

Session 2017-19
No. 256



Thursday
4 April 2019

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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Earl Howe	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Barran	Whip
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Department for International Development and Treasury Spokesperson
Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office
Baroness Buscombe	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Callanan	Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
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Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development
Lord Young of Cookham	Cabinet Office Spokesperson and Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Thursday, 4 April 2019

Citizens' Rights: UK Nationals in the EU

[HLWS1445]

Lord Callanan: Citizens have always been our priority in the negotiations for our departure from the EU. Today I am setting out further details on the steps that the Government is taking to protect UK nationals.

Reciprocal arrangements for social security coordination, including reciprocal healthcare, in a no deal scenario

UK nationals who have chosen to build their lives in the EU and wish to remain there are concerned about their social security entitlements, including healthcare cover in the event of a no deal.

In the Government's December announcement on citizens' rights, we highlighted that aspects of the social security coordination section of the Withdrawal Agreement, including reciprocal healthcare, require reciprocity from the EU or Member States and cannot be protected unilaterally. We set out that we were exploring further options to protect these rights in a no deal scenario and the Department for Health and Social Care proposed maintaining existing healthcare arrangements with EU Member States and EFTA states until 31 December 2020 on 19 March; with the aim of minimising disruption to citizens' healthcare provision.

However, to fully protect UK nationals in the EU, the UK is seeking to protect the social security coordination rights of UK nationals in the EU, including reciprocal healthcare, by reaching reciprocal arrangements with the EU or Member States to maintain existing rights for a transitional period until 31 December 2020, consistent with our guarantee of the healthcare rights of EU citizens living in the UK.

Family reunification

UK nationals are also concerned about their right to return from the EU with non-UK national family members after exit. Having listened to these concerns, I can confirm that UK nationals will be able to return to the UK with their existing close family members under current rules, until 29 March 2022. This means that where the relationship exists before exit or where a child was born overseas after this date, they will be able to apply to and qualify for the EU Settlement Scheme until 29 March 2022. After this date, such family members will be able to return to the UK by applying under the relevant UK Immigration Rules.

UK nationals living in the EU who return to the UK after exit will be able to be joined by future spouses and partners, where the relationship was established after exit, and other dependent relatives until 31 December 2020 if they previously lived in the EU with that family member. From 2021, the UK Immigration Rules will apply to such family reunion. These arrangements will apply in both a

deal and no deal scenario, providing UK nationals in the EU with sufficient continuity after exit to allow families to plan with confidence, while also bringing family reunion rights for all UK nationals in the UK and abroad into alignment from 29 March 2022.

Access to benefits and services

The Government has already announced that UK nationals living in the EU will continue to receive benefits, including child benefit and disability benefit, where the recipient is exporting a UK benefit to their EU country of residence. UK nationals in the EU who are already in receipt of a UK benefit, including the State Pension, will also continue to receive these benefits should they choose to return to the UK.

UK nationals returning to live in the UK who meet the ordinary residence test will be able to use NHS services. This means that UK nationals who have returned to the UK permanently in a no deal scenario would have access to NHS-funded healthcare on the same basis as UK nationals already living here.

UK nationals considering returning to the UK and planning to make new applications for benefits and services should check eligibility requirements for the relevant benefits and services on gov.uk. The usual entitlement conditions, which exist for both resident and returning UK nationals, will apply and we expect most returning UK nationals will be able to satisfy the necessary eligibility requirements. Certain benefits and services, such as non-contributory benefits, include satisfying certain residence criteria and individual Decision Makers will carefully consider each application to ensure that UK nationals receive the benefits and services that they are entitled to.

Access to Higher Education, Further Education 19+ and Apprenticeship Funding in the UK

UK nationals living in the EEA or Switzerland on exit day, who wish to study in England, will continue to be eligible for home fee status and student support from Student Finance England, along with access to Further Education 19+ funding for courses and apprenticeships in England starting up to seven years from exit day in a no deal scenario. In a deal scenario, the seven year transition period will commence at the end of the Implementation Period.

The seven year transition period will ensure that eligible UK nationals living in the EEA or Switzerland wishing to study in Further Education 19+, Higher Education, or undertake an apprenticeship in England, will be able to do so immediately on their return to the UK during this transition period.

Further information

The measures outlined above are without prejudice to the rights and privileges accorded, by virtue of the Common Travel Area, to Irish and UK nationals when in each other's state.

The Government continues to pursue a ring-fenced agreement with the EU and has exchanged letters with the European Commission on the subject. The UK has also

reached separate agreements with the EEA EFTA states and Switzerland, which will mean that in a no deal scenario UK and EFTA nationals living in each other's countries before exit day will be able to continue living their lives broadly as they do today.

We will continue to provide updates to UK nationals in the EU on gov.uk and through our network of Embassies, Consulates and High Commissions.

Let me reiterate that securing the negotiated Withdrawal Agreement is in the mutual interest of all our citizens. It is the most effective way for the Government to guarantee the rights of UK nationals in the EU and to provide certainty.

I will be depositing the policy paper *Citizens' Rights - UK nationals in the EU* in the Libraries of both Houses.

Common Frameworks Analysis

[HLWS1449]

Lord Young of Cookham: My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today placing in the libraries of both Houses a copy of the revised UK common frameworks analysis, which is also available on Gov.uk. When the UK leaves the European Union, powers previously exercised at EU level that intersect with devolved competence will flow back directly to Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. In some areas, we will need to maintain UK wide approaches, or common frameworks, after we leave the EU. Frameworks will create a common approach across the UK in a range of policy areas. They will provide a number of benefits, including ensuring it remains simple for businesses from different parts of the UK to trade with each other, helping the UK to fulfil its international obligations, safeguarding our common resources and ensure the effective functioning of the UK internal market.

The revised analysis sets out the progress we have made to develop common frameworks in collaboration with the devolved administrations since the first analysis was published in March 2018. There is a reduction in the number of policy areas where primary legislation is being considered, from 24 to 21, in these areas only some of the elements of the framework are expected to be in legislation. In the majority of areas (reduced from 82 to 78), non-legislative arrangements, such as a concordat, are being considered. The number of areas where no further action is required to create a framework has increased from 49 to 63. In these areas, to ensure certainty for businesses is maintained, the UK Government and devolved administrations will continue to cooperate when appropriate. Finally, there are now only four areas where competence is disputed, and conversations between the UK Government and devolved administrations continue (reduced from twelve in the first publication), demonstrating the significant progress made in this area. These changes demonstrate the careful and considered

joint work underway to establish common frameworks, which in some areas has led to reclassification.

The cooperative approach to frameworks so far demonstrates the progress that can be achieved through proceeding collaboratively. We welcome the commitment demonstrated by the Scottish and Welsh Governments to agree on the direction of travel set out in the analysis and to continued close working to develop frameworks. We also welcome the commitment to cooperative working, including in policy areas where no formal common frameworks are required.

Ebola Outbreak: UK Response

[HLWS1453]

Lord Bates: My Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for International Development, has made the following statement:

The number of cases of Ebola in the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has recently passed 1000. Given this, it is both proper and timely to update the House on the steps which the UK Government is taking to continue to support the response in DRC and to ensure robust and effective preparedness in neighbouring countries.

Since I last updated the House on 14 February, there has been an increase in the number of confirmed and probable cases of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in eastern DRC. As of 31 March 2019, 1089 Ebola cases have been recorded (1023 confirmed and 66 probable) and 679 people have died. Twenty-one health zones have been affected and twelve are currently reporting active new cases.

Despite the success of the response in curbing the disease in a number of health zones, the outbreak is still not under control. The last few weeks have seen a substantial increase in the number of cases reported, and the security context remains extremely challenging. In late February, two Médecins Sans Frontières Ebola treatment centres were attacked in Butembo and Katwa. The UK condemns these attacks in the strongest of terms; health workers fighting this disease should never be the target of violence and nor should patients. However, I am pleased to note that the affected treatment centres have now re-opened, run for the moment by the Government of DRC's Ministry of Health in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), both of whom the UK is supporting.

The attacks underline the difficulty of responding to this outbreak in an area of ongoing conflict, and the vital importance of strengthening community engagement to break the chain of transmission. Despite the challenges faced there has not been a rapid rise in cases as was seen during the West Africa outbreak in 2014-16.

With UK support and technical advice, the response is now shifting to become more locally-owned, including through the hiring and training of more local staff, which will have the additional benefit of building longer-term

health capacity and resilience. The response communications strategy has been revised to ensure that messages come primarily from local, influential leaders and figureheads.

The UK remains one of the major supporters of the response and DFID has recently released new funds to the third Strategic Response Plan for this outbreak. Some of this new funding has been used to target specific areas of the response that need strengthening, particularly around infection prevention and control, and water, sanitation and hygiene. The vaccination campaign remains a key element of the response, with over 93 thousand people vaccinated in DRC so far. Once again, at the request of the Government of DRC who are leading the response I am not announcing specific funding figures to avoid putting front-line responders at further risk of attack.

As mentioned in my statement to the House on 26 March regarding Cyclone Idai, I recently spoke with both Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, and Sir Mark Lowcock, Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to underline UK support and urge further measures on the part of the UN system in tackling the outbreak. We welcome WHO and OCHA strengthening their leadership in-country to support the DRC Government in delivering an effective response.

There remains a significant risk of transmission to neighbouring countries and measures are being taken to prepare accordingly. The UK is leading donor efforts to support regional preparedness. In Uganda we have supported the vaccination of 4,420 front-line health workers, with a further 1,000 planned over the next month. We have also helped establish a screening facility at the border with DRC. In Rwanda we have strengthened surveillance activities at borders, carried out infection prevention and control training, and supported the roll out of vaccinations for at-risk health workers. We have also supported similar activities including in South Sudan, and have recently deployed staff to strengthen efforts in Burundi.

The risk of Ebola to the UK population remains very low. Public Health England continues to monitor the situation daily and review the risk assessment on a two-weekly basis.

The UK is committed to supporting our partners to end this outbreak of Ebola as quickly as possible. We have continued our 'no regrets' approach, providing both funding and expertise – recognising that this is an international crisis that both requires and deserves a sustained international response. Tackling the spread of deadly diseases in Africa is firmly in our national interest – saving lives, reducing suffering, and helping prevent transmission across borders.

Foreign Affairs Council

[HLWS1450]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Alan Duncan), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) will take place in Luxembourg on 8 April. It will be chaired by the High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini.

The FAC will discuss Current Affairs, Afghanistan, Eastern Partnership and Venezuela.

Current Affairs

We expect HRVP Mogherini to update Ministers following her visits to the G7 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Dinard and the League of Arab States Summit in Tunis. She will also provide an update on the first round of Ukrainian Presidential elections.

Afghanistan

Ministers will discuss developments in Afghanistan, including recent efforts to make progress on peace, and will look ahead to the Presidential elections scheduled for later in 2019. They will also discuss the EU's future role in Afghanistan.

Eastern Partnership

Ministers will discuss preparations for the Eastern Partnership Ministerial meeting on 13 May and will reaffirm the EU's commitment to supporting greater resilience, security and prosperity across the region. They will assess progress against the priorities identified as the '20 deliverables for 2020': to achieve a stronger economy, governance, connectivity and society. Ministers will also take stock of ongoing work to mark the Partnership's 10th anniversary.

Venezuela

Ministers will receive an update from HRVP Mogherini following the latest meeting of the International Contact Group on Venezuela and on plans for next steps. Ministers will discuss how to maintain pressure on the Maduro regime including the possibility of further targeted sanctions.

Council Conclusions

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Afghanistan, which call for an Afghan-led process and confirm EU support and its future role, as well as the Court of Auditors' Special Report on Mali and Niger.

General Affairs Council

[HLWS1446]

Lord Callanan: The UK and the EU have agreed an extension to Article 50, until 12 April 2019, which is legally binding in EU and international law. Until we leave the European Union, we remain committed to fulfilling our rights and obligations as a full Member State, and continue to act in good faith.

I will attend the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 9 April 2019 to represent the UK.

The provisional agenda includes:

Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 - 2027

Ministers and the Commission will discuss progress on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations. The intention is to reach an agreement on the negotiations in autumn 2019.

Conclusions on the Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030"

The Council will adopt conclusions on the reflection paper titled "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030, on the follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change". The paper was released in January 2019 by the Commission as part of its 2019 Work Programme. Ministers will discuss this paper ahead of the Sibiu Summit in May, where issues relating to Europe's future will be discussed.

Values of the Union - Hungary / Article 7(1) TEU Reasoned Proposal

Ministers will discuss the Article 7(1) procedure in relation to Hungary.

Rule of Law in Poland / Article 7(1) TEU Reasoned Proposal

The Commission will provide an update on 'Rule of Law' developments in Poland and Ministers will discuss next steps.

Informal ECOFIN

[HLWS1454]

Lord Bates: My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Philip Hammond) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

An informal meeting of Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) Ministers will be held in Bucharest on 05 – 06 April 2019. Ministers will discuss the following:

Working Lunch - Multiannual Financial Framework

Ministers will discuss the Multiannual Finance Framework in the context of the European Semester and financing of the EU budget.

Working Session I

The Council will then be joined by Central Bank Governors for the first working session.

a) Institutional Cycle Priorities

Following a presentation from Bruegel, Ministers and Central Bank Governors will discuss the priorities for the next EU institutional cycle.

b) Capital Markets Union

Ministers and Central Bank Governors will then discuss the way forward for the Capital Markets Union.

Working Session II

a) Labour Mobility in the EU

Following a presentation from the Centre for European Policy Studies, Ministers will discuss the macroeconomic and fiscal impact of labour mobility in the EU.

b) Taxation and Economic Growth

Ministers will discuss the role of taxation in supporting EU economic growth.

c) Preparation of the April G20 and IMF meetings

Ministers will be invited to approve the EU Terms of Reference for the G20 meeting and International Monetary and Financial Committee Statement, ahead of the Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C.

Intellectual Property Office: Performance Targets

[HLWS1448]

Lord Henley: My hon Friend the Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore) has today made the following statement:

Our Industrial Strategy sets out the Government's vision for making the UK the most innovative country in the world. The UK starts from a position of strength and is already ranked in the top four of the Global Innovation Index and top 10 by the World Bank as the best place to start and grow a business. But the global landscape is changing and we must continue to invest in research and development. The Industrial Strategy has set an ambition to raise total research and development to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027, helping businesses access the right funds and equip them to face the challenges and opportunities presented by new technologies and new ways of doing business.

Intellectual Property (IP) plays a crucial role in innovation and touches everything that makes modern life more enjoyable, easier, safer and prosperous. It provides inventors, creators and entrepreneurs with the confidence to invest knowing that they will reap the benefits of their investments. UK investment in IP rights reached almost £64 billion in 2016 and studies have shown that industries that rely on IP have accounted for over a quarter of UK employment and almost half of GDP. Our IP system matters. It creates jobs and economic growth and is helping to propel Britain to the forefront of innovation.

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) Corporate Plan 2019-20 explains how through its stewardship of the IP system, it will help the UK to be the most innovative and creative country in the world. It will do this through delivering excellent IP services, creating a world leading IP environment and attracting and retaining the best people by making the IPO a brilliant place to work. This plan outlines the start of the IPO's transformational journey, which will provide truly modern IP services to its customers.

The UK already has one of the best IP regimes in the world, consistently ranked as one of the top regimes in indices such as those from the Taylor-Wessing Global IP Index and US Chamber of Commerce International IP Index, and during 2019-20, the IPO will continue to contribute to building a business environment that makes

the UK the best place in the world to start and run a business.

As an Executive Agency and Trading Fund of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the IPO have set targets which are agreed by Ministers and laid before Parliament. I am glad that today I can inform the House that for 2019-2020 the IPO's targets are:

- At least 85% of our customers to rate us 8/10 for overall satisfaction.
- By the end of March 2020 we want 90% of renewals to be conducted via the new enterprise-wide digital renewals service.
- 75% of the businesses we reach confirm that they are able to make informed decisions about their IP.
- Deliver our services efficiently through continuously improving our systems, processes and ways of working to make things better for our customers and our people, reduce costs and improve the value for money we provide. Our target is to achieve efficiencies worth at least 3.5% of our core operating costs.

Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission

[HLWS1451]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mark Field), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I am announcing today the publication of the recent Tailored Review of the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission (MACC), an Arm's Length Body of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

The MACC was established in 1953 to express gratitude to the American people for the post-war support and assistance conceived by US Secretary of State George C Marshall, subsequently known as the Marshall Plan. It provides postgraduate scholarships in the UK for US students with the potential to excel in their chosen fields of study and future careers. Marshall alumni become advocates for greater mutual understanding and cooperation between our two countries, bolstering our bilateral relationship and our soft power.

As a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), the MACC is required to undergo a Tailored Review at least once in every Parliament. The principal aims of Tailored Reviews are to ensure public bodies remain fit for purpose, are well governed and properly accountable for what they do.

The full report can be read on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tailored-review-of-the-marshall-aid-commemoration-commission>

This Review involved consultation with a broad range of stakeholders across the UK and the US, including MACC commissioners and staff, former and current Marshall scholars, FCO officials, staff working on similar

scholarship programmes and academic institutions in both the UK and US. It provided an opportunity to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the commission and its programme, and to understand how it delivers on the FCO's strategic priorities.

The Review concluded that the MACC runs a high-quality and well-managed programme that is still needed and contributes to strengthening the UK's relations with the US. As such, it is a valuable soft power asset, providing a good return on a relatively small financial investment. It also concluded that NDPB status remains the right classification for the commission. However, it identified areas for improvement, making a total of 24 recommendations, including:

- The Association of Commonwealth Universities, which currently administers the MACC, should draw on in-house expertise to support the commission and ensure the sustainability of the programme's administration.
- The FCO should establish more consistent active outreach activity throughout the US network.
- The commission should develop a shared communications strategy, while the FCO should ensure communications about the programme are incorporated into FCO communications work.
- The commission and FCO should develop and implement a stronger monitoring and evaluation system.

A joint implementation plan is being developed by the FCO and the MACC, with agreed recommendations expected to be implemented by the first quarter of 2020.

Copies of the Review will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Tailored review [Annex C - MACC Tailored Review Report - FINAL.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2019-04-04/HLWS1451/>

Parks and Green Spaces

[HLWS1455]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Hon Friend, the Minister for Local Government (Rishi Sunak) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

In September 2017, the Government agreed to provide a written update to Parliament to assess the progress made against the recommendations of the Select Committee's Report into the future of public parks. Today I am updating the House on a suite of initiatives to secure this future. These have been formulated in conjunction with the Parks Action Group (PAG) who advise on the steps the Government could take to ensure the future of our parks and green spaces. The PAG, which is comprised of a Cross-Government group of senior officials and a sectoral group, along with its coordinator have been key

in driving forward the recommendations of the Select Committee. We published details of the PAG's membership and aims on 19 September 2017: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-pledges-500000-for-new-action-group-to-grow-future-of-public-parks>.

In its first recommendation, the Committee advised that the Government should develop models to support local authorities in the assessment of the value of their parks. In 2018 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, provided funding for the Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool (<https://www.leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval>) which enables the recreational value of publicly-accessible parks, paths and beaches in England and Wales to be estimated and factored into decision-making. Additionally, in July 2018 the Office for National Statistics, working in partnership with DEFRA, published a national set of UK urban natural capital accounts as part of a work programme to develop natural capital accounts for the UK.

The Committee's second recommendation covers the relationship between local communities, local authorities and the free use of parks. The Government ran a public consultation on the free use of parks, 'Running Free: Preserving the Free Use of Public Parks Consultation', between April and July 2017. We published our response in December 2018 and it can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764830/Parkrun_Consultation_Response.pdf. Whilst we recognise the right of local authorities to quite legitimately charge for specific events in parks as a means of income, our position is that public parks should remain free for members of the public for reasonable everyday use.

The Committee, in their third and fourth recommendations, rightly asked the Government to support the development and working of friends' groups. My Department recently provided Locality and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces with £130,000 to develop a national infrastructure for 'Friends of Parks' groups and create a network of Green Champions. Working with local authorities, friends groups and other voluntary organisations, these Green Champions will be invaluable in supporting community groups who wish to take greater responsibility in the management of their local parks. This funding will also expand the existing Government-sponsored 'My Community' website to provide a hub for community groups interested in supporting their local parks.

In line with our response to the Committee's fifth recommendation, my Department has addressed health and safety in parks by promoting best practice and quality standards. The Green Flag Award scheme, run under licence from my Department and operated by Keep Britain Tidy, continues to highlight community and local authority-run parks that have achieved a national quality standard for parks and green spaces. This scheme ensures that all participating parks meet high quality standards and that these parks act as ambassadors for best practice.

1577 sites achieved the award in 2018 and I hope to see further parks added this year. Green Flag Award Parks can be found here: <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/award-winners/>.

In its sixth recommendation, the Committee rightly asked the Government to investigate the action that could be taken to increase provision of parks and green spaces. The House will be aware that my Rt Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, recently announced significant funding to support parks across the country. He committed £9.7 million to local authorities to support them in the maintenance of their parks. He also provided £3.75 million in funding to 200 community-led organisations as part of our successful and very popular Pocket Parks Plus Programme. Working with their local authorities, these community groups will expand access to green space for our communities.

The Committee's seventh recommendation asked local authorities to adopt a whole-place approach, and cooperate with other local authorities, when updating their Local Plans. The Government is confident that the National Planning Policy Framework equips local authorities with the decision-making powers to secure the protection of parks – for both new and established communities. Additionally, we have recently provided £1.2 million to the Future Parks Accelerator Programme which is an initiative, developed by the National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund, to support local authorities and, importantly, area-based partnerships to pilot and test new and innovative models of managing and funding parks estates.

In response to recommendation eight, my Department has invested £30,000 in a joint project with DEFRA and Natural England to develop a framework of green infrastructure standards. Local authorities will be supported to assess their green infrastructure provision against this new framework. This project will also examine how our commitments on green infrastructure can be incorporated into national planning guidance and policy.

In their ninth recommendation, the Committee asked further questions of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. This plan, published in January 2018, recognises the importance of parks and green infrastructure for people's health and wellbeing. It includes the commitment to green our towns and cities and details a series of actions relating to green infrastructure and trees. One of these actions is to develop a national view of what 'good' green infrastructure looks like. Defra and MHCLG have helped to establish the cross-government project led by Natural England mentioned above that will review and update existing standards for green infrastructure. The project is working with a range of expert stakeholders, including the PAG, to develop an initial framework for testing and piloting in summer 2019.

The Committee's tenth to thirteenth recommendations asked the Government to support the development of new

and innovative models of parks estate management and funding. My Department has invested £20,000 in the Landscape Institute to support them in the development of apprenticeship standards for the roles of 'Landscape Technician' and 'Chartered Landscape Professional.' We will continue to work with the PAG to ensure the findings from the Association for Public Service Excellence's forthcoming research report into the skills of existing parks managers are reflected in these standards. As outlined above, we have also supported the Future Parks Accelerator programme to provide examples of new and innovative models of parks estate management and funding. Additionally, we have provided £210,000 to help capture and share the lessons learnt from Newcastle City Council's transformative parks management project, and to help them make available governance and legal templates to others wishing to adopt this innovative model.

We can all agree that parks and green spaces are vital to the communities we serve. They provide space for respite from our busy lives, opportunities to spend time with our friends and families, and they are oases in our busy urban areas. I am confident that the initiatives I have outlined above demonstrate that the Government is making significant progress on delivering on our shared commitment to secure the long-term sustainability of parks for our future generations.

Pensions Dashboards Consultation

[HLWS1456]

Baroness Buscombe: My Right Honourable Friend The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Rt hon Amber Rudd MP) has made the following Written Statement.

Later today I will publish the Government's Response to the consultation on the Pensions Dashboard CP75.

Pensions dashboards will revolutionise retirement planning. They will enable people to access their pension information in a single place online, in a clear and simple form, whether that is on a laptop or tablet, and from their own home. Putting individuals in control of their data, pensions dashboards will bring together all pensions information from multiple sources, which can then be accessed at a time of their choosing.

This Government's pensions reforms have transformed Britain's retirement savings culture. More than 10 million people have benefitted from our revolutionary policy of automatic enrolment into workplace pensions.

On 3 December 2018 the department published a consultation Pensions Dashboards: working together for the consumer. The Government's response to the pensions dashboards consultation outlines how the Government will facilitate the pensions industry to deliver this project.

Both the quantity and quality of the 125 responses received were helpful in informing the approach we set out. The responses we received were largely positive in nature.

The result of this feedback is that Government will facilitate the delivery of pensions dashboards as a key priority. We expect to see to see initial industry dashboards developed and tested from this year.

Government remains committed to ensuring the individual is in control of their data and is conscious of the need for pace in order to deliver dashboards. Our priority is to ensure that information is presented securely, in a clear and simple format to support consumers with their retirement planning. The response to the consultation on dashboards includes:

- a commitment to bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity to compel all pension providers to make consumers' data available to them through a dashboard;
- an expectation that the majority of schemes will be ready to 'go live' with their data within a three to four year window;
- confirmation that State Pension information will be included as soon as possible; and
- that dashboards will help to reconnect people with 'lost' pension pots, benefitting savers and providers.

A crucial entity in taking this forward will be the industry delivery group; made up of stakeholders from across the industry, consumer groups, regulators and government who will be accountable to the Single Financial Guidance Body board. We anticipate the delivery group should be fully operational by the end of the summer. The priorities for the delivery group in 2019 are to create a clear strategy for delivering the digital architecture, design a robust governance and security framework and to work with industry on their readiness to provide data via dashboards.

It is my firm belief that the pensions industry is best placed to develop and deliver dashboards. However, there is a role for Government in facilitating industry's delivery of dashboards which work for consumers and put people in control of their data.

Pensions dashboards can be an enabler for a real step-change across the sector to modernise the way it communicates with its members. They also provide an opportunity to build trust with consumers, ensuring they can access their pensions information in a convenient way.

School Condition Funding

[HLWS1447]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My right honourable friend the Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today, I am announcing the allocation of over £1.4 billion of capital funding in the financial year 2019–20 to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate.

This funding is provided to ensure schools have well maintained facilities to provide students with safe environments that support a high-quality education. It is

part of £23 billion committed over 2016–21 to deliver new school places, rebuild or refurbish buildings in the worst condition and deliver thousands of condition projects across the school estate.

For the financial year 2019–20, the £1.4 billion of capital funding includes:

- Almost £800 million for local authorities, voluntary aided partnerships, larger multi-academy trusts and academy sponsors, to invest in maintaining and improving the condition of their schools.
- Over £400 million available through the Condition Improvement Fund for essential maintenance projects at small and stand-alone academy trusts and sixth-form colleges.
- Over £200 million of Devolved Formula Capital allocated directly for schools to spend on small capital projects to meet their own priorities.

Details of successful applications to the Condition Improvement Fund have also been published today, covering 1413 projects at 1210 schools and sixth form colleges.

Details of today's announcement will be published on the Department for Education section on the GOV.UK website. Announcement notifications are also being sent electronically to responsible bodies' chief executive officers.

Whirlpool Tumble Dryers

[[HLWS1452](#)]

Lord Henley: My hon Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kelly Tolhurst) has made the following statement:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) will imminently publish its review of Whirlpool's tumble dryer modification programme.

In 2015 Whirlpool identified a design issue in several tumble dryer models which could lead to increased risks of fire incidents due to excessive lint accumulation at the rear which then ignites. The company then undertook a modification programme to address the issue. However,

concerns were raised about the modification programme and in May 2018 my predecessor, the hon member for Burton, commissioned OPSS to review the actions taken by Whirlpool.

Following a review of the modification programme, as well as consideration of technical documents supplied by Whirlpool, the OPSS has concluded that the risk is low and further reduced by the modification. However, shortcomings were found in the testing and quality assurance procedures, and the business must improve its monitoring and management of risk. They must also continue their consumer outreach programme and use more creative methods to contact affected consumers.

Given the full circumstances of the current position, in particular that the overall level of risk is low and that efforts have been made by Whirlpool to address the identified problem and to comply with its legal obligations, formal enforcement action is not justified at this stage. However, OPSS has produced a list of requirement actions for Whirlpool to take in light of the findings of the review, and OPSS will continue to monitor the programme. Should Whirlpool fail to take the expected action within appropriate timescales, enforcement action would need to be considered.

The main findings of the review are:

- The ongoing risk from tumble dryers modified by Whirlpool is low and consumers can continue to use them
- Whirlpool has made efforts to address the identified problem but must do more.
- OPSS is requiring Whirlpool to take further action and will continue to monitor the steps taken to ensure the efficacy of the modification in consumers' homes over the long term.
- The modification and outreach programme should continue, with new and different methods used to reach consumers.

The safety of consumers is the number one priority for Government. We acknowledge the steps Whirlpool has taken to reach consumers and modify their tumble dryers, and we will continue to monitor the situation.

Written Answers

Thursday, 4 April 2019

Antisocial Behaviour and Crimes of Violence

Asked by **Lord Tebbit**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they categorise antisocial or violent individuals by whether they are left wing or right wing; if so, why; and if so, what criteria they take into account when assessing whether any such individual should be described as left wing or right wing. [[HL14756](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government takes seriously the threat from all forms of antisocial behaviour, extremism, and violence, including terrorism, whether this is motivated by left-wing, right-wing or Islamist ideology. Our response is however threat agnostic. It is a matter for the Police to determine whether a crime has been committed and, where a crime has been committed, how it is classified. In its analysis of extremism, the Government applies the definition of extremism set out in the 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy equally.

Arcadia Group: Pensions

Asked by **Lord Myners**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to, or met, the Pensions Regulator in the last three months in connection with Arcadia Group. [[HL14789](#)]

Baroness Buscombe: The Pensions Regulator carries out its functions independently. The Department has not made any representations to the Pensions Regulator in relation to the Arcadia Group in the last three months.

Armed Forces: Large Goods Vehicles

Asked by **Earl Attlee**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Ministry of Defence intends to operate its white and green fleet of Heavy Goods Vehicles to at least as high a technical and safety standard as civilian commercial operators. [[HL14845](#)]

Earl Howe: The Secretary of State for Defence's Policy Statement for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection (HS and EP) requires the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to comply with all applicable UK legislation when operating within the UK, including for the operation of its white and green fleet of Heavy Goods Vehicles. When operating overseas, the MOD applies UK standards and arrangements where reasonably practicable and, in addition, responds to host nations' relevant HS and EP expectations. Where MOD dis-applications, exemptions or derogations from UK legislation apply, the MOD is required to maintain Departmental arrangements that

produce outcomes that are, so far as reasonably practicable, at least as good as those required by UK legislation.

Asbestos: Industrial Diseases

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what response they are making to the announcement by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health that diseases as a result of exposure to asbestos are killing 5,000 people a year and that more than 130 companies or individuals have been ordered to stop work activities over the past year after being found to be non-compliant. [[HL14926](#)]

Baroness Buscombe: The Government welcomes the efforts by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) to raise awareness of the health risks arising from workplace exposure to asbestos. The announcement by IOSH highlights the need for employers and employees to remain vigilant when undertaking work which may disturb asbestos. The Health and Safety Executive and Local Authority inspectors will continue to take action in cases of non-compliance with the law, as indicated in the IOSH announcement.

Asylum: Christianity

Asked by **Baroness Cox**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the Home Office refused asylum applications because of (1) quotations used by applicants from the Bible which "are inconsistent with your [the applicant's] claim that you converted to Christianity after discovering it is a 'peaceful' religion..."; and (2) a candidate "affirmed in your Asylum Interview Record that Jesus is your saviour, but then claimed He would not be able to save you from the Iranian regime. It is therefore considered that you have no conviction in your faith and your belief in Jesus is half-hearted". [[HL14728](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We are urgently investigating reports which indicate that some asylum decisions were not drafted in accordance with our policy.

Published Home Office policy guidance contains detailed instructions on how asylum decision makers are expected to approach religious based claims. Our policy makes clear that when assessing such claims, decision makers are expected to ask appropriate and sensitive questions based on an understanding of religious concepts, philosophical viewpoints and forms of persecution a person may suffer due to their religion, belief or lack of belief.

Where credibility of a conversion to a faith needs to be established, an interview should be far more an exploration of a claimant's personal experiences and journey to their new faith, both in their country and in the UK, rather than a test of religious facts.

The Home Office have worked closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Asylum Advocacy Group (AAG) for many years, to help improve their approach to religious based claims and have recently worked with them to develop and produce a specialist training package.

The aim of this course is to ensure that where religion or belief is raised in an asylum claim, asylum decision makers appropriately consider all the available evidence in accordance International, European & Domestic law and Home Office Asylum Policy, when interviewing asylum applicants and making decisions on their claims.

The course will be rolled out to Asylum Senior Caseworkers and Technical Specialists in April 2019 and all asylum Decision Makers over the course of the subsequent three months.

Asylum: Religion

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures are in place to ensure that officials assessing asylum applications have sufficient theological information to interrogate claims made by those seeking refuge from persecution on account of their faith. [[HL14729](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights.

Asylum decision-makers carefully assess protection needs following an interview by considering all available evidence provided by the claimant in light of published country information. They receive extensive training on considering asylum claims and must follow published Home Office policy guidance. Guidance on interviewing and decision making are provided in published policy instructions on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/asylum-decision-making-guidance-asylum-instructions> and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction>

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The course will be rolled out to Asylum Senior Caseworkers and Technical Specialists in April 2019 and all asylum Decision Makers over the course of the subsequent three months.

Asked by Baroness Sherlock

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they provide religious literacy training to staff who decide asylum applications. [[HL14748](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office have worked closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Asylum Advocacy Group (AAG) for many years, to help improve their approach to religious based claims and have recently worked with them to develop and produce a specialist training package.

The aim of this course is to ensure that where religion or belief is raised in an asylum claim, asylum decision makers appropriately consider all the available evidence in accordance with International, European & Domestic law and Home Office Asylum Policy, when interviewing asylum applicants and making decisions on their claims.

The Asylum Learning and Development Team (AL&D) also delivers the Foundation Training Programme (FTP) to all new asylum decision makers. This intensive five-week course provides staff with training on all aspects of asylum decision making, including religious-based claims, religious conversion and has been endorsed by the UNHCR. During the course, trainees consider case studies involving religion or belief-based persecution. This course is followed by a period of mentoring.

Automation

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that 1.5 million jobs could be lost due to increased automation. [[HL14798](#)]

Lord Henley: The Industrial Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to make the UK a global centre for AI and data innovation and to embed the power of these technologies across our economy.

The estimate does not consider the potential job creation resulting from automation. World Economic Forum estimate that automation will create 133 million new globally by 2022.

The Government recognises that demand for skills will continue to change, in part in response to automation. In order to equip the UK to capitalise on this opportunity, we have committed to improving the UK's system for training in digital skills, lifelong learning to ensure that working people have the support they need to navigate the challenge of automation to a higher-wage future. The Government are investing £406 million in maths, digital and technical education and have committed £100 million for the first phase of developing the National Retraining Scheme to support people vulnerable to technological change.

Bahrain: Prisons

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Mandates of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, published on 17 January, which expressed concerns over the ongoing reprisals against political prisoner Hajar Mansoor Hasan in Bahrain and identified Major Albardoli "as the prison official responsible for the abuses in Isa Town Prison"; and what steps they are taking, under their international obligations and as a signatory to the UN Convention against Torture, to tackle torture and prison abuses in Bahrain. [HL14745]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government takes note of a number of sources of information on a range of issues in Bahrain; including publications and statements by the UN and non-governmental organisations, including UN Special Rapporteurs. The UK continues to encourage the Government of Bahrain to protect human rights for all of its citizens, in line with its international obligations.

We encourage those with concerns about treatment in detention to report these to the appropriate oversight body. We encourage the oversight bodies to carry out swift, thorough and impartial investigations.

The UK does consistently and unreservedly condemn torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and we raise our concerns wherever and whenever it occurs.

Business Premises: Change of Use

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they provide to those who wish to convert commercial buildings into residential accommodation. [HL14832]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Our Planning Practice Guidance sets out information on when planning permission is required to change use of buildings, and whether national permitted development rights apply. This is available on the MHCLG website.

Chris Grayling

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 22 March (HL14509), whether the details of the Secretary of State for Transport's diary for 4 March are exempt from

disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000; and if so, why. [HL14769]

Baroness Sugg: Any request made under the Freedom of Information Act would be carefully assessed on a case by case basis in light of the Act's statutory framework, including the consideration of relevant absolute or qualified exemptions. Hospitality, meetings with external parties and travel are published for all Ministers on a quarterly basis.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with companies running petrol service stations about the provision of electric vehicle charging and establishing a common signage to inform drivers that charging is available. [HL14825]

Baroness Sugg: The Government has had a number of discussions with companies running petrol service stations about the provision of electric vehicle charge points.

The Automated and Electric Vehicles Act gives the Government new powers to improve the provision of electric vehicle infrastructure. These proposals include powers to require provision at large fuel retailers. We have said we will monitor the market and only use these powers if the market fails to deliver the infrastructure required. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 do not prescribe signs for petrol filling stations. An electric vehicle charging point symbol is available for use on traffic signs indicating service areas.

Hare Coursing

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many police reports were made for hare coursing in England and Wales in (1) 2013, (2) 2014, (3) 2015, (4) 2016, (5) 2017, and (6) 2018. [HL14743]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not hold the information requested.

It is an operational matter for the police.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 19 March (HL14551), how many HS2 trains and their destinations an hour per direction are planned to use the connection between HS2 and the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre when (1) only Phase 1 is operational, and (2) both Phases 1 and 2A are operational; and what are the expected dates that Phase 1 and Phase 2 will become operational. [HL14724]

Baroness Sugg: Handsacre Junction is designed for HS2 trains to run from the HS2 network and onto the West Coast Mainline.

- The HS2 Phase One Business Case (published in October 2013) assumed that 7 trains per hour in both directions will operate over Handsacre Junction to destinations north of Birmingham.

- The HS2 Phase 2a Business Case (published in July 2017) assumed that 1 train per hour in both directions will operate over Handsacre Junction

The Select Committee is considering modifications to the proposed layout of Handsacre junction following the deposit of Additional Provision 2 to the Phase 2a hybrid Bill on 8 February 2019.

Final decisions about the Train Service Specification that will operate on the HS2 network, and relevant parts of the existing rail network, will be made once the Department has received advice following the outcome of the West Coast Partnership competition. Regarding when Phase 1 and Phase 2 will be operational, HS2 Ltd has been set a Delivery In Service Target by Government and it is working with its suppliers to confirm the latest assessment of schedule.

Housing: Construction

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their commitment to "maintaining existing strong protections for the Green Belt, and clarifying that Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances" in Fixing our broken housing market (CM 9352), published in February 2017, what assessment they have made of the Campaign to Protect Rural England's report State of Brownfield 2019, published in March; and what plans they have to incentivise building on brownfield sites. [[HL14876](#)]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We provide strong encouragement for re-use of brownfield land. The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for new homes and other uses. We ask them to prioritise brownfield wherever practicable, and have provided support in the form of increased loan funding for site preparation, infrastructure and land assembly; new permitted development rights to put existing buildings to good use; and a reduction in the constraints on brownfield sites in Green Belt to allow more affordable homes. Local brownfield registers are bringing thousands of hectares of developable land to the attention of house-builders. Local authorities are also beginning to receive proposals regarding Permission in Principle for housing-led developments on land in brownfield registers.

Brownfield sufficient for hundreds of thousands of new homes exists, but it is for local authorities to use their plans to steer much-needed housing-led development and

investment to brownfield sites available in viable and sustainable locations.

Listed Events

*Asked by **Lord Storey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last reviewed the protected Sports Rights List; whether they have any plans to add other national sports, in particular women's sports, to that list; if so, which sports they intend to add; and if not, why not. [[HL14754](#)]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The list of protected sporting events was last reviewed between 2008 and 2009, by an independent advisory panel. Government does not currently have any plans to revise the list which we believe works well to deliver the best outcome. Our listed events regime strikes a balance between retaining free-to-air sports events for the public while allowing rights holders to negotiate agreements in the best interests of their sport.

Coverage of women's professional sport on free to air television has improved significantly in the last ten years, with the women's Football World Cup and Euro Championships, Women's Rugby World Cup, cycling and tennis being regular fixtures on the BBC and ITV. However, the list is kept under continued review by my Department to ensure that the nation's most loved sporting events remain available on free to air television.

M20: Road Traffic Control

*Asked by **Baroness Randerson***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) toilet and washing facilities, (2) catering facilities, and (3) water supplies, are provided at (a) Manston Airport and (b) on the M20, as part of Operation Brock. [[HL14827](#)]

Baroness Sugg: If Manston Airport is used as a goods vehicle holding facility under Operation Brock in the event of disruption to cross channel services, hauliers will have access to toilet, washing and catering facilities on site and they will also be provided with water.

Any decision as to whether welfare for hauliers is required on the M20 will be taken on the day on the basis of the latest intelligence. Welfare is the responsibility of Kent County Council.

Welfare provision for private motorists will be triggered if Operation Brock is activated once traffic has been queuing for at least 4 hours and the welfare of individuals is assessed to be at risk. Plans have been designed to highlight to the travelling public the locations where welfare provision can be sought away from the Highway such as large supermarkets or fuel stations close to major junctions. If necessary, this may include the supply of water, sanitation and blankets.

M4: Speed Limits

Asked by Lord Lipsey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the estimated value of motorists' time lost due to the 50mph limit in place as part of the works to create a digital M4. [HL14781]

Baroness Sugg: The impact of delays during construction of the M4 junction 3 to 12 smart motorway scheme was assessed as part of the economic appraisal undertaken prior to the start of construction. This took into account various factors including the impact of the construction programme in full, lane availability and also the effect of limiting traffic speed to 50mph. This assessment gave an estimated value of £123m for user delay costs during construction. The economic appraisal also forecasts that the scheme could deliver £2 of benefits for every £1 of cost.

North Korea: Forced Labour

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the report by Human Trafficking Search State-sponsored Slavery: an North Korean Export, published in 2018, that an estimated 200,000 North Korean state-sponsored workers are used as forced labour in 45 countries. [HL14816]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is aware of the report by Human Trafficking Search and deeply concerned by its findings. North Korea has sent large numbers of workers overseas to earn money for the regime though estimates of the total number vary considerably. We urge all countries to meet their obligations under UNSCR 2397 to repatriate DPRK overseas workers by December 2019. The UK has actively encouraged all UN member states to submit implementation reports to the UN as part of these obligations and continue to engage with states that host DPRK workers in violation of UN sanctions.

North Korea: Human Trafficking

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of estimates in the Global Slavery Index relating to the number of North Koreans who have been trafficked to China. [HL14817]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government is deeply concerned at reports of North Korean women who have experienced sexual exploitation or forced marriage, in North Korea or China. Our Ambassador has raised our concerns directly with the Government of North Korea. Although it is hard to assess accurately how many North Koreans have been forced into human trafficking in China or other countries, the Global Slavery Index indicates that the numbers involved are distressingly high. We are committed to the eradication of

all forms of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking by 2030, as unanimously adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015.

Pensioners: Social Security Benefits

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they have issued, or intend to issue, to advise mixed age couples to claim (1) pension credit, and (2) pension age housing benefit before 15 May. [HL14770]

Baroness Buscombe: The Government announced on 14 January that the mixed age couple policy change legislated for in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 will come into force on 15 May, following the roll out of Universal Credit.

Information was placed on GOV.UK regarding the change and how people could be affected for the purposes of claiming Pension Credit and Housing Benefit for pensioners. This sets out that mixed age couples already claiming Pension Credit or Housing Benefit for pensioners at the point of change will not be affected for as long as they remain entitled to either benefit. It also makes clear that mixed age couples who would be eligible for either benefit on 14 May but who have not yet claimed will have until 13 August to make a backdated claim from that date.

Following the announcement, we are implementing comprehensive plans to raise awareness of the change among people who may be affected. We have written directly to mixed-age couples who are already in receipt of Pension Credit or Housing Benefit for pensioners to ensure they know about the change and how they could be affected if their circumstances change on or after 15 May. The Department has also engaged with a number of relevant organisations, including Age UK, Citizen's Advice and Local Authority representatives. A factsheet about the change has been provided, to help ensure that accurate information is available in the places where people are most likely to seek information.

DWP staff in Pension Centres and Jobcentres will be able to provide information and advice, as will staff in Local Authorities who administer Housing Benefit.

Poverty

Asked by Baroness Stroud

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, what steps they are taking to ensure that people living more than 50 per cent below the poverty line in the UK are not left behind. [HL14919]

Baroness Buscombe: This government is committed to delivering a sustainable long-term solution to poverty, by building a strong economy and ensuring that the benefit system works with the tax system and the labour market, to support employment and higher pay.

The Government does not publish data on those living more than 50% below the poverty line as comparisons of household income and expenditure suggest that those households reporting the very lowest incomes may not have the lowest living standards, meaning such a measure is likely to be unreliable.

The Department for Work and Pensions, through its Jobcentre Plus network and local delivery partners, provides support for vulnerable customers or those with complex needs to address barriers so that they can move forward with their lives.

A report on progress on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda will be presented to the UN's High Level Political Forum in July as part of the UK's Voluntary National Review. The Department for Work and Pensions is leading work across Government to assess progress against the first of these goals: 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere'.

Private Rented Housing: Electrical Safety

Asked by Lord Tope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made with plans, announced in January, to introduce mandatory electrical safety checks in the private rented sector. [HL14840]

Asked by Lord Tope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultations are being held with consumer groups on ways to ensure that tenants are aware of electrical safety checks in the private rented sector. [HL14841]

Asked by Lord Tope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultation they have held with local government on the enforcement of any new regulations for mandatory electrical safety checks in the private rented sector. [HL14843]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We are working to bring into force regulations on mandatory electrical safety checks in the private rented sector as soon as possible, subject to parliamentary approval and timetable. As outlined in the Government response to the consultation on Electrical Safety in the Private Rented Sector, published on 29 January 2019, we will work with industry to produce guidance for landlords setting out the skills and qualifications relevant to determining competence of those carrying out electrical inspections. We intend to work with local authorities in England as we develop the range of sanctions available to them for non-compliance.

We regularly consult with stakeholder groups including tenants, and in July 2018, we updated our 'How to' guides, a series of checklists for renting in England which must be provided to tenants at the outset of all new tenancies. Further consultation with tenant groups will take place when the Electrical Safety Regulations come

into force to raise tenant awareness about the changes and the 'How to' guides will be updated accordingly.

Private Rented Housing: Safety

Asked by Lord Tope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether landlords and letting agents should be prevented from renting properties if they do not possess an up-to-date gas safety certificate. [HL14842]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: All landlords must provide a tenant with a gas safety certification at the start of the tenancy and within 28 days of each annual gas safety check, if there is a gas installation. Landlords of tenants on assured shorthold tenancies (which started or were renewed after 1st October 2015) cannot serve an eviction notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 if the gas safety certificate has not been provided.

Racial Discrimination

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to produce a definition of (1) Islamophobia, and (2) other forms of racism. [HL14838]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Cross-Government Working Group to Tackle Anti-Muslim Hatred will be undertaking a programme of work to consider a definition following consultation, which effectively tackles prejudice and hatred.

Government is clear that all forms of hate crime, including race-related hate crime, are unacceptable and there is legislation in place to deal with perpetrators of hateful acts. We have asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of the current hate crime legislation.

Radio: Local Broadcasting

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on local communities of local commercial radio stations being bought by international media companies; and the move away from local programming to centralised content produced in London which is also aired by other stations. [HL14751]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to ensure that local commercial radio stations remain local in (1) presence, and (2) content. [HL14752]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether an international media company which has bought a local

commercial radio station, which has subsequently closed its local headquarters, is in breach of the commercial radio licence that was awarded to that local station by Ofcom. [HL14753]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The local programming and content requirements for holders of local analogue commercial radio licenses (whether the holder is ultimately owned by an international media organisation or not) are set by Ofcom under the legislative framework – primarily the Broadcasting Act 1990 and the Communications Act 2003. Changes to legislation introduced by the previous Government in March 2010 gave local commercial stations the ability to network local programming within defined editorial areas for the first time.

Under section 314 of the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom is required to produce and keep up to date localness guidance for local analogue radio license holders to follow in complying with their local programming and content requirements. In 2018, Ofcom consulted on changes to the localness guidance following research on listener attitudes. Ofcom's impact assessment covered the potential impacts on radio listeners and the industry.

Compliance with licence requirements is a matter Ofcom, the independent regulator.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the regulations issued by Ofcom in 2018 that allowed radio station owners to reduce the minimum amount of local programming on local radio stations during daytime hours from seven to three hours per day. [HL14796]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on local communities of the decision by Ofcom to remove the requirement on local radio stations to produce their own breakfast show. [HL14797]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: We have made no such assessment. These are matters for Ofcom, the independent regulator.

Saudi Arabia: Detainees

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 18 March (HL14232), which specific media sources were used to inform the response; and whether they agree with the conclusions and views expressed elsewhere in those articles. [HL14757]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: This figure was obtained from the 'Statement by the Royal Court: Anti Corruption Committee Concludes Its Tasks' released by the Saudi Press Agency, which is available on their website.

We maintain investigations must be fairly conducted and comply with international standards.

Slavery

Asked by Baroness Stroud

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many potential victims of modern slavery referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2018 had been through the NRM before. [HL14755]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The National Crime Agency regularly publishes National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data but does not publish data on potential victims that have been through the NRM previously. The National Crime Agency published the National Referral Mechanism Statistics Annual Report 2018 on 20th March 2019:

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics/2018-nrm-statistics/1019-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-annual-report-2018>

Social Security Benefits

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many families are subject to the benefit cap. [HL14822]

Baroness Buscombe: Households can have their benefits capped either under Housing Benefit, or under Universal Credit, and the latest statistics were published in February 2019, covering households capped to November 2018.

Point-in-time caseload: Number of households capped by family type at November 2018, GB

	Total	Single, no child dependant	Single, with child dependant(s)	Couple, no child dependant	Couple, with child dependant(s)
Housing Benefit	52,650	3,540	38,850	40	10,210
Universal Credit	9,810	1,600	5,920	..	2,290

Data Sources: DWP 100% Single Housing Benefit Extract and DWP Universal Credit Official Statistics Database

Table Notes:

- Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. Numbers less than 10 have been replaced with '..'
- Figures include households that have had their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit full service capped. Universal Credit full service is available to all claimant types but only in certain areas of the country at November 2018.
- Figures for Universal Credit may be revised in future publications, as Universal Credit awards may be retrospectively revised.

The Housing Benefit caseload data is taken from DWP Stat-Xplore, whilst the Universal Credit caseload data is taken from the official statistics caseload tables, published on 7th Feb 2019.

Solar Events

Asked by Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they have put in place to protect against geomagnetic disturbances; and whether they have published, or intend to publish, the details of any such measures. [HL14930]

Lord Henley: The Government has assessed the risk of geomagnetic disturbances from Space Weather and identified actions to manage the risks, these are set out in the National Risk Register (2017 edition) on Gov.uk.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

National Risk Register Of Civil Emergencies 2017
[UK_National_Risk_Register_2017.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-01/HL14930>

Students: Plagiarism

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to take any action against social media companies which allow advertisements from essay mill services and contract cheating companies; and if so, what action. [HL14750]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The public must have confidence in the exam system and cheating of any kind is unacceptable.

Online advertising is not specifically in scope of the forthcoming Online Harms White Paper and will be looked at in detail as part of the online advertising review announced by the Secretary of State in February. To the extent that there is overlap between the White Paper and online advertising self-regulation, we will work with stakeholders on any duplication that may arise as a result of the proposals.

Transport: Urban Areas

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they conducted an equality impact assessment when preparing their Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy, published on 19 March; and what account they (1) took when preparing, and (2) plan to take when

implementing, that strategy of disabled people and wheelchair users. [HL14897]

Baroness Sugg: No equality impact assessment was carried out for the Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy. The Strategy sets out the Government's high level thinking on future technologies and trends, many of which are subject to uncertainty. As such it would have been too early to conduct a meaningful equality impact assessment at this stage.

However, in the preparation of the Strategy the Department consulted with a wide range of stakeholders including those representing disabled people and wheelchair users. This included a written Call for Evidence and a roundtable with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

Urban Areas: Community Development

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to strengthen urban communities. [HL14830]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government recognises the value and contribution of all of our communities and supporting them runs through all of the Government's work.

Government has recently announced the £1.6 billion Stronger Towns Fund to help places which have not shared in the proceeds of growth and communities left behind by rapid economic change.

As part of 'Our Plan for the High Street' we are funding the £675 million Future High Streets Fund to support investment in town centre infrastructure and five 'Open Doors' pilots to match local community groups with vacant high street properties. We are also celebrating the good work that communities have done in their high streets and town centres through the Great British High Street Awards, which will return in 2019 in partnership with Visa, and have provided £9.75 million for local authorities to work with community groups to clean up their high streets.

Government has also committed £9.1 billion of the Local Growth Fund to Local Enterprise Partnerships through three rounds of competitive Growth Deals between 2015 and 2021, strengthened local leadership through nine devolution deals and the establishment of eight combined authority mayors; and is negotiating city and growth deals in the devolved administrations, with deals already agreed in Wales for Cardiff and Swansea Bay and £120 million UK Government funding committed to the North Wales Growth Deal.

We are also looking to increase the availability of urban community spaces and on 26 March the Government announced the winners of the £3.75 million fund to create new Pocket Parks and to refurbish existing parks.

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