to direct academies to admit pupils in periods of demand for school places.

While it is for academies, as their own admission authority, to determine the numbers of places they provide, the Department does expect academy trusts along with other schools to collaborate with Local Authorities to provide additional places where these are needed, particularly where an academy has spare capacity that can be brought into use.

The Department supports Local Authorities with capital funding through the Basic Need Grant to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The Department provides revenue funding as part of the Designated Schools Grant that Local Authorities can use to support schools to manage a significant growth in pupil numbers.

■ Childcare: Costs**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[163896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of childcare costs on parents with children below primary school age.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[163900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of childcare costs on parents' ability to return to work.

Claire Coutinho:

The 2023 Spring Budget announced that the department is closing the gap between parental leave ending and the current childcare offer for working parents, ensuring all parents of primary-aged children can access wraparound childcare in school.

This announcement announced the largest ever investment in childcare in England. The measures that were announced will be transformative for parents, children and the economy.

By 2027/28, the department will provide over £4.1 billion to fund 30 hours of free childcare per week, covering 38 weeks per year, for working parents which children aged nine months to three years old in England.

The department will invest £204 million in 2023/24 to uplift the rates for existing entitlements, rising to £288 million in 2024/25, with further uplifts beyond this so that providers have the funding they need to deliver childcare entitlements.

We are removing one of the largest barriers to working parents by increasing the amount of free childcare available. Childcare is a vital enabler for parents to work, which is why we are bringing forward a number of measures to support parents to return and stay in work. This new funding will empower parents, allowing them to progress in their careers and supporting their families.

The department believes all parents should have access to childcare before and after the school day to help them work. That is why we are also launching a new national wraparound childcare pilot scheme.

We will provide a total of £289 million in start-up funding to enable schools and local areas to test flexible ways of providing wraparound childcare.

By 2027/28, government funding on free hours and early education will be in excess of £8 billion a year. This will help working families with their childcare cost.

■ Childcare: Fees and Charges

Helen Hayes:

[167192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the expanded free childcare hours offer announced in the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183 published on 15 March 2023, whether her Department has undertaken modelling of the number of children included in that offer whose parents or guardians are likely to take up the offer in each of (a) 2024 and (b) 2025, broken down by age.

Claire Coutinho:

In the 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced a number of transformative reforms to childcare for parents, children and the economy.

By 2027/28, the government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion a year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This announcement represents the largest ever investment in childcare in England.

In future, working parents will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare a week, for 38 weeks a year, from the point their child is 9 months to when their child starts school. This offer will be rolled out in full from September 2025. The department is ensuring a phased implementation of the expansion to the 30 hours offer to allow the market to develop the necessary capacity, and we will work closely with the sector to develop plans to grow, develop and support the workforce.

Eligibility estimates for the free early education entitlements are explained in the methodology of the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age' under 'Data Quality'. This can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-methodology>.

Further details will be provided in due course.

■ Childcare: Finance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[163897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on childcare funding.

Claire Coutinho:

The department's ministers and officials have regular discussions with HM Treasury on matters relating to early years funding.

On 15 March 2023, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that the hourly rates for the entitlements will be substantially uplifted, on top of additional investments announced in the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review and on 16 December 2022.

The department will provide £204 million of additional funding this year, increasing to £288 million by 2024/25, for local authorities to further increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers, with further uplifts to follow each year. This will include an average of 30% increase in the two-year-old rate from September 2023 and mean that in 2024, the average hourly rate for two-year-olds will be more than £8 per hour and around £11 per hour for under twos. The average three to four-year-old rate will rise in line with inflation, to over £5.50 per hour from September 2023, with further uplifts beyond this.

This funding is in addition to the £4.1 billion that the government will provide by 2027/28 to facilitate the expansion of the new free hours offer, under which all eligible working parents in England will, by September 2025, be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

■ Childcare: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Helen Hayes:

[\[167190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of measures set out in the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183, published on 15 March 2023, on the ability of childcare providers to recruit staff; and what recent modelling has her Department undertaken of trends in staff (a) recruitment and (b) retention in that sector.

Helen Hayes:

[\[167191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the expanded free childcare hours offer announced in the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183, published on 15 March 2023, what assessment she has made of the total number of (a) early years settings and (b) early years staff needed to deliver that offer.

Claire Coutinho:

The department regularly surveys a representative sample of over 10,000 early years providers to gain insights into how they run their provision and the challenges they

face. This includes data on staff recruitment and retention. We also regularly survey over 6,000 parents to understand their usage of childcare.

The data collected through these surveys is used to inform the department's methodology and the uplift required to meet the pressures providers face, and to evaluate the impact this will have on early years settings, early years staff, and on the sufficiency of childcare. We will share further details of this in due course.

The childcare and early years provider survey is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childcare-and-early-years-provider-survey/2022>. The childcare and early years parents survey is accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-2021>.

■ **Childcare: Staff**

Rachael Maskell: **[167273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to develop a workforce plan for Government-funded childcare staff.

Claire Coutinho:

The department continues to explore how to best support the early years sector to recruit and retain the staff it needs. We are working closely with the sector to develop a workforce strategy. The department will share further information in due course.

■ **Climate Change: Education**

Dr Rupa Huq: **[165463]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that climate change and sustainability are integrated throughout the primary and secondary school curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will not be making any changes to the National Curriculum. Topics related to climate change and sustainability feature in the National Curricula for science, citizenship, and geography for primary and secondary schools.

An environmental science A level is available, and a Natural History GCSE will be introduced in 2025. The National Education Nature Park will also provide many educational opportunities for young people to take part in citizen science and biodiversity monitoring.

■ **Free School Meals: Disability**

Daisy Cooper: **[163938]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing free school meal vouchers to those students who are eligible for free school meals but cannot access a school setting due to (a) disability, (b)

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), (c) Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) or other factors.

Nick Gibb:

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on maintained schools and academies to provide free school meals (FSM) to pupils of all ages that meet the criteria for eligibility and who are attending school during term time. The Act makes clear that a child must be registered at a publicly funded school as a condition of claiming FSM.

Local Authorities are funded to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those who are unable to attend school on a long term basis. Parents are advised to liaise with Local Authorities to consider suitable alternatives in line with the guidance on long term illnesses, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>.

■ **Performing Arts: Education**

Anna McMorris:

[167209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the number of (a) performing arts teachers and (b) associated curriculum hours in schools and further and higher education institutions.

Nick Gibb:

Information relating to ITT recruitment performance in England is published annually in the ITT census, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census/2022-23>. In 2022/23, there were 329 postgraduate trainees who started an ITT course in drama, 301 in music, and 1,405 in physical education. Performance versus target in 2022/23 for drama was 113%, for music was 64%, and for physical education was 143%.

Information on the school workforce in England, including the number of subject teachers in state funded secondary schools, is collected each November as part of the annual school workforce census. Information is published in the 'school workforce in England' statistical publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>. Those who are designated as teachers of dance are included within the total for physical education/sports teachers.

As of November 2021, there were 8,976 teachers of drama, 7,003 teachers of music, and 23,708 teachers of physical education/sport at Key Stages 3, 4, and 5 in state funded secondary schools in England. In a typical week, they taught 85,003 hours of drama, 86,480 hours of music, and 290,033 hours of physical education/sport. Drama, music and physical education/sport teachers designate any teacher timetabled to teach the subject for any period in a typical week in November. These teachers do not necessarily have a specific post-A level qualification. This timetabling does not cover an entire year of teaching. If there are variations in timetabling across the year, this is not covered in the data available to the Department.

The Department does not hold data on the number of teachers who teach performing arts in further education institutions.

For 2022/23, the Department increased funding for world-leading specialist HE providers by an additional £5 million, from £53 million in 2021/22 to £58 million in 2022/23. This is on top of the increase of £10 million the Department provided in 2021/22. The Department wants to ensure that specialist institutions, many of which specialise in arts provision, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

■ Performing Arts: Extracurricular Activities

Anna McMorris:

[167210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of rises in the cost of living on the uptake of extracurricular performing arts classes in (a) primary, (b) secondary, (c) further and (d) higher education; and whether she is taking steps to increase engagement in the performing arts in (i) schools and (ii) other educational establishments.

Nick Gibb:

All state funded schools are required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, and this includes promoting pupils' cultural development. The performing arts are a core part of the school curriculum and also supported through extracurricular activities to children and young people.

The Department regularly asks about pupil participation in extracurricular performing arts activities in 'parent, pupil and learner panel' surveys. In the most recent published wave in which the questions were asked (the November wave from the 2022/23 academic year), 19% of pupils reported that they had participated in extracurricular performing arts activities in that term. The Department will continue to monitor the uptake of performing arts and other extracurricular activities, and investigate reasons for any significant changes or trends.

An additional £1.6 billion in funding has been made available for 16-19 education between the 2021/22 and 2024/25 academic years. This includes an up-front cash boost which will see the rate of funding per student increase by over 8% in 2022/23.

The Department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year which have affected university students. In addition to the cost of living measures already announced, the Department discusses cost of living pressures that are affecting students in its regular meetings with stakeholders, including the Office for Students (OfS), Universities UK and other HE representative groups. The Department also consulted with the National Association of Student Money Advisers to understand the ongoing situation in relation to increased requests from students for hardship awards from their universities.

The Department will continue to spend around £115 million per annum on cultural education over three years, through its music, arts and heritage programmes. With the real terms per pupil increases to core school funding and the nearly £5 billion that

has been announced for education recovery, schools will continue to have the flexibility to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum and enrichment activities, including in arts and creative subjects.

The Department will be publishing a Cultural Education Plan in 2023, working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England. The Chair of the Expert Advisory Panel was announced last year, and other panel members will be announced in due course. The Plan will focus on how the Government can support access and participation in a wide range of arts subjects and activities, particularly for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and in underrepresented groups. It will also further support young people who wish to pursue careers in the creative, cultural, and heritage industries.

In addition, the Department wants to ensure that HE specialist providers, many of which specialise in arts provision, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

On 8 December 2022, the OfS published the list of successful HE providers who have been identified as world-leading specialists by the Specialist Provider Panel. The current list of world-leading specialist providers includes 13 providers specialising in the arts. This funding will help improve the diversity and quality of creative education provision available to students.

■ **Physical Education: Females**

Julie Elliott:

[\[165318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to ensure girls and young women to access physical education during secondary school.

Nick Gibb:

On 8 March 2023, the Government announced a package to support girls' equal opportunity to PE and Sport lessons and extra-curricular activities. The announcement included the expansion of the School Games Mark to reward parity of provision for girls.

The Department is also funding a programme worth up to £980,000 over three years run by Sports Leaders Qualification that specifically focuses on improving opportunities for girls aged 8 to 16 in competitive sport and sport leadership. The programme will run until the end of March 2024.

Sport England has also provided £1.5 million of funding to develop a new digital resource, called Studio You, which supports teachers to engage less active teenage girls in their PE and Sport lessons.

■ **Pre-school Education: Finance**

Dame Caroline Dinanage:

[\[163767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions her Department has had with HM Treasury on the below inflation rise in early years funding.

Claire Coutinho:

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with HM Treasury on matters relating to early years funding.

On 15 March 2023, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the hourly rates for childcare entitlements will be substantially uplifted, on top of the additional investments announced at the 2021 Spending Review.

The department will provide £204 million of additional funding this year, increasing to £288 million by 2024/5, for local authorities to further increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers, with further uplifts to follow each year. This will include an average of 30% increase in the 2 year old rate from September 2023 and means that in 2024, the average hourly rate for 2 year olds will be more than £8 per hour and around £11 per hour for under 2s. The 3 to 4 year old rate will rise by 4% to over £5.50 per hour from September 2023, with further uplifts beyond this.

This funding is in addition to the £4.1 billion that the government will provide by 2027/28 to facilitate the expansion of the new free hours offer. This will ensure all eligible working parents in England will, by September 2025, be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

■ Pre-school Education: T-levels**Munira Wilson:**[\[164016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students have enrolled onto the early years educator specialism of the Education and Early Years T-Level in each year since the T-Level was introduced.

Robert Halfon:

The department is introducing T Levels in a phased approach. The number of providers will increase year on year, and student numbers are expected to grow significantly over the next few years.

In September 2020, 650 students started the Education and Childcare T Level, with over half opting for the Early Years Educator specialism.

1,420 students started the Education and Childcare T Level in September 2021 with almost 900 students opting for the Early Years Educator specialism, and early indications from providers are that around 2,150 students started the Education and Childcare T Level in September 2022, with over half of those that have chosen currently opting for the Early Years Educator specialism.

The majority of students on this T Level study the Early Years Education occupational specialism. Students do not have to finalise their occupational specialism until they reach the second year of their programme.

The figures provided are not exact, as data is not always recorded when a student starts the programme.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Mrs Flick Drummond:

[163760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children of compulsory school age who missed 50 per cent or more of possible sessions in the autumn term of the 2023-24 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

Information on the number of children who missed 50% or more of possible sessions in the 2022/23 autumn term will be published in May 2023. The data will be published at the following link, which currently includes data for previous autumn terms:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term>.

■ Schools: Buildings

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[163891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to the maintenance and renewal of school buildings in the last five years.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[163895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps she has taken to ensure adequate funding is available to ensure the safety of school buildings.

Nick Gibb:

Well maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the Department. Over £9 billion has been allocated between the 2018/19 and 2022/23 financial years for keeping schools safe and operational and improving the condition of the school estate, including £1.8 billion in 2022/23. These allocations are informed by consistent data on the condition of schools.

The figure for 2022/23 includes annual School Condition Allocations for Local Authorities, larger multi academy trusts and larger voluntary aided (VA) school bodies to prioritise improving the condition of their schools. It also includes funding for the Condition Improvement Fund, into which smaller and single academy trusts, small VA bodies and sixth form colleges can bid for specific capital projects each year, and Devolved Formula Capital allocated to each school to spend on their own capital priorities. The Department provided an additional £447 million to schools in 2022/23 for capital works, prioritising energy efficiency.

In 2020 the Department announced the School Rebuilding Programme, with a commitment to transform buildings at 500 schools and sixth form colleges over the next decade, prioritising those in the worst condition and with evidence of potential safety issues. 400 schools have been announced to date, including 239 last December.

Where the Department is alerted to significant safety issues with a building that cannot be managed with local resources, additional support is provided on a case by case basis.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[163892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's Condition of School Buildings Survey published in May 2021, what recent assessment she has made of the cost to repair and replace all defective elements of the school estate.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[163894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's Condition of School Buildings Survey, published in May 2021, what recent assessment she has made of the safety of school buildings.

Nick Gibb:

The Department published a high level Condition Data Collection (CDC) Key Findings Report in 2021, which estimated the cost of remedial work to repair or replace all defective elements in the school estate in England to be £11.4 billion. The report can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/989912/Condition_of_School_Buildings_Survey_CDC1_-_key_findings_report.pdf.

The Department is currently updating the data on school building condition in the successor programme, CDC2, which is due for completion in 2026. A full assessment of the remedial costs to repair or replace all defective elements in the school estate cannot be made until completion of the programme.

The Department has allocated over £13 billion since 2015 for keeping schools safe and operational, including £1.8 billion in 2022/23. This is informed by consistent data on the school estate. The School Rebuilding Programme will rebuild or refurbish buildings at 500 schools over the next decade, prioritising schools in poor condition and with potential safety issues. 400 schools have been announced to date, including 239 in December 2022.

It is the responsibility of the academy trusts and Local Authorities which look after school buildings to maintain them and keep them safe. In 2021, the Department wrote to every responsible body signposting them to available support, reminding them of their responsibility to maintain the safety of their buildings, and inviting them to contact the Department regarding any serious structural issues in their buildings. The Department has been following up individually with the schools that responded to this, steering them towards available funding routes and guidance, and, in some cases, sending a technical adviser to visit the school.

The Department has also sent a questionnaire to all responsible bodies asking them to provide information on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their school buildings. The Department has engaged buildings professionals to work with schools who have reported they suspect RAAC is present to verify its presence and

assess its condition. Where the presence of RAAC is confirmed, the Department helps schools with appropriate support.

■ Science and Technology: Equality

Julian Knight:

[163790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to improve diversity and inclusion in the UK's science and technology education and workforce.

Nick Gibb:

The Research and Development People and Culture Strategy sets out the actions that Government and the sector need to take to ensure the UK has the talented workforce it needs to be a global science superpower. This included a review of youth engagement (including the STEM Ambassadors programme), and its effects to encourage more diverse young people into research and innovation.

The Department supports a range of work to improve diversity and inclusion in UK science and technology education in schools. This includes funding an Inclusion in Schools project designed to increase the uptake of A level physics from pupils in underrepresented groups, including girls. It also includes funding the Isaac Physics programme, an online platform of GCSE and A level physics materials developed by Cambridge University designed to increase the numbers of pupils, particularly from typically underrepresented backgrounds, studying physics in higher education.

The Department is investing £84 million into the National Centre for Computing Education to drive increased participation in computer science and funding research programmes on how to improve gender balance in STEM subjects.

Positive progress has been made on uptake of STEM in further education which will help to improve diversity in the workplace.

With over 350 high-quality apprenticeship standards available in STEM sectors, apprenticeships are supporting people of all backgrounds to begin, or progress in, careers in science and technology. The number of STEM apprenticeship starts by women has increased year-on-year, with 14,110 starts in the 2021/22 academic year, an increase of 56% compared to the 9,020 starts in the 2017/18 academic year. The Department is promoting STEM apprenticeships in schools through our Apprenticeship Knowledge and Support programme and our Apprenticeships Diversity Champions Network of influential employers promotes best practices in recruiting and retaining people from all backgrounds in STEM apprenticeships.

The Department is also working with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology to deliver new postgraduate AI and data science conversion courses to boost diversity in AI jobs. The conversion courses provide people with the opportunity to find new employment in AI and data science sectors, even for those who had no previous experience in the field. In the first year of the programme, 76% of the scholarships awarded have gone to women, 45% to black students, and 24% to students with disabilities. There will be an additional 2,000 scholarships to be delivered between 2023 and 2025.

■ Students: Mental Health and Safety**Catherine West:****[163890]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with universities on mental health safety for students.

Robert Halfon:

The mental health and wellbeing of young people is high a priority for this government. It is crucial that students get the mental health and wellbeing support they need to allow them to flourish at university.

The department engages regularly with the higher education (HE) sector on the mental health of university students and works closely to ensure that effective practice is funded and shared more widely. This engagement is supported by Vice-Chancellor Edward Peck, who was appointed earlier this year as HE's first ever Student Support Champion. Edward Peck works closely with ministers and officials, and provides sector leadership to promote effective practice in areas such as mental health and information sharing,

The Office for Students (OfS) works with the HE sector to ensure providers have the necessary funding and tools to support the mental health of their students. Through annual strategic guidance to the OfS, the department asked that the OfS distributes £15 million of funding in the 2022/23 financial year to give additional support for transitions from school or college to university, and through targeting funding to support partnership working with NHS services to provide students with a pathway of care to local mental health services. This strategic guidance is available at:

https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/bb422aae-54fb-42c8-b5db-26e7ed48df80/strategic-priorities-grant-20220331_amend.pdf.

This government strongly supports the University Mental Health Charter, which is led by Student Minds. The Charter brings together universities to share effective practice and create cultural change around mental health. Programme members can work towards the Charter Award, which recognises those universities that demonstrate excellent practice in supporting student mental health. The department has written to all providers to make clear our ambition that they all sign up to the mental health charter programme by the end of 2026. The Charter is accessible at:

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html>.

The department has recently surveyed HE providers about their policies and practices to support student wellbeing and mental health. The study will gather sector wide insights on specific activities in this area and broad evidence on the overall approach to supporting students across HE. 179 providers have responded to this survey and results are due to be published in spring 2023.

■ Teachers: Private Life

Catherine West:

[\[163888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to (a) document and (b) ban relationships between staff and students.

Robert Halfon:

The Office for Students (OfS), the higher education (HE) regulator, is consulting on instituting regulatory interventions in the matter of relationships between staff and students at all registered HE providers. The consultation closes on 4 May 2023. The OfS will publish its conclusions in due course and will take the appropriate action.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[163946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to develop and deploy carbon removal technologies.

Graham Stuart:

Carbon removal technologies will be essential for reaching net zero. The Net Zero Strategy included an ambition to deploy at least 5MtCO₂/yr of engineered removals by 2030, potentially rising to 23MtCO₂/yr by 2035.

A consultation on GGR business models was published in July 2022, setting out proposals to attract private investment and enable GGR projects to deploy at scale from the late 2020s.

This builds on the £100m the Government is investing in research and innovation through the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, including the Greenhouse Gas Removal and Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage Programmes.

■ Electricity Generation

Sarah Champion:

[\[163844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department's biomass strategy will set out policies for using (a) waste wood and (b) other renewable baseload power generators to increase energy security.

Graham Stuart:

The biomass strategy will review the amount of sustainable biomass materials, including waste wood, that is available to the UK and how this resource can be used to achieve the Government's Net Zero ambitions and protect the environment. The biomass strategy will be published in Q2 2023.

■ Electricity: Standing Charges

John McNally:

[\[163860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to reduce regional disparities in Standing Charges for electricity.

Amanda Solloway:

The standing charge includes some electricity distribution costs, which vary regionally to reflect the different costs of maintaining and upgrading the distribution network in different regions. Unique geographic factors mean that electricity distribution costs are markedly higher in the North of Scotland than elsewhere in Great Britain. To protect consumers in the North of Scotland from these costs, the government reaffirmed its commitment in January 2023 to the Hydro Benefit Replacement Scheme. This government scheme provides an annual cross subsidy of over £90 million to reduce related charges in the region.

■ Energy Bill Support Scheme

Julian Knight:

[\[163787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to take steps to improve access to the funding available through the Energy Bill Support Scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

Licensed domestic electricity suppliers delivering EBSS must already make considerations of consumer needs and preferences under supply licence conditions. Traditional prepayment meter users receiving vouchers can nominate someone else to redeem the voucher on behalf of the householder. Suppliers can also provide accessible forms of the vouchers such as large print and braille.

The EBSS Alternative Funding allows applicants to apply online, or through the contact centre helpline if they do not have online access or need extra support. There are also provisions for trusted individuals to apply on behalf of applicants who are unable to do so themselves.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[163928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure (a) local authorities process Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding applications in a timely manner and (b) successful applicants receive one-off payments no later than six weeks after submitting their applications.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government has worked closely with pilot local authorities in designing the scheme and developing guidance for all local authorities. To reduce the administrative burden on local authorities and the time taken to process an application, many of the eligibility checks are completed centrally by the Government

before applications are passed through to local authorities for final checks. The time that applicants will wait to receive support will depend on the case complexity and the volume of applications received by the local authority. The Government is committed to ensuring that eligible applicants are provided support as soon as possible.

■ Energy: Housing

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[165441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on investment in (a) home insulation and (b) heat pumps in order to improve energy efficiency in the context of (i) the cost-of-living crisis and (ii) achieving the UK's Net Zero targets.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is investing £6.6 billion over this Parliament on clean heat and improving energy efficiency in buildings, including through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Home Upgrade Grant, and Boiler Upgrade Scheme. In addition, £6 billion of new Government funding will be made available from 2025 to 2028.

The new ECO+ scheme will be worth £1 billion and run from Spring 2023 – March 2026. The scheme will target a broader pool of households in the least efficient homes in lower council tax bands as well as the most vulnerable.

The Government considers improving the energy efficiency of homes to be the best long-term method of tackling fuel poverty.

■ Energy: Leisure

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[163886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including the public leisure sector in the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme review assessed a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence and contributions from businesses and other stakeholders, on sectors that may be most affected by price increase based on energy and trade intensity (ETII). The public leisure sector does not fall within the trade intensive category and therefore not included in the ETII scheme.

However, and recognising the vital role that swimming pools and leisure facilities play in our communities, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced in the budget additional funding of over £60 million for public swimming pool providers to help with immediate cost pressures and make facilities more energy efficient.

■ Energy: Meters

Tony Lloyd:

[\[162485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the temporary ban on prepayment installations ending before Ofgem's Market Compliance Review into prepayment meter policies and practices has concluded.

Amanda Solloway:

All suppliers have agreed to cease the forced installation of prepayment meters (PPMS) until 31 March 2023, but has now been indefinitely extended whilst Ofgem and industry agree and implement a code of practice to improve consumer safeguards. Ofgem has begun an intensive consultation process to look at what further protections may be needed around PPMs.

As announced in the Spring budget, the Government will remove the premium paid by households using prepayment meters by bringing their charges in line with comparable direct debit customers until the Energy Price Guarantee ends.

Sarah Olney:

[\[163959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the cost to the public purse was of advertising support schemes for people using prepayment meters in the last financial year.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government wants everyone who is eligible to redeem their prepayment meter vouchers and get £400 to help with their energy bills. Unlike direct debit customers, pre-payment meter customers need to take action in order to access the £400 support and represent some of the most vulnerable groups in society which is why it's vital they are made aware of how to access this funding.

Ministers have pushed for suppliers to do more to help vulnerable customers and, alongside using all of its existing relationships and networks, the Government have expanded campaign activity to reach eligible customers with additional advertising across multiple channels including community radio, social media and national magazine titles. The cost of advertising targeted at people with pre-payment meters to drive take-up will be £469,000 this financial year.

■ Energy: Prices

John McNally:

[\[163861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions his Department has had with (a) Ofgem, (b) energy companies and (c) consumer groups on reducing daily unit rates.

Amanda Solloway:

Ministers have regular engagement with Ofgem, energy suppliers and consumer groups.

Daily unit rates for default electricity and gas tariffs are capped by the price cap, which is set by Ofgem, and further reduced by the Government's Energy Price Guarantee.

■ **Energy: Solihull**

Julian Knight:

[\[163792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to provide support for convenience stores with their energy bills in Solihull.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible businesses, including convenience stores, are protected from high energy costs this winter period.

Following an HMT-led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme will run from April until March 2024, and will continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including convenience stores. The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses and other non-domestic customers over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets.

■ **Fuel Poverty: Housing**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[163783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to upgrade all fuel-poor homes, including those which are owner occupied, to EPC C by 2028, in line with the Government's target for social housing and privately rented premises to be EPC C by 2028.

Graham Stuart:

In England, the Government's statutory fuel poverty target is to ensure that as many fuel poor households as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of a Band C by 2030. The Government is delivering against this target through multiple energy efficiency schemes including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Home Upgrade Grant and the Energy Company Obligation.

There has been good progress improving the energy efficiency of households with 47% of homes in England now having reached the Government's 2035 target of achieving EPC C levels, up from 14% in 2010.

■ **Nuclear Power: Finance**

Alan Brown:

[\[163841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of classifying nuclear power as green energy on the ability of non-nuclear renewable energy sources to receive green energy funding.

Andrew Bowie:

The Government has stated its intention to include nuclear in the UK Green Taxonomy, subject to consultation, incentivising private investment in this important technology alongside renewables. The Government will provide a further update on the taxonomy as part of its publication of the Green Finance Strategy in the coming weeks.

■ **Power Stations**

Darren Jones: [165498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department holds data on (a) fuel consumed and (b) electricity produced by power stations.

Graham Stuart:

Data on fuel consumed and electricity produced by power stations are published in the annual [Digest of UK Energy Statistics table 5.6](#), and quarterly [Energy Trends table 5.1](#), under 'Major Power Producers'.

■ **Pre-payment: Meters**

Tony Lloyd: [162486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure energy suppliers remove prepayment meters for customers who are (a) vulnerable and (b) at risk of prolonged disconnection.

Amanda Solloway:

All suppliers have agreed to cease the forced installation of prepayment meters and the remote switching of smart meters to prepayment mode, except in clear instances of energy theft. This pause was due to end on 31 March 2023, but has now been indefinitely extended whilst Ofgem and industry agree and implement a code of practice to improve consumer safeguards.

As announced in the Spring budget, the Government will remove the premium paid by households using prepayment meters by bringing their charges in line with comparable direct debit customers until the Energy Price Guarantee ends.

■ **Renewable Energy: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon: [163843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that businesses in Northern Ireland are able to participate in future contracts for difference auctions during the suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive.

Graham Stuart:

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is only open to generators in Great Britain (GB) and aligned to the GB market. Consequently, Northern Irish generators are not eligible to participate in the CfD scheme. The Department for the Economy is running

a consultation on Design Considerations for its own bespoke Renewables Support Scheme.

■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[167196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to publish details of successful bids to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1.

Graham Stuart:

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social rented homes, on the pathway to Net Zero 2050.

The SHDF Wave 2.1 competition closed in November 2022, and successful projects are likely to be notified in March 2023.

■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Caroline Lucas:

[\[163786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to end the free allocation of permits to companies through the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

As the UK transitions to net zero, the Government is committed to protecting UK industry from carbon leakage (the movement of production and associated emissions from one country to another due to different levels of decarbonisation effort through carbon pricing and climate regulation), which is why the Government gives a proportion of free allowances to businesses under the UK ETS.

The Government is in the process of reviewing its free allocation policy. It consulted last year on technical short term improvements. The Government is also looking at ways to target free allocation to those sectors most at risk of carbon leakage. The Government will publish its response in due course.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[163929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of households who are eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme but that are unable to secure the discount because they have a communal electricity supply.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government does not hold data on the number of people using communal electricity supplies. Households are only eligible for a rebate under the Warm Home Discount if they have an electricity account with a participating electricity supplier.

Low income and vulnerable households not eligible for a rebate may be able to receive assistance via the Industry Initiatives element of the Warm Home Discount.

Matthew Pennycook: [\[163930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to take steps to enable households who are eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme but have a communal electricity supply to secure the discount.

Amanda Solloway:

Rebates provided under the Warm Home Discount have always been provided to the electricity bill payers of participating energy suppliers so households with a community energy supply are not eligible. This makes the scheme efficient to deliver. Households who are ineligible via that route are able to benefit from assistance under the Industry Initiatives element of the Warm Home Discount.

Matthew Pennycook: [\[163931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will extend the Park Homes Warm Home Discount Scheme to all households with a communal electricity supply.

Amanda Solloway:

Rebates provided under the Warm Home Discount have always been provided to the electricity bill payers of participating energy suppliers so households with a community energy supply are not eligible. The Warm Home Discount Park Homes Scheme is run by Charis Grants and funded voluntarily by energy suppliers under the Industry Initiatives element of the Warm Home Discount. It is not a government scheme.

■ Wind Power

Bill Esterson: [\[167088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the maritime offshore wind sector on taking steps to implement the recommendations in the report by Maritime UK entitled Offshore wind plan, published on 7 March 2023.

Bill Esterson: [\[167089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to accept the recommendations in the report by Maritime UK entitled Offshore wind plan, published on 7 March 2023, on taking steps to support (a) the (i) offshore wind and (ii) vessel construction maritime industries and (b) manufacturing and assembly businesses located in ports.

Graham Stuart:

The offshore wind industry is a major UK success story, with the largest operational fleet in Europe, the world's four biggest individual windfarms and the highest ambition for energy produced by 2030. The Government welcomes the publication of the Maritime UK offshore wind plan, which highlights the numerous opportunities on offer

for the UK's maritime industries at both existing and new offshore wind farms. The Government will continue to work in partnership with industry to deliver economic benefit for local areas, helping create well-paid jobs for people living in and around the UK's coastal communities.

Bill Esterson:

[167090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support maritime industries to attract investment in UK ports as centres for manufacturing and assembly for offshore wind.

Graham Stuart:

The Government will provide up to £160 million through the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme (FLOWMIS) to support investment in port infrastructure to deliver floating offshore wind. The Government will set out the next steps on FLOWMIS soon.

The Government has introduced Supply Chain Plan policy to qualifying wind projects seeking a Contract for Difference (CFD), ensuring developers make the investments needed to upgrade supply chain capability, skills and innovation. The Government is considering the introduction of non-price factors into the CFD process further to incentivise investment.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Tony Lloyd:

[165226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to update the list of named sponsors on the notice entitled Seasonal worker visa route RFI notice, published by her Department on 27 June 2022.

Mark Spencer:

Current operators of the Seasonal Workers visa route are listed in the register of licensed sponsors: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-licensed-sponsors-workers>.

We will be updating the RFI Notice webpage in the next few months.

Tony Lloyd:

[165227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the guarantee of a minimum of 32 hours of work every week for people on the seasonal worker visa scheme will be measured (a) on a weekly basis and (b) over a longer period of time; and what steps her Department will take to (i) monitor and (ii) enforce this guarantee.

Mark Spencer:

Sponsors and employers will need to ensure workers on the Seasonal Workers visa route are paid a minimum of 32 hours per week. This must be reflected in payslips covering the pay period for each worker.

A team within the Home Office compliance network will focus specifically on the agricultural sector and ensure sponsors are adhering to guidance and fulfilling their sponsorship responsibilities.

■ **Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill****Alberto Costa:**[\[167158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to bring forward the Kept Animals Bill.

Mark Spencer:

The remaining stages of the Kept Animals Bill will continue its passage when parliamentary time allows. The dates for the remaining Commons stages will be announced in the usual way.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[167070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many cows were slaughtered because of Bovine TB in Shropshire in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Mark Spencer:

SHROPSHIRE	2020	2021	2022
Total number of cattle slaughtered	2047	2099	1981

The **total number of cattle slaughtered** include:

- **TB test positive animals** : animals compulsorily slaughtered because they responded to the tuberculin skin test, interferon-gamma test, or antibody test in a way that was consistent with *Mycobacterium bovis* infection
- **inconclusive reactor animals** : compulsory slaughtered animals that showed positive reactions to bovine tuberculin that were not strong enough for the animals to be deemed reactors
- **direct contacts** of positive animals: animals that, although not test reactors, were considered to have been exposed to *Mycobacterium bovis* and compulsorily slaughtered

The information required is currently published at GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>

Additional information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain/quarterly-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain-statistics-notice-december-2022> :
'total cattle slaughtered' tab.

■ Coastal Areas: Environment Protection

Brandon Lewis:

[166192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will grant local authorities additional powers to compel landowners to contribute to coastal protection schemes.

Rebecca Pow:

Local authorities have a wide range of powers under the Coastal Protection Act (1949) to carry out their role as coastal protection authorities and as coastal erosion risk management authorities, including powers to raise levies on those with an interest in land that will benefit from any coastal protection works. The Act also makes the Environment Agency a relevant authority for the coast protection along with coastal protection authorities. This means the Environment Agency has discretionary powers to direct an owner or occupier of land to undertake coast protection works where they have a historical obligation to maintain defences. The Rt Hon Member's continued support to the Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Coast Parentship East helps to fully engage the local community and relevant landowners, as they take decisions and actions along this part of our coast.

■ Coastal Erosion

Brandon Lewis:

[166189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will review the methodology used by the Government to assess the economic impact of coastal erosion.

Rebecca Pow:

To assess the economic impact of coastal erosion, Defra complies with the methodology used by government which is set out in the green book and is in line with the most advanced knowledge in the field. We are committed to maintain this high standard as new data becomes available and we are building evidence about climate change and sea level rise. Our methodology for appraising coastal erosion projects, for grant in aid, already includes benefits that come from extending the life of properties or any other asset at risk of being lost to the sea because of coastal erosion.

The Government is investing £5.2 billion over six years in flood and coastal erosion schemes to better protect communities across England. Around 1 in 6 of the projects in the £5.2bn 2021-27 programme aim to better protect coastal communities.

Brandon Lewis:

[\[166190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support the Government provides to help communities adapt to the challenges caused by coastal erosion; and whether her Department has plans to increase that support.

Rebecca Pow:

To help communities adapt to the challenges of coastal erosion, the Government has made a record investment of £5.2 billion which includes defences for the coast where it is sustainable and affordable to defend the coastline. Around one in six of the projects in the £5.2 billion 2021-27 programme aims to better protect coastal communities.

In addition to the £5.2 billion flood and coastal defence programme, the Government is investing £200 million in the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) to support local places including coastal communities. This includes the £36 million coastal transition accelerators programme which will support communities in areas at significant risk of coastal erosion to transition and adapt to a changing climate.

The coastal transition accelerator programme will be a catalyst for strategic long-term planning, and test out innovative practical actions to support the coastal communities at risk from coastal erosion. East Riding of Yorkshire and North Norfolk have been identified as the areas to lead off the programme, as they have proportionally the highest number of properties at risk from coastal erosion in England and are facing the greatest challenges from erosion and loss of coastline. Their experience and their learning will be shared nationally.

East Suffolk Council is leading a project as part of the Government's FCRIP. This £8 million Resilient Coasts Project will work with affected coastal communities in four core locations across the East Suffolk and Great Yarmouth frontage. This will enable the people, economies and environment of the Great Yarmouth and Suffolk coastal frontages to live and work with a climate resilient coast.

■ Convention on Biological Diversity

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[163942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to meet target one of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Trudy Harrison:

Target 1 of the Global Biodiversity Framework seeks to address land and sea use change by ensuring that all areas are under biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and other effective management processes. In England we are already taking steps to address this; for example:

- Under the Environment Act 2021 we are introducing a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for new development along with Local Nature Recovery Strategies

(LNRSSs) to target the best places for nature recovery and wider environmental benefits.

- The Government is reforming the planning system through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will consult on how to use changes under the Bill to improve environmental outcomes and embed reforms under the Environment Act.

- Environmental improvement will be fully reflected in the review of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2023.

- The new system of Environmental Outcomes Reports under the Bill will be aligned to the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and ensure that decision makers know how far a plan or project contributes to Environmental Targets.

- The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the duty on all public authorities so that they must consider what action they can take, consistent with their functions, to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and then take that action. In so doing, they must have regard to LNRSSs. Local Authorities and Local Planning Authorities must also publish Biodiversity Reports providing information on action taken, and plans for future action, for biodiversity.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Technical Assistance

Ms Lyn Brown:

[163880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department spent on technical assistance programming delivered by UK-based organisations in 2021 by (a) Official Development Assistance and (b) non-Official Development Assistance spending.

Mark Spencer:

Providing this answer will incur disproportionate costs to the Department.

■ Dogs: Animal Breeding

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[163973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dog breeders who breed (a) one and (b) two litters per year have a dog breeding licence.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 10 March 2023 to PQ158888 ([Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)).

■ Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell:

[165240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding her Department has provided to environmental projects in British Overseas Territories in each of the last five years.

Trudy Harrison:

Defra provides funding to biodiversity and conservation projects in the UK Overseas Territories through Darwin Plus, which is a competitive UK Government grant scheme. Table 1 attached sets out the funding provided to successful Darwin Plus projects for financial years 2017/18 to 2020/21.

Table 1 – Allocations and spend between 2017/18 and 2021/22. Spend includes both ODA and non-ODA.

YEAR	ALLOCATED	SPENT
2017/2018	£3.856m	£1.939m
2018/2019	£3.276m	£2.369m
2019/2020	£3.616m	£3.573m
2020/2021	£4.302m	£3.072m
2021/2022	£5.751m	£5.35m

■ Fisheries: Carbon Capture and Storage

Anthony Mangnall:

[R] [\[163885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has been made of the potential merits of using shellfish aquaculture as a means of carbon sequestration in UK waters.

Mark Spencer:

In 2022 Defra commissioned at 3 year, £200k project to understand better the carbon sequestration potential of seaweed and bivalve aquaculture in English waters. This project is due to complete in Spring 2025, after which a final report will be published.

■ Fishing Vessels: Marine Protected Areas

John McNally:

[\[163875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to ban industrial fishing vessels from Marine Protected Areas on a whole-site basis.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Crawley, on 16 January 2023, PQ UIN [110660](#).

■ Furs: Trade

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[165310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to conclude the call for evidence on the fur trade launched on 31 May 2022.

Mark Spencer:

Defra published a formal call for evidence on the fur trade in Great Britain, which has now closed.

We are continuing to build our evidence base on the fur sector, which will be used to inform any future action on the fur trade.

■ **Litter****Alberto Costa:**[\[167157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Litter Strategy for England.

Rebecca Pow:

Annual reports of progress with delivery of the Litter Strategy can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england-progress-reports.

We also publish a data dashboard to understand the extent of litter and littering in England. Further updates to the dashboard will be available in due course. The dashboard can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-and-littering-in-england-data-dashboard>.

■ **Marine Protected Areas****John McNally:**[\[163876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to ensure that 10 per cent of the UK's waters within her responsibility are covered by a Highly Protected Marine Area by 2026.

Trudy Harrison:

Defra recently announced that it intends to designate the first three Highly Protected Marine Areas in English Waters. These HPMAs would be designated before 6th July 2023. Currently there are no targets set or planned for Highly Protected Marine Areas, however Defra will explore additional sites this year. Any future sites will also be subject to consultation.

■ **Nature Conservation: British Overseas Territories****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[165239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support her Department is providing to help safeguard and support vulnerable species in the British Overseas Territories.

Trudy Harrison:

Defra is committed to improving outcomes for biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories through initiatives such as the Darwin Plus programme. Darwin Plus is a

competitive UK Government grants scheme that provides funding for biodiversity and conservation projects in the Territories. Since 2012, Darwin Plus has invested more than £44 million in over 200 projects in the Overseas Territories.

We have further committed to make available £10 million each year until 2025 for Darwin Plus, and to improve and expand the Darwin Plus programme so that it better meets the needs of the Overseas Territories. In January, we introduced Darwin Plus Local, which is a new scheme to support small scale environmental projects exclusively in the Territories, with the aim of building capacity and contributing to local economies. Later this year, we will publish more information on our plans to develop Darwin Plus Strategic: this will be a new scheme for larger, more ambitious projects, aimed at driving transformative and long-lasting results for OT biodiversity.

The UK Government is working closely with Governments of the Overseas Territories to develop a new, shared UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy is being designed as a tool to guide and attract long-term investment in supporting the Territories' biodiversity. Supported by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Defra is currently engaging stakeholders in-territory, online and in the UK, to ensure the Strategy will meet the needs and priorities of all fourteen Territories. The Strategy is due to be published in 2024.

■ **Neonicotinoids: EU Law**

Caroline Lucas:

[163846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Plant Protection Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, whether (a) Regulation (EU) No 485/2013, (b) Regulations (EU) No. 783/784 and 785/2018 and (c) other EU laws banning neonicotinoid use are in force in the UK.

Mark Spencer:

Commission Implementing Regulations 485/2013, 783/2018, 784/2018 and 785/2018 placed restrictions on the approvals of the neonicotinoid active substance clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam and collectively had the effect of prohibiting use of these active substances in certain circumstances. The approvals of these active substances have since lapsed and so all three active substances are not approved for use in pesticide products, either in the EU or in the UK.

The Plant Protection Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (the 2019 Regulations) established a GB register of approved active substances and provided that existing EU approvals were carried over. The 2019 Regulations then also revoked the EU legal instruments relating to the approval of a large number of active substances, including the four Commission Implementing Regulations referred to above. The GB register can be viewed on the website of the Health and Safety Executive and records that clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam remain not approved.

■ Norfolk Broads: Ecology

Brandon Lewis:

[\[166191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential threat to the Norfolk Broads ecosystem through salt water ingress through (a) rivers and (b) encroachment from the coastline.

Rebecca Pow:

In order to protect fish stocks, the Environment Agency continuously monitors saline levels on the River Bure and River Yare. The Agency also monitors weather and tidal forecasts to help prepare for any potential incidents as a result of saline incursion.

To help get better understanding and predict how far and how much saltwater currently extends into the Broadland rivers now and in future, the Broadland Futures Initiative (BFI) a partnership for future flood risk management in the Broadland area, are working with Environment Agency to develop a statistical model that relates the degree of incursion to the main factors which cause it. This statistical model will be based on the long record of salinity monitoring data collected by the Environment Agency together with other organisations and groups. With ongoing monitoring and data collection, the ability to predict will further improve and the Environment Agency also continue to explore ways to reduce the impact of these natural events.

■ Rivers: Environment Protection

Sarah Green:

[\[159094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much the Government has spent on protecting and restoring chalk streams in each year since 2015.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government does not record its Chalk Stream protection and restoration spend. Chalk Streams represent an important part of our national heritage, and the Government is committed to working with its stakeholders to ensure they are protected. This includes working with the Catchment Based Approach's Chalk Stream Restoration Group to achieve the recommendations outlined in its 2021 Chalk Stream Strategy.

The Environment Agency has a £1 million annual Chalk Partnership Fund, to support projects that address water resources issues on chalk streams and contribute to the implementation of the Catchment Based Approach chalk stream restoration strategy. This may include habitat restoration and improving the monitoring of chalk streams.

■ Seas and Oceans: Pollution Control

Sir Greg Knight:

[167043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that the quality of sea water (a) in and around Bridlington south beach and (b) nationally is improved; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Bridlington South Bay is a priority bathing water investigation for The Bathing Water Partnership in Yorkshire, which is a multi-agency group comprising of the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and local councils. They are committed to resolving the situation as soon as possible and around £2 million has been invested by Yorkshire Water over the last 3 years to investigate which includes intensive survey work and microbial techniques.

The testing indicates that faecal bacteria from birds is always present and is sometimes present from humans and dogs, and it highlighted a possible risk of bacteria from seaweed and sediments. The Bathing Water Partnership held an open meeting for elected council members last month to explain the findings and discuss the continued investigation.

Substantial improvements have been made to bathing water quality. In the early 1990s, just 28% of bathing waters met the highest standards in force at that time. In 2015, new stricter standards were introduced.

In 2022, 97.1% met the minimum standard of Sufficient, with 92.8% meeting the highest standards of Good and Excellent.

Overall bathing water quality has improved significantly over the last decade, with a continuing upward trend. This is due to robust Environment Agency regulation and working with partners. In most places bathing water is now better than it has been for many years.

The Environment Agency have driven £2.5 billion of investment and facilitated partnerships to bring about the change needed to make our coastal bathing waters a success story.

While progress has been made, there is still much more to be done to ensure cleaner and healthier waters for people to enjoy. This requires a combined effort from water companies, farmers, regulators, councils and local businesses. These groups need to get the basics right or face legal action.

We know that improvements can take time and investment from the water industry, farmers and local communities, but where the investment is made, standards improve. We continue to work with these key stakeholders to identify what action is needed to meet the required standards.

■ Swimming

Tim Farron:

[\[163778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has assessed the impact of bathing water status on the number of swimmers, children paddling, and other beach and water users using designated bathing water sites.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has not assessed the impact of bathing water status on the number of swimmers, children paddling, and other beach and water users using designated bathing waters. However, the Environment Agency does regularly count bathers and beach users using a standardised measurement methodology at all designated bathing waters.

Tim Farron:

[\[163779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the (a) minimum and (b) maximum number of swimmers, children paddling, and other beach and water users has been in the user survey for a successful application for bathing water status.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra counts adults swimming and children both swimming or paddling as bathers when assessing applications for bathing water designation. According to our records, the lowest average number of bathers per day that has been provided in the user survey for a successful application for bathing water designation is 32 (the application for the River Wharfe at Cromwheel, Ilkley). The highest average number of bathers per day that has been provided in the user survey for a successful bathing water application is, according to our records, 2,280 (Upton Towans in Cornwall).

■ Thames Water: Fines

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[167215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of how much Thames Water has been fined since 1 January 2019.

Rebecca Pow:

Between January 2019 and February 2023, Thames Water has received fines valued at £12,707,001 from Ofwat and the Environment Agency.

■ Tree Planting

Alex Sobel:

[\[162290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many hectares of trees were planted in the UK in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Alex Sobel:

[162291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many hectares of trees have been planted in 2023 as of 9 March 2023.

Trudy Harrison:

The Forestry Commission produces statistics on new planting of woodland, and trees outside woodland, in England. These statistics are reported for each financial year with an interim mid-year estimate where data is available. We expect to publish statistics for the full 2022-23 year in June 2023. Forestry Statistics are available from the Forest Research website at <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/forestry-statistics-2022/> Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators are available from the GOV.UK website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forestry-commission-corporate-plan-performance-indicators>.

■ Water Companies: Disclosure of Information

Tim Farron:

[166167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many requests were made to water companies under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 in each year between 2020 and 2022; and what the total amount charged by water companies was for access to information under those regulations in the same period.

Rebecca Pow:

For the purposes of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, Defra is a separate legal entity to water companies. Any requests made under this regime to the water companies would have been administered by them and therefore Defra does not hold this information.

■ Water Companies: Regulation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[167211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the regulation of water companies.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 12 January 2023 to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central, PQ [902963](#).

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[167212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential benefits of bringing forward proposals to strengthen regulation of water companies that (a) do not link dividend payments to performance and (b) fail to be transparent about their dividend payments.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[167213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit dividend payments by water companies that do not meet Ofwat performance delivery targets.

Rebecca Pow:

On 20 March 2023, Ofwat announced new measures that will enable it to take enforcement action against water companies that do not link dividend payments to performance. The change will require water company boards to take account of their performance when deciding whether to make dividend payments.

These changes will improve the performance and financial health of water companies, as well as providing greater transparency with customers and stakeholders.

We support Ofwat's new measures, which were made possible by new licence modification powers that the Government gave to Ofwat via the Environment Act 2021.

These changes build on Ofwat's 'Board leadership, transparency and governance principles', published in 2019.

Further information on these new measures can be found here –

[Decision document financial resilience proposals.pdf \(ofwat.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/decision-document-financial-resilience-proposals.pdf)

■ **Water: Conservation**

Ben Lake:

[166304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential role of water efficiency measures in helping achieve the Government's net zero aims.

Ben Lake:

[166305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of using water-saving technologies to help reduce the number of households in fuel poverty.

Ben Lake:

[166306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on the potential merits of using water efficiency technologies to help reduce household carbon emissions.

Rebecca Pow:

We are working with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to maximise the synergies between the Government goals to reduce water demand and achieve net zero. We consulted on introducing a mandatory water efficiency label for water using products across all UK nations and assessed that such a label could save £125 million on water bills and £147 million on energy bills over 10 years. Hot water use is

the second largest use of energy in a home after space heating. For example, installing a water-efficient showerhead could save a family of four about £30 on their combined energy and water bill each year.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Virgin Islands: Tax Avoidance

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[165236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of listing of the British Virgin Islands as an uncooperative tax regime by the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The Overseas Territories are committed to meeting international standards on taxation, including those set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The British Virgin Islands (BVI) are committed to global tax transparency standards, such as the OECD Common Reporting Standard. The BVI has already made progress implementing the relevant OECD standards that saw it listed by the EU, including bringing forward new legislation. The OECD has agreed to a supplementary review of BVI's compliance ratings in light of this. The UK stands ready to support this work as needed. The Overseas Territories with financial centres also regularly share confidential company ownership information with UK law enforcement and tax authorities, demonstrating their commitment to implementing changing global norms. We welcome the ongoing constructive dialogue between BVI, the OECD and the EU on these commitments.

■ Cyprus: Aviation

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[\[165386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on authorising direct flights to North Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has no plans to authorise direct flights between the UK and the north of Cyprus. In accordance with the rest of the international community, with the sole exception of Turkey, the UK does not recognise the self-declared 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' as an independent state. The United Kingdom recognises the Republic of Cyprus as the sovereign authority for the island of Cyprus. As a result, the UK Government cannot negotiate an Air Services Agreement with the administration in the north of Cyprus.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Religious Freedom

Carla Lockhart:

[\[165443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help tackle persecution of Christians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is committed to supporting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), tackling persecution and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Promoting human rights in the DRC is a priority for the UK. We demonstrated the depth of our commitment to promote FoRB globally by hosting an 'International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief' in July 2022. We continue to work through the UN General Assembly Third Committee, UN Security Council and UN Human Rights Council to promote and protect these rights in the DRC.

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[165261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to support the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

David Rutley:

I [Minister Rutley] refer the honourable member to the comments made by my noble colleague, Lord Goldsmith in the House of Lords on 7 March. The UK Government remains in close contact with the US Government about the US Middle East Partnership for Peace Act and how existing peace-building projects and funding can better support the goals of this Act. We share the objective of advancing economic, social, and political connections, and peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians. We stand ready to collaborate and coordinate further, including regarding the Act's Advisory Board, as additional information about its plans and priorities become available.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[167053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will take steps to encourage G7 allies to commit support for the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace at the G7 Summit in May 2023.

David Rutley:

We are in frequent contact with our G7 partners on range of important foreign policy issues, including Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the peace process. Political directors from G7 foreign ministries met in Japan on 8-9 March and discussed steps we can take to calm tensions, reduce violence and keep open opportunities to pursue meaningful dialogue between the Israeli and the Palestinians.

We are in close contact with the US about the fund and we are considering options for collaboration.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[167055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution on 14 March 2023, Official Report, column 671, by what metric he measures whether UK support for the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace would be the most effective use of funding allocated towards people-to-people links.

David Rutley:

The FCDO aid budget is allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate. The UK remains a long-standing supporter of the Middle East Peace Process. There is a robust framework in place for allocating Official Development Assistance (ODA). Data on ODA spend in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is available on DevTracker.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[167057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 14 March 2023 on Israel and Palestine, Official Report, column 672, with which international counterparts other than the US he has discussed the potential creation of an international fund for Israeli and Palestinian peace.

David Rutley:

To date, we have only discussed the creation of an international fund with the US.

■ Kenya: Food Supply

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[165289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with the Kenyan Government to help tackle the hunger crisis in the Kenyan counties of (a) Marsabit and (b) Isiolo.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is closely monitoring the humanitarian situation in Kenya, including in the counties of Marsabit and Isiolo. In response to the ongoing drought, 30,500 children have received life-saving nutritional assistance due to the UK's support. UK-supported programmes have also reached over half a million people in Kenya in drought-prone areas. The UK-supported Hunger Safety Net Programme has reached over half a million people in Kenya in drought-prone areas. This programme has targeted over 7,000 households in Isiolo and over 19,200 households in Marsabit who receive regular cash transfers, building resilience to climate-related shocks.

■ Occupied Territories: Violence

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[165260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential role of the Lions' Den organisation in levels of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

David Rutley:

While the FCDO has not made any specific recent assessment of the Lions' Den organisation, we continue to monitor the situation closely and our diplomatic teams in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are in constant communication with their hosts. The Foreign Secretary has made clear that the UK wants to see a de-escalation of tensions in Israel and the OPTs in his phone calls with both the Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen and Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Malki on 7 March, and we continue to encourage all sides to take action which delivers this. The recent agreement in Aqaba is encouraging in that regard. The UK Government will continue to do all it can to support a peaceful, negotiated, two state solution to the conflict, which we believe is in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians.

■ Tunisia: Civil Liberties

Damien Moore:

[\[165383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the legal rights of those who have been arrested in Tunisia are respected.

David Rutley:

The UK closely monitors the political and judicial situation in Tunisia. We regularly raise respect for human rights and due legal process with the Tunisian Government, including at the highest levels. Minister of State for North Africa, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, publicly commented on the recent arrests on 16 February. He also raised the UK's concerns directly with Tunisian Chargé d'Affaires on 23 February, underlining the importance of due legal process and respect for freedom of expression and association. We will continue engage the Tunisian authorities on these issues.

■ Tunisia: Democracy and Human Rights

Damien Moore:

[\[165382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on supporting (a) human rights and (b) democratic values in Tunisia.

David Rutley:

The UK believes that democratic institutions and accountable governments are the foundations on which open, stable and prosperous societies thrive. We meet regularly with international partners to discuss the political and economic situation in Tunisia. G7 Ambassadors in Tunis have made several joint statements since July

2021, emphasising that democratic values remain central to our ongoing relationships, as well as stating the importance of respect for all Tunisians' fundamental freedoms, and inclusive and transparent engagement with all stakeholders, including diverse political and civil society voices. Together with our partners, we stand ready to support Tunisia and its people.

Damien Moore:

[\[165384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps his Department has taken to help support democratic values and human rights in Tunisia.

David Rutley:

The UK has been clear on the importance of effective, legitimate political opposition, separation of powers, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil society, and independent media in Tunisia. Lord [Tariq] Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for North Africa, raised democratic values and human rights with the Tunisian Chargé d'Affaires on 23 February. His Majesty's Ambassador to Tunisia also raised UK concerns with Foreign Minister Nabil Ammar on 23 February. As a constructive partner to Tunisia, we will continue to engage the Tunisian Government on these important issues.

■ Tunisia: Politics and Government

Damien Moore:

[\[165381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the (a) political and (b) human rights situation for people in the (i) opposition and (ii) media in Tunisia on UK-Tunisia relations.

David Rutley:

We monitor the political and human rights situation in Tunisia closely. The UK has made our views clear, calling for space for legitimate political opposition, civil society and independent media in light of recent developments including most recently during the meeting of Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for North Africa, with the Tunisian Chargé d'Affaires on 23 February. The UK is a constructive partner to Tunisia, and we will continue to raise these important issues with the Tunisian authorities at every available opportunity.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Richard Thomson:

[\[164013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed Windsor Framework on the level of impact on businesses of the regulatory compliance required for the movement of (a) agricultural and (b) other goods from (i) Northern Ireland to Great Britain and (ii) Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework removes an extensive range of bureaucracy and checks that the old Protocol otherwise applied for internal UK trade. The green lane will mean that goods being sold in Northern Ireland will be freed of unnecessary paperwork, checks and duties, using only ordinary commercial information rather than customs processes or complex certification requirements for agrifood. In contrast, trade moving into the EU will be subject to normal third country processes and requirements. We have also secured full unfettered access for Northern Irish firms to the whole UK market. This provides a fundamental change to smooth the flow of internal UK trade.

■ Windsor Framework: Impact Assessments**Richard Thomson:**[\[164011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to publish an economic impact assessment of the Windsor Framework before a Parliamentary vote on this issue.

Richard Thomson:[\[164012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department will publish an economic impact assessment of the proposed Windsor Framework, broken down by the impact on each UK nation.

Leo Docherty:

The Windsor Framework was presented to Parliament on 27 February. The UK will take forward implementing measures as necessary, providing the basis for these new arrangements to enter into force, which will be accompanied by supporting documents in the usual way.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Antibiotics****Sir John Hayes:**[\[165203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of hoarding in the global manufacturing supply chain of antibiotics on the prices of antibiotics in the UK.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made. Since 2019, the Government has restricted the export and hoarding of some medicines already placed on the United Kingdom market where there is evidence of a critical shortage, or a risk of a critical shortage, which could adversely impact UK patients.

For unbranded generic medicines the Department relies on competition to keep prices down. This has led to some of the lowest prices in Europe and allows prices to react to the market. In an international market this ensures that when demand is high

and supply is low, prices in the UK can increase to help secure the availability of medicines for UK patients. Branded medicines spend is controlled through the Branded Health Service Medicines (Costs) Regulations 2018 and the 2019 voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access.

In the UK, anti-competitive behaviour, including hoarding, is a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The Department asks the CMA to investigate where it has concerns about abuses of competition law for generic medicines and where companies are found by the CMA to be in breach of the legislation, the Department will seek damages and invest that money back into the National Health Service.

■ Arthritis: Surgery

Rachael Maskell: [\[163812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 153862 on Arthritis: Surgery, if he can provide information on the numbers of people with arthritis awaiting surgery with the data sets which are compatible with Government held data.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments

Sir George Howarth: [\[162490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps with NHS England to help support NHS trusts to make contractual arrangements for minimally invasive cancer therapies.

Helen Whately:

NHS England commissions selective internal radiation therapy (SIRT) as a treatment choice for patients with unresectable advanced hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), in accordance with Technology Appraisal 688 and metastatic colorectal cancer (mCRC), in accordance with an NHS England clinical commissioning policy.

In total, following regional completion of contractual negotiations and changes, we expect that there will be 19 providers of SIRT in the National Health Service in England. Nine will offer SIRT as a treatment for both HCC and mCRC, a further nine will offer SIRT as a treatment for HCC only and a single provider will offer SIRT as a treatment for mCRC.

■ Carers

Julian Sturdy: [\[163784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of support provided to people who give up employment to become home carers.

Helen Whately:

No recent assessment has been made of the adequacy of support for people who give up employment to become home carers. Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are required to undertake a Carer's Assessment for any unpaid carer who appears to have a need for support and to meet their eligible needs on request from the carer.

■ Clinical Psychologists: Training**Munira Wilson:**[\[164018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of NHS training places for clinical psychologists.

Will Quince:

The Government is fully committed to attracting, training and recruiting the mental health workforce of the future, including clinical psychologists, and is taking a number of steps to achieve this. To increase the number of trained clinical psychologists available, Health Education England has supported a 99% per cent expansion in clinical psychology training commissions over the past four years. This expansion model is expected to achieve a growth of 2,520 additional practitioner psychologists in the National Health Service workforce by 2025.

Munira Wilson:[\[164019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people (a) applied for and (b) took up an NHS training place to train as a clinical psychologist, in each of the last five years for which data is available.

Will Quince:

The Department does not hold data on applicants to clinical psychology courses.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) does publish data on students enrolled on higher education (HE) courses. The following table shows the students enrolled onto the first year of a clinical psychology course in the United Kingdom. Enrolments to clinical psychology courses are not available for previous years.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Undergraduate	295	300	275
Postgraduate	1,415	1,560	1,780
All courses	1,710	1,860	2,050

Source: The HESA HE student enrolments 2023

■ Concussion: Dementia**Jim Shannon:**[\[163754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has supported research into the potential link between concussions and dementia.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including research into the potential link between concussions and dementia. The usual practice of NIHR is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics. All applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

The NIHR is currently supporting research into the potential link between concussions and dementia, such as the PROTECT study which seeks to understand the causes of dementia. The study has found that experiencing three or more concussions is linked with worsened brain function in later life, including memory. The NIHR Brain Injury MedTech Co-operative has also undertaken a study focusing on the detection of prodromal dementia symptoms in former professional footballers.

Government responsibility for delivering dementia research is shared between the Department for Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the NIHR, and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation, mainly by the Medical Research Council and Economic and Social Research Council. The Government spent nearly £420 million on dementia research from 2016/17 to 2020/21. As of 2021/22, the NIHR had £16.8 million funding allocated to research on concussion and traumatic brain injury.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Hikvision**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[158772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Hikvision products are in use in his Department; and whether he plans to remove the Hikvision cameras.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 9 March 2023]: As has been the case under successive administrations, it is not Government policy to comment on the security arrangements of Government buildings. Specific details regarding the make and model of security systems are withheld on national security grounds. The Department is reviewing its CCTV systems following the written statement by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 24 November 2022.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Public Expenditure

Feryal Clark:

[\[160453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a 10-year capital strategy.

Will Quince:

In September 2019, the Government launched a new Health Infrastructure Plan to provide long-term, strategic investment in the future of the National Health Service infrastructure and to ensure that health infrastructure is fit-for-purpose for decades to come.

Building on this work, the multi-year capital settlement confirmed for the Department at the Spending Review 2021 allowed us to take the next steps towards this vision for health and care infrastructure and plans for a 10-year capital strategy remain under review.

■ Diabetes: North West

Scott Benton:

[\[163998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people with diabetes in (a) Blackpool South constituency and (b) NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated care board and its predecessor had a urine-to-albumin ratio test in the last year.

Helen Whately:

The following table shows the number of people with diabetes in Blackpool South Parliamentary Constituency that had a urine-to-albumin ratio (UACR) test during the audit year, January 2021 to March 2022, broken down by diabetes type.

	BLACKPOOL SOUTH			ENGLAND		
	Total	UACR	Percentage	Total	UACR	Percentage
Diabetes type						
Type 1	380	150	39.5	250,125	124,440	49.8
Type 2 and other	5,725	3185	55.6	3,289,925	1,997,825	60.7

Source: National Diabetes Audit

The following table shows the number of people with diabetes in NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board that had a urine-to-albumin ratio (UACR) test during the audit year, January 2021 to March 2022, broken down by diabetes type.

	NHS LANCASHIRE AND SOUTH CUMBRIA INTEGRATED CARE BOARD			ENGLAND		
	Total	UACR	Percentage	Total	UACR	Percentage
Diabetes type						
Type 1	7,645	3,230	42.2	250,125	124,440	49.8
Type 2 and other	102,135	60,635	59.4	3,289,925	1,997,825	60.7

Source: National Diabetes Audit

■ Doctors: Workplace Pensions

Wes Streeting:

[\[166288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of doctors that have left the NHS due to the (a) lifetime and (b) annual allowance cap on pensions savings in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

The decision to claim pension benefits or reduce working commitments is a personal one, and it is not possible to assess the impact of a specific factor. A recent survey undertaken by the British Medical Association suggested that 72% of doctors will retire earlier because of the previous decision to freeze the lifetime allowance and 61% of respondents stated that they would reduce the amount of work that they do for the National Health Service.

As announced at Budget, the annual allowance will increase to £60,000 from 6 April 2023 and the lifetime allowance will also be abolished. These measures will ensure that the vast majority of doctors in the NHS are not disincentivised from remaining in roles and taking on extra hours, as pension tax is no longer a trigger event for retirement.

Wes Streeting:

[\[166289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, if he will make an estimate of the number of doctors who will stay in the NHS as a result of the (a) abolition of the lifetime allowance on pension savings and (b) raising of the annual allowance on pension savings.

Will Quince:

The decision to claim pension benefits or reduce working commitments is a personal one, and it is not possible to assess the impact of a specific factor. Estimates based on projected pension scheme data indicate that around 22,000 senior National Health Service clinicians could exceed the previous £40,000 annual allowance in 2023/24,

and that around 31,000 clinicians had reached at least 75% of the £1.073 million lifetime allowance.

These measures will also ensure that the vast majority of doctors in the NHS are not disincentivised from remaining in their roles and taking on extra hours, enabling them to treat as many patients as possible and helping to deliver on the Government's NHS commitments.

■ **Drugs and Vaccination: Clinical Trials**

Michael Fabricant:

[\[162463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to increase the number of clinical trials for (a) vaccines and (b) other medicines.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 15 March 2023]: In March 2021, the Government published its vision Saving and Improving Lives: The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery. The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery: 2022 to 2025 implementation plan, published June 2021, outlines the steps that the Department and its partners will take to increase the number of clinical trials and studies, including those for vaccines and other medicines.

The Government has recently entered a 10-year partnership with Moderna which includes substantial investment in United Kingdom-based research and development, including running a significant number of clinical trials in the UK.

In addition, Lord James O'Shaughnessy was appointed in February 2023 to undertake a review of commercial clinical trials in the UK. He will publish his advice this spring, this will include recommendations of priority actions to make progress in 2023, as well as setting out longer-term ambitions for UK clinical trials.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Children**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[167185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of children who use e-cigarettes.

Neil O'Brien:

Data from NHS Digital showed that 9% of 11- to 15-year-olds identified themselves as current users of vapes in 2021. The Government is clear that vaping should only be used to help adults quit smoking. Vapes should not be used by people under the age of 18 years old or non-smokers.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Children and Young People**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[165428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to stop vaping by under 18-year olds.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government has introduced a range of measures to prevent vapes being used by people under 18 years of age. The law restricts sales to over-18s only, limits nicotine content, refill bottle and tank sizes, and has specific requirements on labelling and through advertising restrictions.

To make young people aware of the risks of using vapes, in October 2022 we published new vaping content on the Talk to Frank and Better Health websites and developed a suite of resources for schools to use, including the recently published Year 9 lesson plan published by the PSHE Association. These can be found at the following link:

<https://pshe-association.org.uk/resource/vaping?hsLang=en>

The Department for Education (DfE) is also bringing forward the review of the relationships, sex and health education statutory guidance. DfE will consider whether content on vaping should be included in this.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Health Hazards**Dr Neil Hudson:****[165427]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the known medical risks of vaping.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department's assessment of the medical risk of vaping is based upon a series of evidence reviews commissioned over the past several years. The latest, The Nicotine Vaping in England: 2022 evidence update report was published in September 2022.

This current report focuses predominantly on the potential health risks of vaping. It carried out reviews on biomarkers of exposure to nicotine and potential toxicants; biomarkers of potential harm to health cutting across several diseases, including cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases; biomarkers specifically associated with cancer, respiratory, cardiovascular or other health outcomes; poisonings; fires and explosions; nicotine and flavours.

The report concludes that in the short and medium term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking, but that vaping is not risk-free, particularly for people who have never smoked.

■ Exercise**Rachael Maskell:****[167178]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps has he taken to promote the daily mile.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department recently committed funding, until Summer 2025, to support schools in delivering opportunities to help children lead more active lives. This included

funding for the Primary School PE and Sport Premium, which schools can use to support children to participate in the daily or active mile.

■ Eyes: Surgery

Dean Russell:

[\[167249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on regulating the eye surgery industry.

Neil O'Brien:

No assessment has been made. Doctors performing refractive eye surgery in the United Kingdom must be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC), the independent regulator of all medical doctors practising in the UK. Providers who carry out refractive eye surgery must also be registered by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. All refractive eye surgery locations are monitored and, where necessary, inspected by CQC. If CQC become aware of any concerns regarding an individual medical practitioner, then CQC will notify the GMC.

■ Genomics: Health Services

Tracey Crouch:

[\[166186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on rolling out a network of Genomic Laboratory Hubs.

Will Quince:

Genomic testing in the National Health Service in England is provided through the NHS Genomic Medicine Service (GMS), delivered by a national genomic testing network of seven NHS Genomic Laboratory Hubs (GLHs), each responsible for coordinating services for a particular part of the country. The NHS GLHs aim to provide a cutting-edge and comprehensive genomic testing service using the latest technology. The NHS GLHs work together with standardisation and quality at the core, driving rapid adoption of technology and delivering testing as directed by the National Genomic Test Directory, which outlines the full range of genomic testing offered by the NHS. The Test Directory currently covers testing for over 3,200 rare diseases and over 200 cancers.

NHS England have regular discussions with each NHS GLH, as part of quarterly assurance meetings, to discuss opportunities to improve service delivery.

■ Health Professions: Workplace Pensions

Daisy Cooper:

[\[167238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of (a) health professionals and (b) other NHS employees whose pension contributions have previously crossed the annual pension tax threshold and who

would have been expected to pay the lifetime allowance charge but will no longer do so as a result of its abolition.

Will Quince:

In 2020/21, the latest full tax year for which data is available, the NHS Business Services Authority issued 27,395 pension saving statements to all staff for whom the value of their National Health Service pension benefits in that tax year had increased in excess of the £40,000 Annual Allowance. In the same year, there were 1,615 Lifetime Allowance charges paid over to HM Revenue & Customs in respect of NHS pensions claimed. It is not possible to break down this data by occupation.

Looking ahead, estimates based on projected pension scheme data indicate that in 2023/24 around 22,000 senior NHS clinicians could be expected to exceed the former £40,000 Annual Allowance, and around 31,000 clinicians would have reached at least 75% of the abolished £1.073 million Lifetime Allowance. No estimate has been made for other NHS employees.

■ **Healthy Start Scheme**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[167127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has set a target for uptake of the Healthy Start scheme.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[167129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the value of the Healthy Start scheme in line with the value of the Best Start Foods scheme in Scotland.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[167130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to extend the Healthy Start scheme to cover the time period between the age at which eligibility for Healthy Start stops and the age at which children start school and begin to receive Free School Meals.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) operate the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. The NHSBSA is committed to increasing uptake of the scheme to ensure as many children as possible have a healthy start in life.

The NHSBSA promotes the Healthy Start scheme through its digital channels and has created free tools to help stakeholders promote the scheme locally. The NHSBSA has also reached out to stakeholders to see how it can support them to promote the scheme.

The eligibility criteria and value for the Healthy Start scheme are kept under continuous review. There are no current plans to extend the eligibility criteria for the scheme by one year to cover children under the age of five or increase the value of Healthy Start. In April 2021 the value of the Healthy Start benefit increased from £3.10 to £4.25 per week, providing additional support to pregnant women and

families on lower incomes to make healthy food choices. Due to the increase, eligible families with children aged under one receive £8.50 per week compared to £6.20 previously.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[167128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS Business Service Authority are taking to encourage people who were not previously registered for Healthy Start paper vouchers to register for the digital Healthy Start scheme.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Business Services Authority actively promotes the NHS Healthy Start scheme through their digital channels and has created free tools to help stakeholders promote the scheme at a local level.

■ Hepatitis: Health Services

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[167074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with NHS England on future (a) funding and (b) commissioning arrangements for hepatitis C services after April 2024.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 March 2023]: The NHS England Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Elimination Programme is working towards eliminating HCV as a major public health issue in England, ahead of the 2030 World Health Organization target. Significant progress has been made and NHS England has publicly committed to the elimination of HCV in England by 2025, in the financial year 2025/26. NHS England has envisaged that current funding arrangements will continue in some form to allow future HCV elimination work to continue. Currently, commissioning arrangement for HCV elimination occur at a national level. After the point of elimination, which is expected to be at or close to 2025, work to ensure elimination is maintained will be devolved to local commissioning structures.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Liz Kendall:

[\[165370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time between a patient being identified as medically fit for discharge and being discharged was in each of the last 12 months.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 March 2023]: The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Hospitals: Private Finance Initiative

Stella Creasy:

[\[166206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (a) what arrangements her Department has in place to help ensure that hospital trusts who have entered PFI

contracts for buildings remain able to afford interest payments on those contracts and (b) what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of those arrangements in the context of rising inflation and interest rates.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 20 March 2023]: The Department and NHS England are in regular discussions with National Health Service trusts over their financial affairs and this would include the impact of inflation on trusts' contracts.

This Government has taken decisive action in response to the inflationary pressures on the NHS. On top of the additional funding of £3.3 billion from the 2022 Autumn Statement in each of the next two years NHS England has provided an additional £1.5 billion in funding to the NHS in 2022/23. This has been added to system allocations and is covering a range of pressures reported by systems including energy costs, higher costs of consumables, and the cost of PFI contracts that are tied to the retail price index.

The payments due under NHS PFI contracts are not subject to changes in interest rates. In 2023/24 the funding issued to the NHS, and reflected in the NHS payment scheme cost uplift factor, takes account of inflationary pressures in 2022/23 as well as further growth to account for expected non-pay inflation and energy price increases in 2023/24.

■ **Hospitals: Sexual Offences**

Damien Moore:

[\[165423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the availability of early evidence kits in hospitals for administering tests on sexual assault victims.

Neil O'Brien:

It is important that early evidence kits are readily available for instances where it is appropriate to offer them. The purpose of the kits is for gathering early forensic evidence and as such, responsibility for their provision sits with policing. Their use is assessed on a case-by-case basis to secure and preserve evidence. The Department is working with the Home Office to consider the availability of early evidence kits in hospitals.

■ **Influenza: Vaccination**

John Spellar:

[\[165198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2023 on Question 158778, for what reason the service specification for the school aged flu immunisation programme is not published; and if he will consider the potential merits of publishing this information.

Maria Caulfield:

The School Aged Immunisation Service (SAIS) specification covers all school age immunisations, including flu. It is a template for NHS England regional commissioners

to commission SAIS providers that evolves in line with latest policy advice, for example, the addition of flu cohorts. Contracts are held between NHS England regions and SAIS providers and are varied to best meet local need. It is on these grounds NHS England does not publish the specification. This is in contrast to the general practitioner and community pharmacy flu service specifications, which are published as they are part of a national contract. However, each year the annual flu letter is published by the UK Health Security Agency and outlines which groups are eligible for a free vaccine as part of the National Health Service programme, including children.

■ Kidney Diseases: North West

Scott Benton:

[\[163995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were diagnosed with chronic kidney disease in (a) Blackpool South constituency and (b) NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated care board and its predecessor in each year since 2019.

Helen Whately:

Data is not held at the individual constituency level. Data is available from the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and its predecessor, the Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group, which is comprised of Blackpool South, Blackpool North and Cleveleys constituencies. The following table shows the number of people diagnosed with chronic kidney disease within the geographical footprints of the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and the Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group in each year since 2019.

YEAR	LANCASHIRE AND SOUTH CUMBRIA INTEGRATED CARE BOARD	BLACKPOOL CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP
2019/20	69,282	9,574
2020/21	66,411	8,779
2021/22	66,355	8,534

Scott Benton:

[\[163996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were living with chronic kidney disease with classification of categories G3a to G5 in (a) Blackpool South and (b) NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated care board and its predecessor in each year since 2019.

Scott Benton:

[\[163997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of eligible patients with end stage kidney failure in (a) Blackpool South constituency and (b) NHS

Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated care board and its predecessor were given access to home based haemodialysis in each year since 2019.

Helen Whately:

The requested data is not held in the format requested.

Scott Benton:

[\[163999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in (a) Blackpool South constituency and (b) NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated care board and its predecessor were (i) assessed as being at high risk of kidney disease through the NHS Health Check and (ii) diagnosed with kidney disease following referral from the NHS Health Check in each year since 2019.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Kidney Diseases: West Midlands

Steve McCabe:

[\[166118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were living with chronic kidney disease with classification categories G3a to G5 in (a) Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency and (b) NHS Birmingham and Solihull integrated care board in each year since 2019.

Helen Whately:

The requested data is not held in the format requested.

Steve McCabe:

[\[166119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of end-stage renal disease patients in (a) Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency, (b) NHS Birmingham and (c) Solihull ICB had access to home-based haemodialysis in each year since 2019.

Helen Whately:

The requested data is not held in the format requested.

Steve McCabe:

[\[166120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of people with diabetes in (a) Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency and (b) the area covered by the NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board have had a urine-to-albumin ratio (ACR) test in the last year.

Helen Whately:

The following table shows the number of people with diabetes in Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency that had a urine-to-albumin ratio (UACR) test during the audit year from January 2021 to March 2022, broken down by diabetes type.

	BIRMINGHAM, SELLY OAK			ENGLAND		
Diabetes type	Total	UACR	Percentage	Total	UACR	Percentage
Type 1	505	245	48.5	250,125	124,440	49.8
Type 2 and other	6,670	3,855	57.8	3,289,925	1,997,825	60.7

Source: National Diabetes Audit

The following table shows the number of people with diabetes in NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board that had a UACR test during the audit year from January 2021 to March 2022, broken down by diabetes type.

	NHS BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL INTEGRATED CARE BOARD			ENGLAND		
Diabetes type	Total	UACR	Percentage	Total	UACR	Percentage
Type 1	4,765	2,215	46.5	250,125	124,440	49.8
Type 2 and other	83,565	51,435	61.6	3,289,925	1,997,825	60.7

Source: National Diabetes Audit

Steve McCabe:

[\[166121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in (a) Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency and b) the area covered by NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board were (i) assessed as being at high risk of kidney disease through the NHS Health Check and (ii) diagnosed with kidney disease following referral from the NHS Health Check, in each year since 2019 for which records are available.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Leukaemia: Health Services

Julian Knight:

[\[163791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department is allocating to further support for leukaemia patients.

Helen Whately:

The Government is spending more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted

Investment Fund already made available to systems last financial year, to help drive up and protect elective activity, including diagnostics and treatment for people with leukaemia.

As part of this, £2.3 billion of capital funding has been used to transform diagnostics, including increasing the number of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) up to 160. 94 CDCs are currently operational, and the CDC programme has delivered over 3.3 million additional tests, checks and scans since July 2021.

■ **Medicine: Students**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[166369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many medical students have not gone on to work in the NHS upon completion of their training in each of the last five years; and whether he has made an assessment of the consequences for his policies of changes in the levels of medical students entering the NHS workforce.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 20 March 2023]: There is published information on numbers of students, and doctors from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the Office for Students, the General Medical Council and NHS England. However, there is no published estimate of what proportion of medics on graduation go onto to work in the National Health Service and the different sources cannot easily be compared. No assessment of the direct impact on Government policies has been made.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[161251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to the letter of 10 January 2023 from the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: The matters raised in the letter in question are the responsibility of the Cabinet Office. The correspondence has been transferred there and will be answered shortly.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[167046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will published the findings of the call for evidence on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan, which closed on 7 July 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 March 2023]: We received submissions for the Call for Evidence on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan from over five thousand respondents

representing a broad range of voices across England. We have processed each response and we will be publishing a summary of our findings this spring.

■ Mental Health Services: Ambulance Services

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[167045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of 15 March by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Official Report column 326WH, what the time frame is for the roll out of up to 90 mental health ambulances: and in which regions these ambulances will be based.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 March 2023]: The specialised National Health Service mental health ambulances will be delivered in a phased manner from late 2023/24 and into 2024/25, split almost evenly across financial years. All regions except one have bid for and will receive mental health ambulances.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Jim Shannon:

[\[166219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include a statutory duty to provide early intervention strategies to (a) detect and (b) address mental health issues for (i) children and (ii) young people in (A) primary and (B) secondary schools in the forthcoming Mental Health Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bootle on 27 January 2023 to question [129867](#).

■ NHS England: Consultancy

Ed Davey:

[\[152179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS England Chief Data and Analytics Office spent on consultancy work by (a) contract, (b) provider, (c) time period and (d) value in (i) each financial year since 2018-19 and (ii) the 2022-23 financial year to 24 February 2023.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 2 March 2023]: The following table shows the spend in pounds as per each spend category for the financial years since the Chief Data and Analytics Office was established. It has been provided in an aggregated format, as the information requested on contracts and providers is commercially sensitive.

SPEND CATEGORY	2021/22	2022/23	GRAND TOTAL
Implications of legal merger between NHS	-	1,009,000	1,009,000

SPEND CATEGORY	2021/22	2022/23	GRAND TOTAL
England and NHS Digital			
Other Data & Analytics	942,750	288,600	1,231,350
Consultancy			
Grand Total	942,750	1,297,600	2,240,350

■ NHS: Data Protection

Helen Morgan:

[\[161449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that NHS subject access requests are accessible to people without photographic identification.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: Data protection law allows for people to make requests for copies of their own data through subject access requests. Confirming identification is important as it helps to stop organisations from inadvertently disclosing personal data.

Information that can be used to check people's identity can include proof of identification, for example, driving licence, passport, birth or marriage certificate; or proof of relationship/authority, for example, requesting information about a child or by an agent.

■ NHS: Databases

Clive Lewis:

[\[147345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which pilots of the Federated Data Platform were (a) not successful (b) suspended and (c) withdrawn; and if he will list the reasons for each withdrawal.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 23 February 2023]: No pilots have been assessed as unsuccessful, been suspended or withdrawn.

■ NHS: Staff

Tim Farron:

[\[163763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which organisations have been involved in independently verifying the NHS workforce forecasts in the upcoming long-term workforce plan.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 March 2023]: The Government has committed to publishing the long term workforce plan. This will include projections for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals that will be needed in 5, 10 and 15 years' time. This plan is due to be published shortly and this will include further details on verification.

Sir Robert Neill:**[163770]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the actions required to ensure that the NHS long-term workforce plan can be implemented efficiently with regards to establishing (a) governance structures and (b) accountability checks.

Will Quince:

The Government has committed to publishing the long term workforce plan this year. Further information on governance arrangements will be set out in due course.

■ Obesity: Children and Young People**Rachael Maskell:****[167182]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that public health teams are effectively tackling obesity in children and young people.

Neil O'Brien:

There are resources available to assist public health teams in tackling obesity in children and young people including three National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, one on the identification, assessment and management of obesity in children, young people and adults, one on obesity prevention, which outlines how the National Health Service, local authorities, schools and workplaces can increase physical activity levels and make dietary improvements among their target populations, and one on how effective lifestyle weight management services for children and young people should be delivered.

In addition, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has published resources to support the commissioning and delivery of tier two behavioural weight management services for children, families, and adults which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/weight-management-guidance-for-commissioners-and-providers>

The Government also provides robust public health data to local authorities through the National Child Measurement Programme, which can be used to inform the development of local childhood obesity strategies and enables them to plan services and monitor progress.

■ Ophthalmic Services**Dean Russell:****[167250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a national strategy for eye care.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England, through the transformation programme, is considering how eye care services should be commissioned to ensure future sustainability. NHS England have appointed Louisa Wickham as a national clinical director for eyecare to oversee the recovery of eye care services and longer-term transformation. This sits alongside action already being taken to improve the prevention, detection and treatment of sight threatening conditions.

■ Prisons: Blood**Mr Virendra Sharma:****[167075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps with the Secretary of State for Justice to ensure that opt-out reception testing for (a) hepatitis C and (b) other blood borne viruses will continue in prisons after elimination metrics have been met.

Maria Caulfield:

Individuals who have been in prison or other secure and detained settings are at a higher risk of Hepatitis C (HCV) infections. That is why the NHS England HCV elimination programme has significant focus on testing and treatment in prisons and probation centres, including the successful blood-borne virus opt-out reception testing in prisons.

The 2030 World Health Organization HCV elimination goal goes beyond meeting specific elimination metrics but asks countries to meet sustained levels of HCV reduction. To do this beyond 2030, the Department for Health and Social Care, in partnership with NHS England, the Ministry of Justice, His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service, the UK Health Security Agency and other stakeholders, are continuing to explore programmes that target groups most at risk of HCV infections.

■ Public Health: Working Hours**Kirsten Oswald:****[167153]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has made an assessment of the effectiveness of measures to mitigate health impacts of night time shift working.

Neil O'Brien:

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has not made an assessment of the effectiveness of measures to mitigate health impacts of night time shift working. The Working Time Regulations provide protections to night workers. Before someone

starts working at night, they must be offered a free health assessment and on a regular basis after that.

■ Sleep

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[167154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment (a) his Department and (b) The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities have made of the potential health impacts of disrupted sleep.

Neil O'Brien:

Through 'Advancing Our Health: Prevention in the 2020s', the Government committed to review the evidence on sleep and health, and that review was completed by Public Health England. The review looked at the relationship between sleep and physical and mental health, optimum levels of sleep for children and adolescents, and factors that can both hinder and promote healthy sleep.

■ Social Services: Digital Technology

Rachael Maskell:

[\[163810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2023 to Question 157667, what technologies his Department is piloting for social care; and in which ICS areas.

Helen Whately:

The Digitising Social Care programme has made over £35 million available to integrated care systems (ICS) to support the testing and scaling of care technologies that can improve the quality and safety of care and help people live independently at home for longer.

The programme is engaged with all 42 ICSs in England and 41 ICSs have received funding to deploy digital social care records and other care technologies that meet local needs. For example, sensor-based falls prevention and detection technologies that can reduce falls and other technologies that can support people to live more independently in their own home.

■ Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[163857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to review the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 to (a) support e-cigarettes as a reduced harm alternative to cigarettes and (b) regulate non-nicotine containing e-liquids.

Neil O'Brien:

Through the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, the Government is currently reviewing which retained European Union (EU) law should be repealed, reformed or preserved. The Government continues to work with a range of

stakeholders to ensure that any such reforms maintain current standards in patient safety and public health.

■ Transplant Surgery: North West

Navendu Mishra:

[\[163982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were on the organ donation waiting list in the North West on 10 March 2023.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS Blood and Transplant are responsible for organ donation in the United Kingdom. The following tables shows data transplant waiting list numbers for the North West as of 13 March 2023. Suspended indicates the patient has been temporarily removed from the list. This happens for such reasons as being too ill to undergo the operation or being absent.

ORGAN	ACTIVE	SUSPENDED	TOTAL
Kidney	598	524	1122
Kidney/pancreas	43	38	81
Kidney & pancreas is	5	2	7
Pancreas	2	10	12
Pancreas islets	0	1	1
Heart	36	25	61
Lung(s)	33	3	36
Liver	80	14	94
Intestinal	2	1	3
Other multi organ	2	0	2
Total	801	618	1419

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghan Pro Bono Initiative

Seema Malhotra:

[\[166242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what correspondence her Department has had with the Afghan Pro Bono Initiative.

Robert Jenrick:

We are unable to comment on individual cases. We are aware of correspondence from the Afghan Pro Bono Initiative in relation to proposed litigation in individual cases, which by its nature is subject to legal privilege such that it would not be appropriate to release information.

■ Asylum: Children**Seema Malhotra:**[\[163819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 155129 on Asylum: Children, how many people are on the unaccompanied asylum seeking children taskforce; whether any members of the taskforce are from outside government; how many taskforce meetings have been held to date; what the estimated cost of running the taskforce has been since November 2022; and whether the taskforce is expected to publish a report on its findings; and if she will make a statement.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office and Department for Education (DfE) established a UASC taskforce in November 2022 which has been meeting regularly. This multiagency taskforce includes senior representatives from the Home Office, DfE, Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ACDS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) to consider the challenges presented by an increase in the number of UASC. It is co-chaired by DfE Permanent Secretary, Susan Acland-Hood and Home Office Second Permanent Secretary, Patricia Hayes.

There are no costs associated with the taskforce other than for officials and other attendees to prepare for, attend and follow up discussions as appropriate. The government will not be publishing a report of the discussions held by the taskforce.

■ Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry**Alexander Stafford:**[\[163980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals similar to the Limitation (Childhood Abuse) (Scotland) Act 2017 in England and Wales.

Alexander Stafford:[\[163981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to publish a consultation on proposals to implement a redress scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Alexander Stafford:[\[163983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Government plans to publish its response to the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[163986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, published on 20 October 2022.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Final Report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (the Inquiry) constitutes a watershed moment after seven years of investigation into how state and non-state institutions have failed to safeguard children from sexual abuse. We recognise the incredible courage of the 7,300 victims and survivors who came forward to share their stories with the Inquiry, and the over 6,000 victims and survivors who participated in the Truth Project. The Government is committed to keeping those voices at the heart of our response to the Final Report.

The Final Report deserves careful consideration. The Government will respond to all 20 recommendations in due course, noting the convention that it will do so within six months of the conclusion of a statutory inquiry. This will include responses to recommendation 19 which concerns implementation of a redress scheme and recommendation 15 which concerns limitation.

The Government's Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, published in January 2021, sets out our long-term ambition to tackle all forms of child sexual abuse. Our programme of action, to stop offenders in their tracks, bring them to justice, safeguard children and provide support to victims and survivors, is supported by more than £60 million of direct HO investment each year.

We are considering the Inquiry's recommendations in that context, evaluating how we can go further within our ongoing whole system approach to tackling child sexual abuse.

■ **Illegal Migration Bill**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[165314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to (a) carry out and (b) publish an equality impact assessment of the Illegal Migration Bill.

Robert Jenrick:

I refer the Hon member to the answer I gave on 13 March 2023 to his question [UIN161307](#).

■ **Illegal Migration Bill: Impact Assessments**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[167059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date she will publish the impact assessments for the Illegal Migration Bill.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[167060]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has completed an (a) impact assessment, (b) equality impact assessment, or (c) children's rights impact assessment on the Illegal Migration Bill.

Robert Jenrick:

We will publish the impact assessment, equality impact assessment and children's rights impact assessment in respect of the Illegal Migration Bill in due course.

■ Immigration Controls: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell:

[165242]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many holders of British Overseas Territories passports have been denied entry to the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on numbers of persons initially stopped at the border in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on persons initially stopped, by nationality, are published in table Stp_D01 of the '[Passengers initially stopped at the border detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the end of September 2022.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Immigration Removal Centres: LGBT+ People

Daisy Cooper:

[163934]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to collect data on the number of LGBTQI people held in immigration detention.

Daisy Cooper:

[163935]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's immigration policies of the report entitled LGBTQI+ people's experiences of immigration detention: A pilot study, published in February 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

Published Detention Services Orders (DSOs) [2/2016](#) and [11/2012](#) set out how individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual should be safeguarded and treated in detention.

We are unable to publish data on LGBTQI detained individuals. The identification of an LGBTQI individual detained under immigration powers, is entirely at the discretion of the individual. Consequently, even a manual trawl of cases of individuals detained will not necessarily be representative of the true number of LGBTQI individuals

detained during any period. The fact that an individual detained under immigration powers within an IRC or prison is transsexual will always be recorded in a manner sensitive to the needs of that individual, not for statistical purposes. As it is rare for the detention of a trans or intersex person to occur, any reporting would risk the identification of individuals.

■ Legal Profession: Monitoring

Stuart C McDonald: [\[167145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Immigration of 20 February 2023, Official Report, column 33, how many legal practitioners are being monitored by her Department; and (a) for what reasons and (b) by what methods they are being monitored.

Robert Jenrick:

I refer the Hon. Member to my response to Question 149440 on 28 February: [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament.](#)

■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse

Mark Garnier: [\[163837\]](#)

[EU edit] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the updated harms assessment by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs on nitrous oxide, published on 7 March 2023, when she plans to respond to its findings; what assessment she has made of the potential merits of specifically proscribing nitrous oxide; and whether it is her policy to support the other recommendations in that report.

Chris Philp:

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) published their report on nitrous oxide on 6 March, setting out the evidence as it currently stands and made seven recommendations.

The Government will consider the ACMD advice carefully along with any other available evidence, as appropriate, and will respond in due course.

■ Radicalism: Children

Julian Sturdy: [\[163836\]](#)

SUGGESTED EDIT: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the rates of small boats crossing the Channel on the radicalisation of children.

Robert Jenrick:

No specific assessment has been made of the potential impact of the rates of small boats crossing the Channel on the radicalisation of children. If someone is concerned that an individual is susceptible to radicalisation, they can make a referral to Prevent.

■ Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[165298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total amount of funding disbursed by the Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund is to date; and how many local authorities have received funds under that scheme to date.

Robert Jenrick:

The Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund (RTOF) is a £14m cross-government initiative which aims to increase the self-sufficiency and integration of newly-granted refugees, helping them to move into work, learn English, access housing and build links in their local communities.

The programme is piloting a holistic and place-based approach across 26 Local Authorities to address the challenges and barriers faced by newly granted refugees.

The programme is utilising a Social Impact Bond model and is trialling an outcomes-based commissioning model, whereby payments are made by the Home Office to social investors for specific outcomes as they are achieved. The spend for the 22/23 financial year is not yet finalised as providers can submit outcomes claims until the end of the financial year.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[165315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of Afghan nationals who (a) meet the eligibility criteria for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, (b) meet the eligibility criteria for the Afghan citizens resettlement schemes and (c) have received an offer of resettlement under one of those schemes who (i) have not arrived in the UK and (ii) are known to have died since August 2021.

Robert Jenrick:

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), launched on 1 April 2021, we have relocated c.12,100 Afghans, including LE Staff, to the UK under ARAP.

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) launched on the 6 January 2022 and will see 20,000 people from Afghanistan and the region resettled to the UK over the coming years. Around 6,500 people brought to safety in the UK during and after the evacuation are eligible for the ACRS under Pathway 1.

There is no application process for the ACRS. Prioritisation and referral for resettlement will be under one of the three Pathways.

More information on the ACRS is available via the link below: Afghan citizens resettlement scheme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

We estimate that the number of ARAP-eligible people that remain in Afghanistan is approximately 3,900 people (inclusive of immediate family members) out of a total of around 4,300 ARAP eligible individuals awaiting relocation, some of whom are in third

countries undergoing visa checks. These figures are based on HMG records and are subject to change.

Under Pathway 3 of ACRS, the Government is considering eligible at-risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni located in Afghanistan and the neighbouring region for resettlement in the UK. The FCDO is in regular contact with Gardaworld and British Council. We are not aware of the death of a contractor, or a Chevening alumnus, since Pathway 3 of the ACRS opened.

We do not have access to records of deaths in Afghanistan and have not made any such assessment.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[165316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of including Afghan nationals who have worked for (a) the BBC and (b) other media organisations in the eligibility criteria for the next phase of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

Under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), eligible individuals are prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through one of three referral pathways, which is a fair and equitable way to identify those in need.

There are no plans to expand the criteria under the existing pathways of the ACRS to include those formerly employed by the BBC or other media organisations.

In the next phase of Pathway 3 of the ACRS, we will continue to work with international partners and NGOs to welcome wider groups of Afghans at risk. Further detail will be set out in due course.

■ Refugees: LGBT+ People

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[165510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to include protections within the Illegal Migration Bill for those claiming asylum from a country where they are at risk of persecution on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Robert Jenrick:

The Illegal Migration Bill provides the Home Secretary with a legal duty to remove people who have entered or arrive in the UK illegally, having travelled via a safe country. In these circumstances, they will be detained and removed back to their home country or a safe third country such as Rwanda. This will send a clear message that people should not make dangerous, unnecessary and illegal small boat crossings to the UK.

Everyone considered for relocation to a safe third country will be screened and have access to legal advice. We would not relocate someone where it would be unsafe to do so.

Our Migration Partnership with Rwanda will provide protection to those who need it and will provide individuals relocated with support to build new lives there. Rwanda is a fundamentally safe and secure country with a track record of supporting asylum seekers, including working with the UN Refugee Agency which said the country has a safe and protective environment for refugees.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Jim Shannon:

[\[155119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of illegal crossings of the English Channel; and if she will increase the number of patrols in the channel.

Robert Jenrick:

The small boat crossings are dangerous, illegal and unnecessary and the Government is committed to working with our European partners to stop them.

On 10 March 2023, the Prime Minister and President Macron announced the biggest package with France yet to tackle small boats. Initiatives include a significant uplift of the number of personnel deployed to tackle small boats across northern France, as well as a package of new cutting-edge surveillance technologies and equipment, including additional drones, aircraft, and other vehicles and embedded observers to step up our capabilities to detect and respond to small boat crossing attempts.

■ Violent and Sex Offender Register

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[165505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of convicted sex offenders who were added to the sex offenders register for an indefinite period (a) applied and (b) were successful in their application to be removed from the register after 15 years.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[165506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to ensure that convicted sex offenders who were added to the sex offenders register for an indefinite period cannot apply to be removed from that register.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The UK has some of the toughest powers in the world to deal with sex offenders. Offenders are required to notify certain personal details, such as their name, address, and bank details, to the police. This must be done annually and whenever their details change. This system is often referred to as the 'sex offenders' register'.

Offenders subject to the requirements for life are only able to see a review after 15 years (8 years for juveniles) and must submit an application to the police who will take into account a range of factors, including information from other agencies. Removal is not automatic and offenders who continue to pose a risk will remain on the register and will do so for life if necessary.

Data on the number of offenders whose application was successful is published by the Ministry of Justice in the Multi-Agency Public Protection arrangements (MAPPA) annual report, which is available on Gov.UK. The most recent report showed that between April 2021 and March 2022, 387 offenders had their indefinite notification requirements were revoked. Data on the number of offenders who applied for a review is not collated centrally, but the number who had their notification requirements revoked in 2021/2 represents 0.57% of the overall cohort of 66,741 offenders.

We continue to work with the police and other agencies to ensure the right powers are available for them to tackle sexual offending and bring perpetrators to justice and have further strengthening the regime for managing sex offenders and those who pose a risk through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers

Tony Lloyd:

[165228]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to provide compensation to seasonal migrant workers for financial losses incurred due to the late issuing of their visa.

Robert Jenrick:

There is a formal complaints mechanism that individuals can follow if they feel that their application has not been handled correctly:

[Complaints procedure - UK Visas and Immigration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complaints-procedure-uk-visas-and-immigration)).

■ Visas: Young People

Julian Knight:

[163801]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support young people via the expansion of shared visa schemes.

Robert Jenrick:

Rules were laid in parliament to extend the YMS arrangements with New Zealand from 29 June. The eligible age range for the scheme will increase from 18-30 to 18-35. In addition, the scheme for New Zealand nationals will be extended from two years to three years through the ability for YMS visa holders to make a one-year in-country extension. Similar provisions will be afforded to young British nationals through New Zealand's Working Holiday scheme.

Further, The UK and Australia signed a side letter on mobility in December 2021 alongside the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement, setting out commitments on their respective Youth Mobility Scheme and Working Holiday Maker programmes.

The UK and Australia will make changes to these schemes so that they are available to people aged 18 to 35 years for a total stay of up to 3 years. Australia will also remove the requirement for UK nationals on their programme to undertake specific types of work.

Both sides agreed to implement these changes within two years of entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement and will jointly decide on a date for these commitments to come into effect.

The Government remains open to negotiating YMS arrangements with other countries and territories. However, we are unable to disclose the status of negotiations as they occur. Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

JUSTICE

■ Care Proceedings

Caroline Lucas:

[\[163874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of care proceeding cases exceed the 26-week time limit.

Mike Freer:

Information relating to care proceedings is routinely published by the Ministry of Justice on a quarterly basis and can be found via Family Court Statistics Quarterly.

The Department for Education (DfE) has also invested just under £1.5 million across seven regions, to improve practice in pre-proceedings as a means to reduce court backlogs. We will continue to engage with DfE colleagues to monitor progress and impact on care proceedings.

We have significantly increased funding to improve waiting times in the civil and family courts and tribunals. This includes increasing funding to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) by £8.4 million this financial year - to an overall budget of over £141 million.

In March 2021, we launched a Family Mediation Voucher Scheme for those seeking to resolve private law matters relating to a child. A total of £8.7 million has been allocated to the scheme until the end of 2022/23, and as of 5 March 2023, over 15,300 vouchers have been requested.

■ Chelmsford Prison: Fire Prevention

Steve Reed:

[\[167125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the transparency data entitled Ministry of Justice: spend control data for April 2022 to June 2022, published on 30 September 2022, what information his Department used to inform its decision to spend £13.9 million on fire safety at HMPPS Chelmsford; and if he will publish that information.

Damian Hinds:

Decisions on investment in the prison estate are made on the basis of risk and in the interest of the health safety and well-being of prisoners and staff. We are investing heavily to ensure prison fire safety systems are brought up to a modern standard.

■ Prisoners' Release

Ellie Reeves:

[\[165446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were released on Fridays in the last quarter of 2022; and what steps his department is taking to prepare to implement the Offenders (Day of Release from Detention) Bill.

Damian Hinds:

Prisoner releases data for the fourth quarter of 2022 are not yet available. Data covering this period are scheduled for release on Thursday 27 April 2023, as part of the next Offender Management Statistics Quarterly publication.

The Government is supporting the Member for Barrow and Furness, Simon Fell MP's, Offenders (Day of Release from Detention) Bill. The Bill has been introduced to the House of Lords and is awaiting its second reading, Sponsored by Lord Bird. My department is preparing a policy framework to provide guidance on decisions for eligible offenders, in consultation with stakeholders. Should the Bill pass all stages of its parliamentary passage, the policy will be published after Royal Assent.

■ Prisoners' Release: Drugs

Ellie Reeves:

[\[165445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that prisoners with drug dependence can access community drug treatment services in their community as soon as possible after release.

Damian Hinds:

We work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care, NHS England and the Welsh Government to support access to, and continuity of, care in custody and into the community, in line with the goals of the Adult National Partnership Agreement published on 23 February 2023.

As part of our up to £120m investment in getting more offenders into treatment, we are focused on ensuring dedicated staff are in place to ensure continuity of treatment as soon as someone is released. We are recruiting Health and Justice Coordinators in every probation region to improve links between prison and local treatment services, and Drug Strategy Leads in key prisons to ensure a focus on treatment. We are also rolling out more video calling technology, providing prisoners with the opportunity to engage with community treatment pre-release.

■ Prisons: Electronic Government

Catherine West:

[\[165469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of fraud protection on gov.uk to send money to someone in prison system.

Damian Hinds:

In 2020 we commissioned a review of the way money is paid to prisoners. The outcome of this review led to a number of improvements in the way this is done, namely:

1. The relevant policy (PSI 01/2012) was strengthened to restrict the amount of money that could be held and disbursed by prisoners and the use of the [GOV.UK](#) Send Money to someone in prison service was made mandatory to send money to someone in prison aside from a few exceptions.
2. The [GOV.UK](#) service was strengthened to restrict the forms of electronic payments that were acceptable, and a flagging system was introduced that paused suspicious payments.
3. We launched the Money-to-prisoner Compliance Team (MTPCT). This team examines all suspicious payments made to prisoners and can block anything assessed to be fraudulent or linked to other crimes. This team also work with law enforcement to conduct follow up investigations on certain attempted payments.

■ Prisons: Staff**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[165438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison staff were excluded from a prison by (a) their role and (b) the category of exclusion in each of the last 16 quarters.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mary Kelly Foy:[\[165440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of exclusions of prison staff from a prison have led to prosecutions in each of the last four years broken down by role of those staff.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Trials: Greater London**Emily Thornberry:**[\[163751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of ineffective trials in (a) magistrates and (b) crown courts in London did not proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate in (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021, (vi) 2022, and (vii) 2023 as of 11 March.

Emily Thornberry:[\[163829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of ineffective trials in (a) magistrates and (b) crown courts in the Midlands did not proceed due to the

lack of a prosecution advocate in (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021, (vi) 2022, and (vii) 2023 as of 11 March.

Emily Thornberry: [163830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of ineffective trials in (a) magistrates and (b) crown courts in the North East did not proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate in (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021, (vi) 2022, and (vii) 2023 as of 11 March.

Emily Thornberry: [163831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of ineffective trials in (a) magistrates and (b) crown courts in the North West did not proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate in (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021, (vi) 2022, and (vii) 2023 as of 11 March.

Emily Thornberry: [163833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of ineffective trials in (a) magistrates and (b) crown courts in the South East did not proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate in (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021, (vi) 2022, and (vii) 2023 as of 11 March.

Emily Thornberry: [165274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, (a) how many and (b) what percentage of ineffective trials in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) crown courts in the Western region failed to proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate in calendar years (A) 2010, (B) 2012, (C) 2019, (D) 2020, (E) 2021, (F) 2022, and (G) 2023, as of 11 March.

Emily Thornberry: [165275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, (a) how many and (b) what percentage of ineffective trials in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) crown courts in Wales failed to proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate in calendar years (A) 2010, (B) 2012, (C) 2019, (D) 2020, (E) 2021, (F) 2022, and (G) 2023 as of 11 March.

Mike Freer:

Figures on trial effectiveness, by region and reason, are published here: [Criminal court statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics), and allow for proportions of ineffective trials which failed to proceed due to the lack of a prosecution advocate to be calculated.

The latest data published is currently available to Q3 2022. As a result, it is not possible to supply data "as at 11 March" and the supplied data for 2022 runs from January - September 2022 only.

The data provided uses the published regional splits.

We welcome the fact that the Crown Prosecution Service has secured additional funding from HM Treasury to restore parity in fees between prosecution and defence barristers in Crown Court cases to ensure long term sustainability of the profession.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2023-03-21 PQ 163751 163829 163830 163831 163833 165274 165275 table (1).xlsx]

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Buildings: Fire Prevention**

Daisy Cooper: [\[163915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of buildings of all heights which still require fire safety remediation work.

Daisy Cooper: [\[163916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, by what date are developers who have signed the Developer Self-Remediation contract expected to complete remediation work on the buildings for which they are responsible.

Daisy Cooper: [\[163917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 20 February 2023 to Question 141467, whether he has had discussions with (a) valuers, (b) lenders and (c) insurers on their willingness to accept the standard of remediation as per the definition of relevant defects in the Developer Self-Remediation contract as having entirely eliminated all impairment when (i) calculating property values, (ii) proposing mortgage terms and (iii) underwriting buildings insurance on buildings which have been remediated.

Daisy Cooper: [\[163918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including (a) manufacturers and (b) suppliers of (i) cladding, (ii) insulation, (iii) smoke ventilation systems, (iv) fire doors and (v) other faulty building safety components as funding contributors in the remediation waterfall system, with a greater weight of responsibility to meet remediation costs than leaseholders.

Daisy Cooper: [\[163919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adopting the approach of the Irish government to building safety, by funding all required fire safety remediation directly.

Daisy Cooper: [\[163921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the response by the Permanent Secretary to Q99 of the oral evidence session of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, HC962, on 9 January 2023, if he will quantify the term 'vanishingly small tail' as it relates to the number of leaseholders who will be liable to pay fire safety remediation costs.

Daisy Cooper:

[163922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to develop a system of support for leaseholders who do not qualify for protection from costs under the current Developer Self-Remediation contract, including (a) residents in buildings less than 11 metres in height, (b) leaseholders who also own a share of a freehold and (c) leaseholders who own three or more properties.

Daisy Cooper:

[163923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the necessity for ACM cladding to be removed from buildings of all heights, in the context of the decision in December 2022 to prohibit its use on all new buildings as a result of safety concerns.

Lee Rowley:

Further to the [statement](#) made by my Right Hon Friend the Secretary of State, I refer to information set out in the Building Safety Programme data [release](#) and relating to the Building Safety Fund can be found [here](#), as well as to this [estimate](#) relating to mid-rise residential buildings.

The time it will take to remediate a building will depend on the work that needs to be carried out.

The developer remediation contract requires signatories to assess and remediate or mitigate life-critical fire safety risks caused by the original design, construction or refurbishment in buildings for which they are responsible. [42 developers have signed the contract](#) and the value of the works covered by the contract will be at least £2 billion. Signatories are required to keep both the department and affected residents apprised of the progress of remediation works. The Government will monitor developers' performance closely and act if necessary.

Leaseholders in buildings above 11 metres or five storeys are protected from all historical safety remediation costs if their landlord is, or is associated with, the developer; they will also benefit from qualifying status for their principal residence if it is in such a building. In addition, remediation contribution orders enable leaseholders in relevant buildings to attempt to recover remediation costs, whatever the qualifying status of the leaseholder.

We are aware of a very small number of buildings under 11 metres where expensive remediation is proposed. We have written to freeholders and managing agents in affected buildings to make sure proposed works are necessary and proportionate.

The Government has committed £5.1 billion to remediating cladding safety defects in England. Where industry has a responsibility, they should contribute.

Enforcement provisions have been included in the Building Safety Act to ensure that those who are liable to pay under leaseholder protections do so. Relevant authorities have the power to compel responsible entities to fund and undertake the necessary remediation work. The new Recovery Strategy Unit will also pursue firms who do not live up to their responsibilities.

The Act also creates a new cause of action which allows manufacturers of construction products to be pursued through the courts where defective or mis-sold products have been incorporated in a dwelling, and that has caused or contributed to a dwelling being unfit for habitation.

Further, Section 133 of the Act (once in force) will place a duty on landlords to take reasonable steps to explore alternative cost recovery avenues before asking leaseholders to contribute to defined remediation works - this will include pursuing third parties in connection with the remediation works.

On 20 December, the six largest mortgage lenders confirmed that they will lend on buildings in England of 11 metres and above in height with building safety issues where the building is covered by the developer self-remediation contract. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) and their members have stated premiums should reduce where buildings have completed remediation or where there is a reduction in risk.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[163920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the proportion of qualifying leaseholders who will be liable to pay fire safety remediation costs as a result of no other responsible parties being identified as part of the waterfall system.

Lee Rowley:

The Government and Parliament have provided a substantial number of levers to obtain funding for remediation, some of which have been recently made available. We would encourage leaseholders with remediation issues to utilise all levers available to them.

■ Buildings: Safety

Julian Knight:

[\[163795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what funding his Department is allocating to support delivery of the building safety reforms.

Lee Rowley:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the Building Safety Regulator and the Construction Products Regulator have the resources and skills to perform their functions effectively.

On 9 March, the Government announced £42 million grant funding to support recruitment of Building Control Inspectors and Fire Inspectors working with the Building Safety Regulator. The grant funding will enable local regulators to recruit, train and employ new Building Inspectors and Fire Inspectors to support the work of the Building Safety Regulator .

■ Capital Investment

Lisa Nandy: [167098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the 12 Investment Zones announced in the Spring Budget 2023 on UK economic growth.

Lisa Nandy: [167099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether expressions of interest for investment zones submitted in 2022 will be used to decide where the new investment zones will be located.

Dehenna Davison:

Further to the announcement set out at the [Autumn Statement](#), the Hon Member can find further information in the published [Written Ministerial Statement](#), as well as the [Investment Zones Policy Offer](#) and [Methodology Note](#).

■ Energy Performance Certificates

Holly Mumby-Croft: [163912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to maintain the accuracy of EPC ratings.

Lee Rowley:

Government continues to keep the effectiveness of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) under review.

The [EPC Action Plan](#) sets out a programme of work to improve the accuracy of EPCs. This includes reviewing the underlying calculation methodology and working with the EPC assessor accreditation schemes to strengthen the arrangements for auditing assessors and their training.

■ Housing: Construction

Matthew Pennycook: [167197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the Future of the New Homes Bonus consultation.

Matthew Pennycook: [167198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his plans are for the Future of the New Homes Bonus beyond 2023-24.

Matthew Pennycook: [167199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made assessment of the potential impact of the withdrawal of New Homes Bonus legacy payments on local authorities.

Rachel Maclean:

In 2021, we published a consultation on the future of the New Homes Bonus and sought views from the sector on a range of issues.

When considering changes to the New Homes Bonus, the Government has considered both the impact on local authorities and the effectiveness of the Bonus in encouraging housing growth.

Further announcements will be set out in the usual way.

Housing: Equality**Alex Norris:**[\[163882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to give Homes England an objective to reduce inequalities in housing supply in each region.

Rachel Maclean:

Homes England new Strategic Plan will be published in due course, reflecting their responsibilities for levelling up.

Levelling Up Fund**Lisa Nandy:**[\[167097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the decision-making process and criteria by which unsuccessful bids for the second round of the Levelling Up Fund were awarded funding in the Spring Budget 2023 in the context of re-focusing departmental budgets.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon member to AO assessments [published](#) online.

Local Government: Remote Meetings**Richard Fuller:**[\[163814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made on reviewing the responses to the call for evidence on local authority remote meetings, published on 25 March 2021; when he plans to publish the Government's response; and what factors have contributed to the Department being unable to do so to date.

Lee Rowley:

I have nothing to add to the answer given to Question UIN [95817](#) on 2 December 2022.

Property Development: Carbon Emissions**Rachael Maskell:**[\[167274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to encourage newly built multi-purpose development sites to be (a) carbon

neutral and (b) carbon negative; and what steps he is taking to help ensure that such sites encourage the use of active transport and public transport.

Lee Rowley:

As set out previously, the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that the planning system should support the transition to low carbon. As committed to in the Net Zero Strategy, we will carry out a fuller review of the National Planning Policy Framework.

This will include reflecting the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, to strengthen links between planning and transport.

■ **Property Development: Nature Conservation**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[163937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to bring forward regulations to govern whether and when developers can clear wildlife habitats without approval to win planning permission on private land, and if that will include powers to impose penalties and forms of bio-diversity remediation.

Rachel Maclean:

Legislation and national policy affords strong protections to key species and their habitats from development. We are going further by introducing mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which will require that all new relevant development proposals must deliver at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity. The BNG framework includes specific provisions to address pre-development habitat degradation.

■ **Property Management Companies: Regulation**

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[167200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to implement the recommendations of the final report on the regulation of property agents working group on July 2019.

Rachel Maclean:

As part of creating a fair and just housing system, the Government is committed to making sure that homeowners and tenants are protected from abuse and poor service. Further announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Complaints**

Catherine West:

[\[163932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the launch of the Social Housing Complaint Campaign, what the current average waiting time is for residents raising cases with the Housing Ombudsman.

Catherine West:

[\[163933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the launch of the Social Housing Complaint Campaign, what assessment he has made

of the potential impact on the Housing Ombudsman's caseload; and what additional resources he has allocated to the Housing Ombudsman.

Dehenna Davison:

The Government launched the 'Make Things Right' campaign on 6th March 2023 to encourage and inform residents on how to make their voices heard by making a complaint to their landlord in the first instance and escalating to the Housing Ombudsman if they remain unhappy.

I refer the Hon member to the Housing Ombudsman's annual report, available [here](#), and to their consultation document published [here](#).

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Intellectual Property

Wera Hobhouse:

[164032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps the Government is taking to help maintain the UK's position near the top of the International IP Index.

George Freeman:

The UK intellectual property system and enforcement framework is consistently rated as one of the best in the world. The UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) delivers high quality, timely rights granting with record levels of customer satisfaction. It is undergoing a transformation programme to modernise and improve the efficiency of its services to customers.

The Government is also committed to a world leading intellectual property framework that keeps pace with technological developments and that remains world class during global trade negotiations. On enforcement, the IPO's ambitious counter-infringement strategy continues to build on important partnership working in combatting illicit activity.

■ Science and Technology

Julian Knight:

[163789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans her Department has to involve the public and young people in building a sense of shared science and technology goals as outlined in the recent Science and Technology Framework.

George Freeman:

The Government provides support to the British Science Association to create events like British Science Week (BSW), which provides a popular and accessible opportunity for a range of audiences to get involved in science and related areas, and to run their CREST awards, the largest and longest running project-based science engagement programme in the UK.

In addition, the Government also supports the STEM Ambassadors programme which has over 30,000 volunteer scientists and engineers who go out to schools across the UK inspiring young people to take up study of STEM subjects and consider careers in research.

■ Science and Technology: Equality

Julian Knight:

[163806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what data her Department collects and holds on diversity and inclusion in the UK science and technology landscape.

George Freeman:

The Department utilises existing datasets such as Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) and [UK Research & Innovation](#) diversity databases and the Labour Force Survey in the analysis of diversity of the UK Research, Development and Innovation workforce.

The Department also conducted the first ever survey of the UK Research and Innovation workforce in 2022, which included questions relating to gender, ethnicity, disability, age and views on inclusive culture. The report was published on 2nd March 2023 [here](#).

■ UK Intellectual Property Office: Standards

Wera Hobhouse:

[164034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the Government has made an assessment of the adequacy of requirements for representation in ensuring only regulated and qualified practitioners can appear before the Intellectual Property Office.

George Freeman:

The Government supports appropriate regulation of intellectual property practitioners where this is necessary to ensure that applicants and rights holders are effectively represented.

The Government has not seen a need to change the current regulatory framework but continues to welcome evidence from practitioners and consumers if they consider there to be deficiencies in the current system.

■ Ultrasonics: Breast Cancer

Julian Knight:

[163794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what funding her Department is allocating to research in new ultrasound technology to advance breast cancer diagnosis.

George Freeman:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds a wide range of activity into the underpinning research, development and application of tools and technologies for the diagnosis of cancers, including breast cancer. An example includes a £1.18 million award, through UKRI's Future Leaders Fellowship programme, to research at Imperial College London, focused on the development of novel high-resolution ultrasound imaging technology to overcome challenges associated with conventional ultrasound techniques.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Special Advisers****Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[165259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department spent on special advisers in (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23 and (c) 2023-24.

Mr Alister Jack:

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs, including pay bands, is published annually in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. Special Adviser staff costs are paid by the Cabinet Office and the Office reimburses the Cabinet Office for these costs via a budget cover transfer.

Other than salary costs, the Scotland Office has spent the following on special advisers in financial years 2020-21 to 2022-23 (to date).

FINANCIAL YEAR	TRAVEL & SUBSISTENCE£
2020-21	28,336
2021-22	39,766
2022-23 (April to February 2023)	47,370

TRANSPORT**■ Avanti West Coast: Tickets****Samantha Dixon:**[\[165473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure Avanti West Coast allocate an adequate provision of advance tickets on its Chester-London services.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is aware of the impact delayed opening of journey reservations has had on passengers and officials are regularly monitoring Avanti West Coast's plans to improve the situation. However, the compressed booking horizons have not materially impacted the allocation of advance tickets between Chester and London, or on any other route. Once tickets are available, the full range of fares is offered for customers. Passengers are advised to sign up to Avanti's advance ticket alert through its website to be notified when journeys are available to book.

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[163960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to help encourage the development and use of zero-emission aircraft.

Jesse Norman:

The Government published the Jet Zero Strategy in 2022 which sets out its approach to achieving net zero aviation by 2050. The Strategy considered the potential for zero emission flight alongside other measures.

The Government is investing a record £685 million over three years into R&D in the UK Aerospace Sector through the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) Programme. As part of the programme, the Department announced in February £113 million of co-investment with industry in three Rolls Royce led projects on hydrogen in aviation, as well as funding towards Vertical Aerospace, who are developing a battery-electric aircraft in the South- West of England.

As part of the Jet Zero Council, the Department has established a dedicated Delivery Group to convene activity across Government, industry and academia on the development of Zero Emission Flight.

■ Aviation: Cyprus**Brendan Clarke-Smith:**[\[164020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support British citizens who live in North of Cyprus, in the context of the prohibition of direct flights between the UK and the North of Cyprus.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises the inconvenience caused to passengers, including British citizens, by the situation regarding air travel between the north of Cyprus and the UK. Under the Chicago Convention, only the Republic of Cyprus may designate Ercan (in the north of Cyprus) as an international customs airport and grant permission for flights to operate from within its territory. The Republic of Cyprus has not designated Ercan.

This means that no direct air services between the north of Cyprus and the UK can take place. Ultimately, a just and lasting settlement on the island is the best chance of

resolving these complex issues. The UK's commitment to helping all parties to achieve this remains unwavering.

■ Aviation: Disability

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[163944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the Civil Aviation Authority has made in ensuring that air travel is accessible for all passengers.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[163945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Civil Aviation Authority's letter of 9 June 2002 to airlines and airports on standards of provision for disabled and less mobile passengers, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of progress by (a) airlines and (b) airports on improving the accessibility of air travel.

Jesse Norman:

Aviation accessibility is a priority for Government, and the Department are working alongside the CAA to ensure that disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility have the assistance they require to travel with ease.

Following the letter on 9 June 2022, the CAA published additional guidance to airports on providing assistance services. Due to the disruption seen during the summer, the CAA published an interim report on the performance of airports against its accessibility framework in December 2022. The report showed improvement or maintenance of good service across a number of the airports assessed, but also highlighted airports requiring further improvement. The CAA will continue to monitor and work with these airports on plans to implement improvements and publish its usual annual report later this year. The CAA will soon publish a consultation on development of an airline accessibility framework, similar to the existing airport framework.

■ Cycling and Walking: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department held consultations on changes to the Second Walking and Cycling Investment Strategy.

Jesse Norman:

The Department did not consult on this. The change was a factual correction to a number in a funding table and did not represent a change of policy or substance. The Department will consult in due course on the third statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3), as required by the Infrastructure Act 2015.

■ Cycling and Walking: York Central

Rachael Maskell: [\[165325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on potential opportunities to use York Central to showcase active travel excellence; and if he will take steps to support those opportunities.

Jesse Norman:

Active Travel England has been established by the Department to raise standards of active travel delivery, including in new developments. I have asked Active Travel England to meet with stakeholders involved in York Central.

■ Euston Station: High Speed 2 Line

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[163903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 9 March 2023, entitled Transport Update, HCWS625, when HS2 services will run to London Euston.

Huw Merriman:

We remain committed to delivering HS2 services to Euston and will address affordability pressures to ensure the overall spending profile is manageable. We will therefore take the time to ensure we have an affordable and deliverable station design, delivering Euston alongside high-speed infrastructure to Manchester.

■ High Speed 2 Line

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[163901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to make an assessment of the impact of HS2 delays on the local economy of areas with proposed HS2 stations.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[163906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential economic impact of delaying construction of HS2.

Huw Merriman:

The government is committed to delivering HS2 from Euston to Manchester, which will deliver transformational benefits for passengers and communities. The government will continue to provide updated economic assessments of HS2 at key decision points for the programme, as has been done to date. Updated analysis will consider any impacts caused by inflationary and cost pressures. Government will continue to support local places to deliver on their ambitious plans for local growth. Later this year Government will publish a Local Growth Action Plan to set out how we will support local places to realise the many benefits of this transformational scheme.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[163902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with local leaders in (a) Manchester, (b) Birmingham and (c) Crewe on the recently announced delays to HS2.

Huw Merriman:

Following last week's announcement the Secretary of State and I held a number of meetings with key stakeholders engaged in the project. The Mayors of the West Midlands and Greater Manchester and council leaders from Birmingham, Manchester and Cheshire East were invited to engage in these discussions.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[163926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which phases of HS2 will be delayed; how long will those delays will be; and if he will he make a statement.

Huw Merriman:

HS2's opening stage will be delivered to schedule, with the first high-speed services running between Old Oak Common in west London and Birmingham Curzon Street, by 2033.

We remain committed to delivering HS2 services to Euston, and will address affordability pressures to ensure the overall spending profile is manageable. We will therefore take the time to ensure we have an affordable and deliverable station design, delivering Euston alongside high-speed infrastructure to Manchester.

On Phase 2a (West Midlands to Crewe), the Department for Transport expects to re-phase construction by two years with an aim to deliver high-speed services to Crewe and the North West as soon as possible after accounting for the delay in construction. The updated delivery-into-service range will be formally confirmed later this year.

On the Phase 2b Western Leg (Crewe to Manchester), the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill is currently working its way through Parliament and the Government is continuing to look to deliver this section of the railway within the existing 2035-2041 delivery-into-service range.

No delivery-into-service range has yet been set for HS2 East, as the section remains in early development.

A Written Ministerial Statement was laid on 9 March 2023 and I responded to an Urgent Question on HS2 on 14 March 2023.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Procurement

John McNally:

[\[167156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether compensation from the public purse has been paid to any companies that have tendered unsuccessfully for contracts on the HS2 project.

Huw Merriman:

HS2 Ltd have not paid compensation to any company who has unsuccessfully tendered for work on the HS2 programme.

■ **Liverpool Port****Peter Dowd:**[\[163780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 9 March 2023, entitled Transport Update, HCWS625, what alternative sustainable proposals, including rail freight options, he will make an assessment of in relation to Port of Liverpool access.

Huw Merriman:

We will work with the Port and others to appraise future options. Any future assessment of schemes in relation to Port of Liverpool access will be considered with both value for money for the taxpayer and sustainability in mind.

■ **London Bridge Station: Overcrowding****Matthew Pennycook:**[\[163953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential risk of overcrowding at London Bridge Station in the context of additional usage relating to the timetable implemented by Southeastern on 11 December 2022.

Huw Merriman:

London Bridge was specifically rebuilt at a cost over £1 billion between 2012 and 2018 to facilitate easy interchange for passengers. It is a fully accessible station, with lifts to all platforms. Network Rail, who manage London Bridge, and all train operators that use the station, including Southeastern, are constantly assessing demand and passenger flows and have plans in place to ensure that if the station does get crowded, it always remains safe.

■ **P&O Ferries****Sam Tarry:**[\[166386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to implement its Nine Point Plan on P&O Ferries announced on 30 March 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

Since announcing the Nine Point Plan the Government has:

- Brought in the Seafarers' Wages Bill which will ensure that seafarers employed aboard ships regularly operating from UK ports will be paid at least an equivalent to the National Minimum Wage in UK waters
- Worked with industry and unions to develop the Seafarers' Charter, which will encourage and recognise ferry operators taking extra steps to provide good working conditions

- Published a consultation on a statutory code of practice on 'fire-and-rehire' to deter the practice
- Supported amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention to improve access to food and drinking water and appropriately-sized PPE, and led development of guidance to support seafarers who face abandonment
- Commissioned research into seafarer fatigue to give us more robust evidence about the impact of roster patterns
- Commissioned research into internet connectivity for seafarers, as know connectivity and staying in touch with friends and family is so important.

Seafarer welfare is inextricably linked to international maritime law and regulation. As such it must be addressed with international partners and through international fora. The UK will continue to lead the way in seafarer welfare and will not shy away from its role as an international leader in championing this important cause.

■ **P&O Ferries: Conditions of Employment and Redundancy**

Sam Tarry:

[\[166387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department last met with representatives of the RMT Union and Nautalis to discuss the dismissal of the 786 directly employed UK seafarers by P&O Ferries and on the working conditions and pay of seafarers.

Mr Richard Holden:

Officials in the Department meet with union representatives to discuss progress with the seafarer protections nine-point plan and the Seafarers' Wages Bill on a regular basis. Officials last met with the Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) to discuss seafarers' welfare on 3 March 2023 and had a separate meeting to specifically discuss progress on the Bill on the same day. Officials last met Nautilus on 6 March 2023 to discuss progress on the nine-point plan and on 25 January to discuss the Bill.

■ **P&O Ferries: Redundancy**

Sam Tarry:

[\[166388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason his Department did not impose sanctions on P&O Ferries, DP World or flag states for the dismissal of 786 directly employed UK seafarers on 17 March 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

Following the 17 March 2022 dismissals by P&O Ferries the Department for Transport conducted a thorough review of ongoing government contracts with P&O Ferries, and one ongoing contract between the Home Office and P&O Ferries was terminated at our request.

The Government also asked the Insolvency Service to review the company's actions. On 1 April 2022, the Insolvency Service confirmed that following its enquiries it had

commenced investigations into the circumstances surrounding the redundancies, which might ultimately result in criminal or civil sanction.

While a criminal prosecution could not be brought, the civil investigation is ongoing. As such it would not be appropriate for the Government to provide any further comment at this time.

■ **Railway Stations: Bicycles**

Rachael Maskell: [\[165324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure upgrades to railway stations prioritise cycle (a) parking and (b) access.

Huw Merriman:

It is important that rail passengers can easily cycle to stations and that they can park their cycles securely. The Department expects train and station operators to work with the local authorities and communities they serve to consider what facilities may be required locally.

The Department's second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), published in 2022, sets out the government's continued ambition to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey, by 2040.

■ **Railways: Bicycles**

Rachael Maskell: [\[165322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the space available for bicycles on trains; and whether he is taking steps to encourage train companies to provide more space for bicycle storage.

Huw Merriman:

In the National Cycling and Walking Plan, and the Plan for Rail, the Government committed to increase space for cycles on existing trains wherever practically possible and that all future train fleets will include more cycle spaces relevant to the markets served. The Department for Transport and the Great British Railways Transition Team will work with train operating companies to deliver these commitments.

■ **Railways: Bradford**

Philip Davies: [\[163842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many additional direct trains per day between Shipley/Bradford and London Kings Cross will be in place by 2025.

Huw Merriman:

Bradford is currently served by two London North Eastern Railway services per day from London. The aspiration to increase this service to seven trains per day remains.

Investment in the infrastructure at Bradford Forster Square and a resolution to timetabling and operational factors are required before these services can be introduced. The Government has recently confirmed funding for 'Design' stage work on infrastructure upgrades at Bradford Forster Square and Shipley stations.

■ Railways: Fares

Daisy Cooper:

[\[163941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published on 20 May 2021, whether the new fare structure will address the disparity in pricing for annual season tickets available from St Albans City, and stations just two stops closer to London, as a consequence of preferential Oyster fares set by Transport for London being unavailable beyond Elstree and Borehamwood.

Huw Merriman:

We were clear in the Plan for Rail we want to simplify the current mass of complicated fares and tickets, whilst protecting affordable turn up and go tickets and season tickets. We are working closely with industry to deliver this, and have committed to expanding Pay as You Go Ticketing across the South East. We delivered contactless ticketing to St Albans City back in 2019. Oyster zonal fare caps they are managed by Transport in London and the responsibility of the Mayor of London. The Department has no specific plans to review the fares offered in the oyster area.

■ Railways: Infrastructure

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[163905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of inflation on the delivery of rail infrastructure projects.

Huw Merriman:

We are ensuring record funding is invested in the country's transport network, sustainably driving growth across the country while managing the pressures of inflation. We intend to publish the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline shortly which will confirm the latest position on all Network Rail schemes.

■ Railways: North East

Matt Vickers:

[\[166397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure local commuter railway lines in the North East are served by (a) frequent and (b) reliable services.

Huw Merriman:

Rail North Partnership (RNP), through which the Department and Transport for the North jointly manage Northern Train's and TransPennine Express contracts, work

closely with operators and stakeholders to monitor services and seek improvements to meet the needs of passengers and communities in the North East.

■ Railways: Tickets

Julian Sturdy:

[\[163782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to mitigate disruptions resulting from rail ticket office closures.

Huw Merriman:

When proposing any changes to the opening hours, or the closure of ticket offices, the train operating companies must follow the process set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) and take steps to mitigate any potential disruption to passengers.

Passengers should have access to a ticketing system which is user-friendly, where help and advice from a trained representative is available and is accessible to all. We want to move staff out from behind the ticket office window to more visible roles across stations to provide more face-to-face help and assistance to passengers. This would create an opportunity to position staff to provide support where passengers need them the most, on the gateline or platform, whilst still allowing them to help passengers with purchasing tickets when needed. Any potential changes to the opening hours of ticket offices would be led by the train operating company and would need to follow the process set out in the TSA.

■ Shipping: Registration

Gavin Newlands:

[\[165265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many UK flagged ships were registered with the UK Ship Register in each calendar year since 2003.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport publishes UK Ship Register statistics as part of its annual Shipping fleet statistics publication in table FLE0100 and the number of UK flagged vessels of 100 gross tons and over registered in each year from 2003 to 2021 are as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF VESSELS
2003	1,419
2004	1,404
2005	1,438
2006	1,456
2007	1,481
2008	1,550

YEAR	NUMBER OF VESSELS
2009	1,553
2010	1,503
2011	1,469
2012	1,401
2013	1,360
2014	1,327
2015	1,330
2016	1,328
2017	1,317
2018	1,306
2019	1,177
2020	1,134
2021	1,091

The 2022 annual Shipping fleet statistics will be published on 29 March 2023.

The UK Ship Register is provided by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and generally includes all known sea-going ships (and a few non-seagoing vessels) of 100 gross tons and above.

■ Southeastern Trains: Standards

Matthew Pennycook:

[163955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information the Department holds on Southeastern train punctuality at recorded station stops for each quarter since January 2022.

Huw Merriman:

The Department monitors operational performance closely and engages with the rail industry at all levels. Southeastern has a Service Contract that sets quantifiable performance targets and the Department holds data on train punctuality by period at recorded station stops as recorded by Network Rail which includes information for Southeastern.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publishes statistics showing train punctuality at recorded station stops for Southeastern on a periodic basis on the following links at:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/table-3138-train-punctuality-at-recorded-station-stops-by-operator-periodic/> ; and on a quarterly basis at,

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/table-3133-train-punctuality-at-recorded-station-stops-by-operator/>.

■ Southeastern Trains: Timetables

Matthew Pennycook:

[163957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Southeastern have requested a derogation from the requirement to consult in relation to possible timetable changes in May 2023.

Huw Merriman:

Southeastern's contract with the Department requires it to carry out formal consultation when considering material changes to its timetable.

Southeastern is not considering material changes to its timetable in May 2023 and therefore is not required to conduct a formal consultation. Southeastern is considering making some key targeted changes in May 2023, including adding additional services in the peaks, to better match fluctuating demand and in doing so will continue to take passenger and stakeholder feedback onboard.

■ Train Operating Companies: Staff

Mike Amesbury:

[165507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many staff are employed by each train operating company (a) in total and (b) by grade.

Huw Merriman:

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publishes an annual summary of key statistics for each passenger train operating company including data on number of employees which can be found here: [TOC key statistics | ORR Data Portal](#)

■ Train Operating Companies: Vacancies

Mike Amesbury:

[165508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of station staff vacancies there are at each train operating company.

Mike Amesbury:

[165509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of station staff vacancies there will be at each train operating company in January 2024.

Mike Amesbury:

[165511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many station staff employed by Train Operating Companies there were in (a) January 2021 and (b) March 2023.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[165512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of station staff that will be employed by Train Operating Companies in January 2024.

Huw Merriman:

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publishes an annual summary of key statistics for each passenger train operating company including data on number of employees which can be found here: [TOC key statistics | ORR Data Portal](#)

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167171\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he had discussions with relevant stakeholders on the long-term health risks and the effects of prices on alcohol use in advance of the Spring Budget 2023.

James Cartlidge:

The Chancellor regularly engages with stakeholders on a range of issues.

As part of the Alcohol Duty Review, my officials and I have had meetings with relevant stakeholders, including public health representatives, to understand the implications of the new alcohol duty system for their sector.

■ Arts: Government Assistance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[166282\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to provide support for (a) creative industries and (b) digital creative industries.

James Cartlidge:

The government recognises the value of the UK's world leading creative industries.

The eight creative industries tax reliefs support and incentivise the production of culturally British content. At Spring Budget 2023, the government went further to support the creative industries through the tax reliefs.

The government extended the 45% (for non-touring productions) and 50% (for touring productions) rates of the theatre, orchestra and museums and galleries reliefs for two years. The sunset clause of the museums and galleries exhibition tax relief was also extended for two years.

The audio-visual tax reliefs will be reformed to refundable expenditure credits, which will provide a greater benefit than the current reliefs. Film, high end TV productions and video games will be eligible for a credit rate of 34% and animation and children's TV productions will receive a rate of 39%.

At Spending Review 2021 the government announced £50 million over the next three years to support the creative industries, including supporting SMEs to scale up and providing bespoke support for the UK's independent film and video game industries.

■ Bank Levy

Sarah Olney: [\[163965\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has accrued to the Exchequer from the bank levy in each of the last 12 financial quarters.

Sarah Olney: [\[163966\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has accrued to the Exchequer from the bank surcharge in each of the last 12 financial quarters.

Andrew Griffith:

The monthly revenue that has accrued to the Exchequer from the Bank Levy and the Bank Surcharge is set out in Appendix D to the Office of National Statistics [Public Sector Current Receipts dataset](#).

■ Banks: Surcharges

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[167040\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the revenue expected to accrue to the Exchequer from the bank surcharge in each of the next four financial quarters.

Andrew Griffith:

The latest estimate of the revenue expected to accrue to the Exchequer from the Bank Surcharge for the next 4 quarters (financial year 2023-24) is provided in Table A.5 in [Appendix A of the OBR's Economic and Fiscal Outlook](#), which was published on 15 March 2023.

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Matt Vickers: [\[166394\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to reduce beer duty in the context of the cost of living crisis.

James Cartlidge:

On 19 December 2022, the Government extended the alcohol duty freeze by six months to align with the implementation of the alcohol duty reforms and reduce the impact of the duty changes on businesses.

Alcohol duty reform will commence on 1 August and for the first time our system of alcohol taxation will include a new Draught Relief, enabling differential duty between the On and Off trade. We had previously stated that Draught Relief would be 5% from August 1st but at Spring Budget 2023, the Chancellor announced that this relief would be raised to 9.2% meaning that the duty on the average pint of draught beer will continue to be frozen from 1 August 2023. Differential duty was not possible when

we were members of the EU and in the Budget the Chancellor also announced his Brexit Pub Guarantee – confirming that from August 1st draught duty will always be lower compared to the non-draught equivalent, supporting pubs and the wider hospitality sector.

■ Business Rates

Peter Aldous:

[167093]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility of November 2022, what recent discussions he has had with that Office on the factors behind the projected increase in revenue from business rates.

Victoria Atkins:

OBR forecasts are produced independently of ministers, objectively, transparently and impartially, as set out clearly by law. The spring forecast is available at:

<https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

For the spring forecast, the OBR have been engaged with the Treasury in the normal way and there have been regular discussions of the economic and fiscal outlook.

As set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between HM Treasury and the OBR, the forecast process involves the OBR producing multiple draft iterations of the forecasts which it shares with the Chancellor.

With regard to business rates, the 5-year forecast takes account of the Government's £13.6 billion package of support announced at Autumn Statement 2022, and annual CPI indexation of the multiplier.

Future decisions regarding business rates will be taken in line with the normal Budget process.

■ Car Allowances

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[165229]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the Approved Mileage Allowance Payments rates in the context of increases in the cost of living and fuel prices.

James Cartlidge:

The Government recognises that transport is a major cost for individuals. At Spring Statement 2022 the Government announced a temporary 12-month cut to duty on petrol and diesel of 5p per litre. In order to continue supporting all motorists, it will extend the 5p fuel duty cut, which is worth £100 to the average driver over the next year.

The Government has to balance support for individuals with the responsible management of public finances, which fund our essential public services. The AMAP rate is intended to create administrative simplicity and certainty by using an average rate. It will therefore necessarily be more appropriate for some drivers than others. It's ultimately up to employers to choose what they reimburse.

As with all taxes, the AMAP rate is kept under review and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

■ Duty Free Allowances

David Mundell:

[\[165295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the withdrawal of tax-free shopping for passengers travelling to non-EU destinations on spending by non-EU international visitors since 1 January 2021; and what data his Department holds on spending by non-EU international visitors (a) in each of the five years before and (b) since 1 January 2021 in (i) France and (ii) Italy.

Victoria Atkins:

The Chancellor announced on 17 October 2022 that the Government will not be proceeding with plans to introduce a new VAT-free shopping scheme.

Introducing VAT-free shopping would come at a significant fiscal cost as it would subsidise a large amount of tourist spending which already occurs without a tax relief in place.

The independent Office of Budget Responsibility published their assessment of the withdrawal of the previous VAT-free shopping schemes in November 2020. This showed that the withdrawal of VAT-free shopping would raise a significant amount of revenue and have a limited behavioural effect on decisions to visit, or spend, in the UK.

David Mundell:

[\[165296\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has conducted research on the potential economic impact of duty-free shopping in other countries for arriving passengers; and if he will make an assessment of the potential economic impact of introducing duty-free shopping for passengers arriving in the UK.

James Cartlidge:

Duty-free on arrival would place additional pressure on the public finances to which excise duty makes a significant contribution.

Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

Although there are no plans to introduce such a scheme, the Government keeps all taxes under review and considers all available evidence as part of the tax policymaking process.

■ Electricity Generation: Taxation

Jim Shannon:

[\[166222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an investment allowance to the Electricity Generator Levy comparable with that under The Energy (Oil and Gas) Profits Levy.

James Cartlidge:

The Electricity Generator Levy (EGL) and the Electricity Profits Levy (EPL) are designed very differently. Unlike the EPL, the EGL is not a tax on a comprehensive measure of profit that is calculated after recognition of total revenues and costs. Instead, it is payable on the portion of revenues that exceed the long-run average for electricity prices. Rather than providing an investment allowance the government has taken into account the potential impact on investment in the design of the levy with the benchmark price, £75/MWh, being set at 1.5 times the pre-crisis level and indexed to CPI.

Energy: Prices**Alison Thewliss:**[\[904230\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of changes in the Government's energy support schemes on the economy.

James Cartlidge:

At Spring Budget 2023, the OBR forecast that taken together, the freezing of fuel duty, changes to alcohol duty and the extension of the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) for three months lower CPI inflation by 0.7 percentage points in 2023-24.

The OBR forecast that overall the EPG, including the prior announcement at Autumn Statement, will take 2 percentage points off CPI inflation in the year 2023. The subsequent increases to fuel and alcohol duties and the EPG measure then add 0.4 percentage points to CPI inflation in 2024-25.

Fiscal Policy: Carbon Emissions**James Murray:**[\[167243\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the impact of his fiscal policies on the Government's net zero target; and if he will commission the Office of Budget Responsibility to create an updated Fiscal Risks Report on potential economic and fiscal policies to help reach net zero.

James Cartlidge:

The 2021 Net Zero Strategy sets out the action the Government will take to keep the UK on track for its carbon budgets and 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution, and establishes the longer-term pathway towards net zero by 2050. Spending Review 2021 confirmed that since March 2021 the Government has committed a total of £30 billion of domestic investment for the green industrial revolution. Since then, the Government has made new announcements that provide long-term certainty on our investment plans, including £6 billion for energy efficiency and up to £20 billion for Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage.

We are committed to ensuring fiscal decision-making is aligned with achieving net zero. The Green Book sets out that all policies, programmes, and projects must be

developed and assessed against how well they deliver on net zero and other policy priorities.

■ Fraud

Matt Vickers:

[166391]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to tackle financial scams.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime. Tackling fraud requires a unified and co-ordinated response from government, law enforcement and the private sector to better protect the public and businesses from fraud, reduce the impact of fraud on victims, and increase the disruption and prosecution of fraudsters.

The Government is taking action through legislation through the Financial Services and Markets Bill which will enable and require the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) to mandate reimbursement for victims of Authorised Push Payment (APP) scams, where a victim is tricked into sending money to a fraudster. This measure will enable consumers across the country to receive more consistent and comprehensive protection against these increasingly sophisticated scams, ensuring victims are not left paying for fraud through no fault of their own.

The Government is also taking action to address fraudulent activity being hosted online through the Online Safety Bill. The Bill includes a new standalone duty requiring large internet firms to tackle fraudulent advertising, including of financial services.

In addition to this, the total Spending Review 2021 settlement and the Economic Crime Levy represent an overall package of circa £400 million to tackle economic crime over the next three years, including fraud.

The Government is working closely with industry to tackle fraud. In 2021, the Joint Fraud Taskforce (JFT) published three voluntary sector charters. The charters aim to combat fraud in the accountancy, retail banking and telecommunications sectors and include commitments to develop innovative measures to reduce fraud facilitated through these industries, e.g., money muling and SMS enabled fraud.

Finally, the Government intends to publish a new strategy to address the threat of fraud shortly. Through this strategy, the Government will work with industry to remove the vulnerabilities that fraudsters exploit, with intelligence agencies to shut down fraudulent infrastructure, with law enforcement to identify and bring the most harmful offenders to justice, and with all partners to ensure that the public have the advice and support they need.

■ Hospitals: Construction

James Wild:

[\[904228\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the capital budget for the NHS new hospitals programme.

John Glen:

I discuss a range of priorities on health with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, including delivery of the new hospital programme.

The Hon Member will know that the programme was funded at Spending Review 2020 with £3.7bn for 4 years up to 2024/25 with further funding to be announced at the next Spending Review.

I know the Hon Gentleman has particular concerns around the issue of RAAC concrete which is affecting hospitals in his constituency and that the Health Secretary has made ensuring safety for patients and staff at affected sites a top priority.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Daisy Cooper:

[\[163936\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2021 to Question 68467 on Housing Prices: if he will make it his policy to increase the Lifetime ISA property cap threshold to rise in line with the rate of house price inflation.

Andrew Griffith:

Data from the latest UK House Price Index demonstrates that the average price paid by first-time buyers is below the Lifetime ISA property price cap in all regions of the UK except for Inner London, where the average price paid is affected by Boroughs with very high property values. The Office for Budget Responsibility is also forecasting for house prices to fall by 9% by 2024.

The Government continues to keep all aspects of savings tax policy under review and considers all representations received carefully.

■ Insurance: Cancer

Julie Elliott:

[\[165320\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to improve access to (a) life and (b) travel insurance for people who have survived cancer.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government continues to work closely with insurers and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the independent regulator responsible for the conduct of the sector, to ensure people are supported to access the cover they need.

Under rules set by the FCA, insurers must treat customers fairly.

In 2020, the FCA found that some consumers with pre-existing medical conditions, including those affected by cancer, faced challenges navigating the travel insurance

market. To address this, since 2021, the FCA requires firms offering retail travel insurance to signpost consumers to a directory of specialist providers if they are declined cover, offered cover with an exclusion, or charged a significantly higher premium due to a pre-existing medical condition.

■ **Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[167108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 3.100 of the Spring Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, how the £10 million funding will be spent within the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to increase agency capabilities; and what budget that funding will come from.

John Glen:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) will spend the £10m new funding committed at Spring Budget to ensure it has the resources, talent, and infrastructure it needs to deliver the ambitious vision set out by the Chancellor.

■ **Pensions: Tax Allowances**

James Murray:

[\[167246\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the House of Commons Library a breakdown of the estimated costs of increasing the Pension Annual Allowance from £40,000 to £60,000 and the charge removal and abolishing of the Pension Lifetime Allowance, as announced in the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183, published on 15 March 2023, in each year of the forecast period broken down by individual tax and by different tax heads including (a) Income Tax, (b) National Insurance, (c) Inheritance Tax and (d) Capital Gains Tax.

Andrew Griffith:

Information on the estimated cost breakdown of increasing the Pension Annual Allowance and the abolition of the Lifetime Allowance will be published in the supplementary fiscal tables of the [Economic and fiscal outlook](#) by the Office for Budget Responsibility at a later date.

■ **Pensions: Workplace Pensions**

James Murray:

[\[167244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March, if he will publish an estimate of how many (a) people and (b) NHS Doctors will benefit from the (i) increase in the Pension Annual Allowance from £40,000 to £60,000 and (ii) charge removal and abolition of the Pension Lifetime Allowance in each year of the forecast period.

James Murray:

[\[167245\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) the increase in the pension annual allowance, (b) the charge removal and

(c) abolishing of the pension lifetime allowance on the level of employment of NHS doctors; and if he will place a copy of this assessment in the House of Commons Library.

Andrew Griffith:

Information on the abolition of the lifetime allowance can be found in the Pension Tax Limits Policy paper [Pension Tax Limits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/pension-tax-limits)

■ Research and Development Tax Credit

Chi Onwurah:

[167109]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.52 of the Spring Budget 2023, published on 15 March 2023, HC 1183, whether his Department plans to provide at least 12 months' notice before any research and development tax credit scheme merger.

Victoria Atkins:

As stated in the consultation on merging the research and development R&D tax schemes published on 13 January 2023, it is currently the Government's intention that, if implemented, the new scheme will be in place for expenditure incurred from 1 April 2024. In order to keep open the option of a merged scheme, the government will publish a summary of responses to the consultation and draft legislation in the Summer.

Any further changes as a part of the ongoing R&D tax reliefs review will be announced at a future fiscal event, including a final decision on whether to merge the R&D expenditure credit and SME schemes.

Chi Onwurah:

[167110]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference of paragraph 4.51 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, what estimate his Department has made of how many small and medium-sized enterprises in each region are eligible for additional tax relief for Research and Development intensive small and medium-sized enterprises ..

Victoria Atkins:

The government expects that around 20,000 SMEs per year across the UK will benefit from the additional tax relief for loss-making R&D intensive SMEs that was announced at Spring Budget.

HMRC publish annual statistics on the regional distribution of R&D tax credit claims by the company's registered address (the registered address may not be where actual R&D activity is carried out) here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/corporate-tax-research-and-development-tax-credit>

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Paula Barker: [167261]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much income was accrued by HMRC through telephone call charges applied to incoming calls in financial year (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 to date.

Paula Barker: [167262]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department's rationale is for applying call charges to incoming public telephone calls to His Majesty's Revenue & Customs.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC does not charge customers for calls to 0845 or 03000 numbers. There is further information about 0300 numbers on the Ofcom website:

<http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/phone/numbering/what-are-03-numbers/>

For more information on call charges, please refer to GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/call-charges>

■ Silicon Valley Bank UK

Chi Onwurah: [165300]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any (a) team in his Department, (b) Executive agency and (c) other public body had responsibility for assessing the (i) sustainability and (ii) viability of Silicon Valley Bank UK's (A) capital structure and (B) exposure to risk when it was granted a banking licence; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Griffith:

Authorisation decisions are for the independent regulators to comment on. The operationally independent Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) is responsible for the supervision of financial institutions operating in the UK.

Chi Onwurah: [165301]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data his Department holds on the number of companies which banked with Silicon Valley Bank UK; and whether there were requirements on Silicon Valley Bank UK to diversify its deposit holders.

Andrew Griffith:

The Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) is responsible for the supervision of financial institutions operating in the UK.

UK prudential standards, including those on concentration risk are derived from the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) – the international standard setter. On a firm-by-firm basis, the UK regulatory framework allows the PRA to require firms to hold additional capital where their exposures are concentrated on specific activities and are not well diversified.

■ Sizewell C Power Station: Finance

Jim Shannon:

[\[166224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using green bonds to finance the Government's stake in the Sizewell C project.

Andrew Griffith:

The UK Government Green Financing Framework, which sets out the parameters for the UK's green gilts and retail Green Savings Bonds, currently excludes funding of nuclear energy projects. Any potential future changes to the Framework in the future to include nuclear energy would be transparently published by the Government.

■ Spirits: Excise Duties

Alan Brown:

[\[167167\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the additional tax revenue that will be generated in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28 from the August 2023 increase in duty on spirits.

James Cartlidge:

As announced at Spring Budget 2023, in line with the Government's plan to manage the UK economy responsibly, the Government is uprating the previously published reform rates and structures by RPI from 1 August 2023.

However, recognising the vital role pubs play in our communities, the Government will ensure the duty on an average draught pint of beer served in a pub does not increase.

Exchequer impacts of this measure are set out in Table 4.1 of Spring Budget 2023 and have been certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility. More details can be found in the policy costings document published alongside Spring Budget 2023.

■ Swimming Pools: Finance

Jeff Smith:

[\[167162\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether local authorities will be able to apply to the Swimming Pool Support Fund to reopen (a) permanently and (b) temporarily closed swimming pools.

Jeff Smith:

[\[167163\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Swimming Pool Support Fund, what estimate he has made of the number of swimming pools he expects that fund to support.

Jeff Smith:

[\[167164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Swimming Pool Support Fund, when those funds will be made available to local authorities.

Jeff Smith: [\[167165\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether distribution of allocations from the Swimming Pool Support Fund will be at the discretion of local authorities.

Jeff Smith: [\[167166\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Swimming Pool Support Fund, when he plans to publish further guidance and eligibility criteria for that fund.

James Cartlidge:

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring continued public access to public swimming pools. Swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy as well as being a crucial life skill in terms of water safety. Furthermore, swimming facilities are important centres for the local community. That is why the Chancellor has announced, as part of the Spring Budget, over £60 million to safeguard public swimming pools in England as the first step to future proof the sector.

The Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) will focus on public swimming pool providers whose cost pressures are most acute, leaving them most vulnerable to closure. This could include public swimming facilities who have reduced their hours in order to keep services going. Full details of eligibility requirements for the scheme and the application process will be published by Sport England shortly.

Both immediate support for cost-pressure and investment in energy efficiency measures will be targeted to support facilities which are most in need. Funding will be distributed following a competitive application process and made available in the 2023/24 financial year, with grants being made directly to successful local authorities.

■ Tax Avoidance

Deidre Brock: [\[904225\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help reduce tax avoidance.

Richard Thomson: [\[904231\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help reduce tax avoidance.

Victoria Atkins:

Since 2010, the Government has introduced over 200 measures to tackle tax avoidance, evasion, and non-compliance, and in 2021-22 HMRC secured and protected £30.8 billion for public services that would otherwise have gone unpaid.

Last week the Government went further, closing an avoidance loophole within capital gains tax and setting out plans to double the maximum prison sentences for the most egregious tax fraudsters. The Government will also shortly consult on a new criminal offence for promoters of tax avoidance.

■ Tobacco: Excise Duties

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[163858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether his department plans to review tobacco excise structures.

James Cartlidge:

Tax matters are kept under constant review, with any announcements made at fiscal events. All required legislation relating to excise duties will be made via the Finance Bill (or subordinate tax legislation) which is usual and appropriate for tax provisions.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167170\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the changes made to tobacco duty rates from 15 March 2023 and the recommendations in the Khan Report.

James Cartlidge:

The Chancellor regularly engages with his Cabinet colleagues and stakeholders on a range of issues.

Tobacco Duty rates are considered as part of the annual Budget process.

Stakeholders can make representations, which form part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's considerations.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equality Act 2010

Alison McGovern:

[\[165351\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2023 to Question 903996 on Equality Act 2010, if he will outline the policies and practical actions that the Government plans to implement.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is ensuring that all young people get every opportunity to go as far as their talents will take them. Social mobility initiatives include:

- Increasing the number of good school places, 87% of schools are now rated good or outstanding, up from 68% in 2010 and;
- Ensuring people of all ages get the education and skills they need by investing in careers education, transforming technical education, and making apprenticeships and the higher education system more accessible.

On 1 April 2023, the Government will increase the National Living Wage (NLW) for workers aged 23 years and over by 9.7% to £10.42. This keeps the Government on track to achieve its manifesto commitment for the NLW to equal two-thirds of median earnings by 2024 (if economic conditions allow).

■ Women and Equalities: Written Questions**Anneliese Dodds:****[164053]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she will respond to Question 161400 tabled on 8 March 2023 by the hon. Member for Oxford East.

Stuart Andrew:

A [response](#) was issued on Thursday 16 March.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Cost of Living Payments****Seema Malhotra:****[166240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the estimated cost is to his Department of upgrading its systems to ensure that individuals with a nil payment in a qualifying month receive any cost of living payments.

Mims Davies:

Keeping the rules for this policy simple enabled the government to make over 30 million separate payments to support with the cost of living while maintaining core benefit delivery in 2022. This includes the clear rule that you must be entitled to at least 1p of a qualifying social security benefit with respect to the qualifying period to receive a Cost of Living Payment.

Including those on the benefits system, but not in payment of a qualifying benefit, would involve making payments to individuals who were ineligible during the qualifying period. The government's published impact analysis released alongside the Social Security (Additional Payments) (No.2) Bill shows that 85% of those who received no Universal Credit award during the qualifying period for the first 2022 Cost of Living Payment of £326, had no award solely due to earnings. Of those with a no award due to earnings, most had no Universal Credit award for six assessment periods following the qualifying period solely due to earnings or left Universal Credit altogether. Paying those with financial resources available, which would make them ineligible for means-tested benefits, is not the intention of the Cost of Living Payments which are aimed at those on the lowest incomes.

You can find the impact analysis here: [SocSec\(AdditionalPayments\)IA.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

Including those who received no payment of benefit would also involve making Cost of Living Payments to customers who had the payment of their benefit suspended during the qualifying period including those with suspected fraud or where there is a safeguarding risk related to a vulnerable claimant's appointee.

The department has therefore made no such assessment of costs of upgrading its system to include individuals with a nil payment during a qualifying period.

The 2023/24 Cost of Living Payments are being delivered in three payments over the financial year to reduce the chance of someone missing out completely. To help households with the costs of essentials, including those who may not be eligible for the other support we are extending the Household Support Fund in England. The Devolved Administrations will receive Barnett funding to spend at their discretion with their local knowledge.

■ Disability Unit

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[166342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total cost to the Disability Unit budget in 2021-22 was relating to the judicial review of R (Binder & Others) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Tom Pursglove:

The cost to the DU budget for the legal costs relating to the Judicial Review is £103,099.50.

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[167120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish further details on the Universal Support programme announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Spring Budget 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

As a result of the Government's review of workforce participation, the department is introducing a package of measures to address economic inactivity and the barriers preventing people from joining the workforce.

Universal Support is a supported employment programme which will support inactive disabled people, people with health conditions and people with additional barriers to employment, into sustained work.

Eligible people will be able to opt in to receive up to 12 months of "place and train" support - helping them initially to move quickly into suitable work, followed with wraparound support to help them to sustain that employment for the longer-term.

Universal Support will include help for the individual to address issues like debt, manage their health condition and help employers to put in place job shaping or other adjustments to accommodate the individual's needs.

Pioneer areas are mobilising an expansion of supported employment services in 2023. Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care (IPSPC) will provide supported employment in 30 local authorities. Starting from 2024, national Universal Support will begin, supporting at least 50,000 people a year from 2025/26.

In developing Universal Support, the department will engage with a wide range of key stakeholders, including the representatives of local areas, employers, providers and experts in the delivery of 'place and train' support.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Financial Statement and Budget Report of 15 March by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Official Report, column 843, how he plans to assess the degree of illness or disability of people who will be supported back into work.

Tom Pursglove:

We published *Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper on 15th March 2023*. This responds to feedback from *The Health and Disability Green Paper* consultation.

In the White Paper, we announced that we will legislate to remove the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), so that in future there will only be one health and disability assessment, the PIP assessment. This will remove the need to be found to have limited capability for work, and limited capability to prepare for work, to receive additional income-related support for a disability or health condition, giving people confidence that they will receive support, for as long as it is needed, regardless of whether they are working.

We will also introduce a new personalised system of health conditionality and support which will be tailored to the individual and will involve work coaches having personalised conversations with claimants focused on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot do.

We recognise that, for many disabled people and people with health conditions, work or work-related activity is not possible or appropriate; and where this is the case, they will not be expected to participate in these activities to receive their benefit entitlement.

We will work with our work coaches to develop these proposals and ensure they have the right training and support needed to fulfil this change in their role. We will also continue to work with disabled people, people with health conditions and their representatives as we develop this approach.

■ Jobcentres: Training

Sir John Hayes:

[\[165204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what training courses of what length his Department provides to Jobcentre staff on advising jobseekers with mental health conditions and mental health disabilities including (a) dementia, (b) depression, (c) bipolar disorder, (d) obsessive compulsive disorder and (e) Schizophrenia.

Tom Pursglove:

We have taken steps to increase staff awareness of the mental health difficulties that may be experienced by our customers, so they can direct them to further support at any stage of the claimant journey. For example, we introduced mental health training for UC Work Coaches in late 2017. This learning was paused as a COVID easement and retrofit delivery is now being rolled out.

In 2021 we reviewed the learning alongside external experts and psychologists to enhance the offer. The learning is mandatory and aims to help our colleagues better support claimants who may present with mental health issues/unexpected behaviour by exploring their impact on customers, the steps needed to build relationships and learning how to respond appropriately to customers' needs. This learning includes the opportunity for colleagues to practise the skills they have learned during the training, the length of which is over a two- and a half-day period.

Whilst our learning products do not go into specific mental health conditions, we do provide the tools to support staff to engage with claimants with underlying conditions and signpost to more specialist services.

The department is constantly learning, and work is ongoing to strengthen guidance and training as part of continuous improvement activities, ensuring colleagues have the necessary tools and confidence to support these customers.

■ Pensioners: Gloucester

Richard Graham:

[165269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners in Gloucester constituency who received the winter fuel allowance also received the (a) £400 energy bill discount, (b) £150 council tax rebate, (c) £150 warm home discount, (d) £900 energy price guarantee and (e) the £150 disability Cost of Living payment; what assessment he has made of the impact of those allowances on pensioners in Gloucester constituency; and what assessment he has made of trends in the number of pensioners in that constituency in 2023-24.

Laura Trott:

The information requested for part a) to d) is not held by this department. Therefore, the department cannot make an assessment of how many pensioners received the combination of support listed in the question or the impact of receiving such allowances.

The number of Winter Fuel Payments received in Gloucester constituency in winter 2021 to 2022 was 18,468. Statistics for the Winter of 2022 to 2023 will be published in September 2023. A full breakdown of Winter Fuel Payment statistics can be found here: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2020 to 2021 and winter 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2020-to-2021-and-winter-2021-to-2022).

The Department for Work and Pensions has published management information on the total number of Pensioner Cost of Living Payments made. The information can be found here: [Pensioner Cost of Living Payment management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pensioner-cost-of-living-payment-management-information)

The department has also published management information on the number of means-tested benefits and disability Cost of Living payments made. The information can be found here [Cost of Living Payment management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cost-of-living-payment-management-information)

In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, the number of Cost of Living Payments made in specific constituencies is the subject of an upcoming statistical release, and cannot be released before that publication is ready, subject to usual quality assurance.

As reported in the DWP benefits statistics, there were 18,817 people in receipt of State Pension in Gloucester constituency in the quarter ending August 2022, a very slight increase from 18,597 in the quarter ending August 2021. This information can be found here [DWP benefits statistics: February 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023). The ONS has released constituency level data on the age of the UK population using an interactive dashboard which can be found here [Constituency data: population, by age \(parliament.uk\)](https://parliament.uk/constituency-data/population-by-age)

■ Pensions: Telephone Services

Ben Lake: [\[165459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of staffing assigned to the Future Pension Service public call lines.

Laura Trott:

In light of recent unrepresented high demand., additional resource has been assigned to the Future Pension Service. The level of staffing is kept under constant review.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[165476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many AR1 forms were returned late in 2022.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[165477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many AR1 forms were returned late in 2021.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[165478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many AR1 forms were returned late in 2020.

Tom Pursglove:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

AR1s are not identified as 'late' in the PIP statistical datasets and there are numerous reasons for return periods to be extended past the original time limit. Obtaining the necessary data would either require a bespoke system data extract, or a manual examination of each individual PIP claim, both of which could only be undertaken at disproportionate cost.

■ Postal Services: Wolverhampton

Seema Malhotra: [\[163823\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) parcels and (b) letters were processed by Mail Handling Site A Wolverhampton in each year since 2020.

Mims Davies:

Total number of envelopes (scanned and hard copy) processed at the Mail Opening Unit is as follows:

- Jan - Dec 2020 – 10,412,771
- Jan – Dec 2021 – 9,986,764
- Jan- Dec 2022 – 9,158,530
- Jan 2023 – 912,636

In addition, internal courier delivery, documents amounting to:

- Jan- Dec 2020 – 1,856,577 Jan – Dec 2021 – 1,612,310
- Jan- Dec 2022 – 1,103,679
- Jan 2023 – 105,245

January 2023 is the most recent month for which we have figures.

Seema Malhotra: [\[163824\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) parcels and (b) letters are currently stored at Mail Handling Site A Wolverhampton and are unable to be processed.

Mims Davies:

All mail is actioned by the Mail Opening Unit on delivery from Royal Mail on date of receipt. It is processed within 24 hours which includes opening, scanning and routing to the relevant teams in DWP. There are no backlogs of work requiring opening or scanning that would require storage. Once scanned DWP manages a head of work of cases which are not automatically routed and require manual intervention. These are managed digitally.

■ Social Security Benefits

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[167117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the (a) demographic and (b) socio-economic characteristics of people receiving (i) Employment and Support Allowance and (ii) the health-related elements of Universal Credit who do not receive Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[167118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish a regional breakdown of the number of people receiving (a) Employment and Support Allowance

and (b) the health-related elements of Universal Credit who do not receive Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance for the most recent period for which information is available.

Tom Pursglove:

The department aims to publish a range of information on claimants of Employment and Support Allowance and the health element of Universal Credit in due course, and will pre-announce any publication in line with normal statistical practices.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disqualification**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[166241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for those in the 'all work-related requirements' conditionality group, how many claimants currently have a 91 or 182 day sanction attached to their account.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Support for Mortgage Interest**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[163851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is his policy to increase the level of payments through the Support for Mortgage Interest scheme in line with increases in the Bank of England base rate.

Mims Davies:

It is not SMI policy to increase the level of SMI payments in line with increases in the Bank of England's base rate.

The standard interest rate we pay is set at a level based on the Bank of England's published monthly average mortgage interest rate. We have selected this rate because it is the average interest rate that applies to outstanding mortgages, including fixed and variable mortgages. The Bank of England data is the most reliable as it is based on information that covers over 75 per cent of all banks and building societies' mortgage business. It is also updated on a regular (monthly) basis

The standard interest rate is currently set at 2.09% and will only change when the Bank of England's average mortgage rate differs by 0.5 percentage points or more from the rate in payment.

■ **Unemployment: Coventry North East**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[161313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made a recent estimate of the (a) unemployment and (b) youth unemployment rates in Coventry North East constituency; if he will make an assessment of the factors that contribute to those

rates being higher than the UK average; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce unemployment in Coventry North East constituency.

Guy Opperman:

Coventry and surrounding Jobcentres are playing an essential role in promoting an active labour market and finding jobs. Coventry Jobcentre is also hosting monthly larger jobs fairs with around 15-20 organisations in attendance. Employers have been sourced from a variety of sectors.

DWP colleagues work closely with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to deliver a collaborative approach in the region.

Estimates of (a) unemployment and (b) youth unemployment in the year to September 2022 based on the Annual Population Survey are published and available [here](#).

No specific assessment has been made of the factors underlying unemployment in Coventry North East.

■ **Universal Credit**

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[163695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether any decisions on people's Universal Credit entitlement are fully automated; and if he will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

As a modern digital service, Universal Credit uses a high degree of automation to make claims and changes to claims, making it easier for claimants and more efficient for the department. The Department continues to review the way in which decisions are made within the Universal Credit service as processes are further automated.

■ **Universal Credit: Childcare**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[163899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the impact of childcare costs on people in receipt of Universal Credit.

Mims Davies:

We understand that providing financial support with childcare costs to help parents back into work is crucial. That is why we will be significantly increasing the Universal Credit childcare element caps from £646.35 to £950.92 for one child and from £1,108.04 to £1,630.15 for two or more children.

We also acknowledge that, for some parents, a key barrier when moving into work, or moving from part-time to full-time work, can be finding the money to pay their childcare costs in advance. To help eliminate this barrier, UC claimants who are eligible to receive a Flexible Support Fund payment for relevant childcare will be able to claim up to 85% of this payment, as if they had paid it themselves. This will ease the household into the childcare costs payment cycle, enabling parents to pay their next set of childcare costs much more easily.

Further information on the costs associated with the policy to pay Universal Credit childcare support upfront for parents moving into work was published in the Spring Budget 2023: Policy Costings document, Chapter 2, page 8. It can be found [here](#).

Jonathan Ashworth:

[167119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 75 of HM Treasury's Spring Budget 2023 document HC 1183, whether he will publish further details of the costs associated with the policy to pay Universal Credit childcare support upfront for parents moving into work.

Mims Davies:

Further information on the costs associated with the policy to pay Universal Credit childcare support upfront for parents moving into work was published in the Spring Budget 2023: Policy Costings document, Chapter 2, page 8. It can be found [here](#).

■ **Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[167116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an equalities impact assessment of the proposal to end Work Capability Assessments and remove the Limited Capability for Work Related Activity element from Universal Credit.

Tom Pursglove:

The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and has considered equality impacts in its work on removing the Work Capability Assessment. This will be kept under regular review as the policy develops.

■ **Workplace Pensions: Advisory Services**

Daisy Cooper:

[163940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to amend FCA guidance to waive the requirement that someone has to seek independent financial advice and obtain a certificate to allow a transfer out of a defined benefit pension, if they can provide evidence that they are themselves a qualified financial adviser.

Laura Trott:

The appropriate independent advice requirement, contained within The Pension Schemes Act 2015 (Transitional Provisions and Appropriate Independent Advice) Regulations 2015, was introduced to ensure members with safeguarded benefits understood the level of security in retirement provided by such benefits and what the member would lose if they were to exchange them for benefits that can be accessed flexibly.

An amendment to the regulations, in 2017, requires the Secretary of State, from time to time, to carry out a review of the requirement and publish a report on the conclusions of the review.

My department is conducting such a review, and has engaged with the pensions industry, industry bodies, the regulators and consumer groups to inform this review and will publish the conclusions when it is complete.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[\[162465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 122054 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many applications for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme were (a) received and (b) processed in (i) January 2023 and (ii) February 2023.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

James Heappey:

In January ~~2022~~**2023**, 1,327 applications were received, of which approximately 721 were duplicates, while an approximate 7,503 applications were processed.

In February ~~2022~~**2023**, 2,106 applications were received, of which approximately 935 were duplicates, while an approximate 8,444 applications were processed.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Fenwick Hospital

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[146747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to hold back the proposed sale by the NHS of the site and buildings of the Fenwick Hospital, Lyndhurst until (a) documentation is produced specifying (i) who owns the title and (ii) what the terms were under which the original gift of ownership to the Lyndhurst community came under control of the NHS in 1948 and (b) sufficient time has been given to the League of Friends of the Fenwick Hospital further to develop plans for its future and assemble financial support to implement them.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 February 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Will Quince:

The future use of Fenwick Community Hospital is subject to the plans set out by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board ~~who are the legal owners of the land and buildings. It~~ **and NHS England and** is not a matter for the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board and NHS England have offered a meeting to League of Friends and Julian Lewis MP, in order that all information relating to the legal title of the Fenwick Hospital, Lyndhurst can be shared and

discussed. Following this meeting, date to be confirmed, a decision relating to the auction sale of the site and its timing can be made.

■ **Health and Care Professions Council: Registration**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[153854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he intends to advise the Privy Council to reject the Health and Care Professions Council decision to increase their registrants' fees by 20 per cent.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 2 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Will Quince:

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is independent of Government and is funded by its registrants' fees on a cost recovery basis. The HCPC has concluded its consultation on the proposed fee rise and its Council has agreed to seek parliamentary approval for increasing annual registration fees by £19.62 from 1 July 2023. The proposal is subject to the ~~affirmative~~**negative** parliamentary process in both the Westminster and the Scottish Parliaments.

■ **NHS England: Thompson**

Ed Davey:

[\[152180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the article in the Health Service Journal entitled Branding agency hired to help cultivate new personality for NHSE, published on 7 February 2023, what the value of NHS England's contract with Thompson for work referenced in that article is; and if he will publish the interim update for senior leaders.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 6 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Will Quince:

~~We are unable to provide the information requested on NHS England's contract with Thompson as it is commercially sensitive.~~

As part of the implementation of the legal merger of NHS England with Health Education England and NHS Digital approved by Parliament through the Health and Care Act 2022, Thompson were contracted to provide independent support and advice to minimise the risk of disruption to communications with the wider health and care system, operational and strategic partners and stakeholders, and staff patients and the public from the new combined organisation. The value of the contract was £80,000.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Publication of the Fraud Landscape Report

Minister for the Cabinet Office and HM Paymaster General (Jeremy Quin):

[\[HCWS657\]](#)

Today the Government is publishing the 2020-21 Fraud Landscape Report. This follows the establishment of the new Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) in August last year to raise the government's ambition across the public sector in understanding risks and reducing fraud.

The report continues to push the government's transparency agenda by publishing data on the level of detected and estimated fraud and error in the public sector. This report estimates fraud and error losses for central government (excluding those relating to tax and welfare, which are published separately by HMRC and DWP).

In 2020-2021, fraud detection figures grew by 7% on the previous year with departments and public bodies detecting £243 million of fraud, in line with government's objective to continue to focus on the identification and reduction in fraud. These figures include fraud related to schemes in support of the pandemic.

The report shows how the government adjusted the Counter Fraud Function to focus on fraud around the COVID-19 schemes. This was achieved by establishing a COVID-19 intelligence hotline, utilising data analytics and assessing the levels of fraud in all COVID-19 schemes, so that the Centre of Expertise were able to coordinate a unified approach to countering fraud.

The government has continued to develop its capability to take action on fraud. There are now 7,011 individuals, from 35 organisations, who are members of the world's first Counter Fraud Profession meeting our target.

In 2020/21, an additional 99 counter fraud colleagues from across government were trained in the new discipline of fraud risk assessment. This has helped us to better understand fraud at the commencement of government initiatives, a particularly helpful skill in the wake of the pandemic.

This government attaches importance to transparency and the improvements it can bring in fraud detection and prevention right across the public sector. While efforts to support departments and public bodies during the pandemic delayed work on this report, the PSFA intends to publish a bulletin with the data from 2021-2022 in the first half of 2023.

■ Update on procurement exclusion

Minister for the Cabinet Office and HM Paymaster General (Jeremy Quin):

[[HCWS658](#)]

In August 2022, Bain & Company and its global affiliates were excluded from bidding for UK Government business. Following the decision, Bain & Company have cooperated with our investigations, and have provided considerable additional information on their self-cleansing actions. They have also agreed to a period of rigorous monitoring for a minimum of two years, during which their continued compliance will be assessed. Given the progress made since the exclusion, we can confirm that while Bain & Company South Africa, Inc. will remain excluded from UK Government business, Bain & Company, Inc. and its affiliates outside of South Africa are no longer excluded from bidding for government work.

Following robust and intensive dialogue with Bain & Company since the exclusion decision was made in August, which has received the full cooperation from the company, we have concluded that Bain & Company, Inc. and its affiliates outside of South Africa, including both Bain & Company, Inc. United Kingdom and BuyingTeam Limited (trading as Proxima), can bid for UK Government work.

Since the exclusion decision in August 2022, Bain & Company have responded by producing detailed evidence of the measures they have taken internally (including related to the way Bain & Company handles bids for UK Government work), which was not available to the Cabinet Office previously.

This decision is subject to a regular and thorough period of close monitoring, for a minimum of two years, so we can be satisfied that the company continues to uphold the measures they have now put in place.

During the monitoring period, Bain & Company has agreed that it will engage further with the Cabinet Office to provide evidence that their governance, organisation and internal processes are now working and will continue to work as they should do to prevent anything similar happening again.

Bain & Company South Africa, Inc. remains excluded from bidding for UK Government procurements until 4 January 2025, given the findings of the Zondo Commission on its prior involvement with the South African Revenue Service. Bain & Company South Africa has acknowledged it did not fully clarify the facts and circumstances regarding its work for the South African Revenue Service in a comprehensive manner.

Bain & Company has previously apologised for the fact that Bain & Company South Africa's work in South Africa contributed to damaging a critical public institution and acknowledged that its cooperation with investigating authorities fell short.

We will review any new information that comes to light, including as a result of any potential reconsideration by the South African Government of their decision to ban Bain & Company South Africa.

Bain & Company has welcomed this robust external challenge, to help ensure that going forward their governance is of a consistently high standard, that the self-cleansing actions

put in place are operational and that any new issues arising are being managed and communicated transparently.

We strongly condemn corporate malpractice and will not hesitate to exclude suppliers should they be found to not be upholding the highest standards.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Publication of the Tourism Recovery Plan Update Report

Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries (Julia Lopez): [\[HCWS656\]](#)

I am pleased to publish today an Update Report on progress made against the objectives set out in the government's Tourism Recovery Plan.

Tourism is a significant economic, cultural and social asset to the UK. The sector is a powerful engine for economic growth and job creation in every part of the UK. Pre-pandemic it directly employed 1.7 million people, supported 230,000 SMEs and contributed £74 billion in Gross Value Added – 4% of the UK's total. As an industry with long-term growth prospects (forecast at 3% a year globally to 2030), international reach, and a presence in every constituency, tourism has a major role to play in the Government's wider Union, levelling up, and Global Britain agendas.

The Tourism Recovery Plan was published in 2021 in recognition of the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UK's visitor economy. The Plan set out a framework for joint Government and sector development. In the short to medium term, it set out the ambition to recover pre-pandemic levels of domestic and international visitor volume and spending. In the medium to long term, the remaining objectives focused on supporting the growth of a productive, innovative, resilient, sustainable, and accessible visitor economy that benefits every nation and region of the UK.

We are now three years on from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first national lockdown and the start of Government support for businesses affected by closures and social distancing measures.

This Update Report sets out the progress made against the Plan's six objectives, highlights ongoing work, and sets out the future actions the Government will take to continue supporting the sector as it not only recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic but also faces the economic challenges that have arisen since the publication of the Plan in 2021.

The Report sets out the mixed picture of recovery in the sector. In total, over £37 billion in support through grants, tax relief and loans was provided to the hospitality, leisure and tourism sectors to help them survive through the long periods of uncertainty and adversity. The sector is, however, still facing economic challenges. Domestic tourism is recovering well, but international tourism is lagging behind the targets set in the Plan. Behind this mixed picture of recovery, there is huge long-term potential for economic growth, which is why the Government re-commits in this Report to support the sector through the framework of the Tourism Recovery Plan – to help it grow, thrive and, in turn,

boost the UK economy. More broadly, the Prime Minister has promised to halve inflation this year and grow the economy, both of which will support the sector.

Overall, the Report indicates that good progress has been made against the objectives of the Tourism Recovery Plan. It acknowledges that there is further to go to support the full recovery of the visitor economy in the short term and to work with industry to deliver on the medium- to long-term ambition to build a more resilient, innovative, sustainable and inclusive sector that benefits every corner of the UK.

A copy of the Update Report on the Tourism Recovery Plan will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Clinical trials consultation response

Minister of State (Minister for Health and Secondary Care) (Will Quince):

[[HCWS659](#)]

The government has announced plans to overhaul the legislation that governs clinical trials, to introduce a series of measures to make it faster and easier to run clinical trials in the UK. These changes will help speed up clinical trials, without compromising on safety, and encourage the development of new and better medicines for patients. They come after the government announced an extra £10 million of additional funding for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to accelerate the delivery of cutting-edge treatments, including cancer vaccines.

Leaving the European Union has provided a unique opportunity for the United Kingdom to improve regulatory regimes for healthcare products and exercise our new powers as a sovereign regulator. The Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021 allows us to update the current legislation for clinical trials, creating a world-leading regime that prioritises patient safety while enabling and encouraging innovation within the clinical research environment.

To deliver this ambition and gather views of patients, industry and academia, we published a consultation on the future of UK regulations for clinical trials ([Consultation on proposals for legislative changes for clinical trials - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) on 17 January 2022.

We received 2138 responses and I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to respond to the consultation.

Officials at the MHRA, in collaboration with the Health Research Authority (HRA), have analysed the consultation responses and have worked with officials within my Department and the Office of Life Sciences to develop the Government response. The response outlines changes that will support innovation within the UK's life sciences sector and patient access to potentially life-saving medicines, for example through enhancing the transparency of clinical trials; enabling greater proportionality and streamlining the approvals process.

We are removing granular and duplicative regulatory requirements, moving away from 'one size fits all' regulation and embedding principles of proportionality. Ensuring that the regulatory requirements expected are more flexible to match the risk that a trial presents, will result in a regulatory framework that is responsive to all kinds of trials and adaptable to innovative research.

The changes also formalise the Combined Review process in legislation, ensuring research teams receive a single decision from both regulatory and ethical reviews, done in parallel between the MHRA and HRA. This reflects the UK Government's intention to embrace innovation in clinical trials and accelerate the evaluation and implementation of advances in medical interventions to the benefit of UK patients everywhere.

The legislative changes outlined in the consultation response provide firm foundation for and align with the review of clinical trials led by Lord O'Shaughnessy and work undertaken by Sir Patrick Vallance, to ensure a pro-innovation regulatory environment. Through this collective work we will cement our status as a science superpower by making the UK the best place in the world to conduct fast, efficient and cutting-edge clinical research.

The government's response to the consultation will be published on GOV.UK today.

TRANSPORT

■ Rail reform update

Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper):

[[HCWS655](#)]

Today, I am pleased to provide an update on this Government's plans to reform our railways. I am announcing the location chosen to be the national headquarters of Great British Railways (GBR), providing further detail on GBR's regionalised approach including how GBR will benefit the whole of Great Britain, as well as offering more detail on the role of GBR.

From a shortlist of six locations announced last summer, Derby has been chosen as the city to be the future headquarters of GBR.

Among an exceptional list of shortlisted applicants, Derby scored highest in the Expression of Interest stage of the competition, which analysed its suitability against six published criteria: levelling up, connectivity, opportunities for GBR, value for money, heritage and public support. It also scored highest in the six-week public vote, attracting 45,600 votes, more than 5,000 ahead of the second placed location in a total vote of 205,000.

Derby will become the heart of Great Britain's rail industry, bringing together track and train, as well as revenue and cost. This means we will finally treat the railway as the whole system it should be rather than a web of disparate interests that it's become. Passengers will no longer face the excuse-making and blame-shifting of years past. Instead, GBR will be wholeheartedly customer-focussed, serving as the single point of

accountability for the performance of the railway. The rail campus, led by GBR HQ, will help position the industry to achieve this.

GBR will put customers at the heart of its reforms. It will reinvigorate the role of the private sector to help drive innovation with an unrelenting focus on quality, customer service and experience. Under GBR, rail journeys, buying tickets and ticket prices will be easier, simpler and fairer.

Whilst GBR's headquarters will be in Derby, other towns and cities will also benefit from hosting empowered regional GBR hubs equipped with decision making and investment powers aimed at benefiting their local communities. GBR will support jobs spanning across Great Britain including the North, Southeast, Southwest and London. The GBR HQ will share learning, partnerships, connections and opportunities across these centres of excellence.

GBR's Transition Team will now work with Derby to identify the site for the HQ within the city, which will represent value for money for the taxpayer. The Midlands is already a transport supercluster for Britain: with DfT and HS2 based in Birmingham, bringing GBR HQ to Derby represents a further boost to the region's transport sector and demonstrates our commitment to levelling up the country.