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Thursday
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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
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
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
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Duncan of Springbank	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Scotland Office
Baroness Fairhead	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Henley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Manzoor	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Whip
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
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, Treasury Spokesperson and Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Thursday, 25 April 2019

Contingent Liability

[HLWS1487]

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:

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present to Parliament a Minute giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency.

It is the intention of the Government to respect the 2016 referendum result and leave the European Union with a deal as soon as possible. However, there is now a legal need to prepare for possible participation in the European Parliamentary elections, although it remains the government's intention for the UK to leave the European Union with a deal before 22 May, so that we do not need to participate in these elections.

It is normal practice for the Government to indemnify returning officers in this way to ensure their personal liabilities are covered. The Cabinet Office previously provided an indemnity in 2014 for the European Parliamentary elections. The Cabinet Office also provided an indemnity for the 2015 and 2017 UK Parliamentary general elections, the 2016 Police and Crime Commissioner elections, and the Recall of MPs petitions. HM Treasury has approved the indemnity in principle.

Given the highly unusual circumstances, as I hope Hon. Members will appreciate, it has not been possible for the indemnity to be laid in Parliament for 14 sitting days before coming into effect.

On this basis, I have today laid a Minute setting out the Cabinet Office's proposal to indemnify returning officers for the European Parliamentary elections on 23 May 2019 against uninsured claims that arise out of the conduct of their duties. We will also provide a certificate confirming that we will bear any employee liabilities of the returning officer which would otherwise be covered by insurance procured under the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969.

General Affairs Council

[HLWS1485]

Lord Callanan: The UK and the EU have agreed an extension to Article 50, until 31 October 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 represented the UK at the General Affairs Council (GAC) in Luxembourg on 9 April 2019. A provisional report of the meeting and the conclusions adopted can be found on the Council of the European Union's website at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2019/04/09/>

Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 - 2027

The Presidency presented a progress report outlining the latest developments on negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) - related sectoral proposals. The Presidency also highlighted that common understandings have been reached with the European Parliament (EP) on ten sectoral files. Cohesion and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) continued to be the central pillars of the next MFF. However, the Commission noted that the proposed cuts to Cohesion and CAP were unavoidable due to the loss of the UK's contribution.

The Cohesion Fund aims to reduce economic and social disparities and to promote sustainable development. Ministers discussed how Cohesion policy and CAP can best support EU priorities. Some Member States criticised the proposed cuts and supported maintaining funding for transition regions (where GDP per capita falls between 75% and 90% of the EU average). Other Member States advocated for a stronger link of funds to the EU's core business, such as tackling climate change, rule of law and migration. There was general agreement that cohesion funding should be predictable, whilst allowing for a level of flexibility to manage unexpected events.

Ministers agreed that the funding priorities should be modernisation of the agricultural industry and securing support for young farmers. Some Member States proposed a set target for expenditure contributing to climate change goals, while incentivising farmers to meet the goals.

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

Ministers adopted conclusions on the EU's implementation of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are targets in 17 priority areas agreed between the members of the UN in 2015, with the aim of making the world a more sustainable place to live. The Council agreed that the SDGs are a key aspect of the EU's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, making clear reference to "leave no one behind".

The Council's conclusions recognised the importance of the SDGs for the EU, stated that the UN 2030 Agenda was an overarching priority for the EU and stressed that it was in the EU's interest to play a leading role in its implementation, recognising that delivery of this agenda is necessarily a shared responsibility between all stakeholders.

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

The Commission provided an update on the most recent developments regarding EU values in Hungary. Ministers discussed values of the Union in relation to Hungary.

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

The Commission provided an update on the rule of law cases in Poland before the European Court of Justice, and its most recent infraction notification against Poland's disciplinary procedures for ordinary judges. The Presidency stated that the Council would return to the issue.

Prüm Access: Switzerland and Liechtenstein

[HLWS1486]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service (Nick Hurd) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Prüm framework lays down provisions stating that EU Member States grant each other access to their automated DNA analysis files, automated fingerprint identification systems (AFIS), and vehicle registration data. The European Commission has proposed Council Decisions that, if adopted, would extend participation in the key data-sharing elements of Prüm to Switzerland and Liechtenstein as third countries.

The UK is fully supportive of data sharing to assist the investigation, prosecution and prevention of serious crime and terrorism. It is the Government's position that data sharing regimes between countries, with appropriate safeguards, enhance the safety and wellbeing of citizens of and visitors to those countries. The UK has opted in to the Prüm Decisions and remains committed to fully implementing Prüm in the UK.

The UK is also fully supportive of extending the law enforcement access to Prüm to Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The UK has no current biometrics data sharing agreements in place with Switzerland or Liechtenstein. These states are close partners and enabling further data sharing with them will enhance both their security and ours.

The Government has therefore decided to opt in to the EU Council Decisions authorising the signing and conclusion of agreements between the EU and Switzerland, and the EU and Liechtenstein, to enable their access as third countries to Prüm, stepping up cross border cooperation, particularly in combating terrorism and cross-border crime.

The UK Government will continue to consider the application of the UK's opt-in to EU legislation on a case-by-case basis, with a view to maximising the UK's efforts to collaborate with the EU on a security partnership once the UK leaves the EU. The UK is committed to fully implementing Prüm and continuing the international exchange of biometric data with the EU as part of this Future Security Partnership.

Written Answers

Thursday, 25 April 2019

Africa: Migration

Asked by *The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current situation of migrants and refugees in (1) Sudan, and (2) Libya; and whether there has been any change in the direction of migration between those countries. [HL15194]

Baroness Sugg: Sudan is a source, destination and transit point for migrants. While migrants have been accommodated by the Government of Sudan, their policy of encampment limits durable solutions. Integration is very challenging and most African migrants do not have the right to legally work in Sudan; third country resettlement is not viable as the UNHCR programme is currently suspended. Return is not possible for Eritreans due to human rights concerns. Protection is weak and many migrants are exploited.

In Libya, we remain deeply concerned over the appalling conditions for migrants in detention centres, particularly given the current escalation in violence. We urge all sides to ensure the safety of civilians, including vulnerable refugees/migrants; and continue to pressure the Libyan authorities to pursue alternatives to detention and implement a better functioning migration system that respects human rights. These efforts are part of our wider approach to protecting those who are travelling on the dangerous migration route into Libya.

There is insufficient data on border crossings between Sudan and Libya to be able to assess whether there has been any recent change in the direction of migration between those countries. Instability in both Libya and Sudan is likely to cause further displacement.

Apprentices

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to set out how they measure whether the apprentice programme boosts economic productivity. [HL15254]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: We have recently introduced a range of reforms to further support the productivity contribution of apprenticeships. It is too early to assess the full impact of our reforms.

Our Apprenticeships Reform Programme Benefits Realisation Strategy, attached, sets out a broad range of success measures for the programme, including economic measures. Measures include earnings upon completion, results from employer and learner surveys, and the further education (FE) Skills Index – a measure of the productivity impact of the programme over time.

The Skills Index enables us to compare the value of skills investments across the FE sector, including apprenticeships. It looks at the number of learners achieving, the employment rate for those learners as well as expected additional earnings.

The total value-added for apprenticeships in the academic year 2016/17 has increased by 3% on 2015/16, due to an increase in the volume of apprenticeship achievers at Level 3 and above.

We publish annual progress updates against our strategy. Our last update, published in May 2018, is attached and can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/707896/Progress_report_on_the_Apprenticeships_Reform_Programme_May_2018.pdf.

We will be publishing our 2019 update shortly which will include an update to our Skills Index.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL15254_Apprenticeship_Reform_Strategy
[HL15254_Apprenticeship_Reform_Programme__Benefits_Realisation_Strategy.pdf]

HL15254_Report_on_Reform_Program
[HL15254_Progress_report_on_the_Apprenticeships_Reform_Programme_May_2018.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-11/HL15254>

Artificial Intelligence: Ethics

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to remain aligned with EU guidelines on the ethical development of artificial intelligence following the UK's departure from the EU. [HL15171]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: We welcome the guidelines as an important contribution towards ensuring AI is used and developed ethically and to the benefit of society.

The UK will continue to take a leading role in the global debate around the ethics of AI. This is why we have established the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, to provide independent, expert advice on the measures needed to enable and ensure safe, ethical and innovative uses of AI and data-driven technologies.

The principles set out in the EU guidelines are closely aligned with the UK's own approach. Many of the principles are the same as those highlighted as key work areas for the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation.

The EU guidelines are also aligned with the UK's Data Ethics Framework, which includes clear principles for how data should be used in the public sector, including in applications of AI.

Bank Services: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the charges levied on customers by UK banks. [HL15245]

Lord Young of Cookham: The Treasury does not make assessments on the charges levied on customers by UK banks because in most circumstances fees and charges are commercial decisions for the bank.

Birds: Conservation

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend protection to nest sites for species which return to the same sites on an annual basis, such as swifts, swallows and martins; and what assessment they have made of the barriers to those birds returning to such sites, including the use of netting. [HL15183]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: While swallows, swifts and martins have preferential nest sites, they will nest elsewhere. Therefore, protecting nests while they are in use is the most important consideration.

We would expect those considering excluding birds from nest sites to do so only when truly necessary and in compliance with the relevant legislation, including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has written to leading developers to remind them of their obligations in this regard, which includes existing planning practice guidance on the natural environment, and standing advice for local planning authorities to assess the impacts of development on wild birds.

Borders: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have allocated funds for work to find an alternative to the Withdrawal Agreement Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland; and if so, what level of funds have been allocated. [HL15228]

Lord Callanan: The Prime Minister announced on the 26th February that alternative arrangements to the backstop will be a priority for the UK and EU during the next phase of negotiations.

The Government intends to establish three advisory groups to help inform the UK's negotiations with the EU. The Government will make available £20m of funding to support the development, testing or piloting of ideas that emerge from these groups where the Government believes it would be helpful.

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what alternatives to the Withdrawal Agreement Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland are currently being considered. [HL15229]

Lord Callanan: As part of the deal negotiated, the UK and EU have agreed to consider a joint work stream to develop alternative arrangements to guarantee permanently the absence of a hard border in Northern Ireland. This includes a legally binding commitment that both sides will aim to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements by December 2020 - and that they do not need to replicate the backstop in any respect.

Brunei: Legal Systems

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 8 April (HL14929), whether they have discussed the changes to Brunei's laws with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth; and whether, while such laws remain in place, they will call for Brunei's suspension from the Commonwealth due to those laws' incompatibility with Commonwealth values. [HL15134]

Baroness Barran: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth about the situation in Brunei on 4 April. The Secretary General is in contact with the Government of Brunei and is working through Commonwealth channels.

The UK encourages all Commonwealth partners to protect and promote the values in the Commonwealth Charter, including its opposition to all forms of discrimination. We have made clear that nobody should face persecution or discrimination because of who they are or whom they love.

Brunei is one of several Commonwealth countries that imposes corporal and capital punishments. It has now introduced new potential penalties under the Sharia Penal Code.

We have raised our concerns with the Government of Brunei. We will continue to encourage Brunei to remove corporal and capital punishment from its statutes, to pass laws that decriminalise same-sex relations and protect LGBT people from all forms of discrimination.

Disabled Students' Allowances

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken since the inception of Disabled Students Allowance to ensure that those setting the criteria for the Disabled Students Allowance are fully informed about normal practice in identifying and supporting those with special educational needs within the school population. [HL15130]

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that (1) currently, and (2) in the future, those setting the criteria for eligibility for Disabled Students Allowance consult the school sector about making such criteria compatible and in accordance with recommended practice for special education needs and disability within the maintained school system. [[HL15131](#)]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The arrangements introduced in 2014 through the Children and Families Act for supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in schools and further education do not apply to students on a higher education course. This is because the higher education environment is very different to that in schools and in further education, with an emphasis on independent learning. The role of local authorities does not extend to securing higher education for young people with SEND. Moving into higher education is deemed a successful outcome for those with special educational needs.

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are available only to eligible students studying a designated higher education course. There are no plans to align the eligibility criteria with those used for providing support in the schools sector. However, where a young person has an education, health and care plan the local authority is required to share that information with the DSAs study needs assessor, if that is requested by the young person.

This ensures that strategies that have already been used successfully in earlier stages of education may be considered within the context of higher education.

Electricity: VAT

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the amount of income that has been raised in additional VAT revenue on domestic electricity following the recent increase in (1) the Pre-Payment Meter cap, and (2) the Default Tariff cap; and what estimate they have made of such income on an annualised basis. [[HL15205](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: The details that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) collects from taxpayers on their VAT returns are not specific enough to enable the revenue arising from these supplies to be quantified.

HMRC does not require detail on particular products and customer types because it would place a considerable administrative burden on businesses.

Electronic Cigarettes: Licensing

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they published the terms of reference and membership of the working group of experts set up to consider the

recommendations from the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee's report E-cigarettes, published on 17 August 2018, that impact the licensing of e-cigarettes as medicines; if so, when and where they were published; whether they will publish details of that working group's first meeting; and if so when and where they will be published. [[HL15258](#)]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The terms of reference and membership of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) ad hoc working group of experts on e-cigarettes, set up to consider the recommendations from the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee's E-cigarettes report, has not yet been published.

The first meeting of the working group is scheduled for 26 April 2019 and its terms of reference and membership will be published after the first meeting of the group on the CHM website.

Electronic Commerce

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many fulfilment houses had stock seized by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in the last 12 months. [[HL15249](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: In the year ending 31 December 2018, HM Revenue and Customs seized stock belonging to third parties from 14 fulfilment houses.

Energy: Meters

Asked by Baroness Smith of Gilmorehill

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many smart meters have been installed in England and Wales, broken down by local authority area, in each of the past three years. [[HL15268](#)]

Lord Henley: The latest data on the number of smart electricity and gas meters installed in Great Britain is published on a quarterly basis on Gov.UK. As of the end of December 2018, there were nearly 13.8 million smart and advanced meters currently operating in Great Britain.

Data is published only at Great Britain level. Data is not collected from energy suppliers in a format that allows local authority counts to be produced.

Environment Protection: Taxation

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the amount of income that has been raised by HM Treasury from the Carbon Price Support in each year since it was introduced on 1 April 2013 to the present. [[HL15204](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: Carbon Price Support (CPS) is implemented through the CPS rates of both Climate Change Levy and Fuel Duty.

It is estimated that since April 2013 £5bn has been received from CPS, broken down by year as shown in the table below.

<i>Year</i>	<i>£bn</i>	
2013/14	0.2	*
2014/15	1.0	
2015/16	1.2	
2016/17	1.0	
2017/18	0.9	
2018/19	0.7	*

* = data only available for part of year.

EU External Trade: USA

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of trade tensions between the EU and the United States; and whether they anticipate UK trade with the United States will be affected while the UK remains an EU member state. [HL15169]

Baroness Fairhead: The UK has consistently supported the European Commission in engaging with the US to stress the importance of de-escalating trade tensions, which are in no one's interest. We have been clear in our opposition to US tariffs on steel and aluminium and threatened tariffs on autos. These are unjustified and have, and will have, a negative impact on the UK as an EU Member State and after exit under their existing terms.

We will continue to work with the EU and the US to find a constructive permanent solution, including through implementing the EU-US Joint Statement agreed by Presidents Juncker and Trump in July last year.

European Parliament Members

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the need to ensure that British members of the European Parliament (1) do not disrupt the work of that parliament, and (2) are able to represent British interests appropriately in discharging their duties; and what steps they are taking as a result of any such assessment. [HL15208]

Lord Callanan: The European Council Decision, taken in agreement with the UK on 11 April, includes a duty of sincere cooperation in relation to the extension of Article 50. This includes reference to "the commitment by the United Kingdom to act in a constructive and responsible manner throughout the extension". The full Decision can be found here:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/04/10/20190410-european-council-decision-on-extension/>.

If the Withdrawal Agreement has not been ratified by 22 May, we have a legal obligation to hold European Parliament elections as a Member State, as set out under EU treaties, and we will uphold these obligations. We have therefore already started making the necessary domestic preparations in order to prepare for this potential outcome. However, as the Prime Minister has said, we will make every effort to ensure the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified by 22 May so that we do not need to hold these elections.

Free School Meals

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether schools are allowed to provide different food to those in receipt of free school meals compared to other pupils; whether children of immigrant parents whose passports are stamped "no recourse to public funds" are entitled to free school meals if the family income would otherwise qualify; and whether children of asylum seekers are entitled to free school meals. [HL15144]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Compliance with the attached School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools. We also expect all academies and free schools to comply with the standards, and since 2014, we have made this an explicit requirement in their funding agreements. All meals provided must meet the School Food Standards.

It is not acceptable for schools to stigmatise pupils by limiting choice for free school meal pupils at lunchtime. The vast majority of schools and caterers already make use of cashless systems and other methods to ensure that children who are eligible for free school meals are not identified separately.

Free school meals are available to disadvantaged families in receipt of certain qualifying benefits. Decisions as to whether immigrants or refugees have recourse to public funds are made by the Home Office. Those granted refugee status can access full mainstream benefits, and asylum seekers receiving support under Part VI of the Immigration & Asylum Act (1999) are also entitled to free school meals.

The Home Office is able to exercise discretion to grant recourse to public funds where the family would otherwise be destitute. Where this entitles the family to receive certain benefits they may also be able to claim free school meals.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL15144_School_food_standards
[HL15144_School_food_standards .pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-09/HL15144>

Hong Kong: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the charges (1) incitement to public nuisance, (2) incitement to incite public nuisance, and (3) conspiracy to public nuisance, used in Hong Kong; and what effect they anticipate such charges will have on Hong Kong's freedoms and sustaining the "two systems, one country" model. [HL15135]

Baroness Goldie: The British Government is aware that each of the nine key figures of the 'Occupy' Movement were found guilty of at least one public nuisance offence on 9 April. The Court found that the charges brought were constitutional. It also found that the offence of conspiracy to cause a public nuisance does not have the undesirable effect of curtailing or suppressing civil disobedience or suppressing human rights.

Sentencing is due on 24 April, and the defendants have the right to appeal including on the legitimacy of the legal provisions under which they were charged. It would therefore not be appropriate to comment further or in detail on these ongoing legal cases. It would be deeply concerning if this or any other ruling discourages legitimate protest in the future, or discourages young people from engaging in politics.

Hong Kong citizens are guaranteed the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. Hong Kong's success and stability depend on its high degree of autonomy and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to the inclusion of a human rights clause, protecting the rule of law, in any future trade deal that includes trade with Hong Kong; and whether they intend, in conjunction with other countries, to raise issues regarding Hong Kong in international fora, in particular its extradition laws and the autonomy of Hong Kong. [HL15176]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has long supported the promotion of our values globally and this will continue as we leave the EU. We are committed to upholding the UK's high standards and we are exploring all options in the design of future trade and investment agreements, including human rights provisions within these.

We will continue to monitor closely events in Hong Kong, including proposals to change extradition laws, and any developments that may affect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. Where appropriate, we will raise issues of concern with the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities, speak publicly about the issue, or raise in international fora.

Inheritance Tax: Siblings

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 9 April (HL14826), what considerations led them to set aside their proposal to establish a working party on the fiscal disadvantages experienced by sibling couples. [HL15147]

Lord Young of Cookham: The Government keeps all taxes under review. The Office of Tax Simplification are reviewing inheritance tax and will make recommendations that the Government will consider.

The inheritance tax treatment of married couples and civil partners reflects their unique legal relationship, and extending this treatment to siblings would incur an Exchequer cost.

Internet: Regulation

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report from the Coalition for a Digital Economy suggesting that new tech regulations set out in the Online Harms White Paper may restrict fair competition of UK start-ups in this sector. [HL15201]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The Online Harms White Paper sets out our plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online. This will make companies more responsible for their users' safety online, especially children and other vulnerable groups, and will help to build trust in digital markets. New regulation will be risk-based and proportionate across the broad range of businesses and other organisations in scope, designed to support innovation and a thriving digital economy. The White Paper sets out our intention to consult widely with companies, civil society and other governments to develop our proposals, ahead of finalising new legislation.

As outlined in our Digital Strategy and Charter, our ambition is to ensure the UK is the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business.

Iraq: Yazidis

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Iraq to extend the provisions of the bill on rights for Yazidi female survivors, submitted to the Iraqi parliament on 28 March, to include all women kidnapped and enslaved by ISIS, and to ensure that all crimes committed against minorities are defined as such in international fora. [HL15133]

Baroness Goldie: We welcome the steps latterly taken by the Iraqi government to extend rights to Yazidi female survivors, including addressing the specific problem of

the legal status of children born to Yazidi survivors as a result of sexual violence. We have not made representations to the Government of Iraq to extend the provisions of the bill submitted to the Iraqi parliament on 28 March but will continue to raise with the Iraqi authorities the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of all victims of Daesh's crimes.

Israel: Elections

Asked by Lord Steel of Aikwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the general election result in Israel. [HL15198]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Following the election that took place in Israel on 9 April, Israeli political parties are now engaged in coalition formation discussions. The UK looks forward to continuing its excellent relationship with the Israeli Government and to working closely together on shared areas of interest.

Lasers: Weapons

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the development of high energy laser weapons systems. [HL15219]

Earl Howe: The Ministry of Defence Strategic Programmes team has established a Novel Weapons team to build on the work carried out by Defence Science and Technology. It is preparing the Ministry of Defence for the introduction of capabilities, including High Energy Lasers. A range of Capability Demonstration Programmes will be undertaken to accelerate the introduction of Directed Energy Weapons by approximately 10 years and further inform the Armed Forces of their utility.

Leeds Station: Capital Investment

Asked by Lord Wallace of Saltaire

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of investment in Leeds Station, as proposed in the Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan, on future economic growth in (1) Leeds, (2) the Leeds City Region, (3) Yorkshire, and (4) the wider Northern Powerhouse. [HL15174]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government is continuing to work with Leeds City Council on their ambitious plans for the redevelopment of Leeds Station to support wider economic growth and to develop the case for contributions from a number of potential funding sources, alongside other funding from commercial developments, including those associated with the Network Rail station.

Mali: Terrorism

Asked by The Earl of Sandwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are monitoring the threat posed by Islamic terrorists in Mali and neighbouring countries; and what role the UK currently has in the EU capacity-building missions in Mali and the Sahel. [HL15192]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are deeply concerned by the security situation in the region, including recent attacks against civilians and security forces operating in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Working alongside international partners, we continue to monitor the threat posed by terrorist groups in Mali and neighbouring countries and we remain committed to helping to address complex challenges in the Sahel.

The UK has seconded six military and two civilian personnel to the EU Training mission (EUTM) in Mali, who provide strategic advice; infantry, medical and counter-Improvised Explosive Device training; and international humanitarian law and gender expertise. Although there have been no UK personnel in the EU capacity building (EUCAP) missions in Mali and Niger since our last secondment in 2017, we continue to actively participate in all EU discussions concerning these missions and have supported their mandate extensions to January 2021 and September 2020 respectively.

Midland Main Railway Line: Electrification

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following their decision to extend the electrification of the Midland Main Line from Kettering to Market Harborough, whether they now intend to reconsider their decision to abandon the electrification of that line all the way to Sheffield. [HL15164]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There are currently no plans to further extend electrification on the Midland Main Line (MML), beyond those works planned by the MML enhancements programme and HS2 Phase 2b. The Department for Transport has taken the decision to deliver new bi-mode trains for MML intercity services. Together with significant infrastructure investment along the route, for example the track and signalling upgrade at Derby station which was completed last year, this will mean that passengers will benefit from faster journeys, and from more seats and better quality trains with as little disruption to passengers as possible.

National Insurance Contributions: Tax Allowances

Asked by Lord Bird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evaluation they have made of the proposal by the retailer Timpsons that national insurance holidays be introduced as an incentive for employers to take on former prisoners,

armed forces veterans, or long-term unemployed individuals. [[HL15139](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: The Government has committed in its manifesto to introduce a National Insurance holiday for employers who take on:

- those who have committed a crime but who have repaid their debt to society;
- veterans;
- and those who have been unemployed for over a year.

We will set out any changes as part of the annual fiscal event process, in the context of broader government work on employment support, and the wider public finances.

Natural Gas: VAT

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the amount of revenue that has been raised in additional VAT revenue on domestic gas following the recent increase in (1) the Pre-Payment Meter cap, and (2) the Default Tariff cap; and what estimate they have made of such income on an annualised basis. [[HL15206](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: The details that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) collects from taxpayers on their VAT returns are not specific enough to enable the revenue arising from these supplies to be quantified.

HMRC does not require detail on particular products and customer types because it would place a considerable administrative burden on businesses.

Niger: Refugees

Asked by The Earl of Sandwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accuracy of reports from the International Organisation for Migration that large numbers of refugees and migrants have entered Niger from Mali, Nigeria and elsewhere; if so, how many are registered with the UN; and what assistance the UK is offering to any such refugees. [[HL15193](#)]

Baroness Sugg: We broadly agree with reports from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM): escalating violence in the Diffa region of Niger has triggered the displacement of 18,000 people in recent weeks. However, we would note that IOM does not capture the total flows of people passing along migratory routes.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that Niger is home to one of the largest populations of refugees across the countries of the Sahel (174,767 people), including 55,496 people displaced by the conflict in Mali and 118,868 from Nigeria.

In 2019, the UK is providing £13.16 million to Niger via the World Food Programme, UNICEF and ICRC to

provide food, respond to severe acute malnutrition, and provide protection to conflict-affected people.

Overseas Trade: China

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase foreign investment and trade between the UK and China post-Brexit. [[HL15200](#)]

Baroness Fairhead: The Government works actively to increase trade between the UK and China, including through our overseas network led by HM Trade Commissioner for China, bilateral working groups, and through the broad support the Department for International Trade provides to UK exporters and to Chinese companies wishing to invest in the UK. Ministerial travel also supports this, and provides the necessary platform to progress market access for British goods and services. The Secretary of State travelled to China five times last year. He secured market access for UK dairy, worth £240m over 5 years, at the Department for International Trade-led Joint Economic and Trade Commission, and led the UK delegation to China's inaugural International Import Expo in November, where the UK secured over £2bn worth of deals. The Government is also conducting a Joint Trade and Investment Review with China, an analytical exercise to explore all options to increase flows of goods, services and investment in our post-Brexit trading relationship.

Planning

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 28 January ([HL12849](#)), when they expect the revised planning practice guidance, which follows from the National Planning Policy Framework 2018, to be introduced. [[HL15160](#)]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government is committed to updating the planning practice guidance in line with the recently published National Planning Policy Framework. My Written Answer sets out what progress the Government has made towards developing new national planning practice guidance, which covers the development of new road schemes that offer shared space between pedestrians, motorists and other road users.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is continuing to work closely with the Department for Transport (DfT), on guidance relating to sustainable transport and accessibility which will address shared space schemes and inclusive spaces. DfT are also working with Transport Scotland undertaking research on the issue of inclusive street design. To align the planning practice guidance with the work that DfT are doing, MHCLG anticipates being able to publish the sustainable transport and accessibility

guidance in Autumn, depending on the timescales of the work feeding into this.

Railways: Standards

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they intend to take against train operating companies that have the lowest rates of passenger satisfaction in the most recent National Rail Passenger Survey by Transport Focus, published in January. [HL15161]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department continually monitors passenger satisfaction with rail operators and if performance declines, we take appropriate action under the terms of our contracts. Operators are required through their Franchise Agreements to achieve challenging satisfaction targets across a range of key measures and if these targets are missed, they must invest in improvements for passengers.

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the core reasons for the latest National Rail Passenger Survey by Transport Focus, published in January, showing the lowest levels of passenger satisfaction in 10 years. [HL15162]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The latest National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) results (Autumn 2018) found that 8 in 10 journeys were rated as satisfactory overall at the national level, with fewer than one in 10 rated as unsatisfactory. Satisfaction as measured by the NRPS has generally remained stable over the last 10 years.

The fieldwork for the Autumn 2018 NRPS was the first since the introduction of the new timetable in May 2018 and the subsequent period of network disruption, which is likely to have had an impact on the results for some Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

In addition, a number of TOCs were affected by industrial action throughout 2018, including South Western Railway and Northern. Parts of the country (particularly Scotland) were affected by Storm Ali during September and October which closed a large number of stations in Scotland.

Rwanda: Genocide

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the remarks made by the Rwandan Minister of Justice and Attorney General Johnston Busingye that "Anyone who cares about British values and justice should be ashamed. The UK will go down in history as the only country in Europe which knowingly shielded alleged Rwandan genocidaires from justice." [HL15175]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We strongly disagree with any remarks that alleges the UK has shielded alleged

genocidaires. The decision on whether or not to extradite is a matter for the courts, not the government. We are a committed partner of Rwanda and believe in holding any perpetrators to account and ensuring justice is achieved. In line with this commitment, following the High Court ruling the Metropolitan Police undertook work to scope the allegations and subsequently launched an investigation. The Minister for Security committed in the House of Commons to ensuring that those suspected of war crimes face full justice and that resourcing or any other barriers will not stand in the way of completing this investigation as quickly as possible. However it is important to recognise that these investigations are complex and in order to ensure a free and fair trial, this will take time.

Sixth Form Education

Asked by Lord Murphy of Torfaen

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many sixth-form colleges in England were converted into 16–19 academies in 2018. [HL15184]

Asked by Lord Murphy of Torfaen

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial benefits of an institution converting from a sixth form college to a 16–19 academy; and if so, what are those benefits. [HL15187]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: In 2018, 3 sixth form colleges converted into 16–19 academies.

The government set out the benefits for sixth form colleges of becoming academies in the guidance for post-16 area reviews in March 2016, which is attached. Academisation enables colleges to build closer partnerships with schools which build on their strengths. It also allows them to realise educational and financial benefits from sharing resources, expertise and administration.

There are some direct financial benefits, notably the ability to reclaim VAT.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL15184_HL15187_Reviewing_post_18_education
[HL15184_HL15187_Reviewing_post_16_education_and_training_institutions.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-10/HL15184>

Asked by Lord Murphy of Torfaen

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many pupils attended (1) sixth form colleges, and (2) 16–19 academies in England, broken down by academic year, in each of the last five years. [HL15185]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Participation estimates for young people academic aged 16 to 18 in education, training and employment in England are published

annually in the National Statistics release 'Participation in education, training and employment'. Academic age refers to the age at the start of the academic year 31 August and therefore includes the first year of post compulsory education.

The estimates in the release relate to a snapshot of activities at the end of the calendar year and therefore does not give all pupils who attended. Information is drawn together from various post-16 data sources including the school census and the individualised learner record (ILR) to give a coherent and comprehensive picture of participation.

The attached table shows the numbers of young people of academic age 16-18 in full or part-time education by institution type.

For 2017, the 'Converter Academies' row in the attached table includes both schools recorded as converter academies on the school census and sixth form colleges who were recorded as a converter academy on the ILR.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL15185_Participation_Estimates_16-18_in_Education
[HL15185_Participation_Estimates_16-18_in_Full
and_Part_Time_Education.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-10/HL15185>

Asked by Lord Murphy of Torfaen

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current state of sixth form education and the future financial prospects of sixth form colleges. [HL15186]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Sixth form education in England has real strengths, offering a wide range of both academic and technical education for young people. The newly reformed A levels and the T levels that are now being developed are strengthening the 16-19 offer. 89% of sixth form colleges and 79% of state-funded school sixth forms were graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted at their most recent inspection as of 31 March 2019.

We have protected the base rate of funding for 16 to 19 year old students up until 2020, and we will be investing an additional £500 million per year in the delivery of T levels, once fully rolled out, and have launched a £38 million capital fund to support the initial roll-out.

However, we do recognise that all types of institutions providing sixth form education face financial challenges, and we will be considering future needs in the forthcoming Spending Review.

Skin Cancer: Health Education

Asked by Lord Clark of Windermere

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to raise awareness of the risks of skin cancer and methods of prevention [HL15225]

Asked by Lord Clark of Windermere

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include skin cancers in the Be Clear on Cancer campaign resources. [HL15226]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: Advice for adults and children on sunscreen and sun safety in the United Kingdom and abroad, to reduce the risk of developing skin cancer is available online at the NHS website. Advice includes: spend time in the shade when the sun is strongest, between 11am and 3pm; make sure you never burn; cover up with suitable clothing and sunglasses; take extra care with children; and use at least factor 15 sunscreen.

Public Health England (PHE) is refreshing its guidance to actual and prospective users of sunbeds on how to minimise exposure to ultraviolet radiation, which can cause skin cancer. PHE's online guidance will be updated in spring 2019.

Social Impact Bonds

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Social Impact Bonds; and whether they intend to continue the scheme. [HL15167]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Government has launched several Social Impact Bond programmes since 2010, including the Peterborough Prison Offender Rehabilitation service, the Social Outcomes Fund, two Rough Sleeping Programmes and the Fair Chance Fund. Evaluation and assessment findings have shown that Social Impact Bonds can successfully address complex social problems, with evidence of both improved outcomes and reductions in costs.

The Centre for Social Impact Bonds will continue to build the evidence base for Social Impact Bonds by supporting the monitoring and evaluation of current programmes, and building on our partnership with the Government Outcomes Lab at Oxford University, a centre of expertise for Social Impact Bonds and innovative Government commissioning.

In line with our commitments outlined in the Civil Society Strategy, the Centre for Social Impact Bonds will continue to provide support to government departments to deliver Social Impact Bonds at scale. Government is also supporting the use of Social Impact Bonds in the commissioning of local public services through the Life Chances Fund, an £80m fund to help people in society who face the most significant barriers to lead happy and productive lives.

South Western Railway: Timetables

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 27 March (HL14667), what assessment they have made of

whether timetable bids for later trains within the Network Rail Framework could be considered if they are approached by the franchisee, South Western Rail. [HL15156]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: South Western Railway has applied to Network Rail to run later services to Yeovil for the timetable change on 15 December this year. The new timetable is currently being developed through the rail industry's timetabling process led by Network Rail.

Students: Loans

Asked by Baroness Brady

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the rates of interest charged on student loans to ensure they properly reflect the Bank of England interest rate. [HL15142]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The system for setting interest rates on student loans is set out in The Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009, as amended. The Department for Education sets the interest rate as instructed by the regulations.

For post-2012 student loans, the department regularly monitors the interest rates set on student loans against the interest rates prevailing on the market. The most appropriate comparators for undergraduate student loans are the effective interest rates available on unsecured personal loans, as published by the Bank of England (data series CFMBJ77 and CFMBJ94). Both rates continue to be above the maximum interest rate charged on student loans.

Sudan: Overseas Aid

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 1 April (HL 14681), what funding provided by DFID Sudan was disbursed by implementing partners to government of Sudan institutions for each of the last five years. [HL15127]

Baroness Sugg: DFID's policy in Sudan is that no financial aid or support should be provided directly to the Government of Sudan. DFID Sudan started monitoring indirect disbursements from Financial Year 2016/17 in order to ensure that any risks presented were appropriately managed. The time and resources required to collate information prior to Financial Year 2016/17 from implementing partners would come at a disproportionate cost.

DFID Sudan can confirm that the following funding provided by DFID was disbursed by implementing partners to Government of Sudan institutions.

- Financial Year 2016/17 - £1.6M
- Financial Year 2017/18 - £1.5M
- Financial Year 2018/19 - £1M

Sunbeds

Asked by Lord Clark of Windermere

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review sunbed regulations. [HL15227]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The Sunbeds Regulation Act 2010 was implemented to prohibit under-18s from using sunbeds based on the recommendations by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

The Department, with expert advisers, is considering whether the current legislation and associated guidance, produced by the Department, the Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England to support the enforcement of the regulations by local authorities and the safe use of sunbeds, are effective for protecting sunbed users.

Syria: British Nationals Abroad

Asked by Baroness Berridge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what attempts they have made directly, or through, the UN or relief agencies, to assess the conditions in which British children are living in internally displaced persons' camps in Syria. [HL15212]

Asked by Baroness Berridge

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the internally displaced persons' camps in Syria in which British children reside are under the control of the government of Syria or the Kurdish authorities. [HL15213]

Baroness Sugg: The UK remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation throughout Syria, which is why DFID is working closely with the UN and our INGO partners to maintain an up to date picture of conditions and humanitarian needs, including within Syria's Internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps. These assessments help us to better understand the conditions inside these camps and support the people in most desperate need. Our aid inside Syria helps people regardless of their country of origin and is driven by these assessments by the UN and INGO partners, to make sure food, medical care and shelter reaches the people who need it most.

IDP camps in Syria are overseen by the organisation which governs the area where a camp is located. Across Syria this includes, but is not limited to, the Assad Regime and Kurdish authorities.

Telecommunications: Standards

Asked by Baroness Byford

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will review (1) the time requirements for telecommunication companies to respond to reported service failures and

restore telephone lines and broadband, and (2) the level of compensation for service failures. [[HL15179](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Byford***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Ofcom review individual cases where telephone and broadband failures are dealt with in an unsatisfactory manner. [[HL15180](#)]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: These are matters for Ofcom, the UK's designated enforcer of consumer law and regulation for the UK communications industries. Ofcom do not handle individual complaints, but look at how problems affect UK consumers as a whole and then make decisions on whether to open enforcement investigations. Ofcom also has powers to introduce new consumer regulations under its General Conditions of Entitlement, which apply to all providers of electronic communications networks and services must comply with if they want to provide services in the UK.

In March 2017, Ofcom consulted on introducing an automatic compensation scheme for fixed broadband and landline telecoms to protect consumers who suffer from specific service failures. Subsequently, industry agreed to introduce a voluntary automatic compensation scheme, which came into effect from 1 April 2019. The new scheme applies to new orders placed or problems reported from 1 April 2019 and sets out compensation amounts for delayed repairs following a loss of service, missed repairs or provision appointments, and delays to the start of a new service. Ofcom plan to review the scheme after it has been in place for 12 months.

Where an individual feels that their service fault has been dealt with in an unsatisfactory manner by their telecoms provider, and if their complaint has not been resolved after eight weeks, they can refer their case to an independent Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme. ADR schemes can review individual cases and any decisions they make are binding on telecoms providers. There are two ADR schemes for telecoms, the Ombudsman Services (OS) and the Communications and Internet Services Adjudication Scheme (CISAS), and all communications providers must be members of one of these schemes.

Tunisia: Prosperity Fund

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 25 March (HL14416), why the Prosperity Fund does not have any projects in Tunisia. [[HL15153](#)]

Baroness Sugg: The UK is working alongside our international partners in Tunisia to support economic reforms to tackle the long term challenges facing the country, including youth unemployment.

We have been increasing our support for these issues through the North Africa Good Governance Fund,

through which we will spend over £12m in 2019/20 – more than doubling our support since 2014/15.

The Prosperity Fund is a Fund with 27 multiyear programmes. With £1.2 billion to spend over 7 years the Fund had to prioritise countries and sectors where there is the most potential for inclusive growth and poverty impact; and where UK expertise could make a difference. Tunisia was not considered a priority country for the Fund.

Turkey: Arms Trade

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 28 March (HL14668), which weapons exported to Turkey from the UK are capable of interoperability with current and proposed defence systems, such as the S-400 missiles. [[HL15154](#)]

Earl Howe: None of the weapons systems which the United Kingdom has thus far exported to the Republic of Turkey are considered interoperable with current and proposed Russian defence systems, such as S-400.

Universities: USA

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Viscount Younger of Leckie on 29 March (HL14665), whether they have had, or intend to have, discussions with the government of the United States about the possible effects of incidents of cash-for-student places at United States colleges on the mutual standing of higher education institutions between the UK and the United States. [[HL15155](#)]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: In order to support the standing of our higher education institutions, the UK government regularly engages with other countries to aid the mutual recognition of qualifications. To support this objective, the UK National Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC) provides expert advice on behalf of the UK government on the comparability of international qualifications with those of the UK. They have close links with their counterparts in countries around the world, including in the US. Our universities and colleges are supported by the UK NARIC service in making decisions on the eligibility of applicants for places in their courses.

VAT: Tax Evasion

*Asked by **Lord Lucas***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many notices of joint and several liability were issued in the last 12 months in respect of VAT evasion by overseas sellers; and how much stock was seized as a result. [[HL15250](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: In the year ending 31 December 2018, HM Revenue and Customs issued 3,827 notices of joint and several liability to online

marketplaces. These inform the online marketplace that it could be held jointly liable for an overseas seller's future unpaid VAT. In the vast majority of cases, the receipt of a notice results in the online marketplace removing that seller from its platform. Seizure of stock takes place under separate powers.

Water Companies: Competition

*Asked by **Baroness Byford***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Gardiner of Kimble on 1 February (HL13061), what assessment they have made of whether the cost to serve allowance for non-household water retailers is sufficient to enable effective competition. [[HL15177](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Byford***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Gardiner of Kimble on 1 February (HL13061), what rationale was behind the decision to set the cost to serve allowance for smaller non-household water customers at its proposed levels. [[HL15178](#)]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Determining the appropriate price protections for non-household water customers, including the cost to serve allowance, is a matter for Ofwat, the economic regulator for the water

industry. The current price protections for non-household water customers run until March 2020.

Ofwat has collected detailed cost data from all licensed water and sewerage retailers, to provide them with the evidence about the current cost to serve allowance.

In December 2018 Ofwat published a consultation on price protections to apply from April 2020. This included questions on the cost to serve allowance. Chapter 7 of the consultation published on GOV.UK sets out the proposed approach and Ofwat's rationale for the proposal.

The consultation closed on 15 February. Ofwat is considering the responses received and will respond in due course.

World Economy

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of a recent International Monetary Fund forecast regarding the impact of a no-deal Brexit as a risk to global economic growth. [[HL15168](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: The government has not assessed the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook April 2019 publication. The IMF is an independent organisation. Their analysis of the UK and global economy represents their own views.

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