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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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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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Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, Treasury and Cabinet Office
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
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Lord Benyon	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Berridge	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
Lord Bethell	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
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Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
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Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Whip
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Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
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Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Wolfson of Tredegar	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

Written Statements

Tuesday, 14 September 2021

AQUIND Interconnector: Application for Development Consent

[HLWS281]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng) has today made the following statement:

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by AQUIND Limited for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the UK elements of a 2,000MW bi-directional subsea electrical power interconnector between Normandy in France and Lovedean in Hampshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The deadline for the decision on the AQUIND Interconnector application was 8 September 2021.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 21 October 2021 for deciding this application to allow an opportunity for further information in respect of compulsory purchase powers to be provided and considered.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

Controls on Incoming Goods from EU

[HLWS280]

Lord Frost: On 31 December 2020, the UK left the EU's Single Market and Customs Union. The Government put in place the staffing, infrastructure, and IT to ensure a smooth transition. Thanks to the hard work of traders and hauliers, we did not see disruption at our ports; and, despite dips in trade value with the EU in the early months, the monthly value of exports to the EU has recovered strongly.

Now the UK is an independent trading country, our intention is to introduce the same controls on incoming goods from the EU as on goods from the rest of the world.

The Government initially announced a timetable for the introduction of the final stages of those controls on 11 March. The Government's own preparations, in terms of systems, infrastructure and resourcing, remain on track to meet that timetable.

However, the pandemic has had longer-lasting impacts on businesses, both in the UK and in the European Union, than many observers expected in March. There are also pressures on global supply chains, caused by a wide range of factors including the pandemic and the increased costs of global freight transport. These pressures are being especially felt in the agrifood sector.

In these circumstances, the Government has decided to delay further some elements of the new controls, especially those relating to Sanitary and Phytosanitary goods. Accordingly:

- The requirement for pre-notification of agri-food imports will be introduced on 1 January 2022 as opposed to 1 October 2021.
- The new requirements for Export Health Certificates, which were due to be introduced on 1 October 2021, will now be introduced on 1 July 2022.
- Phytosanitary Certificates and physical checks on SPS goods at Border Control Posts, due to be introduced on 1 January 2022, will now be introduced on 1 July 2022.
- The requirement for Safety and Security declarations on imports will be introduced as of 1 July 2022 as opposed to 1 January 2022.

The timetable for the removal of the current easements in relation to full customs controls and the introduction of customs checks remains unchanged from the planned 1 January 2022.

The Government will work closely with the Devolved Administrations on the implementation of this new timetable, given their devolved responsibilities for agri-food controls.

Full guidance to stakeholders will be provided on GOV.UK shortly.

Covid-19: Booster Programme

[HLWS283]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment) has today made the following written ministerial statement:

The UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme is a recognised success. As of 12 September 2021, 89% of people aged 16 and over in the UK have received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 80% have had their second dose. Public Health England estimate over 143,600 hospitalisations and 108,600-116,200 deaths have been prevented to date by the vaccination programme in England to date.[1]

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its advice on COVID-19 booster vaccinations. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK intend to follow the JCVI's advice.

In JCVI's view, the primary objective of a 2021 COVID-19 booster programme is to maintain protection against severe COVID-19 disease, specifically hospitalisation and deaths, over winter 2021/22. They have noted that this is exceptional advice aimed at

maintaining protection in those most vulnerable, and to protect the NHS.

The JCVI's advice is based on evidence from a number of sources, including UK data on the duration of vaccine-induced protection against severe COVID-19. The Committee note that, as not enough time has passed to enable a clear understanding of the level of protection 6 months after completion of the primary vaccine course in all persons, extrapolation of some data has been required. Taking a precautionary position, JCVI considers that on balance, it is preferable to ensure protection is maintained at a high level throughout the winter months in adults who are more vulnerable to severe COVID-19, rather than implement a booster programme too late to prevent large increases of severe COVID-19 in previously double vaccinated individuals.

JCVI advises that for the 2021 COVID-19 booster vaccine programme individuals who received vaccination in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme (priority groups 1-9) should be offered a third dose COVID-19 booster vaccine. This includes:

- Those living in residential care homes for older adults.
- All adults aged 50 years or over.
- Frontline health and social care workers.
- All those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 (as set out in the Green Book) and adult carers.
- Adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals.

As most younger adults will only have received their second COVID-19 vaccine dose in late summer or early autumn, the benefits of booster vaccination in this group will be considered at a later time when more information is available. In general, younger, healthy individuals may be expected to generate stronger vaccine-induced immune responses from primary course vaccination compared to older individuals. Pending further evidence otherwise, booster doses in this population may not be required in the near term. JCVI will review data as they emerge and consider further advice at the appropriate time on booster vaccinations in younger adult age groups, children aged 12 – 16 years with underlying health conditions, and women who are pregnant.

JCVI advises that the booster vaccine dose is offered no earlier than six months after completion of the primary vaccine course, and that the booster programme should be deployed in the same order as during Phase 1, with operational flexibility exercised where appropriate to maximise delivery. Persons vaccinated early during Phase 1 will have completed their primary course approximately 6 months ago. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the booster vaccine programme to begin in September 2021, as soon as is operationally practicable.

JCVI advises a preference for the Pfizer vaccine to be offered as the third booster dose irrespective of which product was used in the primary schedule. There is good evidence that the Pfizer vaccine is well tolerated as a third dose and will provide a strong booster response.

Alternatively, individuals may be offered a half dose (50µg) of the Moderna vaccine, which should be well tolerated and is also likely to provide a strong booster response. A half dose (50µg) of Moderna vaccine is advised over a full dose due to the levels of reactogenicity seen following boosting with a full dose within the CoV-Boost trial.

Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered e.g. due to contraindication, vaccination with AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received AstraZeneca vaccine in the primary course.

With deployment of booster vaccines imminent, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and a Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Given the proximity between receiving JCVI advice and deployment, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of the planned booster vaccination in the UK.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that these vaccines have satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

[1] PHE Covid-19 vaccine surveillance report: 9 September 2021:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report

COVID-19: Children and Young People Vaccinations

[HLWS282]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment) (Nadhim Zahawi) has today made the following written ministerial statement:

Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has decided, based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and further advice from the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), that a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to all children and young people aged 12-15. This is the remaining group not already eligible for vaccination under earlier JCVI advice on 12-15 year olds at risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19.

The JCVI advised on 3rd September that for healthy 12-15 year olds the health benefits from vaccination were marginally greater than the potential known harms but that the margin of benefit, based primarily on a health perspective, was too small for the Committee to advise a universal programme of vaccination. The JCVI suggested that the Government might wish to seek further views on the wider societal and educational impacts from the CMOs of the four nations.

The CMOs worked with a range of experts including representation from the JCVI looking at this wider picture. The advice, received on 13 September, sets out that overall the view of the UK CMOs is that the additional likely benefits of reducing educational disruption, and the consequent reduction in public health harm from educational disruption, on balance provide sufficient extra advantage in addition to the marginal advantage at an individual level identified by the JCVI to recommend in favour of vaccinating this group. The CMOs recommend that on public health grounds that Ministers extend the offer of universal vaccination with a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to all children and young people aged 12-15 not already covered by existing JCVI advice.

HMG has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK expect to follow the advice and align their deployment in each nation.

For children and young people, the risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 is much lower than for older people and we recognise that decisions on vaccination for this group are therefore much more finely balanced than for adults.

All 12 to 15-year-olds will now be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine. The JCVI will be asked to consider in due course whether a second dose is appropriate taking into account emerging international evidence. This is in addition to the existing offer of two doses of vaccine to 12 to 15 -year -olds who are in 'at-risk' groups as described in Public Health England's Green Book, last updated on 3 September 2021.

I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine deployment to this group via this statement and a Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme for the vaccine the JCVI has recommended should be used in those aged under 18, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that this vaccine has satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

Given the proximity between the announcement and deployment to this group, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of the planned vaccination of these groups in the UK.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 14 September 2021

Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland Working Group

*Asked by **Lord Rogan***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will publish the minutes of all meetings of the technical working group considering the case for changing Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland. [HL2454]

*Asked by **Lord Rogan***

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the technical working group established to explore the case for changing Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland will next meet; and whether this meeting will be open to the public. [HL2455]

*Asked by **Lord Rogan***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the membership of the technical working group established to explore the case for changing Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland was chosen and by whom. [HL2456]

*Asked by **Lord Rogan***

To ask Her Majesty's Government which individuals and groups have been invited to present evidence to the technical working group established to explore the case for changing Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland; and when it plans to publish this evidence. [HL2457]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The government established a technical working group to explore the operational and legal challenges to changing APD in Northern Ireland at Budget 2018.

Members include representatives from industry, experts, and civil servants from both the UK government and Northern Ireland.

Since the Technical Working Group was established, the UK Government has published a consultation on aviation tax reform, to consider how APD could better support Union connectivity and our environmental objectives. We have engaged with the Northern Ireland Executive as part of this process and will be considering their views as we consider the consultation responses in detail.

We will update on the next steps following the consultation in due course.

Cash Dispensing: Fees and Charges

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the Financial Conduct Authority on free access to the UK cash network. [HL2452]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

The Government remains closely engaged with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in developing its cash access proposals, including through the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, which provides a forum for the public bodies to formally co-ordinate respective approaches to access to cash. The Group is chaired by HM Treasury and attended by the Bank of England, Payments Systems Regulator (PSR), and the FCA.

The Government has published a consultation on proposals for protecting access to cash for the long term. The Government proposes that the FCA becomes the lead regulator for oversight of the retail cash system with responsibility for monitoring and enforcing cash access requirements. Under the proposals, the FCA would be responsible for ensuring that facilities provide reasonable access in order to qualify for meeting geographic requirements. The FCA would be expected to take into account factors that reflect existing standards of cash access, including the appropriateness of facilities for vulnerable users, such as costs for end users, security, hours of availability and accessibility.

The consultation is open until 23 September 2021 and is available on the gov.uk website.

Olympic Games

*Asked by **Baroness Hoey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the changing of the British Olympic team name to Team UK instead of Team GB. [HL2423]

Baroness Barran: DCMS Ministers have had no discussions with the British Olympic Association (BOA), an independent organisation, about renaming the Olympic team from Team GB & NI to Team UK.

The BOA is the National Olympic Committee (NOC) for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and the UK Overseas Territories and is wholly responsible for our national representation at the Games and for any branding of the Olympic team representing Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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