

Session 2017-19
No. 321



Monday
7 October 2019

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

[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/>

Members who want a printed copy of Written Answers and Written Statements should notify the Printed Paper Office.

This printed edition is a reproduction of the original text of Answers and Statements, which can be found on the internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>.

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	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	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Berridge	Whip
Lord Bethell	Whip
Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
Lord Callanan	Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Duncan of Springbank	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Northern Ireland Office
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Sugg	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2019

This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence, which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/

Written Answers

Monday, 7 October 2019

A34: Accidents

Asked by **Lord Bradshaw**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many accidents involving death or serious injury have occurred in each of the last five years for which figures are available on the A34 section of the junction with the M40 to its southern end; and in how many such accidents heavy goods vehicles were involved. [[HL17855](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The number of fatal and serious accidents occurring on the A34 section of the junction with the M40 for the last five years for which figures are available is given in the table below. There is no geographical definition of the southern end, so the whole junction and the 100m section of the A34 leading to the junction have been included.

Number of fatal or serious reported road accidents on the A34 section of the junction with the M40¹, 2014 to 2018

Year	Number of accidents
2014	1
2015	0
2016	0
2017	0
2018	0

Source: DfT Stats19

1. Includes the 100m section of the A34 leading to the junction.

The serious accident which occurred at this junction in 2014 involved a car and a goods vehicle of unknown weight.

Apprentices

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Winchester**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy on the (1) provision, and (2) uptake, of lower-level apprenticeship qualifications; and what steps they are taking to address any issues identified with the (a) provision, and (b) uptake, of such qualifications. [[HL17943](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The apprenticeship levy is an important part of the changes to raise apprenticeship quality, creating long-term and sustainable investment in training. Our reforms have put employers in the driving seat, giving them the opportunity to develop apprenticeship standards across all levels to give apprentices the skills that businesses really need.

While starts at level 2 have declined, we have seen a significant upward shift toward apprenticeship starts at higher levels. For example, we have seen starts at higher levels (4 and above) increase by 68% compared to the same point last year. In addition, the level 3 share of the apprenticeships programme shifted upwards, which shows a healthier balance across all levels, helping people progress to highly-skilled occupations.

We will continue to work closely with employers to help them take advantage of our apprenticeship reforms and to invest in the long-term skills needs of their business. We meet regularly with business groups and individual employers to understand the impact of our changes and we use this feedback to help improve the system. For example, in April this year we increased the amount that levy-paying employers can transfer to other employers from 10% to 25%.

Our apprenticeships campaign, Fire It Up, is also working to increase the number of high-quality apprenticeships, by changing the way people think about apprenticeships, demonstrating that they are an aspirational choice.

Borders: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Lord Hay of Ballyore**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the EU on technical alternatives to a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. [[HL17633](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government has now issued a new proposal which means we can leave on 31 October without disruption and in a friendly way. It is a fair and reasonable compromise for all sides that respects the referendum. It contains a special arrangement for Northern Ireland that protects the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and the peace process, and ensures democratic consent for the arrangement.

There have been ongoing discussions with the European Union at Prime Ministerial, Ministerial and Sherpa level in recent weeks and these will continue.

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the Interim and Final Reports, published by Prosperity UK on 24 June and 18 July, on future arrangements for the border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, in particular for preserving the integrity of the Belfast Agreement and for avoiding the need for backstop procedures. [[HL17722](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government welcomes the reports by the Alternative Arrangements Commission, it is an important contribution. We have considered it alongside input from technical experts and businesses to inform our approach to removing the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland (known as the backstop) and avoiding a hard border in Northern Ireland, in the context of negotiations on the future agreement between the UK and the EU. We

remain firmly committed to the Belfast Agreement and we are steadfast in our commitment to do everything in our power to preserve an open border in Northern Ireland.

Brazil and Indonesia: Rain Forests

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the governments of Brazil and Indonesia regarding forest fires and the need to prevent new ones, together with the urgency of preserving existing rainforests. [HL17878]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: UK Ministers and our Embassy in Brasilia routinely engage with the Brazilian Government on many environmental issues, including deforestation. The Foreign Secretary spoke to the Brazilian Foreign Minister about the forest fires in the Amazon on 27 August, and the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas also discussed this issue with the Brazilian Ambassador at a meeting on 4 September. At the G7, the UK pledged a further £10 million towards the protection and restoration of Brazil's rainforests, including areas impacted by the recent fires.

We are also concerned about the fires in Indonesia's forests and peatlands. They are causing extensive damage at both local and regional level, and contributing to global carbon emissions. The British government is engaged with authorities in Indonesia, through our Embassy in Jakarta, to find long term solutions on fire prevention. We are also looking at peatland protection and restoration on Sumatra and Kalimantan, the regions where most fires occur.

Brexit

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will publish the results of Operation Black Swan before 31 October; and if so, when. [HL17965]

The Earl of Courtown: Her Majesty's Government is not aware of the existence of an Operation Black Swan.

Burundi: International Assistance

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UN Human Rights Council Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, published in September, suggesting that Burundi is at risk of a genocide; what assessment they have made of whether the risk factors as outlined in that Report match the criteria identified by the Genocide Prevention Committee as predictors of genocide; and what steps they are taking, with international partners, to prevent such an outcome. [HL17785]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain extremely concerned by the ongoing political challenges and human

rights situation in Burundi, and its humanitarian consequences. An inclusive dialogue led by the region remains one of the only viable options to resolve the ongoing political crisis and we encourage the region to engage fully in this process. We repeatedly raise our concerns with the Government of Burundi and at the UN Human Rights Council and UN Security Council to keep the international spotlight focused on resolving the crisis. The UK wants genuine dialogue with Burundi once it has taken demonstrable steps to improve human rights, and to make progress towards stability.

We are concerned by the findings of the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi that Burundi is at risk of atrocities. We continue to look to the UN and in particular the Commission of Inquiry, to assess whether the criteria as stipulated in the 1948 Convention on the prevention and Punishment of Genocide is at risk of being met. The UK International Ambassador for Human Rights, in her statement at the 42nd UN Human Rights Council on 17 September, welcomed the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and urged the Government of Burundi to fulfil its obligation to protect human rights and to hold perpetrators to account.

Children: Social Services

Asked by Baroness Pinnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have analysed the value and effectiveness of early intervention approaches in children's social care; and if so, what actions they have taken as a result. [HL17826]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The government has funded the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) since 2013, including giving the EIF almost £2 million in 2018-20, to assess, evaluate and disseminate evidence of what works. The evidence on effectiveness in early intervention, including in children's social care, is the core focus of the EIF.

The EIF has assessed the benefits of a wide range of specific early intervention programmes and suggested that, whilst producing robust estimates is challenging, there is a compelling argument that the costs of intervening early are likely to pay off to society in economic terms.

In particular, the EIF highlights that the long-term economic benefits are considerable where early intervention leads to labour market gains, such as improvements in employment and earnings. Published research on the value of early intervention can be found in the 'Realising the potential of early intervention' report, attached, which can also be found at the following link: <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/realising-the-potential-of-early-intervention>.

The value of early intervention is reflected in the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)', also attached. The guidance is clear on the fact that providing early help is more effective in promoting children's welfare than reacting later and that

early intervention plays an important part in supporting children and young people to achieve better outcomes. This is why the government has recently confirmed funding for the Troubled Families Programme for 2020-21 as part of the one-year Spending Round, securing continued support for an early intervention programme which aims to achieve significant and sustained improvement for families with multiple and high-cost problems.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL17826_report
[HL17826_Realising_the_potential_of_early_intervention.pdf]

HL17826_report
[HL17826_Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children_2018.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-25/HL17826>

*Asked by **Baroness Pinnock***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have considered the causes of the increase in demand for children's social care services; and if so, what actions they have taken as a result. [HL17827]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: In preparation for the 2019 spending round, the department worked with the sector, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and HM Treasury, to understand the level of funding local government needs to meet demand and deliver statutory duties. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has now announced that local government social care services are getting an additional £1 billion grant for adults and children in 2020-21. This is on top of the continuation of existing social care grants.

The department will continue to develop our understanding of demand in children's social care as part of preparation for the next Spending Review. We are also working closely with MHCLG on the Review of Relative Needs and Resources to develop a robust, up-to-date approach to funding distribution for children's services at local government finance settlements.

*Asked by **Baroness Pinnock***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether children's social care services delivered and commissioned by local authorities will benefit from additional funding as a result of the Spending Review announcement. [HL17828]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Children's social care services delivered and commissioned by local authorities will benefit from additional funding as a result of the Spending Review announcement. Local Government is getting an additional £1 billion grant for adult and children's social care in 2020-21. This is on top of the continuation of existing social care grants.

Cybercrime: Government Departments and Infrastructure

*Asked by **Lord Harris of Haringey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role of privileged access management in protecting the cyber security of (1) government departments, and (2) critical national infrastructure. [HL17797]

*Asked by **Lord Harris of Haringey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many cyber attacks against government departments have involved the misuse of privileged access credentials. [HL17799]

The Earl of Courtown: Government departments and Critical National Infrastructure organisations are responsible for managing their own cyber risk effectively.

The high level of importance of privileged access management in cyber security is recognised by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is the UK's national technical authority for cyber security.

For Government, it is documented in the minimum cyber security standard in items 5 and 7. For Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) it is documented in NCSC's Network and Information Systems guidance in section B2, and there are specific assessment criteria laid out in section B2.c of the Cyber Assessment Framework for use by cyber security regulators.

For wider industry sectors and Small and Medium Enterprises, best practice is contained in the NCSC Board Kit and 10 Steps to Cyber Security.

The Cabinet Office does not require central Government Departments to report all cyber incidents involving the misuse of privileged access credentials and so does not hold this information centrally.

However, the minimum cyber security standard outlines the communications required by a department when there is a security incident that impacts on sensitive information or key operational services. Therefore departments will only be expected to inform the Cabinet Office of an incident involving the misuse of privileged access credentials that met these criteria.

East Coast Railway Line: Rolling Stock

*Asked by **Lord Bradshaw***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many trains operated by East Coast Main Line were reported as being "full and standing" over the weekend of 16-18 August; and when they expect to allocate enough rolling stock to their appointed train service operator to overcome overcrowding on the line. [HL17791]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: On Friday 16 August 2019, 12 trains operated by London North Eastern Railway (LNER) were reported as being full and

standing. On Saturday 17 August, there was 1, and on Sunday 18 August, there were 6.

It is worth noting that many passengers may have chosen to travel over this weekend as they could not travel over the weekend 24-26 August 2019, the August bank holiday, due to planned major engineering works that closed the East Coast Main Line out of London Kings Cross. Also, there was significant disruption to services the previous weekend, due to a national power supply failure on 9 August 2019, which may have resulted in customer deferring travel plans to the weekend of 16-18 August 2019.

LNER is currently introducing its new Azuma intercity train fleet. This will be one of biggest fleet upgrades in a generation, marking a step change for passengers on the route, with the new trains bringing greater seating capacity, connectivity and enabling reduced journey times. As the new trains are rolled out in phases until mid-2020, capacity will increase across the route, helping to reduce crowding.

Equal Pay

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to identify the cause of the gender pay gap. [HL18021]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government introduced ground-breaking regulations in 2017 requiring large employers to publish gender pay gap data.

We recognise that reporting is just the start; we are committed to ensuring that the UK is an international leader on gender equality research.

This year, we published the Case for Change, an in-depth analysis of how economic gender inequalities develop across people's lives. In this, we highlight research we published in 2018, led by the University of Manchester, that identified four key drivers of the UK Gender Pay Gap:

- Occupational segregation - the types of jobs that women tend to do are less well paid than the types of jobs men do.
- Industrial segregation - the sectors of the economy that women tend to work in are less well paid than the sectors that men work in.
- Differences in the ways men and women participate in the labour market - women tend to spend more years out of the labour market undertaking unpaid care work than men, and tend to have fewer years of full-time work experience.
- Other factors that cannot be explained by the data we have, but could include discrimination, harassment, preferences and choices.

To address these drivers, we published the Gender Equality Roadmap in July, setting out the Government's vision and actions to address the persistent gendered barriers people face across their lives. Furthermore, our

new annual Gender Equality Monitor brings together 24 indicators on gender equality from all areas of life to help us better measure progress over time.

We are also running two research programmes, Women and Gender Equality and Gender and Behavioural Insights, to develop the evidence base on gender equality in the workplace. Findings from this research is being used to identify practical actions for employers and organisations to support women's progression in the workplace and reduce their gender pay gap.

Food: Disadvantaged

Asked by The Earl of Listowel

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to mitigate the impact of any rise in the cost of food staples as a result a no-deal Brexit on low income families. [HL17822]

Asked by The Earl of Listowel

To ask Her Majesty's Government what funds they have set aside for community projects supporting low income families with food staples, following a no-deal Brexit. [HL17823]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Government has been clear that leaving the EU with a deal is its preferred option.

The Government has put in place contingency plans for a range of exit scenarios. These contingencies ensure that the Department can continue to provide our vital services and that individuals will continue to be able to access benefits and services on the same basis as they do now.

The Government is committed to providing a strong safety-net through the welfare system. We continue to spend over £95 billion a year on benefits for people of working age. The Department continues to monitor the effects of EU exit on the economy. Rates of benefits continue to be reviewed in line with the relevant legislation for uprating.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Freedom of Information

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government when Freedom of Information Request 0510-19 to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was submitted; what has caused the delay in responding to it; and whether the new deadline of 16 September was met. [HL17786]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We acknowledged receipt of this request on 28 May 2019, but due to the amount of information to review that could have been in scope for release we have extended the deadline on four occasions. Four letters explaining our need to extend the deadline have been sent. We have now reviewed all the information and are working to meet the 14 October deadline.

Gaza: Israel

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Israel about the situation of stateless female cancer patients in Gaza who require specialist treatment in Israel. [HL17807]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the matter of medical permits with the Israeli authorities. Israeli restrictions severely restrict the movement of medical professionals, patients and families from Gaza, hampering the provision of quality health services, as well as impacting Palestinians in the West Bank. The situation in Gaza is particularly acute, and is compounded by frequent closure by Egypt of the Rafah crossing, preventing urgent medical cases from seeking treatment in Egypt. A lasting resolution to the situation is needed that will ensure that all those who are in need of medical attention and their families have unimpeded access to healthcare provisions.

HMS Bristol

Asked by **Lord Trefgarne**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the role of HMS Bristol. [HL17884]

Baroness Goldie: HMS BRISTOL provides an alongside maritime training and accommodation capability at HMS EXCELLENT in Portsmouth.

India: Nationality

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of India about those people in Assam liable to become stateless as a result of the recent update to the National Register of Citizens; and whether they plan to recommend that it is a matter in which the Commonwealth could mediate. [HL17916]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly engage with Indian Union and State Government Ministers and officials on a range of human rights matters and raise issues where appropriate. On 27 September, officials from the British High Commission in New Delhi raised the National Register of Citizens in Assam, including the future status of those excluded from the register, with the Assam State Minister for Health and Finance. We await further details of what next steps the Government of India will take.

Lebanon: Refugees

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Lebanon's efforts to restrict undocumented foreign labour, and of the

impact of such restriction on unemployment among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. [HL17809]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not yet made an assessment of this particular matter, the UK supports refugees remaining in host countries in the region, and supports host countries to accommodate them. As part of this, we are working in partnership with host countries to help them to expand job and education opportunities for refugees in a way that will enable them to better support themselves and give them skills for the future. We are also helping host countries to cope with the impact of refugees on local services.

Merchant Shipping: Roll-on Roll-off Ships

Asked by **Lord MacKenzie of Culkein**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, the four Point-class sealift ships will be used to transport urgent cargoes of medicines, short shelf life products, or other essential goods. [HL17970]

Asked by **Lord MacKenzie of Culkein**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, there are plans to utilise Marchwood Military Port to import essential goods. [HL17971]

Baroness Goldie: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is supporting the Department for Transport (DfT) in developing contingency plans for the movement of Category 1 goods, from the EU to the UK, in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Category 1 goods are defined as 'those essential for the preservation of human and animal welfare and national security'. DfT is procuring, on behalf of the rest of Government, freight capacity from the commercial market and remains on track to provide the required capacity from 31 October 2019, but it is right to prepare for all eventualities. MOD has therefore been requested to make available one of its freight vessels for use from 31 October 2019 should it be necessary. This vessel is one of the four Point Class Strategic Roll-on-Roll-off vessels (SRR), which are operated by Foreland Shipping Limited under a MOD contract. If this contingency plan is utilised, the intention is to import the Category 1 goods the SRR carries through Marchwood Port, using the MOD contract with the port operator Solent Gateway Limited.

Midland Main Railway Line: Electrification

Asked by **Lord Bradshaw**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 11 July (HL16737), when the final decisions on the costs of electrifying the railway from Kettering to Sheffield, on which their decision not to proceed with the electrification of the Midland Main Line were based, were made by Network Rail. [HL17853]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The indicative cost estimate of c.£1.0bn (in 2012/13 prices) for electrifying the route from Kettering to Sheffield / Nottingham was developed by Network Rail in September 2016.

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 11 July (HL16737), what plans they have (1) to review their decision to deploy new bi-mode trains on the Midland Main Line in the light of the substantial cost reductions being made on current electrification projects, and (2) to compare the present and future costs associated with the bi-mode trains in the light of experience with such trains on the Great Western Main Line. [HL17854]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department does not plan to review the decision to deploy bi-mode trains on the Midland Main Line. The new East Midlands franchise, which was awarded to Abellio in April 2019, will deliver new bi-mode intercity trains from 2022. These trains offer operational flexibility and resilience on both electrified and non-electrified sections of the network.

Rolling stock procurement and operational costs are a matter for train operators or owners. East Midlands Railway is committed to the procurement and operation of these bi-mode trains as set out in the Franchise Agreement.

Ministry of Defence: Contracts

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the average length of time between the receipt of Ministry of Defence tender submissions and contract awards made in the (1) 2009/10, (2) 2014/5, and (3) 2018/19, financial years. [HL17848]

Baroness Goldie: The average length of time between the receipt of Ministry of Defence tender submissions and contract awards is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Ministry of Defence invitations to tender ended in a failure to award any contract in the (1) 2009/10, (2) 2014/15, and (3) 2018/19, financial years. [HL17849]

Baroness Goldie: The number of Ministry of Defence invitations to tender that have ended in a failure to award any contract is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Occupied Territories: Economic Situation

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development Report on UNCTAD

assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, published on 10 September, in particular its conclusion that the Palestinian economy is at risk of collapse as a result of Israeli occupation. [HL17808]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains gravely concerned about the economic and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). Our Government officials regularly propose measures to improve the situation in the OPTs with Government of Israel officials. These include the adoption of a more transparent process for allowing goods into Gaza and permitting greater exports from the strip. The UK is supporting direct measures to support job creation in Gaza. We will more than double the amount of UK aid spent on economic development in the OPTs to around £38 million over the next five years (2018-2023). We have also repeatedly raised with the Government of Israel our concerns about its decision to withhold tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority (PA). We expect economic and fiscal agreements between Israel and the PA to continue to be fully implemented, including Israel's obligations under the Oslo Accords and Paris Protocol.

Office for Students: Registration

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government how long, on average, it takes for an application by an institution for registration with the Office for Students to be processed; and what has been (1) the longest, and (2) the shortest, time taken for such an application, broken down by institution type. [HL17800]

Baroness Berridge: There is no meaningful average time for higher education establishments receiving an outcome on their Office for Students (OfS) registration application. This is because the time taken from initial receipt of the application to a final registration decision is dependent on a number of factors.

These factors include the completeness of the application initially submitted, the scale of the clarificatory information requested by the assessor during the assessment process and the length of time taken by the provider to respond to such information requests. In addition, other factors include the time taken for the provider's access and participation plan to be negotiated and approved and the likelihood of the provider to breach its ongoing conditions of registration, including the ways in which that would impact its students. Furthermore, consideration is also given to the overall readiness of the provider to be regulated.

Cases where decisions that have been reached more quickly often relate to circumstances where the provider has submitted a near-complete application or where queries during the assessment have been minimal. More timely decisions can be made where the risk assessment suggests that the provider is unlikely to breach any of its ongoing conditions of registration.

Cases that have taken longer to assess have typically involved several attempts to obtain relevant information from the provider.

The risk assessment may also suggest either that the provider does not satisfy one or more initial conditions of registration (in which case the provider may make representations against the proposed decision to refuse registration), or that the provider may be at increased risk of breaching one or more of its ongoing conditions of registration, once registered.

In these cases, the OfS is likely to conclude that the interests of students are best protected by taking regulatory action with which the provider must comply, such as applying specific conditions of registration or enhanced monitoring arrangements. Such occurrences would lengthen the timeframe for a decision on an application.

The OfS will be publishing an analysis of the key themes that arose during the initial registration process in the autumn.

Papua: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have held with members of the Pacific Islands Forum about the situation in West Papua. [HL17818]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for Asia and the Pacific attended the Pacific Island Forum in August 2019. The UK notes the communique issued at the Pacific Island Forum but does not intend to respond to it. We regard Papua and West Papua provinces as being part of Indonesia and consider dialogue on territorial issues in Indonesia as a matter for the Indonesian people.

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have plans to raise the current situation in West Papua at the United Nations; and if so, when. [HL17819]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have no plans to raise the current situation in Papua at the United Nations. The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including Papua.

Papua: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of human rights violations by Indonesian security forces in West Papua since 15 August. [HL17816]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government are concerned about recent clashes in Papua. The Indonesian

Government has announced an investigation; which we encourage them to ensure is comprehensive.

The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including Papua. We continue to urge parties to refrain from violence and respect the rule of law.

The Indonesian Government has the right to enforce security on its own territory. We continue to press the Indonesian authorities to address legitimate human rights concerns, including upholding the right of all citizens to peacefully protest, and ensure the sustainable and equitable development of Papua.

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Indonesia about reports of human rights violations in West Papua. [HL17817]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary raised Papua with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on 31 July at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. On 18 June, the former Foreign Secretary raised Papua with Foreign Minister Retno during the UK-Indonesia Partnership Forum, as did the former Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific on 17 June.

Following the most recent protests, our Ambassador released a press statement on 26 September urging all sides to refrain from violence and welcoming the Indonesian government's announcement of a full and comprehensive investigation.

Embassy officials in Jakarta visit Papua and West Papua provinces and regularly press the Indonesian authorities to address legitimate human rights concerns, including upholding the right of all citizens to protest peacefully, and promote the sustainable and equitable development of the provinces. The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including Papua.

Papua: Protest

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the protests and mass demonstrations in West Papua since 15 August. [HL17815]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government are concerned about recent clashes in Papua. The Indonesian Government has announced an investigation; which we encourage them to ensure is comprehensive.

The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including Papua. We continue to urge parties to refrain from violence and respect the rule of law.

The Indonesian Government has the right to enforce security on its own territory. We continue to press the Indonesian authorities to address legitimate human rights concerns, including upholding the right of all citizens to peacefully protest, and ensure the sustainable and equitable development of Papua.

Persian Gulf: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of an accidental outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf region; and what plans they have to make military enhancements to UK forces in that region in response to any such risk. [HL17940]

Baroness Goldie: The Ministry of Defence continually assesses the risk to the UK's interests across the world, including in the Gulf. UK force levels are kept under review to ensure the UK is able to deter and, if required, counter threats to the UK or/and our allies. The UK has joined the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) in the Gulf and deployed additional resource to ensure maritime security is upheld and the free flow of trade is safeguarded. The UK remains focussed on de-escalation. Meanwhile, the UK maintains a steady tempo of exercises and short-term training with our regional partners, demonstrating our commitment to regional stability.

Special Educational Needs: Hearing Impairment

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the figures published by the National Deaf Children's Society which indicate that the number of specialist teachers for deaf children has fallen by 15 per cent since 2011. [HL17801]

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they will take to increase the employment of specialist teachers for deaf children by local authorities and schools. [HL17802]

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the research published by the National Deaf Children's Society in August on GCSE outcomes which indicated that deaf children fall a grade behind hearing classmates at GCSE. [HL17803]

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a bursary scheme for trainee teachers for deaf children. [HL17804]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Department for Education has considered the report by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) setting out their research on the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf and their request for a government funded bursary scheme. Officials are working with the NDCS and other organisations in the sensory impairment sector to identify wider solutions to support teachers wishing to train as Teachers of the Deaf, and qualified teachers of the sensory impaired more widely.

Local authorities should work closely with parents, young people and providers to keep the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) under review. This includes its sufficiency for children and young people with hearing impairment. For 2020-21, we have announced more than £700 million of additional high needs funding, which funds children with more complex special educational needs and disabilities, including hearing impairment. This represents an increase of 11% compared to 2019-20, leading to a total of over £7 billion. This will help local authorities to manage the pressures that they will face next year. Every local authority will see a minimum increase of 8% per head of population aged 2-18. We will provide local authorities with provisional allocations in October.

The Whole School SEND consortium, led by nasen, are currently delivering a £3.9 million two-year programme of work to equip schools to identify and meet their training needs in relation to SEND and build the specialist workforce in mainstream and special schools, including support for pupils with hearing impairment. The National Sensory Impairment Partnership, the membership of which includes the NDCS, are key partners in the delivery of that programme of work.

Syria: Military Intervention

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have had discussions with the governments of the United States and Turkey, following their first joint ground patrol near Tell Abyad in Syria, including about future plans. [HL17877]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly discuss the situation in north east Syria, including the future of the territory, with the governments of the United States and Turkey. The Prime Minister discussed this issue with President Erdogan on 24 September. Senior officials most recently discussed this with their US counterparts during meetings at the UN General Assembly from 23-27 September.

Syria: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement by the UN that the composition of the constitutional committee on Syria has been agreed, what plans they have to call for the inclusion of one or more representatives of the populace living in North-East Syria on that committee. [HL17810]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the UN Secretary-General's announcement on 23 September of the formation of a Constitutional Committee. Decisions on membership of the committee are a matter for the UN Special Envoy for Syria. We have consistently raised with the Special Envoy the need for the committee to be balanced and inclusive.

Thomas Cook: Insolvency

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they took steps, in the light of the collapse of Monarch Airlines and the expenditure of public funds in repatriating travellers, to ensure that public funds will not be irrecoverably spent in repatriating customers of Thomas Cook; and if so, what steps. [HL17824]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The failure of Thomas Cook is one of the largest travel company failures we have ever seen. A failure of this size, and the number of passengers affected, is unprecedented. In these circumstances, it is right that the Government should step in and help affected passengers return home as smoothly as possible. We are seeking to minimise the impact on the Government and taxpayers by recovering costs where appropriate through the ATOL scheme, credit card companies and travel insurance.

The majority of Thomas Cook passengers are ATOL protected and the costs for repatriating those passengers will be covered by the ATOL scheme.

An independent Airline Insolvency Review, chaired by Peter Bucks concluded earlier this year and the Government published the final report on 9 May 2019. The Review also acknowledged there was no “silver bullet or one-size-fits-all” solution, to ensure consumer protection in the event of airline insolvency. The recommendations are complex and represent an evolutionary, incremental policy approach over many years that takes into account an expected implementation period. The Government is actively considering the recommendations of the review and is committed to taking steps accordingly.

Trains

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much bi-mode trains cost to (1) order, and (2) run, compared to electric trains for InterCity services. [HL17795]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Bi-mode trains offer the flexibility and resilience to operate on both routes that are electrified but also non-electrified routes.

Rolling stock procurement and operational costs are a matter for train operators and owners. Due to their complex traction systems and maintenance requirements, bi-mode trains are generally more expensive to buy, maintain and operate.

Trains: Exhaust Emissions

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on greenhouse gas emissions of their decision that East Midlands Trains should order 165 new bi-mode vehicles to fulfil their

franchise commitment as compared with an all-electric fleet using renewable energy. [HL17793]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Passengers expect high quality rail services and we are committed to electrification where it delivers passenger benefits and good value for money for taxpayers, but we will also take advantage of state of the art new technology to improve journeys.

In line with the pmode trains to deliver an overall better environmental performance than the existing diesel trains on this route and so contribute to further improving this record.

Warships: Weapons

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a service and support contract is in place to support the 30mm guns on naval ships. [HL17850]

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government which company produces spares and provides necessary design modifications for in-service 30mm guns on naval ships. [HL17851]

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government which company supplies 30mm guns on the two aircraft carriers and Type 26 frigates. [HL17852]

Baroness Goldie: Pending the outcome of a competition to award a long-term support contract for the 30mm gun capability on in-service Royal Navy ships, interim technical support is being provided by MSI Defence Systems Limited. Arrangements are under way to award a further interim contract to provide additional support, including the provision of spares and necessary design modifications.

The 30mm gun capability on the Type 26 Frigates will be supplied to the Ministry of Defence by BAE Systems. The Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers are not fitted with 30mm guns.

West Bank: Electricity

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take following the decision of the Israel Electric Corporation to cut off electricity supplies to villages in the Palestinian West Bank. [HL17806]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government is aware of the decision of the Israel Electric Corporation to cut power to parts of the West Bank, citing outstanding payments from Palestinian power distributors. We continue to urge both sides of the dispute to reach a prompt and pragmatic resolution, ensuring minimum disruption to the lives of ordinary Palestinians.

Index to Answers

Written Answers.....	1
A34: Accidents	1
Apprentices.....	1
Borders: Northern Ireland.....	1
Brazil and Indonesia: Rain Forests.....	2
Brexit	2
Burundi: International Assistance	2
Children: Social Services	2
Cybercrime: Government Departments and Infrastructure	3
East Coast Railway Line: Rolling Stock	3
Equal Pay.....	4
Food: Disadvantaged.....	4
Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Freedom of Information.....	4
Gaza: Israel.....	5
HMS Bristol	5
India: Nationality.....	5
Lebanon: Refugees	5
Merchant Shipping: Roll-on Roll-off Ships	5
Midland Main Railway Line: Electrification.....	5
Ministry of Defence: Contracts	6
Occupied Territories: Economic Situation	6
Office for Students: Registration.....	6
Papua: Armed Conflict	7
Papua: Human Rights	7
Papua: Protest	7
Persian Gulf: Armed Conflict.....	8
Special Educational Needs: Hearing Impairment.	8
Syria: Military Intervention	8
Syria: Peace Negotiations.....	8
Thomas Cook: Insolvency	9
Trains.....	9
Trains: Exhaust Emissions	9
Warships: Weapons.....	9
West Bank: Electricity.....	9