



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 29 November 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:41 P.M., 29 November 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: ICT

Matt Rodda: [\[2990\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by her Department as of 21 November 2023.

Michael Tomlinson:

As of 21 November 2023, the Attorney General's Office, as a Ministerial Department, has no red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Matt Rodda: [\[2992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what is the annual cost to the public purse of her Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure, (b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

Greg Hands:

In 2022-23, the previous Department for International Trade spent £9.8m on IT infrastructure.

Information is not available on IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 as this predates the creation of the Department for International Trade in 2016.

Table 1 shows expenditure on legacy infrastructure from 2017/18, the first full year for which information is available.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL
2017-18	£0.2m
2018-19	£1.2m
2019-20	£1.4m
2020-21	£1.4m
2021-22	£1.4m
2022-23	£1.4m

■ Audit: Reform

Richard Thomson:

[\[2941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what is her Department's planned timescale on introducing the draft Audit Reform Bill.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government has not set out a timescale for introducing legislation relating to audit reform. The Government is committed to legislating when Parliamentary time allows.

Richard Thomson:

[\[2942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 November 2023 to Question 218 on Audit: Reform, what estimate she has made of the potential cost to the public purse of her Department's work on legislative proposals on reform of audit and corporate governance since the publication of the Restoring trust in audit and corporate governance white paper, CP382.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department does not have an estimate of the cost of the Department's work on reform of audit and corporate governance. Information on internal costs is not broken down in this way.

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Dispute Resolution

Richard Thomson:

[\[2939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the letter from civil society organisations to the Prime Minister entitled, excluding investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) as a condition of UK accession to the CPTPP, published 23 October 2023; and if she will take steps to negotiate a side-letter with the CPTPP that removes access to ISDS provisions for UK investors.

Greg Hands:

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership is a comprehensive agreement that provides investors with investor protection provisions that seek to guarantee the treatment they can expect to receive when accessing and operating in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership markets.

The agreement contains a modern, transparent investor-state dispute settlement mechanism for investors to seek independent legal redress should they not receive this treatment.

These provisions play an important role in protecting UK investors abroad and levelling the playing field. At the same time, the Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership protects states' right to regulate proportionately, fairly and in the public interest.

Richard Thomson:

[\[2940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the investor-state dispute settlement within CPTPP on the water utilities sector.

Greg Hands:

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership investment chapter includes investment protections that are backed by a modern and transparent investor-state dispute settlement mechanism. These provisions play an important role in protecting UK investors abroad and levelling the playing field. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership also protects states' right to regulate proportionately, fairly and in the public interest, including in relation to the UK's water industry.

The UK already has investment agreements containing investment protections and Investor-State Dispute Settlement provisions with over 90 trading partners and there has never been a successful Investor-State Dispute Settlement provisions claim brought against the UK.

■ Department for Business and Trade: ICT

Matt Rodda:

[\[2993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by her Department as of 21 November 2023.

Greg Hands:

As of 21st November 2023, the Department for Business and Trade, as a Ministerial Department, has one red-rated legacy IT system as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

■ Overseas Trade: Switzerland

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[3154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent progress she has made on trade talks with Switzerland.

Greg Hands:

Since launching trade negotiations with Switzerland in May 2023, the UK has held two rounds of negotiations on an Enhanced Free Trade Agreement. Discussions have been constructive and collaborative, and we have made good progress in starting to agree draft treaty text in several chapters.

The third round of negotiations is currently underway and is expected to conclude in early December 2023. The negotiating team will continue to keep Parliament and the

public informed with a ministerial statement and published GOV.UK update following the round.

■ **Small Businesses: Northern Ireland**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[3596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Answer of 3 July 2023 to Question 191252 on Small Businesses: Northern Ireland, what steps she is taking to promote the availability of the investment fund for small businesses in Northern Ireland.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The British Business Bank launched the £70m Investment Fund for Northern Ireland on 16 November 2023 in Belfast and will be promoting it to smaller businesses, their advisers, and the business community in Northern Ireland.

The appointed fund managers, Whiterock Capital and Clarendon Fund Managers, will host a webinar on 12 December 2023. This will introduce their teams, present the product offering, and explain how smaller businesses can apply for funding.

Any business seeking information on the fund should visit the British Business Bank's website where they can sign up to receive more information.

■ **Trade Fairs**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[3416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will publish a list of global trade shows which her Department has encouraged businesses to attend in each of the last two years.

Greg Hands:

Over the last two financial years (including 2023-24), the Department for Business and Trade has organised international activations for UK export-ready small and medium sized enterprises at over 90 international trade shows listed below.

2022-23

Trade show	Country
Cannes Lion	France
Aero India	India
Arab Health	UAE
BETT Asia	Malaysia
Bio Convention - San Diego	USA
Chemspec Europe	Germany

2022-23

DSEI Japan	Japan
ExpoNaval	Chile
Fruit Attraction	Spain
Gulfood (February 2023)	UAE
IACP	USA
IDEX	UAE
Indo Defence	Indonesia
Indo Pacific	Australia
Innotrans	Germany
International Atomic Energy Agency General Conf	Austria
Intersec	UAE
Investing in Africa Mining, Indaba	South Africa
JP Morgan Healthcare conf	USA
Kidscreen	USA
Medica	Germany
Middle East Beauty	France
Mobile World Congress (MWC)	Spain
Money 2020	USA
International Defence Industry Exhibition MSPO	Poland
Pitti Uomo	Italy
Posidonia 2022	Greece
Sial	France
Singapore Fintech Week	Singapore
SMM Hamburg	Germany
SOFIC	USA

2022-23

South By South West (SXSW)	USA
Web Summit 2022	Portugal

2023-24

Trade show	Country
AAHAR	India
Agritechnica	Germany
Anuga	Germany
Arab Health	UAE
Asia Pacific Maritime	Singapore
Australia Space Policy Forum	Australia
Bengaluru Tech Summit	India
BETT Asia	Malaysia
Big 5 Construction	UAE
BIO International	USA
Cannes Lions	France
Chemspec	Germany
CPHI	Spain
Defense & Security	Thailand
DIMDEX	Qatar
Dubai Airshow	UAE
DUPHAT	UAE
FoodEx	Japan
GCC Beauty World ME	Dubai
Global Health Expo	Saudi Arabia
Global Space & Technology Convention	Singapore
GULFOOD 2024	UAE

2023-24

IACP	USA
Indo Pacific	Australia
InFlavour	Saudi Arabia
Intersec	UAE
Investing in Africa Mining Indaba	South Africa
International Defence Industry Exhibition (MSPO)	Poland
International Defence Industry Fair (IDEF)	Turkey
Intersec	UAE
Intersec KSA	Saudi Arabia
JP Morgan Health Tech	USA
Kidscreen 2024	USA
Kormarine	ROK
Medica	Germany
METSTRADE	Netherlands
Middle East Rail	UAE
Mobile World Congress	Spain
Money 2020	USA
NorShipping	Norway
Paris Air Show	France
PCHI (Personal Care and Homecare Ingredients)	China
Photonics West	USA
Pitti Uomo	Italy
Prowein	Germany
ReBuild Ukraine	Poland
Seafood Expo	USA

2023-24

Singapore Fintech Week	Singapore
Singapore Maritime Week	Singapore
SOF Week	USA
Space Tech Expo	Germany
SXSW	USA
Web Summit	Portugal
Wind Europe	Denmark
Wind Europe 2024	Spain
World Defense Show	Saudi Arabia
World New Energy Vehicle Congress	China
World Nuclear Exhibition	Paris

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: ICT****Matt Rodda:**[\[2991\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by his Department as of 21 November 2023.

Alex Burghart:

As of 21 November 2023 the Cabinet Office has 4 red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

The Cabinet Office is actively managing their legacy systems. Since May 2023 the newly formed CTO Function within Cabinet Office Digital have been proactively addressing legacy management and risk mitigation across the Department. This work is refining the definition of Legacy Technology building on the CDDO framework and creating an assessment for all systems within the Cabinet Office. This is still in progress and we will be delivering a governance and decision framework, founded on the CDDO assessment framework, to create plans for remediation which are based upon assessed risk. This work is due to complete this calendar year and will provide a revised and enhanced legacy risk assessment position for the department.

■ Theft: Rural Areas

Jim Shannon: [\[2896\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department holds on trends in the level of theft in rural areas in the last five years.

John Glen:

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 21 November is attached.

Attachments:

1. UK Statistics Authority [241123_Sir_Ian_Diamond_UKSA_Jim_ShannonMP_2896.pdf]

■ Veterans: Homelessness

John Healey: [\[2769\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of homeless veterans have secured accommodation through the Reducing Veteran Homelessness Programme in each region.

John Healey: [\[2771\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department has made towards ending veteran homelessness.

John Healey: [\[2772\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department has spent on veterans homelessness support in each month of 2023.

Johnny Mercer:

To date, the Government has committed nearly £30m towards ending veteran homelessness, including:

- £20m capital housing fund over three years to provide extra housing for veterans through the development of new builds and the refurbishment of social and charitable housing.
- £500k to fund Op FORTITUDE, a dedicated referral scheme to provide a single central point for local authorities, charities and housing providers to support homeless and rough sleeping veterans, in addition to over £7.2m to fund specialist help for veterans in more than 900 veteran supported housing units.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Carbon Emissions: Advertising****Tahir Ali:**[\[3343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to restrict advertising for high-carbon products and services.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Government has no plans to restrict new categories of advertising, including on high carbon products.

■ Culture: Education**Barbara Keeley:**[\[3621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many times and on what dates she has attended meetings of the Expert Advisory Panel on Cultural Education.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Cultural Education Plan will ensure that all young people, regardless of their background, can access high-quality cultural education. Among other things, this is an important step in delivering our Creative Careers Promise, set out in the Creative Industries Sector Vision, which aims to build a pipeline of talent into our creative industries, from primary school onwards.

Development of the plan is being led by a panel of 22 experts, including teachers and education leaders, and representatives from the performing arts, libraries, museums, heritage and youth sectors, and the creative industries. While development of the Cultural Education Plan is being driven by the Expert Advisory Panel, the Minister for Arts & Heritage (Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay) and the former Minister for Schools (Nick Gibb MP) have attended panel meetings on multiple occasions.

Furthermore, the panel is being informed by a series of 50 listening exercises with representatives from across the creative, cultural, education and youth sectors. Lord Parkinson joined one of these listening exercises held at the Royal Opera House with teachers and educationalists from across the country.

■ Culture: Nottingham**Lilian Greenwood:**[\[3465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is steps taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for cultural activities in Nottingham.

Sir John Whittingdale:

His Majesty's Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality arts and cultural opportunities and activities, no matter where they live. We have supported culture in Nottingham in a variety of ways.

Between 2020/21 and 2023/24, Arts Council England will have invested over £30 million in arts and cultural organisations in Nottingham. As part of its 2023–26 National Portfolio, public funding is being provided to 14 organisations in Nottingham encompassing theatre, dance, museums, visual arts, literature and libraries. This funding includes over £1.2 million per year to New Art Exchange, the highly successful visual arts centre.

As part of the above funding, Nottingham City Council’s museum service was reconfirmed as a National Portfolio Organisation in the latest round of funding, meaning it will receive £1.4 million over the next three years. A number of the local projects which it directly funds are aimed at encouraging more people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and diverse backgrounds to engage with the city’s heritage. The independent National Justice Museum is also part of the Arts Council’s National Portfolio and will receive £733,000 of support over the period 2023–26.

Another of the City Council Museums, Wollaton Hall, has this year received £470,000 from the Government’s Museum Estate and Development Fund for assistance with maintenance, whilst Nottingham libraries have received funding through both rounds 1 and 2 of the Government’s Libraries Improvement Fund.

Nottingham Castle Museum’s recent transformation was funded in part by a £13.9 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Arts Council England’s National Lottery Project Grants programme also remains open for funding bids from anyone operating arts and cultural organisations in England.

The recent announcement of the third round of the Government’s Levelling Up Fund included support for Bulwell, which will be receiving almost £20 million of public investment for Bulwell town centre – including a new marketplace, and aiming to improve the look and feel of hidden heritage by reinstating original features.

Organisations in Nottingham also benefited from the Culture Recovery Fund to protect them during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 39 organisations sharing over £10.5 million of funding.

■ **Television Licences: Non-payment**

Jim Shannon:

[\[2886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many people were prosecuted for TV licence evasion in Strangford constituency in 2022.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The UK Government does not hold this data.

■ **Tickets: Taxation**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[3619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a ticket levy on (a) arenas, (b) stadiums and (c) major festivals to support grassroots live music.

Barbara Keeley:

[3620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will hold a consultation on support for live music.

Sir John Whittingdale:

His Majesty's Government is committed to supporting our grassroots music venues, which play an absolutely crucial role in our world-leading music sector and developing homegrown talent.

That is why we are supporting live music through a range of measures. This includes an additional £5 million to Arts Council England's (ACE's) successful Supporting Grassroots Music fund, as set out in the Creative Industries Sector Vision in June. This £5 million expands and extends ACE's existing grassroots fund, open since 2019, and takes our total investment in grassroots music through the fund to almost £15 million. This fund will enable venues to increase support for young and emerging artists, improve equipment and physical infrastructure, and support venues to become more financially resilient and develop new income streams.

This is in addition to other government support provided to the live music sector, including over £3 million during the pandemic from the Emergency Grassroots Music Venues Fund. The Culture Recovery Fund also provided over £200m of support for live music venues, and further support was provided through the £800m Live Events Reinsurance Scheme, alongside the cross-sector grants, loans, and reduction of VAT on tickets to 5%.

Through ACE, the Government has also supported the Music Venue Trust's 'Own Our Venues' initiative, providing £500,000 which will help the Trust acquire the freeholds of grassroots music venues at risk of closure. DCMS Ministers attended the opening of the first acquisition, 'The Snug' in Atherton, Greater Manchester, in October.

Music venues are also eligible for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief, with a 75% relief up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business. This relief was extended for a further year during the Chancellor's Autumn Statement last week. DCMS and DLUHC are also working closely with the sector to revise planning guidelines to ensure that new developments engage with existing music venues before being built.

We have no plans to impose a ticket levy. Industry-led discussions are ongoing regarding increased support for grassroots music venues from larger events and venues.

We understand that the DCMS Select Committee will shortly be launching an inquiry into live music, and we will consider the Committee's report once it is published.

■ Tourism: Commonwealth**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[2798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has taken steps to promote tourism from the rest of the Commonwealth to (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has taken steps to promote tourism from the rest of Europe to (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

Sir John Whittingdale:

His Majesty's Government works to promote the whole United Kingdom as a destination for tourists, both domestic and international, working with the devolved governments and administrations across the UK.

VisitBritain has in-market teams for Europe, including France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and the Nordics, where they promote Britain through various campaigns and marketing of Britain's regional diversity. VisitBritain also has in-market teams for Australia, Canada and India for the Commonwealth. The latest figures from VisitBritain's International Passenger Survey indicate there were 21 million visitors from Europe to the UK in 2022, accounting for 67% of total inbound visits to the UK and 44% of total inbound spend.

VisitBritain recently kicked off the next phase of our GREAT-funded international marketing campaign in France and Germany to showcase Britain as a dynamic, diverse and exciting destination and to drive tourism outside of London.

Each year, VisitBritain welcomes more than 120 international travel trade buyers for a series of educational visits across Britain. They showcase the latest tourism products to international buyers. Last year, we had buyers from 16 international markets taking part including France, Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Australia, India and Canada.

VisitBritain recently hosted 'Destination Britain India', its first trade mission to India since the pandemic. It saw dozens of British industry suppliers from across the nations and regions meet with 75 top buyers from India. The suppliers included hotels, retailers, visitor attractions, tour operators, transport providers and local destinations from across Britain.

VisitBritain is developing a new multi-million-pound GREAT Britain marketing campaign for the USA, the UK's largest and most valuable visitor market, as well as Canada and Australia, with a focus on screen tourism.

VisitEngland is creating a portfolio of nationally supported, strategic and high-performing Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) to transform the English visitor economy landscape and appeal more strategically to domestic and inbound visitors. 26 LVEPs have now been accredited, including VisitEssex which covers the Romford area.

DEFENCE

■ **Air Force: Training****Julie Elliott:**[\[2883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for (a) abandoned and (b) postponed Royal Air Force training exercises in each year since 2018.

James Heappey:

This information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Armed Forces: Commonwealth****John Healey:**[\[3564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many commonwealth veterans have been serving in the armed forces for four years or more.

John Healey:[\[3565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many commonwealth veterans who served in the Armed Forces for four years or more have left in each of the last five years.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 July 2023, there were 2,580 trained regulars in the Armed Forces who had served four or more years and whose nationality was recorded as being a commonwealth country.

The table below shows the outflow over the last five years of trained regulars in the Armed Forces who served for four or more years, and whose nationality was recorded as being a commonwealth country:

12 MONTHS

ENDING :	30-JUN-19	30-JUN-20	30-JUN-21	30-JUN-22	30-JUN-23
Outflow	250	160	100	100	130

Notes

- Figures have been provided by Analysis (Tri-service).
- UK Regulars comprise Full time Service personnel, excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel.
- Nationality is as recorded on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system.

- Figures in the table have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a “5” have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards.
- Outflow is derived by month-on-month comparisons of strength. These figures include outflow to specific populations.
- Length of service (LOS) has been calculated using entry date extracted from Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) and is calculated as full years of service completed on outflow.

John Healey:

[\[3566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many commonwealth veterans who served in the Armed Forces for six years or more had their visa fees waived in the last year.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

All applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK are submitted to the Home Office. The Ministry of Defence does not hold information about the number of applications submitted or granted since the fee waiver was implemented on 6 April 2022 to Serving personnel on discharge or to undocumented veterans living in the UK.

■ Armed Forces: Health Services

Sarah Atherton:

[\[3681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of service personnel have received (a) trauma treatment and (b) orthopedic from a private healthcare provider via the NHS fast-track pathway as of 24 November 2023.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Further to the answer I gave on 16 November 2023 to Question 1407 to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Ms Atherton), the number of regular service personnel in England who have received intervention under the Fast Track Surgery Contract, which is currently provided by SPIRE Healthcare, is set out by financial year in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR(FY)	ORTHOPEDIC AND SPINAL	
	PATIENTS	IMAGING REFERRALS
FY2020-21	203	2,670
FY2021-22	299	3,341
FY2022-23	472	3,376
FY2023-24 (prediction)	540	3,230

The figures provided include the predicted requirement for the current financial year, should referral criteria and surgical intervention types remain unchanged.

The Department does not hold data on the proportion of service personnel who have received treatment under the Fast Track Surgery Contract.

■ **Armed Forces: Housing**

Maria Eagle: [\[2780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his timetable is for implementing changes to accommodation entitlements to recognise the rights of unmarried families.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As previously announced, the New Accommodation Offer is due to launch on 11 March 2024. There will be an implementation phase of three years with full operating capability expected to be reached in March 2027.

Helen Morgan: [\[3379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 November 2023 on Service Family Accommodation and Winter Planning, HCWS28, what support his Department plans to provide to the 40 per cent of properties which have a damp and mould report raised but which will not have a mitigation package funded.

James Cartlidge:

The remaining circa 1,700 Service Family Accommodation properties where damp and mould has been reported, reflect more minor incidences of damp and mould than those more severe, prioritised cases being tackled by the standardised mitigation packages. These cases are being addressed through simple maintenance visits, with 1,419 of such tasks already complete.

Helen Morgan: [\[3380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 November 2023 on Service Family Accommodation and Winter Planning, HCWS28, on which bases the 4,000 properties receiving damp and mould mitigation packages are located.

Helen Morgan: [\[3381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 November 2023 on Service Family Accommodation and Winter Planning, HCWS28, on which bases the 1,000 properties receiving new kitchens or bathrooms are located.

Helen Morgan: [\[3382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 November 2023 on Service Family Accommodation and Winter Planning, HCWS28, on which bases the 1,500 properties receiving boiler or heating upgrades are located.

James Cartlidge:

I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Helen Morgan:[\[3383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 November 2023 on Service Family Accommodation and Winter Planning, HCWS28, which bases the 423 newly purchased homes for service families are on or near to.

James Cartlidge:

In the last 12 months, 423 homes have been purchased by the Ministry of Defence across the UK in the following locations:

ALDERSHOT GARRISON

Imjin Barracks

Hereford Garrison

Defence Medical Services, Whittington

Halton Camp

Carver Barracks

His Majesty's Naval Base Portsmouth

Royal Marine Base Poole

Stonehouse Barracks

Commando Training Centre Royal Marines Lympstone

Brompton Barracks

RAF Brize Norton

Dreghorn Barracks

RAF Lossiemouth

■ Armed Forces: Labour Turnover**Julie Elliott:**[\[2881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people left the (a) Army, (b) RAF, (c) Royal Navy and (d) Royal Marines in each calendar year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The requested information is provided in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Outflow from UK regular forces by service [20231122 - Outflow per service 2010-22 - Final Table (1)1.xlsx]

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

Julie Elliott: [\[2878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful applications to join the (i) Army as a NCO, (ii) RAF as an NCO and (iii) Royal Navy as a rated officer were made in each year since 2010.

Julie Elliott: [\[2879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful applications to join the (i) Army as an officer, (ii) RAF as a commissioned officer and (iii) Royal Navy as an officer were made in each year since 2010.

Julie Elliott: [\[2880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful applications to join the Royal Marines as an (i) Officer and (ii) non-commissioned Officer were made in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is taking time to collate the required information to answer the hon. Member's Questions. I will write to her when the information is available, and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Contracts

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[2804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for awarding contracts to maintain (a) Challenger 3 tanks and (b) Boxer armoured fighting vehicles.

James Cartlidge:

The support solutions for both the Challenger 3 tanks and the Boxer armoured fighting vehicles will be guided by the Land Integrated Operating Services, a cornerstone of the Land Industrial Strategy. Work is ongoing to develop a robust support solution, which will be contracted and in place prior to Initial Operating Capability in 2027 for Challenger 3.

The UK BOXER programme is part of the wider BOXER NATO Support Partnership, which will enable BOXER support to be in place for the Initial Operation capability in 2025. Once in-service, Boxer vehicles will be primarily maintained by the Field Army; supported by industry supplied Field Service Representative and partners.

■ Defence: Seas and Oceans

John Healey: [\[2775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the UK's seabed warfare capabilities.

James Heappey:

As outlined in the 2021 Integrated Review and accompanying Command paper, the Government is investing in a number of seabed warfare capabilities. This includes the Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance (MROS) programme, Mine Hunting Capability (MHC) and Deep-Water Military Data Gathering will enhance our ability to detect, understand, attribute and act against those who pose a threat to our interests and allow us to maintain maritime situational awareness.

These investments in underwater warfare capabilities will support the protection of our critical national infrastructure, the safeguarding of maritime trade and maintenance of our underwater advantage, increasing our ability to protect and assure underwater critical national infrastructure and to detect threats in the North Atlantic.

John Healey:[\[2776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of a UK seabed warfare strategy.

James Heappey:

As outlined in the 2021 Integrated Review and accompanying Defence Command paper, Defence places great importance on underwater capabilities to protect and assure our critical national infrastructure, safeguard maritime trade and maintain our underwater advantage. The paper also sets out Defence's approach to seabed warfare, including investment in a suite of capabilities including the Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance (MROS) programme, Mine Hunting Capability (MHC) and Deep-Water Military Data Gathering.

John Healey:[\[2777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of (a) the security of and (b) its ability to defend the UK's seabed infrastructure.

James Heappey:

I refer the right hon. Member to answer I gave him to Question 188667 on 19 June 2023.

Attachments:

1. Telecommunications Cables: Seas and Oceans [UIN 188667.docx]

■ Forces Help To Buy Scheme**John Healey:**[\[2773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of armed forces personnel used the Forces Help To Buy Scheme each year since 2014.

John Healey:[\[2774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much has been spent on the Forces Help To Buy scheme in each year since 2014.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The below table details the total number of claims, the proportion who applied and the total value loaned since 2014.

Please note that to be eligible to apply for a Forces Help to Buy loan personnel as a minimum, must be in regular armed service, meet medical requirements and have at least six months left to serve. This list is not exhaustive and there are a number of other eligibility criteria they must meet under the rules of JSP464.

FINANCIAL YEAR (FY)	TOTAL CLAIMS ALL ARMED FORCES BY FY	PROPORTION OF ELIGIBLE ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL (%)	TOTAL VALUE BY FY (£)
2014-15	3046	2.19	45,426,122.60
2015-16	3596	2.68	55,640,967.19
2016-17	3891	2.96	58,181,144.62
2017-18	3765	2.9	55,552,612.12
2018-19	3497	2.73	52,679,480.33
2019-20	3259	2.58	49,441,714.07
2020-21	3088	2.45	49,417,779.49
2021-22	2952	2.3	47,129,552.51
2022-23	1970	1.53	31,987,989.63

■ India: Foreign Relations

John Healey:[\[2766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on implementing the 2030 Roadmap for India-UK future relations.

James Heapey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has made positive progress against the 'Defence and Security' pillar of the 2030 India-UK Roadmap. To support military cooperation, we have signed a logistics Memorandum of Understanding enabling UK ships to use Indian facilities with greater ease, as well as an agreement to enable the exchange of maritime shipping information.

We have increased military engagement including through bilateral and multilateral military exercises in the land, air and maritime domains. Defence Partnership-India (DP-I), a bespoke programme office, was launched in September 2023 to support defence industrial collaboration. We have also significantly increased senior military

and ministerial bilateral engagement, and the Secretary of State for Defence has invited his Indian opposite number to visit the UK early in the new year.

Finally, the MOD has and continues to support the running of annual UK-India Staff Talks for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, culminating in the annual Permanent Secretary-led Defence Consultative Group (DCG) which took place on 24 November.

■ India: Military Exercises

John Healey: [\[2765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) bilateral and (b) multilateral military exercises have taken place with India since 2010.

James Heappey:

The following exercises have taken place since 2010:

- 28 bilateral exercises (14 Navy, seven Army, seven Air Force)
- Six multilateral exercises (Maritime Partnership 2021, Konkan Shakti 2021, Milan 2022, Cobra Warrior 2022, RIMPAC 2018 and 2022)

■ Israel: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill: [\[3678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has undertaken an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment for providing (a) assistance and (b) arms to Israel since 7 October 2023.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments (OSJAs) which provide the basis for internal MOD decision making processes on a range of defence engagement activity with Israel. These have been updated since the 7 October 2023.

As for undertaking an international humanitarian law assessment for providing arms to Israel, this is the responsibility of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which in turn advises the Department for Business and Trade. Therefore, the MOD does not undertake its own OSJA for the supply of arms to Israel, but any relevant information held by the MOD is shared across His Majesty's Government (HMG) to be considered as part of HMG's overall export licensing process.

■ Kosovo: Armed Forces

John Healey: [\[2764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK troops are in deployed in Kosovo as of 21 November 2023.

James Heappey:

The UK currently has 643 personnel deployed to Kosovo, in operational and Defence Engagement capacities.

In an operational capacity, the UK currently has 641 personnel supporting NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR). There are 41 regularly deployed personnel, and a further 600 personnel currently deployed from our Strategic Reserve Force.

To support our Defence Engagement programme, the UK currently has a deployed Advisor to the Kosovo Security Forces, in addition to the non-resident Defence Attaché (based in Skopje, North Macedonia).

■ Middle East: Warships

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[2805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Royal Navy ships are in the Middle East; and how many are tasked to the Middle East over the next 12 months.

James Heapey:

The UK demonstrates our commitment to freedom of navigation through the forward deployment of the Frigate HMS Lancaster, supported by the Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary) RFA Cardigan Bay, which regularly patrols the Gulf of Oman and through the Strait of Hormuz. In addition to this, three minehunter vessels; HMS Middleton, HMS Bangor, and HMS Chiddingfold are permanently stationed in the Gulf and help, along with allies, maintain the flow of global maritime trade. The RN remains agile and ready to react to any emerging threats and tailor deployments based on operational need.

We do not comment on future operations as to do so could, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness, or security of the Armed Forces.

■ Reserve Forces: Disability and Sick Leave

Sarah Atherton:

[\[3682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of reservists are unable to work due to (a) disability and (b) illness as of 24 November 2023.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

This information is not held in the specific detail requested.

The status of reserves by medical standard and reserve type as documented on JPA as at 24 November 2023 is detailed in the below table:

ASSIGNMENT TYPE	MFD	MLD	MND	NO RECORDS	TOTAL
Called out Reservist	733	88	20	-	841
Full Time Reservist	3,781	1,470	469	-	5,720
High Readiness	54	6	-	-	60

ASSIGNMENT TYPE	MFD	MLD	MND	NO RECORDS	TOTAL
Reserve					
Sponsored Reserve	6	1	-	-	7
Volunteer Reserve	27,038	3,051	2,348	-	32,437
Grand Total of	31,612	4,616	2,837	-	39,065
Reservists with Medical Standards					
Reservist Without Medical Standards (new joiners etc)	-	-	-	-	3,548
Grand total of Reservists	31,612	4,616	2,837	3,548	42,613

MFD – Medically Fully Deployable

MLD – Medically Limited Deployability

MND – Medically Non-Deployable.

■ Watchkeeper WK450

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[3597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 27 June 2023 to Question 190762 on Watchkeeper WK450, how many Watchkeeper platforms are being used for testing and evaluation.

James Cartlidge:

There are currently three Watchkeeper Uncrewed Aerial Systems being used for test and evaluation.

■ Weapons: Decommissioning

Julie Elliott:

[\[2882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any (a) SA80 and (b) Glock 17 have been decommissioned in each year since 2015.

James Cartlidge:

SA80 and Glock 17s are decommissioned each year due to damage and wear outside of safe limits.

The ongoing SA80 A2 to A3 upgrade programme is also resulting in some SA80 A2s being decommissioned.

EDUCATION**■ Department for Education: ICT****Matt Rodda:**[\[3000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what is the annual cost to the public purse of her Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure, (b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

Matt Rodda:[\[3001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by her Department as of 21 November 2023.

Damian Hinds:

The annual cost of the department's expenditure on IT infrastructure is approximately £200,000, excluding VAT. The department's current annual expenditure on IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 is £0. From 2010, the department's infrastructure and platforms have not retained historic records on legacy IT infrastructure for each year.

As of 21 November 2023, the department, as a Ministerial department, has one red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework. The department is actively managing its legacy IT estate and is seeking to exit legacy systems via its existing change plans.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Sarah Champion:**[\[3237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help parents access specialist support needed to enable their child to (a) fully participate in school life and (b) avoid being regularly absent.

Damian Hinds:

Specialist support for children with additional needs to participate in education and avoid being regularly absent is vitally important. The department is taking a number of steps towards both these goals. In the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan, published in March 2023, the department set out plans to build a consistent national SEND and AP system that parents and carers can trust, easily navigate, and have confidence in.

The foundation for the new nationally consistent system will be evidenced-based National Standards for early and accurate identification of need, and timely access to support to meet those needs. The Standards will clarify the types of support that should be ordinarily available in mainstream settings and who is responsible for securing the support. This will help families, practitioners and providers understand what support every child or young person should be receiving from early years through to further education, no matter where they live or what their needs are.

On 22 November 2023, the department also announced Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools. This new programme, backed by £13 million of investment, will bring together Integrated Care Boards, local authorities, and schools, working in partnership with parents and carer to support schools to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children. These measures will also benefit attendance, improving which is a top priority for the government. The department recognises that pupils with SEND can face additional barriers.

To ensure pupils receive the support they need to regularly attend and participate in school, the department has published guidance expecting schools to have sensitive conversations with families about attendance, work with parents to develop specific support approaches, establish strategies for removing any in-school barriers and ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed.

A range of programmes including attendance hubs spreading best practice across school and attendance mentors providing one-to-one support will also tackle absence for children with SEND.

In addition, the department is investing £2.6 billion between now and 2025 to fund new special and AP places and improve existing provision, including opening 33 new special free schools, with a further 48 in the pipeline; and £21 million to go towards training 400 more educational psychologists, building on the £10 million investment announced earlier in 2022.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Sarah Olney:

[3531]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 26 October 2023 to Question 203895 Teachers: Recruitment, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of new teacher sign ups that is attributable to the Get Into Teaching advertising campaign.

Damian Hinds:

Several methods are used to assess the Get Into Teaching campaign's impact. They include regular brand tracking studies and other market research; econometric modelling to identify and quantify the factors affecting sign ups to the Get Into Teaching service; analysis of the flow of candidates between Get Into Teaching and the Find and Apply services; and tracking of site traffic to the Get Into Teaching website.

The teaching recruitment campaign tracks a number of behavioural and attitudinal metrics to give a rounded picture of campaign impact.

Key Performance Indicators for the teaching recruitment campaign are the consideration of teaching as a career amongst our target audience and the number of new, unique sign-ups to the Get Into Teaching service. The campaign also measures the proportion of sign-ups attributed to the advertising campaign, through econometric modelling. Recent econometric analysis shows that in July 2023, 42% of sign-ups to the Get Into Teaching website were attributable to paid advertising.

There are many factors affecting the number of teachers recruited in any given recruitment cycle, including levels of financial support, predicted demand for new teachers, the size of pool of new graduates and other economic factors.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: ICT

Matt Rodda:

[\[3002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by her Department as of 21 November 2023.

Graham Stuart:

This information is not held centrally by the department. DESNZ is a new department, so the risk is unlikely to be recorded.

Matt Rodda:

[\[3004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what is the annual cost to the public purse of her Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure, (b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

Graham Stuart:

The accounting systems track IT spend, but do not capture the level of detail readily to identify spend on Infrastructure or legacy systems. Determination of legacy IT will require more work; the Legacy Risk Assessment will be prepared and submitted to Cabinet by the end of the current Financial year. Currently, within our centrally managed digital function, there is no legacy IT of any material size or value.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Richard Thomson:****[2958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1756 on Seed Potatoes: Exports, if he will publish the conclusions of his meetings at the third TCA Trade Specialised Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures on 11 October 2023.

Mark Spencer:

The minutes of the third TCA Trade Specialised Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures will be published in due course on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ **Agriculture: Environment Protection****Mr Toby Perkins:****[2851]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, published 31 January 2023, (a) how the target for 65% to 80% of farmers to adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% of their land will be measured and (b) which farming practices will count towards this.

Mark Spencer:

The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan says we are aiming for between 65 to 80% of landowners and farmers to adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10-15% of their land by 2030.

This will be delivered through a range of measures. These include habitat restoration and creation; activities to reduce the impact of invasive non-native species on sites or to address pressures on sensitive areas; improvements in water storage and management; and changes to limit emissions while maintaining agricultural profitability and increasing productivity.

Farmers will be supported to deliver these measures through our Environmental Land Management schemes (Countryside Stewardship, the Sustainable Farming Incentive, and Landscape Recovery), the Farming Investment Funds and Farming Innovation Programme, woodland creation and tree health grants, and grants to assist with the cost of improved slurry infrastructure and equipment.

We will continue to work with farmers and land managers to ensure we achieve these targets in the most effective way, and in a way that works best for farmers and farm businesses and supports our commitment to maintain domestic food production.

■ **Animals: Exports****Tahir Ali:****[3550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill.

Mark Spencer:

We are determined to deliver our manifesto commitment on live exports. We will bring forward the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill in due course.

■ Biodiversity: Property Development**Caroline Lucas:**[\[3460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government will provide specific (a) guidance and (b) resources for local planning authorities to monitor and enforce the Biodiversity Net Gain system that is due to come into force from January 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

Government will publish a package of guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) shortly. This guidance will include advice for landowners, developers, and Local Planning Authorities around their role and responsibilities in delivering mandatory BNG. This guidance will include information on monitoring and enforcing BNG.

Significant biodiversity gains on the development site must be legally secured by planning condition, planning obligation or conservation covenant. Biodiversity net gain sites away from the development site must be legally secured by planning obligation or conservation covenant. Authorities can charge a monitoring fee through section 106 planning obligations, to cover the cost of monitoring and reporting on delivery of that section 106 obligation. Monitoring fees can be used to monitor and report on any type of planning obligation, for the lifetime of that obligation. For gains that are secured with conservation covenants, we expect costs for monitoring and enforcement activities to be reflected in the price of biodiversity units.

The planning enforcement regime will be the principal way of enforcing delivery of BNG.

■ Cats: Coronavirus**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[2959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of cases of feline infectious peritonitis in Cyprus on (a) biosecurity and (b) feline health in the UK.

Mark Spencer:

A single nine-month-old kitten imported from Cyprus in August has been diagnosed with Feline Infectious Peritonitis as a result of being infected with a strain of Feline Coronavirus contracted in Cyprus. While this virus is estimated to have killed 8,500 cats in Cyprus (in the first half of this year, mostly in the large feral cat population) the risk to UK cats is very low.

We will continue to use our established systems to monitor feline coronavirus through our Veterinary Risk Group and Animal Disease Policy Group, and review our domestic or import policies should risks change.

■ Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[2852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many farmers have applied to the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier in the most recent application window; and what proportion of those were (a) eligible for and (b) offered an agreement.

Mark Spencer:

The application deadline for the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier scheme closed on 28 April 2023 with 1,450 applications received by the Rural Payments Agency. As of 22 November 2023, there were 1,223 eligible applications (84.3%) of which, 585 offers of agreement had been made (47.8% of eligible applications). Applications continue to be processed and agreement offers sent on a daily basis.

■ Dairy Farming: Skilled Workers

Jim Shannon: [\[2885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure access to skilled labour in the dairy farming sector.

Mark Spencer:

We appreciate the importance of skilled labour to our domestic food producers, including the dairy sector. To help support the issue of labour shortages, the Government commissioned John Shropshire to carry out an independent review which considered how automation, domestic labour and migrant labour can contribute to tackling labour shortages in the food supply chain. The report was published in June 2023.

The Government Response will consider all ten of the recommendations made in John Shropshire's Review, covering the four themes of Recruitment & Retention, Skills, Data, and Automation. The Government Response will be published shortly.

The Skilled Worker visa route is open to all nationals who wish to come to the UK for the purpose of working in a skilled job they have been offered. The Government have broadened the skill and salary thresholds to include medium skilled jobs and the route now covers 60% of jobs in the economy. This strikes an appropriate balance between allowing employers access to the skills our economy needs and encouraging investment in the resident workforce.

Defra will continue to work closely with our dairy and other agricultural sectors and across government, to make sure that the workforce requirements for food and farming are understood.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Waste Management

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[2937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's waste policies for supporting (a) reuse, (b) prevention and (c) recycling of waste materials.

Robbie Moore:

Alongside our 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy, the Government's ambitions to minimise waste were outlined earlier this year in [Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste](#), our new Waste Prevention Programme for England. This sets out our priorities for action to manage resources and waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy across key sectors. It also embeds our circular economy approach by retaining materials and goods in circulation for as long as possible and at their highest value, including through increasing reuse, repair and remanufacture. The final chapter of the Programme sets out our plans to monitor and evaluate progress. We have indicators in place to capture changes and we will monitor trends over an extended period of time. In addition, through the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research programme, experts will support Defra in exploring the metrics and data requirements needed to support a circular economy.

We are also introducing our Simpler Recycling reforms which will ensure that across England, people will be able to recycle the same materials, no longer needing to check what their council will accept for recycling. This policy will make recycling easier and ensure there is a comprehensive, consistent service across England. This will reduce confusion with recycling to improve recycling rates, ensuring there is more recycled material in the products we buy, and the UK recycling industry grows.

■ Deposit Return Schemes**Julian Sturdy:**[\[2862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress has been made on developing the interoperability criteria for deposit return schemes in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Robbie Moore:

In May 2023, the Government published a position statement setting out that deposit return schemes across the UK should be interoperable to reduce complexity for businesses and consumers, and to avoid unnecessary barriers to trade. Defra is working closely with devolved administrations at pace on the next steps to deliver interoperable schemes across the UK. We will be providing updates on this as soon as possible.

■ Environment Protection**Caroline Lucas:**[\[3179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 16 June 2020 to Question 57159 on Environment Protection, when he plans to embed the environmental principles detailed in Section 17 of the Environment Act 2021 into HM Treasury's Green Book.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Act 2021 places a new legal duty on Ministers to have due regard to the environmental principles policy statement when making policy. The policy

statement sets out how to interpret and proportionately apply the five environmental principles, to put the environment at the heart of policy across government. The duty came into force on 1 November 2023.

Application of the policy statement in appraisals is part of the Green Book process. The Green Book landing page on GOV.UK highlights the new legal duty and revised guidance on Enabling a Natural Capital Approach provides additional detail. The Green Book itself will be updated next year to reflect the duty.

■ Environment Protection: EU Law

Caroline Lucas: [\[3458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the provisions in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 on levels of environmental protection.

Rebecca Pow:

It has not been necessary to carry out such an assessment. The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 will only remove from the UK statute book pieces of Retained EU Law (REUL) specifically cited in the revocation schedule. These are being removed because they are obsolete, expired, duplicated, no longer relevant to the UK, or have been superseded by new legislation. The Government remains fully committed to upholding environmental standards. Ministers made commitments at all stages of the Bill's passage not to reduce environmental standards and protections. Since the start of November Ministers have had a legal duty to have due regard to the environmental principles policy statement under the Environment Act 2021 when making policies using the REUL Act's powers. This Government uses expert advice, including that of many independent experts, when making provisions that relate to the environment.

■ Environmental Land Management Schemes: Disclosure of Information

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[2855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to publish (a) payment calculations and (b) option uptake data for the Environment Land Management scheme.

Rebecca Pow:

We published principles for how we set payment rates in our Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes in June 2021. These can be found at [Environmental land management schemes: payment principles](#). The payment rates for all actions in the ELM schemes are published in the information about each scheme on GOV.UK.

We publish data on uptake of individual options in the Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship schemes. The latest data can be found at [2023 - Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship Data](#).

■ Fish Farming: Animal Welfare

Caroline Lucas:

[\[2847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2023 to Question 348 on Fish Farming: Animal Welfare, when his Department asked the Animal Welfare Committee to update its 2014 opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing; and when he plans to determine any next steps.

Mark Spencer:

Defra commissioned the Animal Welfare Committee to update its 2014 opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing on 10 June 2021 and their report was submitted to us on 16 February 2023. We continue to study the recommendations carefully to determine next steps and are meeting with relevant stakeholders.

■ Fish: Animal Welfare

Kate Osamor:

[\[3306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will accept the recommendations of the Animal Welfare Committee's report entitled Update to the 2014 FAWC Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing, published in February 2023.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bolton South East, Yasmin Qureshi, on 13 October 2023, [UIN 201679](#).

■ Fisheries

Jim Shannon:

[\[2895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the fisheries management plans updated on 2 October 2023 on UK (a) fishermen and (b) fishing communities.

Mark Spencer:

In July, Defra published impact assessments on the draft [Fisheries Management Plans](#). Further assessment of impacts will be conducted as appropriate during implementation.

■ Food: Charities

Tahir Ali:

[\[3547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to help support farmers to redistribute their surplus food to food charities.

Mark Spencer:

The Government supports a thriving, productive and efficient farming sector that prevents waste occurring in the first place. For instance, we are supporting investment in productivity-boosting equipment, technology and infrastructure through

the Farming Investment Fund. This provides grants to farmers, foresters, and growers (including contractors to these sectors) that will help their businesses to prosper, while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment. At the recent Farm to Fork Summit we announced new reviews into fairness in the horticulture and egg supply chain building on what we have already got underway to improve transparency and contracts in the pork and dairy markets. We launched the review into the egg supply chain on 31 October 2023, and will launch a public consultation on horticulture in the coming weeks.

We acknowledge that more can be done to reduce food waste in the primary production stage. The 'fair dealings' powers contained in the Agriculture Act 2020 can be used to prevent these kinds of unfair trading practices where they occur, as we are aware that unreasonably late cancellations or specification changes can sometimes lead to produce being unharvested.

The Government works closely with businesses through our delivery partner the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to overcome any barriers to redistribution. This includes the development of guidance and best practice through a sector wide working group, and support for the Target Measure Act (TMA) approach to understanding and acting on food waste in supply chains, including the redistribution of any surplus should it arise and is supported by the National Farmers Union (NFU). Where the NFU stands on food waste – [NFUonline](#).

Since 2018, Defra funding of nearly £13m has supported both large and small redistribution organisations across the country to increase their capability and capacity.

The total amount of food redistributed in the UK in 2022 was over 170,000 tonnes and a value of around £590 million, an increase of 133% since 2019.

■ Food: Waste

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[3617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Government response to the consultation on Improved Food Waste Reporting By Large Food Businesses in England was withdrawn; and what his policy is on mandatory food waste reporting for large food businesses.

Robbie Moore:

The Government remains committed to tackling food waste. Following further engagement with stakeholders the Secretary of State has decided to re-examine how best to secure the benefits of food waste reporting, including mandatory measures. We now intend to gather further evidence and re-consider all options on improving food waste reporting for large businesses using the latest available data.

■ Forests: Commodities

Caroline Lucas:

[3180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021, what his timetable is for the publication of regulations to implement due diligence obligations on specified forest risk commodities.

Rebecca Pow:

We ran a consultation from 3 December 2021 to 11 March 2022 to seek views on the details of regulations that will implement the Environment Act provisions, to ensure that these are designed effectively. The Government published a summary of responses to this consultation on 1 June 2022 and is committed to implementing due diligence provisions at the earliest opportunity through secondary legislation.

■ Hedgehogs: Conservation

Sir John Hayes:

[3085]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the list of animals which are protected in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to include hedgehogs.

Rebecca Pow:

Where there is evidence to show that it is necessary and effective to do so, the Government may consider providing protection through legislation to regulate activities impacting on our native species. In doing so it is important to consider whether the legislation will deliver the intended effects or whether there are more appropriate routes to delivering the same outcomes.

With regard to hedgehogs, while we are concerned about their conservation status, there is no clear evidence to indicate additional protection by adding them to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will be effective in supporting recovery of the species. It does not regulate the activities linked to its decline which, rather than intentional or reckless killing, are primarily caused by habitat loss and fragmentation due to removal of field margins, hedgerows and scrub; the use of herbicides and insecticide; and road traffic.

■ Hedgehogs: Walls and Fences

Sir John Hayes:

[3086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the use of hedgehog-friendly fencing for new-build housing.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a wide range of issues, and Cabinet discussions are considered confidential.

■ Hunting: Animal Products**Tracey Crouch:** [\[3183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit the import of hunting trophies.

Rebecca Pow:

We are disappointed that the Hunting Trophies Bill failed to progress in the House of Lords in the previous session, despite overwhelming support from hon. Members for our proposals. We are committed to delivering on our manifesto pledge to ban the import of hunting trophies and will continue to explore ways to bring this forward.

■ Meat: Ritual Slaughter**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[2459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the quantity and proportion of halal (a) beef and (b) lamb sold in the last 12 months.

Mark Spencer:

We do not hold data that would allow us accurately to estimate the quantity of halal beef and lamb sales in the last 12 months.

■ Office for Environmental Protection**Caroline Lucas:** [\[3178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 18 October 2022 to Question 65693 on the Office for Environmental Protection, when she plans to publish the summary of the business case for the Office for Environmental Protection.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra will publish a summary of the business case for the Office for Environmental Protection.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive: Suffolk**Dr Thérèse Coffey:** [\[3217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023 have been (a) made and (b) approved in Suffolk Coastal constituency.

Mark Spencer:

The Sustainable Farming Incentive has a rolling application window and as of 23 November the RPA has received 12 applications of which 7 agreements have been offered and 6 accepted for the Suffolk Coastal Constituency.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Cemeteries****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2791\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many visits to graves and sacred sites his Department has facilitated for people of Chagossian descent in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

The FCDO has facilitated four heritage visits for people of Chagossian descent to British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) in the last five years: 3 in 2019 and 1 in 2020. Visits were suspended after February 2020 due to COVID-19. Each heritage visit included visits to graves and other sites of interest.

■ China: Uyghurs**Tahir Ali:**[\[3337\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to take diplomatic steps in response to China's treatment of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government closely monitors China's serious human rights violations in Xinjiang against Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities, and continues to lead international efforts to hold China to account and change its behaviour.

In October 2023, the UK led a record joint statement on Xinjiang at the UN, demonstrating a significant number of countries are prepared to call China out for its human rights violations. We have also imposed sanctions, provided guidance to businesses, and taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains.

We consistently raise China's human rights violations with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels. The former Foreign Secretary did so during his visit to Beijing in August 2023. We will continue to raise these issues directly with China and in multilateral fora including the UN.

■ Eswatini: Rule of Law**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[3167\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the decision of the International Parliamentary Union Governing Council on Case SWZ-COLL-01, published on 27 October 2023, what recent steps he has taken to support the rule of law and political space in Eswatini; and whether he has taken recent steps to support (a) trade union and (b) other civil society engagement between organisations based in the UK and Eswatini.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Since reopening our High Commission in Eswatini in 2019, the UK has been active in promoting good governance and the rule of law, through engagement with trade unions, political groups and civil society organisations as well as with the three branches of government. During the extended political transition this year, the High Commission supported efforts to promote peaceful and credible elections. The High Commission has also supported a series of media freedom events, and used International Programme Fund resources to promote a range of local initiatives in partnership with NGOs.

■ Gaza: Hospitals

Dan Carden: [\[2974\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the statement by the World Health Organisation entitled Evacuation orders by Israel to hospitals in northern Gaza are a death sentence for the sick and injured, published on 14 October 2023.

David Rutley:

The UK is clear that healthcare and other emergency services personnel, and civilian infrastructure including hospitals and medical facilities must be protected in conflict. We have consistently urged Israel to ensure it adheres to International Humanitarian Law and takes all possible precautions to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. We urge the Government of Israel to allow humanitarian access into Gaza for humanitarian organisations so civilians can receive the assistance they need, including for medical purposes. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary engage regularly and closely with their Israeli counterparts on this issue.

Dan Carden: [\[2975\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with the World Health Organisation on military action on hospitals in Gaza.

David Rutley:

We maintain regular contact with World Health Organisation on a full range of issues relating to the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We continue to impress upon Israel the need to comply with International Humanitarian Law, minimise civilian casualties and protect civilian infrastructure including medical facilities. The FCDO is actively engaging with international partners and those operating on the ground to do all we can to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Dan Carden: [\[3056\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the World Health Organisation's statement entitled WHO appalled by latest attack on Indonesian Hospital in Gaza, published 20 November 2023.

David Rutley:

The UK is aware of the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting which has documented a number of attacks against health care facilities since 7 October. The UK is clear that healthcare and other emergency services personnel, and civilian infrastructure including hospitals and medical facilities must be protected in conflict. We have consistently urged Israel to ensure it adheres to International Humanitarian Law and takes all possible precautions to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. UK Aid is helping trusted UN partners and others to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary engage regularly and closely with their Israeli counterparts on this issue.

■ Israel and Occupied Territories: Weapons**Dan Carden:**[\[2956\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if the UK Government will launch an investigation to determine whether British-made weapons have been used in acts that breach human rights in (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and if he will suspend arms sales to the region while such an investigation takes place.

David Rutley:

The Government takes its defence export responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. All applications for export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. All licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard and we are able to suspend, refuse or revoke licences as circumstances required. We can and do respond quickly and flexibly to changing international circumstances. The Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

■ Israel: International Criminal Court**Dan Carden:**[\[2954\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on Israel's (a) membership of and (b) cooperation with the International Criminal Court.

David Rutley:

Israel is not a State Party to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC). We have consistently called on Israel to respect International Humanitarian Law regarding its operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We respect the independence of the ICC Prosecutor and the Court.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Dan Carden:**[\[2951\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the statement by the UN entitled Gaza: UN experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people, published on 16 November 2023, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the deployment of an international protective presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories under the supervision of the UN.

David Rutley:

The UK's longstanding policy is that any judgment as to whether genocide or international crimes have occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, not governments or non-judicial bodies. We have consistently called on Israel to respect International Humanitarian Law regarding its operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The UK is currently focused on supporting UN efforts in Gaza through funding and diplomatic advocacy on humanitarian needs and access. This includes pressing Israel to allow sufficient fuel into Gaza to meet civilian needs, including powering hospitals, desalination plants and bakeries - as well as fuel for the UN to deliver much needed humanitarian assistance. We are also supporting the UN in their advocacy efforts to push Israel to allow more aid into Gaza through land routes, including opening the existing Kerem Shalom crossing point as well as Rafah, and exploring the possibility of new maritime routes. We pay tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) aid workers who have tragically lost their lives in this conflict.

Dan Carden:[\[2952\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the statement by the UN entitled Gaza: UN experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people, published on 16 November 2023, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing an arms embargo on all warring parties.

David Rutley:

The Government takes its defence export responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. All licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard and we are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences, or refuse new licence applications, as circumstances require. We have been doing what we can to prevent regional escalation and have reiterated our support for Israel's right to self-defence and the importance of adherence to international humanitarian law. In the long term, to prevent further conflict and terrorism, there must be a political solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict: a two-state solution which provides justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. To make that vision a reality, we are also urging all sides to de-escalate tension in the West Bank and tackle all forms of extremism. It is vital that the

Government of Israel does all it can to reduce the violence in the West Bank. We will oppose any attempts by malign actors to cause further escalation in the region.

■ Libya: IRA

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2802\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make it his Department's policy to seek compensation from the Government of Libya for victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2803\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make it his Department's policy to utilise frozen Libyan assets to compensate victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism.

David Rutley:

The UK Government reiterates its sympathy for UK victims of Qaddafi-sponsored terrorism, and indeed all victims of the Troubles. It is important that the UK Government pursues fairness and consistency in the provision of support to victims of terrorism and access to publicly funded compensation schemes. The UK's position with regards to victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism is that it is the responsibility of the Libyan Government to provide compensation. The UK Government cannot lawfully use frozen Libyan assets to provide compensation to victims as doing so would break international law and our obligations as members of the UN. We will continue to press the Libyan authorities to address the Libyan State's historic responsibility for the Qaddafi regime's support for the IRA.

■ Mali: Tuareg

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[3166\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the level of risk of (a) identity-based violence and (b) other potential abuses against members of Tuareg communities in Mali.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO is monitoring the situation in northern Mali closely, including instances of identity-based violence and other potential abuses against Tuareg communities. The UK has been robust at the UN Security Council in emphasising the need to end impunity and that Wagner Group, whose record of human rights abuses and violations is clear, will not deliver the long-term peace or security Mali needs. To address this issue, the UK is urging parties to the conflict to reinvigorate inclusive dialogue, and Lord Ahmad discussed this with Algerian Foreign Minister Attaf on this during the Algerian Strategic Dialogue in November. The UK is also working to support initiatives, including through the UN, aimed at protecting human rights across Mali and ensuring perpetrators can be held to account, regardless of who they are.

■ Nnamdi Kanu**Ms Marie Rimmer:** [\[3267\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the legality of the continued incarceration of Nnamdi Kanu.

Ms Marie Rimmer: [\[3268\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure Nnamdi Kanu is not subject to capital punishment.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Court proceedings are ongoing in Nigeria regarding Mr Kanu's continued detention, and we are following these closely. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office continues to provide Mr Kanu with consular support. The UK Government is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle in every country, including Nigeria. In individual consular cases we raise our oppositions to the death penalty at whichever stages we judge will be the most effective.

■ Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment**Andy Slaughter:** [\[2823\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with his Saudi counterpart on the application of a Royal Decree of 2020 on the passing of death sentences on minors.

Andy Slaughter: [\[2824\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make public representations to his Saudi counterpart on revoking death sentences passed on minors.

Andy Slaughter: [\[2825\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with this Saudi counterpart about adoption of a moratorium on the death penalty.

David Rutley:

Saudi Arabia is well aware of the UK's opposition to the death penalty in all countries and in all circumstances, as a matter of principle. We regularly raise concerns about its use and Saudi Arabia is an FCDO Human Rights Priority Country, in part because of the continued use of the death penalty. The Minister for the Middle East and Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon regularly discusses a wide range of human rights issues with the Saudi authorities, most recently during the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission's visit to the UK in September 2023. We monitor and raise all known juvenile death penalty defendant cases with the Saudi authorities, and discuss outstanding questions regarding the application of the Royal Decree of 2020. We will continue to do so.

■ South Asia: Elections

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[2839\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help support free and fair elections in South Asia.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives are all expected to hold elections at different levels in 2024. Elections in Nepal are expected in 2027. The UK believes transparent, democratic governance is in the interests of all people and the long-term stability of every nation. We raise the importance of free and fair elections in our discussions with South Asian governments, and with opposition parties and others. We press for an end to harassment and intimidation of civil society, media and opposition parties. Ministers and HMG officials visiting the region, regularly convey that respect for the rule of law and access to justice are essential in open democracies.

■ Sudan: Elections

Alicia Kearns:

[\[2988\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department plans to take steps with the US and Norway to undertake election monitoring in South Sudan before the South Sudanese elections in December 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK, and Troika (US, UK and Norway) have been engaged in South Sudan's peace process since the signing of the revitalised peace agreement in 2018. We collectively urge the Government of South Sudan to implement the terms of the Agreement, including free and fair elections. Our Joint Troika Statement on Sudan and South Sudan on 27 June emphasised the urgent need for the Government of South Sudan to make enough progress to allow elections to happen. The UK also funds the placement of technical experts in both the ceasefire and peace agreement implementation monitoring mechanisms, which play an important part in South Sudan's Peace Agreement and help hold the parties to their commitments.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[3529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to promote the uptake of Covid-19 booster vaccinations.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[3530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to promote the uptake of influenza vaccinations.

Maria Caulfield:

Throughout autumn and winter, the Government and the National Health Service are encouraging those that are eligible to take up the Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 vaccination offer. A range of communications are in place to ensure those eligible are aware of the offer. This includes:

- NHS England's national call/recall programme which coordinates mail and text message prompts to those eligible; in addition to communications from general practices and pharmacies;
- an extensive public information, media and external affairs communications programme;
- a paid Winter Vaccinations campaign 'Get vaccinated. Get winter strong', which launched on 1 November 2023 and is running up to 17 December 2023 across a range of broadcast and digital channels supported by audience tailored activity;
- a health and social care workforce communications programme; and
- provision by NHS England of financial arrangements to encourage providers to accelerate take up of both vaccines.

Health and Social Care Leadership in England Review**Wes Streeting:**[\[867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made towards implementing the recommendations of the Messenger Review.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 15 November 2023]: "Leadership for a Collaborative and Inclusive Future" was published in June 2022 and made seven recommendations, which were accepted by the Government.

NHS England is leading on implementation of all seven recommendations with progress made on all the recommendations, working in partnership with Skills for Care where they apply to the social care workforce.

Work on recommendations is progressing at pace and Parliament will be updated as appropriate.

Health Services and Social Services: Disability**Emma Hardy:**[\[3646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to support the implementation of accessible information in (a) NHS England and (b) social care services.

Emma Hardy:[\[3647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure the programme of work on accessible information is (a) adequately resourced and (b) prioritised in NHS England.

Maria Caulfield:

National Health Service organisations and publicly funded social care providers must comply with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) to meet the communication needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment or sensory loss. NHS England has completed a review of the AIS to help ensure that everyone's communication needs are met in health and care provision. The review considered the effectiveness of the current AIS, how the standard is implemented and enforced in practice, and identified recommendations for improvement.

Following publication of the revised standard, NHS England will continue work to support its implementation with awareness raising, communication and engagement and updated e-learning modules on the AIS to ensure NHS staff are better aware of the standard and their roles and responsibilities in implementing it. The e-learning modules are accessible to everyone working in the NHS and adult social care services.

NHS England are responsible for the review of the AIS and publication and have sufficient resource for this. The implementation of the AIS will mostly take place at a local level and it will be for local systems to determine what resource is necessary.

A key part of the AIS review is the strengthening of assurance of compliance with implementation of the AIS. As such, an AIS self-assessment framework has been developed to support providers of NHS and social care services to measure their performance against the AIS and develop improvement action plans to address gaps in implementation. The self-assessment framework has also been designed to help the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to firstly gain insight into people's experiences and whether their accessible communication needs are being met and secondly help CQC better understand organisational performance and to include that in the CQC assessment framework for provider organisations.

For social care providers, a new duty on CQC to assess local authorities' delivery of their Care Act 2014 duties went live on 1 April 2023, and as part of these assessments, under the theme of 'Working With People', CQC will consider to what extent local authorities ensure people in the area have access to the advocacy, information and advice they need to make informed decisions about how to meet their care and/or support needs.

■ Health Services: Police Custody**Stella Creasy:**[\[3629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England paid to (a) Mountain Healthcare Ltd and (b) G4S Health UK Ltd for the provision of healthcare in police custody and secure environments between (i) October 2020 to September 2021 and (ii) October 2021 to September 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England does not have responsibility for healthcare provision within police custody, as this sits with police commissioners and the Home Office.

Regarding payments to Mountain Healthcare Ltd and G4S Health UK Ltd for provision within the detained estate, NHS England has advised that figures are not available of the timeframes requested, as its financial accounting and reporting year runs from April to March. It can confirm that G4S Health UK received £4.05 million between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, and £2.495 million between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 for health care in the detained estate. No payments were made to Mountain Healthcare during these periods.

■ Health: Screening

Wes Streeting:

[327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of diagnostic tests have been carried out by the NHS (a) in total, (b) six weeks and (c) ten weeks after a referral in the last 12 months.

Andrew Stephenson:

Diagnostic test activity across the 15 test types recorded by NHS England was 25.6 million in the 12 months to September 2023. The data requested for diagnostic tests at six weeks and ten weeks after a referral is not collected by NHS England in the format requests.

The NHS' Delivery Plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care aims for 95% of patients needing a diagnostic test to receive it within six weeks by March 2025. NHS England aims to increase diagnostic activity to 120% of pre-pandemic levels by March 2025 to support this.

In the 2021 spending review £2.3 billion was awarded to transform diagnostic services over the next three years. Most of this will help increase the number of Community Diagnostic Centres up to 160 by March 2025, expanding and protecting elective planned diagnostic services. The remainder of the funding will increase capacity for imaging, endoscopy as well as lung and mammography screening, and improve digital diagnostics.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[3275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the security and privacy of patient data transmitted through Chinese-made cellular internet of things modules.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department keeps the security issues associated with internet facing technology/components, including implications for patient data, under close review as part of its overall approach to security, and in line with Government Security Group, National Protective Security Authority and National Cyber Security Centre guidance. The Data Security and Protection Toolkit, which sets the cyber security standard for health and care organisations, sets out expectations regarding organisations using appropriate technical controls, such as encryption, to protect data.

The National Security and Investment Act allows the Government to intervene where foreign direct investment is targeted at innovative companies within the United Kingdom. Where such investment is within critical sectors, it is mandatory to notify the Government and this is subject to thorough assessment by the national security community. The Procurement Bill will also provide powers for the Government to exclude and debar companies from public procurement where the Government assesses there to be an intolerable national security risk.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 28 March 2022 to Question 125389 on Protective clothing: Procurement, how much his Department has spent on defending legal challenges from the Good Law Project regarding the use of the high priority lane for personal protective equipment contracts; and how much was paid by the Good Law Project towards the Department's costs.

Andrew Stephenson:

Up to the end of October 2023, the Department has spent £3,884,214 excluding VAT on defending legal challenges from the Good Law Project. £337,000 has been recovered to date from the Good Law Project in costs.

■ NHS: Research

Wes Streeting:

[\[866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on rolling out a national approach to costing and contracting for commercial clinical research undertaken in the NHS.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 16 November 2023]: NHS England's National Contract Value Review (NCVR) provides costing and contracting for commercial clinical research undertaken in the National Health Service. Since its introduction in October 2022, over 600 studies have had a national review completed. The average time from initial costing submission to the date of the first participant consenting to take part in the study has reduced by 110 days or 36%. Stage 2 of NCVR was implemented in October 2023 and eliminates local negotiation at the point of costing and contracting and will further improve these timelines.

In addition, NHS England and the Devolved Administrations are committed to extending NCVR to include the setup of Early Phase (phase I and IIa) and Advanced Therapeutic Medicinal Products (ATMPs) studies. Work has begun to introduce NCVR in a limited number of ATMP studies to test and refine the process.

■ Ophthalmic Services

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has plans to work with professional eye care bodies and organisations to ensure that the principles identified in Royal National Institute of Blind People's report entitled The Eye Care Support Pathway, published in November 2023, are embedded into clinical pathways and are included in training curricula.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions officials in her Department have had with NHS England on the potential merits of endorsing the Royal National Institute of Blind People's eye care support pathway.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will meet the Visual Impairment Charity Sector Partnership to discuss the RNIB's report entitled The eye care support pathway, published in November 2023.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department welcomes the publication of the Royal National Institute of Blind People's Eye Care Support Pathway. NHS England contributed to its development and is looking to embed the pathway in the eyecare transformation programme. Furthermore, NHS England has offered to support the dissemination of the pathway to eyecare commissioners and providers.

I will be scheduling meetings with a range of eye care stakeholders over the coming weeks and months and am looking forward to discussing this with relevant stakeholders.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Digital Technology

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps she has taken to improve digital connectivity across the whole eye care pathway.

Andrea Leadsom:

Integrated care boards have taken steps to introduce direct referral pathways from community optometry to ophthalmology services. The requirement for this was set out in NHS England's 2023/24 Priorities and Operational Planning guidance, published in December 2022. This has included steps to implement digital connectivity, in support of wider eye care transformation. This will facilitate the sharing of digital images between primary and secondary eye care providers.

■ Patients: Databases

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[\[3208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she plans to take to improve patient data on ethnicity.

Andrew Stephenson:

NHS England's Operational Planning Guidance for 2023/24 recognises the importance of improving the completeness of data on patient characteristics. This is one of the five strategic priorities in our drive to reduce healthcare inequalities. NHS England has therefore asked systems to continue to improve the collection and recording of ethnicity data across primary care, outpatients, accident and emergency, mental health, community services, and specialised commissioning. To aid this, NHS England is working to develop tools to support collection of ethnicity information in frontline services.

■ Radiology: Telemedicine

Karin Smyth:

[\[2912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients receiving teleradiology scans in NHS settings were scans carried out more than once in the last 12 months.

Karin Smyth:

[\[2913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, many and what proportion of patients receiving teleradiology scans carried out by overseas companies were scans carried out more than once in the last 12 months.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 27 November 2023]: The information requested is not held.

■ Respiratory Diseases

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[3528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to prepare for future viral respiratory diseases.

Maria Caulfield:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has permanent standing capacity to prepare for, prevent and respond to threats to health, including viral respiratory diseases. As part of its role, UKHSA maintains critical national infrastructure and specialist capabilities, such as high containment laboratories and specialist diagnostic equipment, required to respond to emerging and high consequence infectious diseases.

In addition, the Government has established the Centre for Pandemic Preparedness within UKHSA to ensure the United Kingdom's future pandemic response is faster,

more effective, and more efficient to reduce the negative impacts of health threats to the UK.

■ Sexual Assault Referral Centres: Finance

Stella Creasy: [\[3627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England paid for the provision of sexual assault referral services in the financial years (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows the amounts paid by NHS England for the provision of Sexual Assault and Abuse Services over the past three financial years:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT (£)
2020/21	38,998,000
2021/22	42,331,000
2022/23	48,090,000

Source: NHS England

Stella Creasy: [\[3630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England paid for the provision of sexual assault referral services to (a) Mountain Healthcare Ltd and (b) G4S Health UK Ltd between (i) October 2020 to September 2021 and (ii) October 2021 to September 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not held in the format requested as NHS England's financial accounting and reporting is from April to March. The following table shows the amounts paid to both Mountain Healthcare Ltd and G4S Health UK Ltd over the past three financial years, for the provision of sexual assault referral services:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT PAID TO MOUNTAIN HEALTHCARE LTD (£)	AMOUNT PAID TO G4S HEALTH UK LTD (£)
2020/21	4,431,000	4,406,000
2021/22	8,073,000	4,124,000
2022/23	10,911,000	5,076,000

Source: NHS England

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

Ashley Dalton:

[3562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the number of elective surgeries cancelled in the last 12 months.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 28 November 2023]: Official NHS England statistics show that between September 2023 and September 2024 (latest National Health Service published data) the total number of elective surgeries cancelled in England for non-clinical reasons was 76,021. Some common non-clinical reasons for cancellations by the hospital include ward beds being unavailable, surgeon or theatre staff being unavailable, or emergency cases needing the theatre.

Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cancelled-elective-operations/cancelled-ops-data/>

HOME OFFICE

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Stuart C McDonald:

[2909]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the UK Visas and Immigration seasonal workers team was established; how many visits it has made to farms since its establishment; whether it found evidence of underpayment of workers on its visits; what powers they have to compensate workers for underpayment of wages; and what steps they are taking to ensure workers are not penalised for reporting issues.

Stuart C McDonald:

[2910]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will undertake a review of the seasonal workers scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not publish data concerning farm visits under the seasonal workers scheme.

The Seasonal Worker team undertakes farm visits to check sponsor compliance by interviewing farm managers, checking worker accommodation and speaking to sponsored seasonal workers.

If evidence of underpayment is identified, that is investigated in line with published Sponsor Guidance and action taken if necessary. UKVI do not compensate sponsored workers for loss of earnings.

Anonymity is offered to workers speaking to our officers; workers are also able to report concerns via the online reporting tool. Full details of how to report information to the Home Office are available at: www.gov.uk/reportimmigration-crime

Allegations of abuse should also be reported to the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority. Details of how to do this are available on the GLAA website, at: www.gla.gov.uk/report-issues/english-report-form/

The Government keeps the Seasonal Worker route under close ongoing review. Separately, the independent Migration Advisory Committee announced on 22 March 2023 that it is conducting a review of this route.

■ **Animal Experiments: Cosmetics**

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[2844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to revoke licences for testing cosmetics ingredients on animals issued between 2019 and 2022.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Home Secretary's written statement of 17 May 2023 announced a ban on new licences for animal testing of chemicals used exclusively as cosmetics ingredients, carried out under chemicals (REACH) regulations for the purpose of worker and environmental safety.

The Home Office has completed its review of existing 'legacy' licences and has engaged with the relevant companies. I can confirm that, in Great Britain, no animal testing is being conducted, nor will any testing be authorised, of chemicals that are exclusively intended to be used as ingredients in cosmetics products.

■ **Asylum: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry: [\[2977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers in Northern Ireland were (a) taken into Larne House short-term holding facility and (b) transferred to a longer-term detention centre in Britain in each of the last 12 months.

Stephen Farry: [\[2979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers who had been transferred from Larne House in Northern Ireland to a longer-term holding facility in Britain were released into a hotel in England in the last six months.

Robert Jenrick:

We do not publish the information requested. This is because the information is not available in a reportable format and providing this information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Stephen Farry: [\[2980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of trialling community-based alternatives to detention for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland.

Robert Jenrick:

Recent independent evaluations of two Home Office funded pilot projects in the UK found no definitive evidence that community-based case management focused alternatives to immigration detention led to the quicker resolution of individual cases nor represented better value for money. We therefore have no plans to progress any further community-based case management focused alternatives to immigration detention.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**Sarah Owen:**[\[2986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people living in asylum accommodation have culturally-appropriate food.

Sarah Owen:[\[2987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people living in asylum accommodation can access places of worship.

Robert Jenrick:

Food options are provided which cater for special dietary, cultural or religious requirements, including additional food or meals as required to meet the nutritional needs of asylum seekers for whom three daily meals may be insufficient.

As our cohort are of mixed religions and faiths, we offer facilities on-site via a dedicated mixed faith prayers and reflection area as well as facilities to pray. If asylum seekers wish to visit a place of worship, we will of course assist them to do this by co-ordinating logistics and helping them to navigate their way through any public transport arrangements or suitable alternatives.

■ British Nationality and Visas: Fees and Charges**Dan Carden:**[\[3062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will take steps to reduce the cost of application fees for (a) visas and (b) citizenship.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review. However, there are no plans to reduce fees for applications for visas or British Citizenship. It is the government's policy that those who use and benefit most from the immigration system should contribute towards the cost of operating it, reducing the burden on the UK taxpayer.

The Home Office provides exceptions to the need to pay application fees in a number of specific circumstances. These include affordability-based waivers for entry clearance and leave to remain on family and human rights grounds, and for applications for children seeking to register as a British Citizen.

■ Community Policing: Portsmouth

Stephen Morgan:

[\[3025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of neighbourhood policing levels in Portsmouth.

Chris Philp:

Decisions about how neighbourhood policing is delivered, including the size, composition and prioritisation of neighbourhood policing teams are for operationally independent Chief Constables. They are best placed to use their local knowledge and experience to serve local communities. Democratically elected PCCs, or mayors with these functions are responsible for holding Chief Constables to account for their running of the force.

We are ensuring that policing has the resources it needs. As a result of the Police Uplift there are now almost 150,000 officers (headcount) in police forces across England and Wales - the highest number on record. As at 31 March 2023, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary recruited 582 additional officers against a total three-year allocation of 518 officers.

As a result of our investment in policing, the number of police officers within local policing roles in England and Wales is the highest since comparable data began. As at 31 March 2023, in Hampshire and Isle of Wight there were 1,596 full time equivalent police officers employed in local policing roles, a 5.4% increase on the previous year (1,514 FTE in March 2022).

■ Community Security Trust

Dan Jarvis:

[\[2897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing multi-year funding for the Community Security Trust.

Tom Tugendhat:

In March 2023, the Home Secretary announced the continuation of the Jewish Community Protective Security (JCPS) Grant, which provides security to Jewish schools, synagogues and other community sites. The JCPS Grant is managed on behalf of the Home Office by the Community Security Trust.

In response to the Israel/Hamas conflict and reports of increased incidents of antisemitism in the UK, the Prime Minister announced additional funding of £3 million, bringing total funding for CST in 2023/24 to £18 million. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement confirmed that protective security funding for the Jewish community will be maintained at £18 million in 2024/25.

We continue to keep protective security funding mechanisms for faith communities under review, and any arrangements for future years will be announced in due course.

The Government is also investing up to a further £7 million over the next three years for organisations like the Holocaust Educational Trust to help tackle antisemitism. This funding will ensure support is in place for schools and universities to understand, recognise, and deal with antisemitism effectively.

■ Demonstrations: Palestinians

Simon Fell: [\[3546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an assessment of the potential role of members of Hamas in pro-Palestinian protests in the UK.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government takes proscription offences seriously. Investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations or individuals who may be members of or who demonstrate support for proscribed organisations are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies.

Following the terrorist attacks on Israel, the (then) Home Secretary wrote to police chiefs in England and Wales urging them to step up patrols and use the full force of the law to tackle those inciting hatred towards our Jewish communities.

Public order policing has disseminated briefing materials to police forces covering hate crime and the proscription offences, including advice on the flags associated with proscribed organisations Hamas and Hizballah.

■ Dog Fighting

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[2842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help ensure that police forces have the resources to tackle illegal dog fighting.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office remains committed to ensuring that the police have the resources they need. However, it is for Chief Constables and directly elected PCCs, and Mayors with PCC functions to make operational decisions based on their local knowledge and experience, including how to allocate resources.

The police now have record ever numbers across England & Wales, and that Police funding is £550m higher this year than last year.

■ Firearms: Crime

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken to tackle the illegal possession of firearms in England.

Chris Philp:

This Government is committed to tackling the threat posed by the illegal possession of firearms. Our approach is centred around:

- Partnership working including working with law enforcement to tackle illicit firearms supply.
- Upstream intervention and securing the border by enhancing capabilities to reduce trafficking of illicit firearms into the UK.
- Restricting Organised Crime Group (OCG) access to illicit firearms by reducing diversion from the legal to illegal market.

The Government keeps firearms controls under constant review to safeguard against abuse by criminals and terrorists. The Firearms Act 2023 responds to concerns from law enforcement and extends licensing controls to miniature rifle ranges and extends the criminal law to cover possessing component parts of ammunition with intent to manufacture.

The Online Safety Act 2023 includes Firearms Offences in the list of priority offences. In addition, the recently introduced Criminal Justice Bill includes measures relating to the possession of 3D printed firearms templates.

■ Hate Crime

Caroline Lucas:

[\[2849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 21 June 2023 to Question 189060 on Hate Crime: LGBT+ People, when he plans to publish the Government's response the Law Commission's report entitled Hate crime laws: Final report, published on 7 December 2021.

Laura Farris:

We are grateful for the detailed consideration the Law Commission has given to its review of hate crime laws. In April this year, the Government published a response to Recommendation 8 on misogyny as a hate crime and we will respond to the remaining recommendations shortly.

■ Hate Crime: LGBT+ People

Stephen Morgan:

[\[3024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help reduce levels of (a) homophobic, (b) biphobic and (c) transphobic hate crimes.

Chris Philp:

The Government is clear that all forms of hate crime - including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime - are completely unacceptable. We have a robust legislative framework in place and expect the police fully to investigate these abhorrent offences and make sure those who commit them feel the full force of the law.

Our absolute priority is to get more police onto our streets, cut crime, protect the public and bring more criminals to justice. We are supporting police by providing them with the resources they need, including having recruited 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023.

The Government has worked with the police to fund True Vision, an online hate crime reporting portal, designed so that victims of hate crime do not have to visit a police station to report. We also fund the National Online Hate Crime Hub, a central capability designed to support individual local police forces in dealing with online hate crime. The Hub provides expert advice to police forces to support them in investigating these offences.

The Government Equality Hub is providing over £3m of funding, between August 2021 and March 2024, to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying. This includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups, including those who are victims of hate-related bullying and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic based bullying.

The Government has also made hate crime a “priority offence” in the Online Safety Act, which received Royal Assent on 26 October. Under new legal duties of care, technology companies will need to prevent, identify and remove illegal content and activity online. This means less illegal content - including content that incites hate on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation - will appear online and, when it does, it will be removed more quickly.

■ Home Office: ICT

Matt Rodda: [\[3659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much their Department spent on (a) current and (b) legacy IT infrastructure (i) in total and (ii) purchased in 2013 or earlier in each of the last three years.

Matt Rodda: [\[3660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by their Department.

Chris Philp:

We do not currently hold data on the amount of money that has been spent on current and legacy IT infrastructure.

As of the most recent update to Public Accounts Committee in December 2022, four systems are deemed Red Rated Legacy systems. There are active update programmes working to replace each of these.

■ Immigration: Applications

Kevin Brennan: [\[3592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of (a) system upgrades and (b) maintenance on the time taken to process leave to remain applications.

Kevin Brennan:

[\[3593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of (a) system upgrades and (b) maintenance on the time taken to produce biometric residence permits.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office releases weekly upgrades, including maintenance, to the Atlas caseworking system. Such releases are completed without the Atlas caseworking system, or services like BRP production, being down at all and so there is no impact upon caseworking or BRP production.

Where a maintenance release requires the system to be taken down temporarily, it is done so in quiet periods and for a very short time period, so that caseworking operations are not adversely affected.

■ Migrants: Palestinians

Rachael Maskell:

[\[2361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department provides support to Palestinian people living in the UK to (a) work and (b) study; and whether his Department provides support to Palestinian people resident in the UK to provide homes for family residing in (i) Gaza and (ii) the West Bank.

Robert Jenrick:

Since 2015, over half a million people were offered safe and legal routes into the UK. This includes over 28,600 individuals resettled to the UK under our global resettlement schemes. We continue to provide the most vulnerable refugees in need of protection a route to safety directly from regions of conflict and instability through these schemes, which include the UK Resettlement Scheme, Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement scheme. This represents one of the most generous resettlement offers in the UK's history. However, the U.K. only has finite capacity. We cannot provide a safe and legal route for every conflict in the world.

There are no plans to introduce bespoke arrangements for people arriving from the region, and we are not considering establishing a separate route for Palestinians to come to the UK. Immediate family members of British citizens, and those settled in the UK, who wish to come and live in the UK and do not have a current UK visa, can apply under one of the existing family visa routes. The UK's efforts are focussed on ensuring aid reaches those who need it most. The Prime Minister announced on Monday 23 October that the UK will provide a further £20 million of humanitarian aid for civilians. This latest funding is in addition to the £10 million of aid announced by the Prime Minister last week.

■ National Security

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[3193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to counter hostile state activity.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Home Office has an important role in the cross-government response to state threats. Through the National Security Act 2023, we have brought together vital new measures to protect our national security, which will enable our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to deter, detect and disrupt the full range of modern-day state threats.

I also lead the Defending Democracy Taskforce, which seeks to protect the democratic integrity of the UK from threats of foreign interference.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[3303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to tackle hostile state activity.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Home Office has an important role in the cross-government response to state threats. Through the National Security Act 2023, we have brought together vital new measures to protect our national security, which will enable our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to deter, detect and disrupt the full range of modern-day state threats.

I also lead the Defending Democracy Taskforce, which seeks to protect the democratic integrity of the UK from threats of foreign interference.

■ Organised Crime: South West

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[2807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of organised crime in (a) Bournemouth East constituency and (b) the South West.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is committed to ensuring that the police have the resources they need and that is why I have recently approved, on an exceptional basis, Dorset's application for £600,000 of additional funding to support the force with the costs of exceptional policing demand arising in Bournemouth.

Ultimately, it is for Chief Constables and directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), and Mayors with PCC functions to make operational decisions based on their local knowledge and experience. This includes how to allocate resources to reduce levels of organised crime.

Chief Constables, PCCs and Mayors with PCC functions have provided significant resource to the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) network by allocating 725

extra officers to ROCUs between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023. Those officers are tackling the range of Serious and Organised Crime threats, helping to reduce crime and keep communities safe.

Dorset Police used the Police Uplift Programme to grow their officer capacity. As part of that programme Dorset was set a target to recruit 166 new officers. As of April 2023, 174 new recruits joined Dorset over the last 3 years.

Investment in policing is paying off and delivering results. Violent Crime, as measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), has fallen 52% in the year ending June 2023 compared with the year ending March 2010.

■ Passports: Applications

Fleur Anderson: **[3069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to include (a) information on and (b) opt in forms for (i) organ, (ii) stem cell and (iii) blood donation with passport application forms.

Robert Jenrick:

In September the Department of Health and Social Care and the Home Office jointly announced that, during the next year, adults applying to renew their passport online will be signposted to the NHS Organ Donor Register. We will continue to work with the NHS Blood and Transplant Service to look further at how the passport application process might help raise awareness of how to register an organ donation decision in due course.

■ Passports: Republic of Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: **[3595]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passport applications from residents of the Republic of Ireland were processed by the Belfast Passport Office in each year between 2017 and 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The data below shows the volume of passport applications from residents of the Republic of Ireland that were processed by the passport office in Belfast for each year from 2017 to 2019:

2017	9,812
2018	9,401
2019	9,936

Following the introduction of a new passport application processing system that distributes work digitally across all available work locations, the data for the number of applications processed is not broken down by office. The information requested is therefore not held in a reportable format from 2020 onwards.

■ Refugees: Palestinians

Steven Bonnar:

[\[2982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a resettlement scheme for Palestinian refugees.

Robert Jenrick:

Since 2015, over half a million people were offered safe and legal routes into the UK. This includes over 28,600 individuals resettled to the UK under our global resettlement schemes. We continue to provide the most vulnerable refugees in need of protection a route to safety directly from regions of conflict and instability through these schemes, which include the UK Resettlement Scheme, Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement scheme. This represents one of the most generous resettlement offers in the UK's history. However, the U.K. only has finite capacity. We cannot provide a safe and legal route for every conflict in the world.

There are no plans to introduce bespoke arrangements for people arriving from the region, and we are not considering establishing a separate route for Palestinians to come to the UK. Immediate family members of British citizens, and those settled in the UK, who wish to come and live in the UK and do not have a current UK visa, can apply under one of the existing family visa routes. The UK's efforts are focussed on ensuring aid reaches those who need it most. The Prime Minister announced on Monday 23 October that the UK will provide a further £20 million of humanitarian aid for civilians. This latest funding is in addition to the £10 million of aid announced by the Prime Minister last week.

■ UK Border Force: Dogs

Julie Elliott:

[\[2884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many detector dogs the Border Force had for each year since 2015.

Robert Jenrick:

We take the security of Border Force detector dogs very seriously.

It is a long-standing policy that we do not comment on security arrangements.

■ Visas: Music

Barbara Keeley:

[\[3618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the visa applications of (a) artists and (b) other professionals for the WOMEX international music convention in October 2024.

Robert Jenrick:

Officials from UK Visas and Immigration have already engaged with the organisers of the WOMEX International Music Convention (2024) in August this year. UKVI officials

will continue to work with the organisers to support the visa application process for artists and other professionals.

■ **Visas: Sudan**

Kerry McCarthy: [3158]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if his Department will take steps to support Sudanese nationals who were given six-month Leave Outside The Rules and whose visas are expiring to extend their leave to remain.

Robert Jenrick:

Where a person who has been given leave outside the rules but is unable to return home they should apply for an extension of leave. Further information about applying for an extension can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-to-extend-stay-in-the-uk-flrhro>.

Each case will be assessed on its merits. If they are unable to afford the fee then a fee waiver application can be made. Details about fee waivers can be found at:

<https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/fee-waiver>.

■ **Wind Power: Migrant Workers**

Dave Doogan: [3676]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to reinstate the offshore wind workers concession.

Robert Jenrick:

The government is fully supportive of businesses involved in delivering the UK's net zero ambitions. The wind farm sector has many roles which meet the requirements of the UK's main economic migration route, the Skilled Worker route.

The offshore wind farm worker immigration rules concession ended on 30 April.

There are no plans to reinstate the concession given the industry has a visa route available to them to use if they are unable fill vacancies from the domestic workforce.

JUSTICE

■ **Family Courts: Children**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [3594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's report entitled Assessing risk of harm to children and parents in private law children cases, published in June 2020, what steps his Department plans to take to further engage children in family court proceedings.

Mike Freer:

The welfare of the child is the family court's paramount concern and any decisions about future arrangements for children are based on this fundamental principle.

In February 2022, we launched the Investigative Approach Pathfinder court pilot in Dorset and North Wales. This pilot aims to improve the experiences for children and their parents in private law proceedings and particularly those who may need additional support, such as domestic abuse survivors. A key part of this is a stronger ‘voice of the child’ approach to ensure that, where appropriate, children’s wishes and views are central to proceedings. Evaluation of the pilot is ongoing.

In May 2023, the government published an update to the Implementation Plan for the “Assessing risk of harm to children and parents in private law children cases” report, which demonstrates the good progress we have made to date and reiterates our determination to continue to respond recommendations of the report.

■ Prison Accommodation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[3195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress his Department has made on delivering 20,000 additional prison places.

Edward Argar:

So far, c.5,600 additional prison places have been delivered. This includes our two new c.1,700-place prisons: HMP Five Wells, which opened last year; and HMP Fosse Way, which opened in May. It also includes, among others, c.380 Rapid Deployment Cells now in place across six sites, c.350 places brought online by re-rolling HMP Morton Hall, and a workshop at HMP High Down to support 90 new places which was delivered ahead of schedule in March.

By the end of 2025, we will have delivered over 10,000 places in total. This will include our third new prison, HMP Millsike, delivering c.1,500 places, new houseblocks at HMP Stocken and HMP Guys Marsh, as well as hundreds more Rapid Deployment Cells.

We have secured outline planning permission for our fourth new prison, near the existing HMP Gartree in Leicestershire, which will deliver a further c.1,700 modern places.

We have also put in place short-term measures across the prison estate to expand useable capacity in the estate by an extra c.2,500 places since September 2022 while ensuring our prisons remain safe for staff and offenders.

■ Prisons: Pest Control

Julie Elliott:

[\[2875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much was spent on pest control in the prison estate in each year since 2018.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice has significantly increased investment in custodial Facilities Management over the period, including in pest control activity. The amount spent on

pest control in the prison estate for each financial year since 2018 is in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL PEST CONTROL COSTS (£000)
2018/19	568
2019/20	872
2020/21	1,227
2021/22	1,107
2022/23	1,172

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Antisemitism and Islamophobia

Dan Carden: [\[2961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to tackle (a) antisemitism and (b) Islamophobia.

Lee Rowley:

As set out previously, antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred are abhorrent and have no place in our community. No one should be a victim of hatred because of who they are. Since the appalling terrorist attacks of 7 October in Israel we have seen a sharp increase in reported antisemitic incidents here in the UK. We have also seen a rise in anti-Muslim hatred and other racist and religiously motivated incidents.

The Government has announced an additional £3 million for the CST to provide additional security at Jewish schools, synagogues and other sites. Tell MAMA are our key partner working to monitor and support victims of anti-Muslim hatred and we have allocated over £6 million since 2012.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: ICT

Matt Rodda: [\[3008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by his Department as of 21 November 2023.

Matt Rodda: [\[3009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what is the annual cost to the public purse of his Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure,

(b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

Simon Hoare:

There are no IT systems used by the department that would fall into the category of Legacy IT under the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

The department does not operate infrastructure from prior to 2013.

The department does not hold information relating to legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010 centrally.

Further details of government expenditure are published regularly.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Incentives**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[1496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 November to Question 114 on Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Incentives, where in his Department's 2021-22 publication of data on non-consolidated performance related pay is the value of non-cash vouchers awarded to staff specified.

Simon Hoare:

Further to the publication set out [here](#), non-cash payments are captured as part of overall spend on non-consolidated performance related payments. The value of non-cash vouchers awarded to junior staff working for the Department as performance related bonuses in the year 2021-22 was £111,870. This was well within the Department's approved non-consolidated performance pay pot of 0.65% and in-line with Civil Service pay remit guidance and best practice established by Cabinet Office HR.

■ **Holiday Accommodation: Students**

Rosie Duffield:

[\[3031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of provisions in the Renters (Reform) Bill on the ability of students to acquire short-term lets for the purposes of their education.

Jacob Young:

Since introducing the Renters (Reform) Bill, we have heard from across the sector that the Bill would interrupt the student housing market, potentially reducing a vital supply of properties. We have listened to these concerns and recognise that further changes are needed.

We have amended the Bill to include a new ground for possession which will allow landlords of HMOs to seek possession ahead of each new academic year, facilitating the yearly cycle of short-term student tenancies. This will mean students can sign up to a property in advance, safe in the knowledge they will have somewhere to live while studying.

■ Local Government Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[3516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will raise the threshold above which local authorities can increase the level of the police and fire precept before a local referendum is triggered.

Simon Hoare:

The proposed referendum principles for 2024-25 will be set out in the usual way.

■ Local Government: Elections

Julian Knight: [\[3255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to enable local authorities to hold elections using the single transferable voting system.

Simon Hoare:

Government has not made any such assessment. The Government was elected on a manifesto which included a commitment to continue to support the First Past the Post voting system.

The Government believes that the First Past the Post system is a robust and secure way of electing representatives, that is well understood by voters, and provides for strong and clear local accountability. It ensures a clear link between elected representatives and constituents in a manner that other voting systems may not.

■ Loneliness and Poverty

Andrew Rosindell: [\[3147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will have discussions with local authorities on establishing community hubs with the aim of helping to tackle (a) poverty and (b) social isolation in (i) Romford and (ii) England.

Simon Hoare:

The Government recognises how community hubs, run by local authorities, charities and voluntary and community organisations play an important role in helping to deliver local services on which communities rely.

Local councils play an essential role in the fabric of our country and are best placed to understand local funding priorities. The flexibility to make funding decisions at a local level is often why these services are so effective.

In recognition of this most of the funding made available through the Local Government Finance Settlement, worth £59.7 billion in 2023-24, is un-ringfenced in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities.

■ Right to Buy Scheme: Council Housing and Housing Associations

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[2935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support households to buy their (a) council and (b) housing association homes in areas with high property costs.

Lee Rowley:

The Government is strongly supportive of helping people to own their own homes, those who rent their homes and those who wish to buy them, and remains committed to the Right to Buy, which has helped over 2 million social housing tenants to become homeowners.

The maximum Right to Buy discounts were raised in 2012 and increase each year in line with CPI. This annual increase in the discount assists tenants, including those in areas with high property costs, to purchase their homes, which has resulted in over 155,000 since this reinvigoration.

The Right to Buy discount also specifically recognises the higher property prices in London where the maximum available discount is £127,900 compared with £96,000 in the rest of England.

■ Sleeping Rough: Temporary Accommodation

Sir George Howarth:

[\[3421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the (a) Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme, (b) Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme and (c) Local Authority Housing Fund.

Felicity Buchan:

DLUHC have just awarded a three-year contract to the Centre for Homelessness Impact to evaluate the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping system, including accommodation programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme.

As of October 2023, our Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme had delivered over 5,300 homes for rough sleepers across England. We remain confident that the overall target of 6,000 homes will be achieved.

The £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme was announced in September 2022 aiming to deliver homes for adults experiencing severe multiple disadvantage and specialist accommodation for young people (under 25) who are at risk of, or already experiencing, rough sleeping in the areas of highest need.

Following the conclusion of the first two rounds of the Local Authority Housing Fund in 2024, DLUHC will conduct an evaluation of the fund.

■ Veterans: Homelessness

John Healey: [2767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many veterans are reporting as homeless.

John Healey: [2768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many veterans were reported as being homeless in each year since 2010.

John Healey: [2770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the number of veterans who were homeless in each month in 2023.

Felicity Buchan:

DLUHC publishes statutory homelessness statistics for England which is available at - [Homelessness statistics](#). The most recent statistics (January to March 2023) shows 560 (0.7%) households owed a homelessness duty included a member with a support need due to service in HM Forces. Homelessness statistics for the next quarter (April to June 2023) will be published on 30 November. The Government is providing £33 million over the next 3 years to increase the service provided to veterans, which includes £20 million for the Veteran Housing Capital Fund which will be used to modernise, rebuild and expand our veteran housing network. This is in addition to £8.55 million funding announced last year for more than 900 veteran supported housing units with specialist help for former armed forces personnel.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence**

Matt Rodda: [2997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Qq715-720 of the oral evidence given to the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee by her Department's Director General, Digital Technologies and Telecoms, on 8 November 2023, on what evidential basis her Department concluded that (a) the Information Commissioner's Office and (b) other regulators have sufficient powers to counter the risks associated with artificial intelligence.

Saqib Bhatti:

The Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) existing powers enable them to address a wide range of current and emerging risks relating to AI within their remit. The ICO has assessed how data protection applies in an AI context. They have identified it as a priority area, due to its potential to pose a high risk to individuals and their rights and freedoms. The ICO has already produced guidance and practical

resources, including guidance on 'AI and Data Protection', clarifying requirements for fairness in AI.

More broadly, many UK regulators are already taking action to regulate AI in their existing remits, including developing new regulatory tools in the context of AI. For example, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has published a roadmap for software and AI as a medical device and the Competition and Markets Authority recently published a report on their initial review of AI foundation models. Alongside this, we have begun work to establish a new central function to support regulators to deliver the AI regulatory framework, enabling knowledge exchange and support regulator coordination. We are engaging closely with regulators across the UK and their sponsoring government departments to understand their readiness to regulate AI effectively. This will inform our work to develop policy options with a view to addressing gaps that emerge, which could include future consideration of extending a regulator's remit or adding additional powers.

■ **Broadband: Elmet and Rothwell**

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[2860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent progress her Department has made on the procurement process under Project Gigabit for work in Elmet and Rothwell constituency.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Over 98% of premises in Elmet and Rothwell already have access to a superfast broadband connection (over 30Mbps) and over 83% have access to gigabit-capable broadband (>1000 Mbps). This is above the national average of 97% for superfast coverage and 79% for gigabit coverage respectively.

In April 2023, as part of Project Gigabit, we launched a procurement inviting broadband suppliers to bid for a contract to bring gigabit-capable broadband to the remaining premises in West Yorkshire, including in Elmet and Rothwell, that are unlikely to be reached by broadband suppliers' commercial rollout plans. We aim to award a contract to the successful supplier in early 2024.

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: ICT**

Matt Rodda:

[\[2998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by her Department as of 21 November 2023.

Andrew Griffith:

As of 21 November 2023, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, as a Ministerial Department, has zero red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

Matt Rodda:

[\[2999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what is the annual cost to the public purse of her Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure, (b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

Andrew Griffith:

The accounting systems track IT spend, but do not capture the level of detail to readily identify spend on Infrastructure or legacy systems. Determination of legacy IT will require more work, the Legacy Risk Assessment will be prepared and submitted to Cabinet by the end of the current Financial year. Currently, within our centrally managed Digital function, there is no legacy IT of any material size or value.

■ National Science and Technology Council

Peter Kyle:

[\[3523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many times the National Science and Technology Council met in (a) 2021, (b) 2022 and (c) 2023 as of 23 November.

Andrew Griffith:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

SCOTLAND

■ Urban Areas: Economic Situation

Marco Longhi:

[\[900326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the Government's guidance entitled Our Long-Term Plan for Towns on the Scottish economy.

John Lamont:

The UK Government will invest £140m over 10 years into seven Scottish towns that have been overlooked.

This will breathe new life into these communities and empower them to take back control of their future by tackling anti-social behaviour, regenerating high streets, and improving local transport.

This will greatly enhance the long-term economic growth of these towns.

TRANSPORT**■ Active Travel: Disability****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[2933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by Sustrans, entitled Disabled Citizens' Inquiry: Giving disabled people a voice in walking and wheeling policy and practice, published 8 February 2023.

Guy Opperman:

Active Travel England is working with local authorities and disabled people's organisations to improve opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling for all. An accessible and inclusive transport system is a priority for the Department for Transport, and integral to its objective of improving transport for the user.

■ Aviation: Volcanoes**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[3614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of increased volcanic activity in Iceland on aviation.

Anthony Browne:

The Department of Transport maintains regular engagement with the Met Office who informs the Department of the type of volcanic activity and likelihood of eruption taking place in Europe. Over the past week, seismic activity at Reykjanes has reduced. The Met Offices' current assessment of the Reykjanes volcano is that if an eruption were to happen this would be effusive (lava and gas dominant as opposed to ash-rich), similar to previous eruptions taken place in 2022 and 2023. Therefore, it would have a minimum impact on aviation.

In addition, the Department maintains regular engagement with NATS, CAA, Met Office, and UK airports, to understand the potential impacts of an eruption and existing contingencies in place to manage disruption to passengers and operations.

■ Bus Services: Yorkshire and the Humber**Keir Mather:**[\[3401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to support rural bus services in (a) Selby and Ainsty constituency and (b) Yorkshire.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is investing over £2 billion in funding for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to deliver their Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). This includes £1 billion from redirected HS2 funding to level up bus services in the North and Midlands as part of Network North.

The support provided for bus services (including rural bus services) in Yorkshire is £137million. This includes:

AREA	BSIP FUNDING UP TO MARCH 2025 (£MILLION)	BSIP (PLUS) FUNDING UP TO MARCH 2025 (£MILLION)	NETWORK NORTH BSIP FUNDING UP TO MARCH 2025 (£MILLION)
North Yorkshire council		2.9	3.5
East Riding of Yorkshire council		2.3	1.9
Hull City council		1.5	1.5
South Yorkshire MCA		6.3	7.8
West Yorkshire CA	70	7.8	13.4
City of York council	17.4		1.2

■ Department for Transport: Public Expenditure

Liam Byrne:

[\[3576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which spending programmes their Department devolves for administration to (a) local government in England and (b) other local spending bodies; and what the budget is of each such programme for each year for which budgets are agreed.

Anthony Browne:

The Government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement. At Spring Budget, the Government announced the trailblazer devolution deals with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA), which included a commitment to introduce single funding settlements at the next Spending Review for these MCAs. At Autumn Statement, the Government published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GMCA and WMCA, setting out how the single settlements will work. The Government also announced an ambitious new 'level 4' of the devolution framework, including a single transport funding settlement for eligible institutions, and a 'consolidated' pot at the next multi-year SR covering two DLUHC investment themes – local growth and place, and housing and regeneration. Following successful delivery of the 'consolidated' pot, and learning from the trailblazers, Level 4 institutions will then become eligible to receive a single settlement from the subsequent multi-year Spending Review.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Julian Knight: [\[3249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA holds data on the number of enquiries submitted by hon. Members during the month of January 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[3256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in February 2023.

Guy Opperman:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) received 413 items of written correspondence from hon. and Rt hon. members in January 2023 and 396 in February 2023.

The DVLA also has a dedicated telephone service for MPs and this service received 100 calls in January and 91 in February.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Members

Julian Knight: [\[3483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in March 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[3484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in April 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[3485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in May 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[3486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in June 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[3487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in July 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[3488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in August 2023.

Guy Opperman:

The table below shows correspondence from Rt Hon and hon Members from March to September 2023.

	DIRECT CORRESPONDENCE FROM MPs	TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES FROM MPs
March 2023	440	106
April 2023	349	64
May 2023	389	89
June 2023	391	86
July 2023	317	73
August 2023	347	65
September 2023	348	58

■ Driving

Chloe Smith:

[\[3454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish guidance on implementing the policies in his Department's policy paper entitled The plan for drivers, published on 2 October 2023.

Guy Opperman:

Each of the 30 measures in "The Plan for Drivers" is being implemented on its own timescale according to what action is required, for example the launch of a public consultation, publication of revised guidance, or procurement of a supplier.

■ Driving Licences: Applications

Fleur Anderson:

[\[3070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to allow people applying for driving licences on the DVLA website to sign up for (a) stem cell and (b) blood donation.

Guy Opperman:

Following a request from the National Health Blood and Transplant Service, a process was introduced to enable driving licence applicants to register their details on the NHS Organ Donor Register. This includes those applying via DVLA's online services. The Department hasn't been asked to consider this with stem and blood donation, but it would be happy to consider.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Compulsory Purchase

Andrew Bridgen:

[R] [\[3231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many properties were purchased by HS2 Ltd using compulsory purchase orders in (a) North West Leicestershire constituency and (b) the UK.

Huw Merriman:

There have been no land or property purchased using compulsory purchase powers in the North West Leicestershire Constituency. The Secretary of State does not have compulsory powers for Phase 2b of the scheme.

It is not practicable to provide a figure for the number of properties that have been acquired via compulsory purchase order for the delivery of the HS2 project, as it is land parcels that are required for its delivery and so that is what is recorded.

■ Northwich Station: Repairs and Maintenance

Mike Amesbury:

[\[3671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will hold discussions with Network Rail on the adequacy of the timetable to complete repairs at Northwich rail station.

Huw Merriman:

The station building exterior is planned for substantial completion by 29 January 2024 with further work planned to fit out the interior. We are working with our colleagues at Northern to confirm shortly.

Some of the scope of the work is outside of Network Rail ownership and we are liaising with ArchCo and the local authority to plan the work needed.

The reopening of the building and waiting room will be announced when the programme for the internal specification is finalised.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Stephen Morgan:

[\[3023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of pavement parking on the mobility of (a) vulnerable and disabled people, (b) children and (c) parents with buggies.

Guy Opperman:

We recognise that vehicles parked on the pavement can cause serious problems for pedestrians, particularly people with mobility or sight impairments, as well as those with prams or pushchairs. Local authorities already have powers to restrict pavement parking, but we have consulted on additional measures to help councils tackle pavement parking outside London. We are currently working through the policy options and the possible legislative opportunities for delivering them. Once a way forward is agreed we will publish our formal response.

The formal consultation response will be available to view at:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking.

Andrew Gwynne: [3159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle pavement parking in Denton and Reddish constituency.

Andrew Gwynne: [3160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had with discussions with (a) Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and (b) Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council on prohibition of pavement parking.

Andrew Gwynne: [3161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of pavement parking on levels of public transport use.

Andrew Gwynne: [3162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of levels of support for a default pavement parking ban among disabled people.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has consulted on options to help local authorities outside London tackle pavement parking, including a default ban. Views were expressed on a wide range of related issues, including public transport. The Department will publish a formal response when final decisions have been taken. The Department has not had recent discussions with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council or Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, but the consultation was open to all local authorities.

Vicky Foxcroft: [3298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will commission research on the potential impact of pavement parking on (a) disabled people and (b) other pedestrians.

Vicky Foxcroft: [3299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to reduce the cost of repairs to pavements that have been damaged by pavement parking.

Guy Opperman:

Local authorities are responsible for pavement maintenance and already have powers to tackle pavement parking by implementing Traffic Regulation Orders. The Department has consulted on further options to help local authorities tackle this issue and will publish a formal response when final decisions have been taken. The Department is fully aware that pavement parking can pose problems for all pedestrians, particularly for people with sight or mobility impairments, and can be the cause of damage to pavements.

Kim Johnson: [\[3369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle pavement parking in Liverpool.

Kim Johnson: [\[3370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with Liverpool City Council on the potential merits of prohibiting pavement parking in Liverpool.

Kim Johnson: [\[3372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the cost of damage to pavements caused by pavement parking in the last 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

Local authorities are responsible for pavement maintenance and already have powers to tackle pavement parking by implementing Traffic Regulation Orders. The Department has consulted on further options to help local authorities outside London tackle this issue and will publish a formal response when final decisions have been taken. Any new measures will be accompanied by an impact assessment. The Department has not had recent discussions with Liverpool City Council, but the consultation was open to all local authorities. The Department is fully aware of the damage that can occur to pavements from parked vehicles.

■ Pedestrian Areas

Kim Johnson: [\[3371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all roads have an accessible width of footway.

Guy Opperman:

Local authorities are responsible for maintaining footways within their local areas. The Department provides good practice guidance on designing accessible public realm in *Inclusive Mobility: a Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure*, which includes recommendations on footway widths to accommodate all road users.

It is for local authorities to consider how to apply this guidance to their roads to ensure infrastructure is designed in a way that enables them to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty.

■ Public Footpaths: Visual Impairment

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[2934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure footways are accessible for people with visual impairments.

Guy Opperman:

Local authorities are responsible for maintaining footways within their local areas. It is for them to ensure this is done in a way that complies with equalities legislation, particularly the Public Sector Equality Duty. However, the Government believes all public realms should be inclusive and accessible.

Railways: Midlands and North of England**Charlotte Nichols:** [3551]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which projects in the north and midlands will receive funds reallocated from the cancellation of Phase 2 of the HS2 project.

Huw Merriman:

You can see a full list of projects here: [Find out about every new transport project in your region - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-transport-projects)

All Network North schemes will be subject to the development and approval of business cases and will undergo formal governance in line with relevant fiscal and legal duties.

Roads: Finance**Greg Smith:** [3363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of highways funding for (a) Buckinghamshire and (b) England.

Guy Opperman:

Local highway authorities across England are set to benefit from an £8.3 billion boost in funding for highway maintenance, the biggest ever increase in funding for local roads. This funding is in addition to local transport funding from the last Spending Review and in addition to what local authorities were expecting to receive. Buckinghamshire will receive a minimum additional overall uplift of £51 million between 2023-24 and 2033-34, which should allow it to make major improvements to the condition of its local roads.

Roads: Safety**Tahir Ali:** [3341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase road safety in inner city areas.

Guy Opperman:

Responsibility for making decisions about the roads under its care, including measures to protect the safety of inner city road users, sits with the relevant Local Traffic Authority (LTA) for that inner city area.

The Department for Transport provides guidance to LTAs on various traffic management measures which impact road safety. A collection of these can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-transport-notes>.

Guidance provided by the Department for LTAs is kept updated to maintain the highest road safety standards possible.

■ **Taxis: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon:

[\[2888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage the transition to fully electric taxi fleets in Northern Ireland.

Guy Opperman:

Taxi policy is a devolved matter in all UK nations. However, the UK Government provides Plug in Vehicle Grants to support the transition to zero emission vehicles across the UK. These include a number of harder to transition vehicles including taxis, wheelchair accessible vehicles and vans. The eligibility for these grants is based on the vehicle design and capability. All grants are kept under continual review to ensure the best value for taxpayer's money.

Some local authorities in the devolved administrations may have received money to support chargepoint installation through the Levelling Up Fund, such as in Northern Ireland, which received £3 million towards the upgrade of the electric vehicle charging network.

TREASURY

■ **Banks: Selby and Ainsty**

Keir Mather:

[\[3390\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to mitigate the impact of bank branch closures in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Bim Afolami:

Decisions on opening and closing branches are taken by the management team of each bank on a commercial basis with which the Government does not interfere.

Nonetheless, the Government believes that the impact of branch closures should be mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have access to appropriate banking services.

The Government supports industry working together to provide alternative banking and cash services, such as Banking Hubs. To date, industry has committed to delivering new shared Banking Hubs in over 90 communities. Further alternative options to access everyday banking services can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking and via the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

Guidance from the Financial Conduct Authority also sets out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to close their branches. Firms are expected to carefully

consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This seeks to ensure the implementation of closure decisions is done in a way that treats customers fairly. The Consumer Duty also requires that firms deliver "good outcomes" for customers.

■ Freeports and Investment Zones: Tax Allowances

Sarah Olney:

[3638]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of tax reliefs in (a) freeports and (b) investment zones on tax revenues in each financial year between 2023-24 and 2028-29.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Office for Budget Responsibility has published estimates for the potential impact of the Freeport tax reliefs in England, Scotland and Wales in economic and fiscal outlook publications at previous fiscal events as below:

- English Freeports: [CP 545 – Office for Budget Responsibility – Economic and fiscal outlook – October 2021 \(obr.uk\)](#) (page 205)
- Scottish Freeports: [Economic and fiscal outlook - March 2023 \(obr.uk\)](#) (Page 160)
- Welsh Freeports : [Fiscal supplementary tables receipts and other November 2023.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

■ Halifax Bank of Scotland: Fraud

Andrew Bridgen:

[3232]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the Dame Linda Dobbs Review into Lloyds Banking Group's handling of the HBOS Reading fraud.

Bim Afolami:

As you are aware, Lloyds Banking Group has appointed Dame Linda Dobbs as an independent legal expert to consider whether issues relating to HBOS Reading were investigated and appropriately reported to authorities at the time by Lloyds, following its acquisition of HBOS. The findings from this review have not yet been published.

Once the report from this review has been completed, its findings will be shared with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), which will then consider what action is appropriate to take. As the FCA is an independent body, I am unable to comment further on these matters.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Sarah Olney:

[3637]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of freezing ISA allowances on tax revenues in each year between 2023-24 and 2028-29.

Sarah Olney: [3639]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the annual tax revenue accrued by not raising the ISA subscription limit.

Bim Afolami:

As set out in the Autumn Statement on the 22nd of November 2023, the effect on tax revenues of maintaining subscription limits at current levels for 2024-25 for Adult, Junior, Lifetime ISAs and Child Trust Funds are as available at :

[Autumn Statement 2023 Policy Costings - Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

■ **Multinational Companies: Taxation**

Mr Virendra Sharma: [3622]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the planned timetable for the implementation of OECD pillar two in (a) the US, (b) China, (c) India and (d) the EU.

Nigel Huddleston:

The UK is implementing the G20/OECD Pillar 2 rules from 31 December 2023. A considerable number of countries join the UK in doing so. This includes EU Member States, where a Directive mandates all Member States except the very smallest must implement for 31 December 2023.

I understand that China and India have not yet announced their plans on Pillar 2. The US administration have committed to align their policy with Pillar 2. These countries are all members of the 'Inclusive Framework' of countries and jurisdictions that meet, discuss and agree the rules and who must accept the rules as they are applied by those that have introduced them.

Pillar 2 is a global approach to disincentivising multinational profit shifting and levelling the playing field on tax competition, and the rules mean that not every jurisdiction is required to implement them to achieve this.

■ **Renewable Energy: Finance**

Tahir Ali: [2943]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to use revenue generated by new North Sea oil and gas licensing to fund green energy initiatives.

Gareth Davies:

The Government is of the view that spending and taxation decisions should be made separately to avoid limiting the ability to manage the public finances flexibly.

■ **Treasury: ICT**

Matt Rodda: [3657]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much their Department spent on (a) current and (b) legacy IT infrastructure (i) in total and (ii) purchased in 2013 or earlier in each of the last three years.

Gareth Davies:

Given there are so many definitions of IT infrastructure, we are unable to provide comprehensive data without clarification on the type of spend.

Matt Rodda:[\[3658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by their Department.

Gareth Davies:

There are no red-rated IT systems used in His Majesty's Treasury.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Children: Maintenance****Keir Mather:**[\[3404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps he has taken to improve the accuracy of the information collected on parent finances by the Child Maintenance Service.

Paul Maynard:

As a principal part of the service design the Department uses data from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and its own benefits data to assess 91% of Paying Parents earned income and benefit status, which are key parts of the maintenance calculation. We also receive evidence of income directly from Universal Credit where a customer is in receipt of Universal Credit with earnings.

Primarily, calculations are based on historic income amounts from the latest available tax year, provided via interface by HMRC, where a complete tax year is available within the last 6 years. Where historic tax year information is unavailable, or a customer requests a supersession on the basis that PP income is 25% different from the historic amount, we have two routes based on the PP employment circumstances:

- Where a customer is employed, we directly interface with Real Time Information (RTI) to obtain real time evidence of a customer's current income.
- Where a customer is self-employed, we require a fully complete and verified Self-Assessment Tax Return, of a more current tax year than that provided previously by HMRC. This negates mid-year changes for Self Employed customers as self-employed income can fluctuate from month to month.

Where a paying parent receives unearned income which can be legally considered in assessing child maintenance either parent can request a variation to the normal maintenance calculation. Cases involving suspected misrepresentation or fraudulent behaviour can be investigated by the Financial Investigation Unit (FIU). This is a

specialist team which can request information from financial institutions to check the accuracy of information the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) is given.

Where a change to current income is applied, CMS will further verify this against HMRC evidence at Annual Review, and again at a Periodic Current Income Check (+11 months from change to Current Income) to re-verify the income evidence with RTI. This provides comprehensive assurance as it is independent of the Paying Parent and directly interfaces with HMRC, reducing the opportunity for misrepresentation or inaccuracies. We have increased the proportion of changes where we automatically interface with RTI, including changes instigated by Receiving Parents.

In October 2023, the Government announced intentions to introduce legislation so that unearned income can be taken into account automatically when the maintenance calculation is made to ensure a paying parent's maintenance calculation reflects their ability to pay. We are currently engaging with stakeholders on how best to implement this.

The National Audit Office accuracy figures are published on their website and confirm CMS achieved better than 99% for the last 6 years (2016/17 to 2021/22) however, they are still auditing 2022/23 accuracy.

■ **Disability: Employment**

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government's consultation on Disability workforce reporting, published on 16 December 2021, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring companies with more than 250 employees to publish annual data on the number of disabled people they employ as a proportion of their workforce; and when he plans to respond to that consultation.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to require companies with more than 250 employees to publish data annually on (a) their disability pay gap and (b) the proportion of disabled employees within each pay quartile.

Tom Pursglove:

Following the judgement from the Court of Appeal that the National Disability Strategy is lawful, work has recommenced on disability workforce reporting. Analysis of the consultation is underway and we will publish the findings and next steps in 2024.

■ **Jobcentres: Staff**

Alison McGovern: [\[2863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of work coach appointments took place in person in the latest period for which data is available.

Jo Churchill:

The information provided in the table below shows the number and proportion of attended appointments between 14/10/2023 and 14/11/2023.

APPOINTMENT CHANNEL	NUMBER	PERCENT
Phone	548,000	22.9
Video	109,000	4.6
In person	1,736,000	72.5

These figures are derived from DWP's administrative data and relate to in-person, telephone, and video appointments with Universal Credit claimants. All Universal Credit types are included. Non-Universal Credit appointments are not included. The numbers of appointments have been rounded to the nearest thousand, and the percentages to the nearest 0.1%.

Alison McGovern:[\[2864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the minimum training required for new work coaches is.

Jo Churchill:

All DWP new entrant work coaches undergo a minimum mandatory learning journey comprising of a combination of induction, onboarding, and operational fundamental learning prior to progressing into their work coach technical learning.

The work coach specific learning is a total of 30 days and is a combination of facilitated learning and consolidation, this is followed by a 2-day mental health learning event.

Additionally, all new work coaches undergo mandatory Keeping Safe learning which is for employees who have direct contact with members of the public.

■ **Poverty: Children****Afzal Khan:**[\[3325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to reduce child poverty in Manchester, Gorton constituency.

Mims Davies:

The Government is committed to reducing poverty, including child poverty, and supporting low-income families. We will spend around £276bn through the welfare system in Great Britain in 2023/24 including around £124bn on people of working age and children.

From April 2023, we uprated benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1% and, subject to Parliamentary approval, working-age benefits will rise by 6.7% from April 2024, in line with inflation.

In 2021/22 there were 1.7 million fewer people in absolute poverty after housing costs than in 2009/10, including 400,000 fewer children.

With almost one million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting people, including parents, to move into and progress in work. This approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. The latest statistics show that in 2021/22 children living in workless households were 5 times more likely to be in absolute poverty, after housing costs, than those where all adults work.

To help people into work, our core Jobcentre offer provides a range of options, including face-to-face time with work coaches and interview assistance. In addition, there is specific support targeted towards young people, people aged 50 plus and job seekers with disabilities or health issues.

In addition, the voluntary in-work progression offer started to roll-out in April 2022. It is now available in all Jobcentres across Great Britain. We estimate that around 1.2m low-paid benefit claimants will be eligible for support to progress into higher-paid work.

To further support parents into work, on 28th June 2023, the maximum monthly amounts that a parent can be reimbursed for their childcare increased by 47%, from £646.35 for one child and £1,108.04 for two or more children to £950.92 and £1,630.15 respectively. Importantly, we can now also provide even more help with upfront childcare costs when parents move into work or increase their hours.

To support those who are in work, on 1 April 2024, the Government will increase the National Living Wage for workers aged 21 years and over by 9.8% to £11.44 representing an increase of over £1,800 to the gross annual earnings of a full-time worker on the NLW.

This government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living which is why we are providing total support of £104bn over 2022-25 to help households and individuals.

Included within this, to support low-income households with increasing rent costs, the government will raise Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents in April 2024. This will benefit 1.6 million low-income households, who will be around £800 a year better off on average in 2024-25.

■ Social Security Benefits: Armed Forces

Ben Lake:

[3641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to disregard compensation offered to wounded (a) service people and (b) veterans under the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation schemes as income from (i) Income Support, (ii) Income-

based Jobseeker's Allowance, (iii) Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, (iv) Working Tax Credit, and (v) Pension Credit.

Ben Lake: [\[3642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to disregard compensation offered to wounded (a) service people and (b) veterans under the (i) Service Invaliding Pensions and (ii) Service Attributable Pensions scheme as income from (A) Universal Credit, (B) Child Tax Credit, (C) Income Support, (D) Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, (E) Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, (F) Working Tax Credit, (G) Social Care payments and (H) Pension Credit.

Mims Davies:

Universal Credit replaced a number of benefits and tax credits. It was decided that War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Payments would not be taken into account in Universal Credit. Guaranteed Income Payments, Service Attributable Pensions and service-attributable, non-taxable Service Invalidity Pensions are also not taken into account. However, it has never been the intention that the rules around the treatment of income and indeed other rules - should be changed across the legacy and other benefits to align them with Universal Credit.

Social care payments are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Care.

Ben Lake: [\[3643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department has taken to incorporate the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant into welfare and benefits policy making.

Ben Lake: [\[3645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that (a) serving members of the Armed Forces and (b) veterans in receipt of compensation for a service-related injury are not disadvantaged compared to their civilian counterparts in the receipt of welfare benefits.

Mims Davies:

The department takes its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant very seriously. It has an Armed Forces Advocate in place at Director level who is responsible for ensuring that members of the armed forces community do not suffer any disadvantage as a result of service. This covers both the development of policy and the way the department delivers its services. The advocate is supported by officials who provide expert advice to policy makers and others on the application of the covenant.

DWP has a range of special provisions in place to take account of the particular needs and circumstances of the armed forces community, ranging from delivering the Armed Forces Independence Payment to providing for special National Insurance Credits for spouses.

Some armed forces compensation payments also receive special treatment compared to similar payments and replies to the hon. Member's other questions set this out in more detail.

Ben Lake:

[\[3644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require local authorities to disregard compensation offered to wounded (a) service people and (b) veterans under the (i) War Pensions and (ii) Armed Forces Compensation scheme as income from (A) Housing Benefit, (B) Council Tax Support, (C) Discretionary Housing Payments and (D) Disabled Facilities Grants.

Mims Davies:

Housing Benefit regulations permit local authorities to disregard beyond the standard disregard of £10 a week for the whole or part of any War Pensions and guaranteed income payments under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) can be paid to those who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. Local authorities (LAs) administer the scheme as they are best placed to make informed judgements about relative priorities and needs in their area to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported and the funds are targeted effectively. There are no prescribed resource tests and payments are entirely at LA discretion. LAs simply have to be satisfied that the person concerned is in receipt of housing support (through HB or housing element of UC) and needs further financial assistance towards housing costs.

This Department is not responsible for the policies concerning Council Tax Support and Disabled Facilities Grants.

■ Social Security Benefits: Telephone Services

Nadia Whittome:

[\[3560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times to speak to the Disability Service Centre.

Tom Pursglove:

We have increased Case Worker resource and consequently wait times on the PIP enquiry line have significantly improved in recent weeks.

It is not possible to increase performance further until the resource position improves further, because we have to deploy Case Workers on processing as well as telephony, to meet demand in both areas of work, which are equally important.

DWP is continually developing new technological capability aimed at providing better information, tailored to customer needs, at the point of call. Going forward, this approach will also help to reduce waiting times for customers.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

TRANSPORT

■ Flitwick Station

Alistair Strathern:

[963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what Network Rail's planned timetable is for completing accessibility work to Flitwick railway station.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 13 November 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Huw Merriman:

As part of our recent Network North announcement, the Government confirmed £350m will be made available to improve the accessibility of our train stations.

We are assessing over 300 nominations for Access for All funding beyond 2024, including a nomination for Flitwick railway station. If successful, the funding will create an obstacle free, accessible route from the station entrance to platforms. Successful nominations will be announced in due course.

Funding has been identified to deliver step free routes between street level and all platforms at Flitwick station. Design work is nearing completion and Network Rail hope to begin onsite delivery in Spring 2024, with all upgrades entering passenger service in early 2025.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Lionesses Futures Fund**

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lucy Frazer): [\[HCWS76\]](#)

The Government has today announced it is investing £25 million in 2024-25, complemented with £5 million of additional investment from The Football Association, to create a new Lionesses Futures Fund. This fund is expected to deliver 30 state-of-the-art 3G artificial grass pitches across England, providing gold-standard provision for women and girls.

This funding honours the Lionesses' win at the UEFA EURO 2022 Final and their journey to the final of the FIFA World Cup 2023, as well as their efforts to continue to raise the profile of women's football, both domestically and internationally. It is important to build on these successes to ensure a long-lasting and sustainable future for women's football in this country.

The Football Foundation, the charitable body responsible for delivering the existing Government (as well as FA and Premier League) investment in grassroots facilities in England, will lead delivery of this new fund. The Foundation is applying robust principles to identify sites to benefit from this investment across all of England. The Government will continue to monitor and work closely with the Foundation to ensure projects have women's and girls' usage at the heart of their plans.

Many of the selected projects - which will be confirmed by the Football Foundation in due course - will have a women and girls-led club at their heart. In total these sites will support an estimated 8,000 unique female players - built around women and girls' priority use, using reserved peak-time slots, women and girls-only evenings and priority booking for women's and girls' teams to drive up participation and create pathways for growth.

The decision to focus investment on artificial grass pitches allows for increased hours of playing time as well as a larger variety of playing formats, creating more opportunities for women and girls to get involved at a recreational level. We know that a lack of appropriate and accessible changing facilities is a current barrier to women's and girls' participation. With this in mind, each site will also have a new or upgraded changing facility.

The new investment the Government is committing to today builds on our existing investment of over £300 million in grassroots and multi-sport facilities across the UK between 2021 and 2025 (which we deliver in partnership with the Football Associations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). This funding also seeks to increase access for underrepresented groups (including women and girls) and ensures that every community has access to the grassroots facilities it needs.

We are in a defining period for women's football in this country and the Government is committed to honouring the Lionesses and building on their legacy - this investment will

transform grassroots access and make sure that high quality facilities are ready and available when women and girls turn up to play.

EDUCATION

■ Early Years Update

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Families and Wellbeing (David Johnston): [\[HCWS78\]](#)

The bold and transformative reforms to childcare that this government announced at the Spring Budget, including the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever made, will help to give children the best start in life and is a core element to our long-term strategy to grow the economy and get people back into work.

By 2027-28, we expect the amount of money we are investing in childcare to have doubled from £4 billion to £8 billion each year and it will give working parents 30 free hours of childcare per week from when their children are 9 months old until they start school.

Today's announcements are a vital next step to deliver our new entitlements for parents, providers, local authorities, and the early years sector in preparation for the first phase of delivery in April 2024.

They include details of when and how eligible working parents of two-year-olds can apply to receive the first 15 hours free childcare for 2 year olds and the significant increases to sector funding to support the successful delivery of the upcoming entitlements.

Early Years Funding

We have published the new Local Authority rates funding for 2024-25 alongside the government's response to the recent consultation on early years funding.

In 2024-25, we are providing over £400m additional funding to deliver a significant uplift to the hourly rate paid to local authorities for the entitlements. This includes £67m of new funding to reflect the 9.8% increase in the National Living Wage from April 2024, £57m in recognition of teacher pay and pension costs in 2024, and the £288m additional funding for 2024-25 announced at Spring Budget in March 2023.

The final local hourly funding rates for 2024-25 include an average 4.7% increase for the current 3 and 4-year-old entitlement, from £5.62 in 2023-24 to £5.88 in 2024-25. Average funding rates for 2-year-olds will be £8.28 per hour, and rates for under 2s will be £11.22 per hour.

As set out in the government response to our consultation, there was broad agreement with our proposals relating to funding the entitlements for 2-year-olds and under 2s, and we will implement the majority of the proposals included in the consultation. This includes a new national funding formula to distribute entitlement funding for 2-year-olds and under 2s, extending the majority of the existing local funding rules to the new entitlements, and extending eligibility for the Disability Access Fund (DAF) and the Early Years Pupil

Premium (EYPP) to younger age groups. These proposals will ensure that funding for the early years entitlements are distributed fairly, efficiently, and supports delivery of the entitlements across the country. The full consultation response has been published on GOV.UK [<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-funding-extension-of-the-entitlements>].

Full details on the 2024-25 local authority hourly funding rates, including step-by-step tables, have been published on GOV.UK [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2024-to-2025>].

Childcare entitlement codes

From 02 January, eligible working parents will be able to apply for their 15 hours childcare for their two-year-olds. Parents have until 31 March to apply for a code.

To apply for a childcare code, each parent needs to be working and earning the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum/living wage. This means that each parent needs to earn from just over £9,500 per year to be eligible for 15 hours a week of childcare during term time. Parents must also each earn under £100,000 adjusted net income per year to remain eligible for the entitlement.

More information on the range of childcare support available to parents can be found on the Childcare Choices website, where parents can explore the early education entitlements and other government help with childcare costs.

Capital funding allocations

We will publish this week the allocations of the £100m of capital funding for the 2023-24 financial year to support local authorities in delivering the expansion of the 30-hours early years entitlements and our commitment that all parents will be able to access wraparound care from 8am-6pm by 2026.

Local authorities are responsible for mapping supply and demand in their areas to ensure there are sufficient places available locally. They will be expected to work their local private, voluntary, and independent providers and schools to introduce or expand childcare provision in their area where there are gaps in provision.

The funding is anticipated to help deliver thousands of new places across the country.

Full details of the allocations, including guidance for local authorities and childcare providers will be published on GOV.UK this week.

Childminder grants

The Childminder Start-up Grant Scheme is open for applications from Thursday 30th November. The Scheme supports new childminders by providing them with grant funding, worth up to £7.2m, helping childminders with the cost of setting up their own businesses.

As previously announced, we are offering £600 to new childminders registering with Ofsted, and £1200 to new childminders registering with a childminder agency (CMA). Grants to childminders registering with CMAs will be paid in two instalments, with a 6-month limit on claiming the second instalment.

Childminders must apply for the grant within two months of registering as a childminder, or within two months of the Scheme launching.

The scheme is available to all new childminders who have completed their registration on or after 15th March 2023. Individuals who have previously been registered as childminders and wish to re-register into the sector may also apply for the scheme, but there must be at least a 12-month gap between the date of their previous registration being cancelled and their new registration being finalised.

The Scheme will be facilitated by Ecorys UK Ltd, and new childminders can apply on GOV.UK.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Restoring our natural heritage

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Steve Barclay):

[\[HCWS77\]](#)

Tackling climate change and restoring nature go hand in hand. As we prepare for the next international climate discussion at COP28, today we are delivering a package of measures to steward and restore our natural heritage, connect people with nature and strengthen our global environmental leadership. Together, these measures are a huge step forward in delivering our Environmental Improvement Plan.

From rare British rainforests in our countryside to the trees in our towns and cities, we are investing in nature and ensuring more people can enjoy its benefits. We will work in partnership with businesses, communities and farmers to restore nature across the country.

We know that access to the countryside boosts our wellbeing and the rural economy. Getting out into nature can help our physical and mental wellbeing. Natural England research shows that we could save the NHS more than £2 billion a year if everyone had good access to green space.

Every year there are 270 million visits to National Parks and National Landscapes (the new name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in recognition of their importance to the nation) but we need to do more to make sure everyone, especially those unfamiliar with the countryside, have the chance to enjoy it responsibly.

To deliver on our manifesto commitment, we will start the process to designate a new National Park. To support existing National Parks and National Landscapes, government will publish the final response to the Landscapes Review and provide an additional £10 million in the new year to help them achieve more for people and nature. Government is also making an additional £5 million available this year, for Protected Landscapes teams to apply for, to improve the water environment in these special places.

To restore nature and support responsible access to the countryside we are:

- Taking forward a further 34 new Landscape Recovery projects, involving over 700 land managers across the country. Together these projects will restore more than 35,000 hectares of peatland, sustainably manage more than 20,000 hectares of woodland, including some temperate rainforest, create over 7,000 hectares of new woodland, and benefit more than 160 protected sites (SSSIs), alongside the sustainable production of food. The successful round 2 projects will now be awarded a share of around £25 million in development funding to finalise delivery plans, and secure money from private investors through green finance. This builds on the success of the first 22 Landscape Recovery projects that are already underway, aiming to restore more than 600 km of rivers and targeting the conservation of more than 260 flagship species.
- Publishing a plan to recover England's temperate rainforests, a globally rare and important habitat found in, for example, Cornwall, Devon, and Cumbria.
- Creating two new community forests in Tees Valley and Derbyshire – locally led projects planting trees near to where people live and work.
- Launching a competition for a second National Forest - inspired by the existing National Forest in the Midlands, this competition will support the creation of a new forest for the nation in England, helping to increase public access to woodlands, boost tree-planting, support nature recovery and tackle climate change.
- Publishing the Woodland Access Implementation Plan to protect, improve and expand access to woodlands, enabling more people to spend time in nature.
- Delivering our Biodiversity Net Gain package so new homes improve the local environment.
- Giving residents a say on the future of street trees in their neighbourhood, implementing a new duty to ensure communities are consulted before trees are cut down.
- Dedicating £2.5 million of funding to connect more children with nature, building on the success of the Generation Green project. The funding will help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to experience the wonders of our most beautiful landscapes.

These announcements today will build on our environmental leadership and help us to deliver our commitments to protect 30% of land by 2030. We have already created or restored wildlife habitats the size of Dorset and passed the world-leading Environment Act with long-term targets to restore nature. At COP28, we will once again champion nature as a vital ally to tackle climate change and commit to get more people out into nature.

A full list of the successful projects in the second round of Landscape Recovery can be found in Annex A

Attachments:

1. Annex A – Landscape Recovery round two projects [Restoring our natural heritage WMS Appendix A.docx]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Public Health Update**

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Victoria Atkins): [\[HCWS79\]](#)

The Government remains committed to ending new HIV transmissions within England by 2030. In order to do this successfully, we must identify and treat more of those who are unknowingly living with HIV.

As part of our HIV Action Plan, NHS England is currently operating a bloodborne virus emergency department opt-out testing programme for HIV, and Hepatitis B and C for 34 emergency departments across London, Manchester, Salford, Brighton and Blackpool, focusing on areas with extremely high HIV prevalence (5 or more HIV cases per 1,000 residents aged 15-59), in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) HIV Testing guidance.

This means that anyone aged 16 years and over attending an emergency department in these areas and having a routine blood test will get automatically tested for HIV, and Hepatitis B and C, unless they opt-out. Accessible public-facing information about testing, its benefits and how they can opt-out allows individuals to make informed choices.

Through their recently published evaluation report, the data from NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) indicate that the existing opt-out testing programme has been highly successful in areas of extremely high HIV prevalence, helping identify over 2,000 cases of blood borne viruses, including 550 cases of people living with undiagnosed or untreated HIV.

After careful consideration of the available evidence, I am pleased to announce the Government is committing to new research, commissioned through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), to evaluate the expansion of HIV opt-out testing to a further 46 emergency departments, in areas across England where there is high HIV prevalence (2 or more HIV cases per 1,000 residents). Funding will support 12 months of testing for each emergency department, to begin during the next financial year.

We anticipate that this will be an effective way to reach a substantial proportion of the estimated 4,500 people England who are living with HIV but unaware of their status.

We will continue to keep Parliament updated on our progress to meet our 2030 ambitions as set out in our HIV Action Plan. We also want to thank our partners across the NHS, in NHS England, in UKHSA, local government, and the community and voluntary sector for their work towards ending HIV transmission in England.