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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Chief Whip
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<b>Lord Benyon</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park</b>	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Greenhalgh</b>	Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
<b>Lord Grimstone of Boscobel</b>	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Kamall</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
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<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Lord Wolfson of Tredegar</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
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# Written Statements

*Monday, 25 October 2021*

## Homelessness Prevention Grant: One-off Payment Update

[HLWS339]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister for rough sleeping and housing (Eddie Hughes) has today made the following statement:

The Government has protected renters across the country throughout the pandemic, providing an unprecedented £400 billion support package for the economy, a six-month stay on possession proceedings to protect renters from eviction, and extended notice periods. Thanks to this support, the vast majority of private renters (93%) are up to date with their rent. We are spending almost £30 billion supporting people with their housing costs in 2020-21. With the UK economic recovery gathering pace, we are continuing to help people into work and increase their earning potential – the most sustainable route to financial security. We are investing billions through our Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

We recognise, however, that some private renters have rent arrears built up as a result of the pandemic and vulnerable households may need additional support.

We have therefore announced an exceptional one-off payment of £65 million that will be made available to local authorities in 2021/22 through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The additional funding will support local authorities to help vulnerable households with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless, including helping households to find a new home where necessary. Local authorities will target funding to those who need it most and help them to get back on their feet.

The investment builds on the £310 million in funding already available to local authorities through the Homelessness Prevention Grant – a £47 million uplift on last year to help fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act – which is part of the overall investment of more than £750 million this year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

This announcement underlines the Government's commitments to building back better from the pandemic, supporting renters and to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. The funding will ensure local authorities are given the resource they need to make this a reality in local areas. It will allow us to build upon the success we have had in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping with the number of families in temporary accommodation now at the lowest level since 2016 and a 37% decrease in rough sleeping recorded in the 2020 Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot compared to 2019.

The £65 million funding is in addition to the recently announced £421 million Household Support Fund to help

vulnerable families in England with essentials over the coming months, which will be distributed by councils to those who need it most, including for example, through small grants to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities. Further support is also available to renters through the welfare system. This includes £140 million in Discretionary Housing Payments funding, which is available for local authorities this financial year to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

## Slough Borough Council

[HLWS341]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch) has today made the following statement:

Our local councils play a vital frontline role in our communities and our democracy. Everyone in the House recognises what they do and the importance of making sure they are able to contribute to our levelling up agenda. We need our councils to be able to make our towns and cities great places to live, where everyone, no matter what their circumstances, has the opportunity to thrive and can take advantage of effective and efficient service delivery. We need our councils to be able to support our most vulnerable citizens, for example through children's services and adult social care. In doing so, we need councils to make the most of every penny they receive from hard-pressed taxpayers to secure better outcomes. This will build confidence and trust between local authorities, local councillors, and the communities they serve. That is why the situation at Slough Borough Council is of such concern.

Slough Borough Council was one of a small number of local authorities to request exceptional financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government agreed in principle to this request subject to the outcome of an external assurance review. This review considered the Council's financial position and the strength of its wider governance arrangements, and provided an assessment of the Council's ability to achieve financial sustainability without further recourse to public funds.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) led on the financial aspects of the review. Jim Taylor, former Chief Executive of Salford City Council, Trafford Council and Rochdale Borough Council, led on governance. I would like to thank Jim Taylor and CIPFA for their hard work. Copies of the reports have been deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

The reports paint a deeply concerning picture of mismanagement, of a breakdown in scrutiny and accountability, and of a dysfunctional culture at Slough Borough Council. The Council's internal controls and processes are inadequate, and the overview and scrutiny function is not equipped to operate effectively. Service delivery is hampered by ineffective core corporate functions such as IT and HR, and the residents of Slough are poorly served by the Council's struggling revenues

and benefits service. The Council's contract management is weak and has resulted in rushed procurement, missed exit opportunities, and has delivered poor value for money. There is little evidence that the Council understands the entirety of its commercial investments and their impact on its finances. The staffing structure lacks the capacity and capability to deliver on the challenges the Council faces without external help. It is only very recently that senior members have grasped the seriousness and urgency of this situation and established it is not just solely a result of financial accounting assumptions. The Council cannot demonstrate a track record of making difficult decisions or of taking decisive action to bring about improvements. The reports confirm that, as indicated in the Section 114 notice issued by the Council earlier this year, the Council's expected requirement for additional financial support in 2021/22 has risen from £15.2 million to over £100 million.

The review shows unequivocally that Slough Borough Council has failed to comply with its best value duty of continuous improvement, as required by the Local Government Act 1999. The financial challenge is acute, and the review has concluded that the Council cannot become financially self-sustaining without considerable Government support.

To quote the review:

"An authority struggling to comply with its best value duty displays the following characteristics:

- an overreliance on interim officers
- a lack of corporate capacity
- many inadequate internal processes
- signs of distrust among and between councillors and senior officers
- the absence of effective scrutiny, transparency, and public consultation
- insufficient capacity to achieve the change required
- instances of poor-quality advice to members
- a lack of understanding of how some meetings should be conducted
- in some cases, members not understanding their role
- significant unknown past liabilities yet to be determined.

"Slough Borough Council has been displaying these characteristics over past years until present day and has failed its best value duty despite the concerted efforts in the last few months. It is unable to resolve the difficulties on its own."

Expressed in formal terms, the Secretary of State is satisfied that Slough Borough Council is failing to comply with its best value duty and he is considering exercising his powers of intervention to secure compliance with the duty. To that end, and in line with procedures laid down in the Local Government Act 1999, officials in my department have today written to Slough

Borough Council, asking for representations on the external assurance review and on the proposed intervention package. That letter also recognises the hard work of many of the staff at Slough Borough Council.

The proposed package is centred on the appointment of Commissioners to exercise certain and limited functions as required, for a minimum of three years. The proposal is for the Council – under the oversight of the Commissioners – to prepare and implement an Improvement Plan, and report on the delivery of that Plan to the Commissioners every six months.

In detail, the Council would be required to:

- Complete, within three months, an assessment of the functional capability of all service areas to identify the gaps in capacity and capability.
- Prepare and agree, within six months, action plans to the Commissioners' satisfaction to address any functional shortcomings.
- Undertake any actions the Commissioners require to avoid incidents of poor governance or financial mismanagement that would jeopardise the Council's ability to meet its Best Value duty.
- Prepare and agree, within three months, a fully resourced Improvement Plan which should include action plans to deliver: financial sustainability; improvements in democratic services, including the audit and corporate governance functions; a scrutiny function that is fit for purpose; improvements in internal audit; properly functioning procurement and contract management functions; improvements in the Council's IT function; an officer structure and scheme of delegation which provide sufficient resources to implement the Improvement Plan.

It is also proposed that Slough Borough Council will:

- Devise and implement a programme of cultural change to rebuild trust between officers and members within six months.
- Following the review of Council companies, within six months consider the roles and case for ongoing operation of each subsidiary company (except Slough Children First).
- Take steps to enable better and evidence-based decision making, including enhancing data and insight functions.

I hope and expect Slough Borough Council will take the lead on this path to improvement. Given the gravity of the review's findings, the Secretary of State must consider what would happen if the Council failed to deliver the necessary changes, at the necessary speed.

The Secretary of State is, consequently, proposing to direct the transfer to Commissioners of all executive functions associated with:

- The governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Council.

- The strategic financial management of the Council.
- The oversight of collection of revenues and the distribution of benefits by the Council.
- All non-executive functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers at the Council to the Commissioners.

These powers are for use should the Council not satisfy the Commissioners in their improvement processes. I hope it will not be necessary for the Commissioners to use these powers, but they must be empowered to do so if they consider the required improvement and reforms are not being delivered.

The Commissioners will report to the Secretary of State at six monthly intervals on progress. They will also work closely with Trevor Doughty, the Children's Services Commissioner for Slough Borough Council already in place and reporting to the Secretary of State for Education. This will ensure that the improvements that he has overseen to date through the Department for Education's statutory intervention continue to be made, and that services for Slough's vulnerable children and families continue to be delivered to an acceptable standard. Similarly, the Commissioners will be mindful of the interests of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and the consultancy support available from the Department for Work and Pensions to improve the revenue and benefits service.

We are inviting representations from the Council on the report and the Secretary of State's proposals by Friday 5 November. Given the conclusion of the review that "Improvement for Slough Borough Council will rely on stability in political leadership, and it would be advisable that the council moves towards a four yearly election cycle at the earliest opportunity", we are also seeking views on how best to achieve this.

We want to provide the opportunity for members and officers of the Council, and any other interested parties, especially the residents of Slough, to make their views on the Secretary of State's proposals known. Should the Secretary of State decide to intervene along the lines described here, he will make the necessary statutory directions under the 1999 Act and appoint Commissioners. I will update the House in due course.

Government does not take these steps lightly and recognises and respects the role of local councils in our communities and our democracy. Slough Borough Council is a rare case of failure. Most local authorities in England have a good record of service delivery, transparency, probity, scrutiny, and accountability. It is a

record worth protecting. We will take whatever steps are necessary to uphold the good name of local government and to root out practices that do it down.

Finally, I urge council leaders across the country to read these reports. I know the local government sector – officers and members – will be saddened by the news that a council is failing. I would encourage all to make sure that they are not making the same mistakes as those that are described in this review. Local people deserve better than this from their local councils.

## Trade Remedies Authority: Call-in Powers

[HLWS340]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP) has today made the following statement.

The Government is today announcing that it intends to make new powers to enable the Secretary of State for International Trade to call in certain investigations conducted by the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA).

These powers will ensure that the Secretary of State for International Trade has oversight for and may direct transition review investigations where she considers it is needed. The call in power only applies to transition reviews and reconsiderations of transition reviews, and does not apply to new investigations. Where the call in power is exercised, the Secretary of State for International Trade will set out her reasons for doing so in a statement to the House of Commons.

One of the advantages of being an independent trading nation is that we can adapt our domestic rules to UK economic circumstances.

The Government will always do everything in its power to defend UK industry and jobs and to allow our world-leading companies to compete on an equal footing.

The UK has always been a strong supporter of free trade. But free trade does not mean trade without rules. Rather than restricting free trade, trade remedies can help ensure that free trade is also fair trade. All major trading nations have a trade remedies system in place and many of these allow for greater Ministerial involvement in decision making than the UK currently allows.

As announced on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, the Government will continue to consider whether wider changes might need to be made to the trade remedies framework to ensure it can consistently defend UK industry. DIT will continue to work collaboratively with the TRA on this process and in the application of the call in power where the Secretary of State decides it is needed.

## Written Answers

*Monday, 25 October 2021*

### **Afghanistan: Education**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to promote and support an effort to (1) co-ordinate, (2) fund, and (3) deliver education to children in Afghanistan. [\[HL3037\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Supporting education for children, and particularly girls, in Afghanistan, is a priority for the government and we are working with other donors to coordinate a consistent international response. Taliban policy on girls' education remains unclear, particularly in respect of girls' secondary education. We will continue to work with the international community to use our influence to secure girls' rights, including the right to education. Before making any funding decisions we will look carefully at how we might support girls' equal access to schooling.

### **Afghanistan: Health Services**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the UK plans to assist the (1) United States, and (2) United Nations, in delivering medicine and medical products to Afghanistan. [\[HL3033\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are committed to ensuring the delivery of critical drugs, medical supplies and immunisations to the most vulnerable in Afghanistan. We are working with the United States, the EU, Canada; and multilateral organisations including the WHO, World Bank and Global Fund to explore how we can further support primary health care provision in the country.

### **Afghanistan: Taliban**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proposal by the government of France to recognise the Taliban as a legitimate government, if certain conditions regarding human rights and women's rights are met. [\[HL3034\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** French policy towards the Taliban is a matter for the French Government. The UK's long-standing policy is that we recognise states not governments. The UK and France, along with other members of the G7, are working closely together to maintain pressure on the Taliban to ensure respect for human rights, including the full access of girls to education and women to employment, to allow humanitarian access, and to sever all contact with terrorist groups.

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the feasibility of delivering emergency aid to Afghanistan without working directly with the Taliban. [\[HL3035\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** No funding will be provided directly to the Taliban. Our support will be delivered through partners such as the UN and international NGOs who have capability on the ground, and capacity to deliver at scale, as well as experience of delivering in Taliban controlled areas. Before funding is committed we conduct due diligence assessments on partners and implementation chains to assess risks and actions needed; and we remain in regular contact with partners to review these risks during implementation.

### **Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**

*Asked by Lord Coaker*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when David Marsh will produce recommendations on the Ajax programme; and when these recommendations will be published. [\[HL3058\]](#)

**Baroness Goldie:** David Marsh has been appointed as SRO on the Armoured Cavalry Programme (including Ajax). The MOD is committed to working with General Dynamics to achieve a resolution of outstanding issues. We will not take into service a capability which is not fit for purpose. Mr Marsh has not been commissioned to produce a "report" on Ajax but will in the ordinary course be advising Ministers as the programme evolves.

*Asked by Lord Tunnickliffe*

To ask Her Majesty's Government following the appointment of David Marsh as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Ajax programme, which Minister is responsible for considering his recommendations on the programme. [\[HL3082\]](#)

**Baroness Goldie:** The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to working with General Dynamics to achieve resolution of outstanding issues on the Armoured Cavalry Programme. We will not accept into service a capability which is not fit for purpose. David Marsh has not been asked to provide a specific report on a set of recommendations but will be providing advice to Ministers in the ordinary course in his role as SRO. The Minister for Defence Procurement supports the Secretary of State on the delivery of the MOD's Equipment Plan.

### **Apprentices: Taxation**

*Asked by Lord Blunkett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the percentage of apprenticeship levy that has not been spent in the current financial year to date; and what assessment they have made, if any, of



the likely overall apprenticeship levy underspend in financial year 2021–22. [HL2904]

**Baroness Barran:** The details of apprenticeship budget spend for the 2021–22 financial year will be included in the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Annual Report and Accounts, which is due to be published in the second half of 2022. Employers have until 31 March 2022 to start new apprenticeships in the current financial year.

In the 2021–22 financial year, the apprenticeships programme budget is £2.5 billion for investment in apprenticeships in England, double that spent in the 2010–11 financial year in cash terms. The annual apprenticeship budget is set by HM Treasury and, although closely linked, is distinct from the total levy income collected by HM Revenue and Customs.

The levy is an important part of our reforms to create a high quality, employer-led apprenticeships system, and it supports employers of all sizes to invest in high-quality apprenticeship training.

### Armed Conflict: Civilians

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much funding they are putting into (1) international, and (2) national, unarmed civilian protection; and which projects that have been funded are directed at, or include elements of, such work. [HL2994]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Protecting civilians is at the core of the FCDO's work to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts around the world. This involves working bilaterally and multilaterally not only on resolution of conflict itself, but also to ensure that parties involved respect their obligations under international law, and to condemn violations of those obligations. The highest civilian protection needs are in contexts of armed conflict, therefore the UK is proud to have committed approximately £600 million this financial year for bilateral humanitarian protection and assistance in fragile and conflict affected states. In addition, the UK funds the work of multilateral organisations and agencies with a protection focus. For example, in the last financial year, we have provided £63 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to protect and assist the victims of conflict and promote compliance with International Humanitarian Law and £35 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition to our mandatory peacekeeping and UN regular budget contributions, we provided £250,000 this financial year to improve protection of civilians in peacekeeping, including a project on unarmed approaches. We will continue to use our role in the UN Security Council and other international fora to champion civilian protection, including humanitarian principles, International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and refugee law.

### Assistance Animals: Export Health Certificates

*Asked by Lord Willoughby de Broke*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that qualified guide dogs, assistance dogs, and their disabled owners are not discriminated against when travelling to the EU by the (1) cost, and (2) bureaucracy, of obtaining an animal health certificate. [HL2987]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The UK has been formally 'listed' as a 'Part 2' third country for the purposes of the EU pet travel regulations, which means that new rules apply to pet movements from Great Britain (GB) to the EU and Northern Ireland (NI). The pet health and documentary requirements for such pet travel are set out under the EU Pet Travel Regulations.

Defra recognises the undue impact that these changes are having on pet owners and assistance dog users. Defra has been clear that there are no animal health or biosecurity justifications for these additional rules to travel to the EU or NI. We will continue to press the EU Commission in relation to securing 'Part 1' listed status and recognition of the UK's tapeworm-free status, recognising that achieving this would alleviate some of the new requirements for pet owners and assistance dog users travelling, including the requirement for an Animal Health Certificate (AHC). We see no valid animal health reason for these to not be granted and we have one of the most rigorous pet-checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity. We have submitted a detailed technical case setting this out and are continuing to engage with the EU on a workable solution.

We are proactively engaging with the assistance dog community and relevant stakeholders on the impacts on dog movements from Great Britain to the EU. We will continue to work closely with assistance dog organisations to share the latest advice and guidance (in accessible formats) with their members on pet travel requirements.

Our advice for pet owners and users of assistance dogs travelling is that they should continue to contact their vet at least one month in advance to ensure their pet has the correct vaccinations and paperwork to travel abroad. The costs of completing and issuing an AHC are commercial decisions, set by individual veterinary practices.

### Azerbaijan: Foreign Relations

*Asked by Lord Hussain*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the independence of Azerbaijan on 18 October, and (2) to mark the anniversary by strengthening bilateral cooperation with the government of Azerbaijan. [HL2936]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Her Majesty the Queen sends her congratulations on the occasion of the anniversary of countries' national or independence days, including Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, the UK Ambassador will congratulate the people of Azerbaijan on 18 October - the Day of Restoration of Independence. The UK Government continues to work with Azerbaijan to strengthen our bilateral cooperation. In her recent call with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov, the Minister for Europe and Americas welcomed the continued strengthening of UK-Azerbaijani relations including in key areas such as trade and English language learning.

### **Civil Service: Pay**

*Asked by Lord Balfre*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the merits of removing London weighting from civil service salaries in the event that employees do not work in their London offices for at least three days a week. [HL2894]

**Lord True:** Since the pandemic began, Civil Servants have been delivering the Government's priorities from home and in the workplace. The Civil Service continues to follow the latest Government guidance and departments have plans to move gradually to hybrid working.

Pay below the Senior Civil Service is delegated to departments. London pay levels reflect the need to recruit in the London market, not simply the costs incurred by staff for working in the capital. There are no plans to change terms and conditions around London based pay.

### **Clothing and Textiles: Training**

*Asked by Lord Rogan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they plan to have with the devolved administrations to agree a four-nation approach to broadening skills in the fashion and textiles sectors. [HL3130]

**Baroness Barran:** Skills provision is a devolved matter. It is for each nation to develop its own skills policies to meet local and national need. In England, we have introduced a range of skills policies and also published the 'Skills for Jobs' White Paper in January 2021, which sets out our blueprint to reform post-16 education and training. It is focused on giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs in sectors the economy needs and boost this country's productivity. By 2030, almost all technical courses will be on employer-led standards, ensuring that the education and training people receive are directly linked to the skills needed for jobs.

Our policies and reforms are aimed at delivering high-quality provision across a range of sectors, including fashion and textiles.

The introduction of T Levels will boost access to high quality technical education for thousands of 16-19 year olds. T Levels in Craft and Design, developed by relevant employers including the British Fashion Council and UK Fashion & Textile Association, will be available for first teaching from September 2023. While T Levels are currently an England only offer, we are exploring the possibility of extending T Levels outside of the English market, giving opportunity to other administrations to benefit from the quality and ingenuity of T Levels where this fits with their overall post-16 provision.

We are also committed to supporting more people to benefit from the high quality training that apprenticeships offer, including those at the start of their career or those looking to retrain. The department is responsible for apprenticeships policy in England only. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland receive a share of levy funding and it is the responsibility of the devolved administrations to decide how they spend this share to fund and operate their apprenticeship programmes.

In England there are currently 54 high quality employer-designed apprenticeship standards available for the creative and design sector, including 6 for fashion related opportunities. As of 3 August, we have introduced a £7 million fund to help employers in England set up flexi-job apprenticeships agencies, to support sectors such as agriculture, construction and the creative industries.

The government is investing £3 billion in the National Skills Fund, which includes £500 million in Barnett funding for the devolved administrations. We have not had any discussions with the devolved nations about a joint approach to broadening skills in the fashion and textiles sectors through the National Skills Fund, but in England, the government is supporting any adult who does not have A level equivalent or higher qualifications, to access over 400 fully funded level 3 courses, with Free Courses for Jobs. The offer includes qualifications that can support adults to progress in the fashion and textiles industry.

### **Companies Act 2006**

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relevance of section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 due to changes in business practice since that date. [HL2953]

**Lord Callanan:** Section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 requires directors, in promoting the success of their company in the interests of its members, to have regard to a number of matters, including the interests of employees and the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment. The legislation is flexible and permissive, allowing companies to identify a purpose for the company other than to benefit its members. Many companies have made successful use of this flexibility.



## Developing Countries: Females

*Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, as part of their overseas development assistance (ODA) disbursement, (1) what assessment they have made of the economic contributions of older women in lower- and middle-income countries, and (2) what steps they have taken to ensure that ODA supports these women to access decent work and live fulfilling lives. [\[HL3005\]](#)

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Older women remain economically active, often in difficult, informal roles and driven by necessity. The unpaid contributions women make over their lifetime to the economy as carers are unrecognised, and their informal work is often invisible. As a result, many older women lack access to savings, pensions or other social protection. FCDO is investing in improving collection and use of disaggregated data (by sex, age and disability) to enable us to empower and include those who are too often invisible or face additional barriers to escaping poverty. We have led the way on the Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan and encouraging multilaterals such as the World Bank and UN to collect disaggregated and inclusive data.

FCDO aims to improve outcomes for women and girls, including older women, through the new £19 million Gender-Responsive Social Protection programme, which is building the evidence base on what works and offering technical assistance to strengthen government and partners social protection investments. We are also supporting governments to provide social protection for older women, including in Uganda, where over 210,000 women are currently benefitting from a senior citizen grant through a programme delivered and funded in partnership with the Governments of Ireland and Uganda.

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made on the 'What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale' programme. [\[HL3009\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK launched the What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale Programme during the Generation Equality Forum in June 2021 and the programme has now started. A separate research component is currently in procurement. This £67.5 million investment will build on the ground-breaking success of What Works Phase 1 and is the largest investment by any single donor government to prevent gender based violence globally.

## Developing Countries: Poverty

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relative importance of (1) improving health and education, and (2) increasing GDP per capita, in reducing poverty in countries in receipt of UK development aid. [\[HL2941\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The FCDO remains steadfast in our focus on tackling poverty. The importance of interventions in improving health and education versus those aimed at increasing GDP per capita in reducing poverty varies with context. The FCDO conducts country-level analyses which identify the main barriers to development and poverty reduction and the main opportunities for acting on them.

## Educational Visits: EU Nationals

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what assessment they have made of the impact on incoming school group visits to the UK from the EU of the requirement from 1 October that such groups will need to ensure that each individual child holds a full international passport, and (2) what plans they have to allow children on school trips to the UK from the EU to enter with an ID card only. [\[HL2915\]](#)

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** We have always expected people who visit the UK, including children visiting as part of a school group, from outside the EU (including close allies such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) to hold a passport and we now expect those visiting from EU countries to do the same.

We have therefore phased out the use of EU, other EEA and Swiss national identity cards as a valid travel document for entry to the UK as a visitor, and as of 1 October 2021 all visitors are expected to hold a passport (and visa where necessary).

We provided almost a year's notice for this change to allow people to plan ahead and obtain a passport, if they need to, before they travel. There are no plans to allow child visitors on school trips to enter the UK from the EU without holding either an individual or being part of a collective passport.

## Electric Vehicles: Speed Limits

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 20 September (HL2628), what plans they have, if any, to introduce speed limits for electric bikes and electric scooters. [\[HL3030\]](#)

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government does not at this point have any plans to introduce speed limits for electric bikes. Decisions on electric scooters will be taken in the light of evidence from national trials.

E-scooters being used legally in a trial must have a maximum design speed not exceeding 15.5mph. Some trial areas have set lower maximum design speeds for electric scooters being used in the trials in their area.

An electrically assisted pedal cycle electric motor must have a maximum power output of 250 watts, and should not be able to propel the bike when it is travelling more than 15.5mph.

## Energy Companies Obligation

*Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many grants have been awarded through the Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation to (1) owner occupiers, and (2) tenants in rented accommodation. [HL3045]

**Lord Callanan:** The Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation falls under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). The current scheme is an obligation on larger energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency and heating measures in the homes of low-income and vulnerable and fuel poor householders.

Since ECO began in 2013, around 935,000 homes have been upgraded under the Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation. Of those, over 664,000 were owner occupiers; 193,000 were private rented tenants and almost 78,000 were social rented tenants.

*Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many grants have been awarded through the Local Authority Flex scheme to (1) owner occupiers, and (2) tenants in rented accommodation. [HL3046]

**Lord Callanan:** The Local Authority Flex scheme enables participating local authorities to refer low-income and vulnerable and fuel poor households, for support under the Energy Company Obligation.

Since Local Authority Flex began in 2017, almost 168,000 measures have been delivered in over 100,000 homes under the scheme across Great Britain, up to July 2021. Local Authority Flex scheme data is not available by tenure.

## Ethiopia: Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what were the results of the visit to Ethiopia by the Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs in September. [HL3008]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, visited Amhara and Mekelle in Ethiopia last month (September). The Minister for Africa Vicky Ford spoke to him immediately on his return. He concluded that the humanitarian situation has significantly deteriorated and the risk of famine is high. There are 6 million people, with 3 million of those being children, who are in dire need of food, health, water and sanitation assistance.

In Amhara the Special Envoy saw the World Food Programme (WFP) in action. He and Minister Ford have reiterated the need for WFP and other partners to have access to all areas so they can provide vital humanitarian aid. The UK Government is committed to continue to

address the humanitarian crises in the north including Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions. On 16 October - World Food Day - Minister Ford announced an additional £29m of humanitarian aid to people affected by the catastrophic conflict in northern Ethiopia. This increases the UK's commitment to the crisis to more than £75m - making the UK the second largest donor.

The Special Envoy has called for all sides to stop fighting and find a political solution to avoid civilian suffering. He raised this with the Ethiopian authorities when he met them during his visit, including the Ethiopian Minister of Finance.

The humanitarian situation in Tigray is a man-made crisis and it is completely unacceptable. Minister Ford urges all parties to urgently agree a ceasefire and to allow humanitarian aid to reach starving people.

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Public Expenditure

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to engage with small UK development charities to assist (1) with departmental submissions to the Comprehensive Spending Review, and (2) in the production of their new International Development Strategy. [HL2906]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The International Development Strategy will outline the UK government's strategic priorities and approach to development. As part of a wider engagement process, my ministerial colleagues have held meetings with many stakeholders, including civil society organisations and small development charities; and we have recently closed a public Call for Evidence, which invited views from all interested parties, including small development charities.

## Freight

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to resolve the short-term issues to UK goods supply chains. [HL2972]

**Lord Callanan:** Businesses have faced a range of challenges over recent months as they recover from the global pandemic which has impacted supply chains across Europe and around the world.

The Government has acted quickly to introduce a series of measures to relieve pressure on vital supply chains, including by: streamlining the testing process for and creating skills bootcamps to train up HGV drivers, sending nearly one million letters to encourage HGV drivers who have left the industry to return, providing up to £7,000 per person funding for the Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship scheme, and deploying nearly 200 military tanker personnel to provide temporary support delivering fuel supplies across the country. The Government has also introduced short-term visas for food

haulage drivers and poultry workers to ease pressures facing these supply chains.

On 8 October, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister appointed Sir David Lewis, former CEO of Tesco, as the UK Government's supply chain adviser, bringing with him a wealth of industry knowledge and expertise to the new role. He will advise the Prime Minister and my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on both immediate improvements and any necessary long-term changes to UK supply chains for goods, and will work with government officials to quickly resolve acute, short term issues. Successful resolution of supply chain pressures will be a joint effort between industry and Government and so Sir Dave Lewis will also co-chair the new Supply Chain Advisory Group, consisting of external experts in the field, and the new Industry Taskforce, to ensure those on the ground have the opportunity to voice their concerns and advise on the most efficient resolutions.

### **Hazem Joulani**

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding the killing of Dr. Hazem Joulani by Israeli forces in East Jerusalem, and the reports that he was denied medical attention before his death. [HL2969]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of the Israel security force's adherence to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest. The wounded or critically ill should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

### **Hebron: Mosques**

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding (1) the denial of access to Palestinians for worship in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, and (2) the prevention of the call to prayer, since 1 September. [HL2968]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise issues of religious freedom with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. We continue to call on all sides to uphold the historic status quo at the Holy Sites.

### **Iran: Baha'i Faith**

*Asked by Baroness Whitaker*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights implications of the exclusion of Bahá'í students from universities in Iran as

a consequence of policies set by the Iranian Education Monitoring and Evaluation Organization; and what representations they have made, if any, to the government of Iran in relation to such exclusions. [HL3085]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

The Baha'i community in Iran continue to be systematically discriminated against, harassed, and targeted. We have repeatedly raised these persistent human rights violations with Iran. On 9 March, at the UN Human Rights Council, the UK called on Iran to end the discrimination and persecution of religious minorities, particularly towards the Baha'i and Christian converts. The education ministry's reported policies are another example of this discrimination. All religious or ethnic minorities should be allowed to participate fully in society and, together with the international community, we have pressed Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues. We call on President Raisi to set Iran on a different course and commit to improving human rights in Iran, including for all religious minorities.

### **Iron and Steel: Carbon Emissions**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking in developing green, low climate emission steel, substituting hydrogen for coking coal; and when is the first steel from this expected to be delivered. [HL2996]

**Lord Callanan:** Decarbonising UK industry is a core part of the Government's ambitious plan for the green industrial revolution. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, published on 17 March, commits Government to work with the Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'. The Steel Council offers the forum for Government, industry and trade unions to work in partnership on the shared objective of creating an achievable, long-term plan to support the sector's transition to a competitive, sustainable and low carbon future. Hydrogen-based steelmaking, Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS), and electrification are some of the technological approaches being examined as part of this process.

The UK steel sector will be given the opportunity to bid into industrial fuel switching innovation programmes under the £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio (NZIP), which is intended to promote switching away from more carbon-intensive fuel sources. The Government has also announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes.

## Iron and Steel: Recycling

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote the recycling of used steel within the UK, including but not limited to using renewable energy for that purpose. [\[HL2997\]](#)

**Lord Callanan:** The UK has a strong domestic recycling market and currently retrieves 11.3 million tonnes of steel scrap per year through regulations such as end-of-life vehicles (ELV) and construction site waste management plans. Of this, around 2.6 million tonnes are currently recycled (melted in a steel plant or cast metals facility) domestically.

The Government published a report, undertaken by the University of Warwick in February 2021, entitled 'Domestic Scrap Steel Recycling – Economic, Environmental and Social Opportunities' which assesses long-term options for action to improve recycling rates of steel in the UK. The Government is currently considering the recommendations made in the report.

## Jerusalem: Palestinians

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel concerning the violence used by Israeli forces against protestors at Sheikh Jarrah. [\[HL2967\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK regularly raises the issue of forced evictions from their homes, including in Sheikh Jarrah, with the Government of Israel. On 8 May Minister Cleverly publicly expressed concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. The former Foreign Secretary visited the region on 25 May where he urged the Israeli Government to take steps to ensure calm in Jerusalem. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

## Land Mines

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what assessment they have made of the number of people who live in danger of landmines and unexploded ordnance, and (2) how much funding they have provided for landmine clearance in each of the last five years. [\[HL2891\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Sixty countries and four territories are contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance. As one of the founding signatories to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, and with our UK Aid investment, the UK is one of the leading supporters of mine action. From 2014-17, our original Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP) invested over £40 million.

From 2018, the UK has invested a further £124 million to help clear deadly explosive devices worldwide through the Global Mine Action Programme 2. By December 2020, GMAP2 had cleared and confirmed safe 395 million square metres of land, the equivalent of over 55,200 football pitches. GMAP2 has also delivered risk education messages to over 3.1 million people in communities affected by mines. In addition, the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund supports a number of mine action programmes around the world.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) which countries, if any, will no longer receive funding for the clearance of land mines and unexploded ordnance, and (2) whether these cuts are compatible with the UK's commitment to the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. [\[HL2892\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are working towards finalising the country allocation for the Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP3) and have welcomed feedback from our partners in the mine action sector. UK mine action work will continue to promote peace and conflict recovery while saving the lives of those most in need and we remain committed to our international treaty obligations.

## Large Goods Vehicles: Accidents

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what steps they are taking to ensure that HGV drivers are not being asked to exceed their daily legal driving limits during the current driver shortage, (2) what record they are keeping of accident statistics involving HGVs, and (3) whether they have recorded an increase in the number of accidents involving HGVs in the past six months. [\[HL3111\]](#)

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is responsible for enforcement of the HGV drivers' hours rules, which includes checking that drivers are not exceeding their daily driving limits. For the period 12 July to 3 October, the DVSA undertook a total of 11,457 targeted checks across both UK and overseas based hauliers. 6,962 offences were identified for non-compliance with the drivers' hours rules of which 2,286 were serious enough to warrant a fixed penalty. The vast majority (2,099) were committed by foreign hauliers, with only 187 fixed penalties for drivers' hours offences issued to UK hauliers. Some DVSA enforcement has been targeted specifically towards operators using the drivers' hours relaxation.

Data on reported road casualties reported to the police, including accidents involving HGVs, are collected through the STATS19 system and published in the Department's reported road casualties statistics according to a regular annual timetable that reflects the time required for reporting, collation and validation of the data from police forces.



High-level provisional statistics for the first 6 months of 2021 are scheduled for publication in November; figures for the whole of 2021 are scheduled for publication in June 2022 (provisional) and September 2022 (final).

### **Large Goods Vehicles: Parking**

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the devolved administrations concerning the provision of lorry parks. [HL3000]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** No specific discussions have taken place with the devolved administrations specifically concerning provision of lorry parks. Lorry parking is a matter for the devolved administrations.

### **Legislation: Supreme Court**

*Asked by Lord Bruce of Bennachie*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the law officers did not refer the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 to Supreme Court within four weeks of the bill being passed by the Scottish Parliament. [HL2909]

*Asked by Lord Bruce of Bennachie*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the circumstances in which they would refer a bill passed by one of the devolved legislatures to the Supreme Court. [HL2910]

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** The Law Officers may refer the question of whether a Bill or any provision of a Bill would be within the legislative competence of a devolved legislature to the Supreme Court for a decision.

This power is set out in relation to the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd and the Northern Ireland Assembly in section 33 of the Scotland Act 1998, section 112 of the Government of Wales Act 2006, and section 11 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, respectively. The power must be exercised within four weeks of the Bill passing its final stage in the relevant devolved legislature.

The Law Officers exercise this power where we believe that a Bill, or a provision of a Bill, is outside the legislative competence of the relevant devolved legislature. The parameters of the devolved legislatures' competence are set out in the relevant Acts of Parliament which have devolved various policy areas. The power in each case is discretionary and exercised in accordance with the wider public interest.

Turning to the particular Act of the Scottish Parliament to which the question refers, the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Bill passed its final stage in the Scottish Parliament on 22 December 2020. Having taken all relevant matters into consideration, the Law Officers decided that in all the circumstances to use their discretion not to refer the UK

Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Bill to the Supreme Court.

### **Mali: Armed Conflict**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the estimated number of people killed in Mali over the past year, and (2) the role (a) Jihadists, and (b) Jihadism, have played in these killings. [HL2889]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The UK is concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Mali. 2021 is set to be the deadliest year in the past decade with violence continuing to spread towards the southern regions. Intercommunal conflict and activity by violent extremist organisations are responsible for civilian casualties, as well as driving displacement, increasing food insecurity, and leading to the widespread closure of schools. Through our deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), our deployment of helicopters to the French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane, and our programmatic support for stabilisation and conflict resolution, the UK is committed to building long-term peace and stability in the Sahel. We also provide humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable in the region, including to those affected by conflict.

### **Mali: Peacekeeping Operations**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what assessment they have made of the role of the Wagner mercenaries in Mali, (2) how many troops are part of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and (3) what assessment they have made of the future of MINUSMA and the role of French and British forces in Mali. [HL2890]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The UK is deeply concerned by the Malian Government's discussions with Wagner Group. In her statement of 29 September 2021, the Minister for Africa made clear that Wagner Group is a driver of conflict and has committed human rights abuses elsewhere. The UK supports the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in urging the Malian Government to reconsider their engagement with Wagner Group given the potential for further instability in the wider region. Together with other partners active in the region, the UK is keeping the situation under close review. As of August 2021, there were over 12,000 troops as part of the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA). MINUSMA will remain critical in helping protect civilians and advancing long-term peace and stability. The UK is in contact with our French partners on their planned changes to operations in the Sahel. We have had assurances that France will retain the critical support functions such as force protection, medical and logistical support, which



allow the UK to effectively contribute to operations in the Sahel. The UK remains committed to UN peacekeeping.

### Mathematical Sciences: Higher Education

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how much they have spent on mathematical sciences at higher education institutions in the UK, and (2) how this compares to the international average. [HL2931]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the breakdown of (1) actual, and (2) planned, expenditure of their £300 million investment in the mathematical sciences. [HL2934]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they have invested in mathematical sciences in each higher education institution in the UK for (1) teaching, and (2) research. [HL2935]

**Lord Callanan:** The UK is a world leader in Mathematics, accounting for the 5th largest share of publications but the third largest share of the top 1% and 10% most cited publications.

Between Financial Year 2015-2016 and September 2021, EPSRC committed £259.9m to research grants Mathematical Sciences. This includes commitment from the Additional Funding Programme. At this current time, EPSRC are unable to make a direct comparison to international averages.

Following the Government's announcement in January 2020 to invest additional funding into Mathematical Sciences, UKRI has awarded around £104 million of additional funding to the discipline, over and above EPSRC's core Mathematical Sciences Theme budget. The additional funding has covered institutes, small and large research grants, fellowships, doctoral studentships and postdoctoral awards.

On the 27 October 2021, the Government will announce the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Once that has concluded, BEIS and UKRI will set out how we meet the commitment to invest additional funding into Mathematical sciences in forthcoming years, as part of the allocations process.

### Migrants: Finance

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to lift the No Recourse to Public Funds rule for one year to support migrants who were put in accommodation under the Everyone In scheme and are no longer eligible. [HL2973]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office has no plans to lift the No Recourse to Public Funds condition

for one year to support migrants who were put in accommodation under the Everyone in Scheme.

### Military Aircraft

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the 'Crowsnest' Airborne Early Warning helicopter programme is on schedule to meet its intended operational date; and what assessment they have made of challenges associated with the F-35B fighter jet programme, in particular regarding personnel. [HL2982]

**Baroness Goldie:** The CROWSNEST programme has successfully delivered a baseline capability to support the Carrier Strike Group deployment in 2021.

The F-35B is a developing capability across Defence and, as such, challenges surrounding Suitable Qualified and Experienced Personnel are constantly monitored to ensure delivery of Strategic effect.

### Myanmar: Arms Trade

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to encourage other governments to adopt the UN resolution of 19 June calling for nations to halt arms sales to Myanmar and the ruling military junta. [HL2965]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar. We are clear that no one should sell arms to Myanmar. The UK worked to secure a strong G7 statement on the 3 and 23 February urging all countries to immediately suspend arms sales to Myanmar. On 5 May, the UK secured a G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting Communiqué that committed G7 members to continue to prevent the supply of arms and technical assistance to the military. The G7 Leaders' Communiqué of 13 June reaffirmed G7 unity on pursuing additional measures should they prove necessary. As you note, on 18 June, the UK worked with partners to deliver a UN General Assembly Resolution 75/287 which called on states to prevent the flow of arms to Myanmar. 119 States voted in favour of the resolution. We will continue to work closely with partners and through multilateral institutions, such as the UN Security Council, to apply pressure directly on those who sell arms to the military. We continue also to press states to respond to the General Assembly resolution's call by committing not to sell arms to Myanmar.

### Nigeria: Armed Conflict

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent reports of (1) fighting in Birnin Gwari in Kaduna state between members of the al Qaeda affiliate Ansaru and other armed factions, and

(2) the prevalence in central Nigeria of diverse armed non-state actors espousing religious extremism. [HL2893]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The Government is concerned by increasing insecurity in Nigeria. We continue to follow developments closely. We are aware of reports of fighting in Kaduna State between Ansaru and other armed factions. In central Nigeria, we remain concerned about rising levels of violence, and the involvement of armed groups in a high number of incidents. While Islamic extremism is a driver of the conflict involving terrorist groups in the North East of Nigeria, it remains our assessment that the causes of conflict in central Nigeria are more complex, and frequently relate to competition over resources and criminality.

### Nigeria: Boko Haram

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threat posed by jihadists in northern Nigeria following reports that Boko Haram fighters have moved from Borno state to Rijana Forest in Kaduna state. [HL2993]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The Government is concerned by increasing insecurity in Nigeria. We continue to follow developments closely, including reports of terrorist activity in Kaduna State. Our Travel Advice advises against all travel to Kaduna State, and notes that significant attacks have occurred in Kaduna State in the past.

### Nigeria: Christianity

*Asked by Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the intensification of jihadist attacks against Christians in Nigeria, as reported by the Gatestone Institute on 10 October; whether they will discuss these attacks with the government of Nigeria; and what further steps, if any, they will take. [HL3004]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** We condemn all violence across Nigeria, the devastating effects of which are felt by communities of different faiths. We are aware of the Gatestone Institute report. Jihadist ideology is a driver of the conflict involving terrorist groups in the North East. We assess that the drivers of intercommunal violence elsewhere in Nigeria are complex and frequently relate to competition over resources and criminality. We regularly visit states affected by intercommunal violence to engage with state governments, civil society, faith and community leaders and affected communities. The Prime Minister discussed a range of issues with President Buhari, including security, in the margins of the Global Education Summit in July. We continue to encourage the Nigerian Government to take urgent action to protect all

those at risk of violence and implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of violence.

### Police: Crimes of Violence

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to research by Femicide Census which found that 16 former or serving police officers had committed femicide since 2009, what assessment they have made as to whether male former or serving police officers commit violence against women, including femicide, at a higher rate compared to the general adult male population. [HL2966]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office collects and publishes information annually on both misconduct and criminal investigations involving police officers. However, information on the circumstances that led to a case being brought is not collected centrally by the Home Office

### Private Rented Housing: Tenants

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the security of tenants in the private rented sector, in particular those affected by (1) the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and (2) the reduction in Universal Credit payments. [HL2957]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Universal Credit uplift were important elements of the wider package of support measures introduced by the Government during the pandemic. These measures have effectively prevented a widespread build-up of rent arrears and prevented evictions, by supporting private renters to continue paying their rent.

This is evidenced by the latest published data from the English Housing Survey Household Resilience Study from April – May 2021, which suggested that the vast majority (93%) of private renters are up to date with their rent. Of the 7% (257,000 households) in arrears, 60% are in arrears of less than 1 month.

In 2020/21, there was over a 40% reduction in households owed a homelessness duty following the end of an assured shorthold tenancy, compared with 2019/20.

As emergency measures are lifted, support remains in place for renters through the welfare system. This includes maintained Local Housing Allowance rates at their increased level in cash terms for 2021/22, and for those who need additional support £140m in Discretionary Housing Payments funding, and the new £500 million Household Support Fund.

As our recovery gathers pace, the government is continuing to help people into work and increase their earning potential – the most sustainable route to financial security. We are investing billions through our Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

We will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 upon renters and are committed to delivering a fairer and more effective rental market that works for both tenants and landlords. This includes repealing Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 to improve security for tenants. We will set out our proposals for reform in due course.

### **Pupils: Absenteeism**

*Asked by **Baroness Wilcox of Newport***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many children on school rolls have not returned to school since the beginning of the current school year; and how many of these are (1) asylum seekers, (2) refugees, or (3) in the care system. [[HL2985](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** The department does not hold data on the number of children who have not returned to school since the beginning of the current school year.

Education is a protective factor for children in care and can be an important lifeline. That is why the department worked closely with local authorities across the country to make sure schools remained open for these pupils throughout national restrictions.

### **Railways: Fares**

*Asked by **Lord Bradshaw***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the effect on train operating companies' revenues of increasing the cost of regulated rail fares, and (2) whether, since the ending of travel restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, (a) rail companies have introduced more unregulated fares, and (b) customers have purchased more unregulated fares. [[HL3002](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Fares revenue fell drastically during the pandemic compared with pre-pandemic levels and is yet to recover. Fare rises help fund crucial investment in maintaining railway services and support our economic recovery.

No assessment has been made on the regulated fares for 2022 and a range of options around the timing and level of the increase are being considered. We will confirm these arrangements in due course.

In a major enhancement to their product range train operating companies have introduced flexi season tickets and continue to keep their range of unregulated fares under review. No assessment has been made of how sales of unregulated fares have changed since the ending of travel restrictions.

### **Regional Planning and Development**

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how they define the term "levelling up" when used in policy statements, (2) when they will publish their objectives

for levelling up, and (3) whether they plan to set measurable targets for each objective. [[HL2955](#)]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** Levelling up is at the heart of the Government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic and deliver for the people of the UK.

It is about empowering local leaders and communities to seize their own destiny; boosting living standards, particularly where they are lower; spreading opportunity and improving public services, particularly where they are weak; and restoring local pride across the UK. The Government will publish a White Paper that will set out our plans in more detail.

### **Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**

*Asked by **Baroness Randerson***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much overall funding has been provided to councils in England for local road maintenance in each of the last five years, up to and including the current financial year. [[HL3028](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** During the last five years the Department for Transport has provided over £5.9 billion by formula to local authorities in England, outside London, to support the maintenance of the local road network.

This funding is not ring-fenced, allowing local highway authorities to spend their allocations according to their own priorities. A breakdown by financial year is in the table below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>£ bn</i>
2017/18	1.047
2018/19	1.346
2019/20	0.926
2020/21	1.526
2021/22	1.125
Total	5.970

### **Rwanda: International Law**

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Durham***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the proposed new Rwandan High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Busingye Johnston, upholds international law; whether they intend to accept his diplomatic credentials; and what discussions they will have with the government of Rwanda about upholding international law. [[HL2919](#)]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** We do not comment on the appointment process for individual Ambassadors or High Commissioners. All applications for agrément for the appointment of Ambassadors and High Commissioners to the UK are considered on a case-

by-case basis and a range of factors are taken into account before a decision is made.

The UK has a strong relationship with Rwanda. Our close cooperation and engagement means we can discuss priority issues and shared concerns, including for example human rights, the Commonwealth, climate and building back from COVID-19. We continue to urge Rwanda, as a member of the Commonwealth, and future Chair-in-Office, to uphold international law and to respect and champion Commonwealth values of democracy, rule of law, and human rights.

### Scholarships: Ethnic Groups

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide funding for scholarships for those wanting to study subjects in which black students are under-represented. [HL3042]

**Baroness Barran:** Ensuring equality of opportunity for talented young people across the country is one of this government's highest priorities.

The previous government brought forward sweeping reforms of higher education (HE) through the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA) to tackle equality of opportunity. This includes the Transparency Duty, which will for the first time require all universities to publish applications, offers and acceptance rates broken down by gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

On 11 March 2021 the Office for Students (OfS) published the access and participation data dashboard, which is used to identify gaps in access, continuation, attainment, and progression at English providers delivering undergraduate provision by different student characteristics, available at:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>.

All HE providers wanting to charge higher level fees must have an Access and Participation Plan agreed by the OfS, in which they set out the measures they intend to take to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups to access and succeed in higher education.

In the 2021-22 academic year, providers have committed over £202 million to access activity. Through access and participation plans, providers are delivering a range of interventions aimed at improving access, progression and continuation rates for under-represented groups, including additional financial support through bursaries and scholarships. For example, Durham University this year launched their 'Durham Inspired' scholarship programme for Black students:

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/scholarships/undergraduate-scholarships-2022-entry/durham-inspired-scholarships-for-black-uk-students/>.

In 2019 the government announced £13.5 million of funding for up to 2,500 new places for AI and data science conversion courses, including up to 1,000 government-funded scholarships. These scholarships are prioritised for Black, Female and Disabled students and are based across 28 Universities across England. In the first year alone over 1,300 students have enrolled, with a total of 210 scholarships awarded to date. Of the scholarships awarded, 40% have been awarded to Black students.

We recognise there is still more to be done, including ensuring that students are accessing high quality courses which have real labour market demand and lead them into skilled employment. In our latest strategic guidance to the OfS we asked them to urge providers to do more to ensure that all students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, are recruited on to courses that will deliver good outcomes.

### Schools: Ventilation

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide funding to schools to improve ventilation systems. [HL2970]

**Baroness Barran:** Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Good ventilation has also been associated with a range of benefits, including improved health, better concentration and lower rates of absence from schools and work. Measuring CO2 levels in indoor spaces is an effective way of identifying poor ventilation in multi-occupant spaces, such as classrooms.

The department has started to provide CO2 monitors to state-funded education settings, including early years, schools and further education providers, backed by £25 million in government funding. We expect that, in most cases, the monitors will confirm that existing ventilation is sufficient.

Where any issues are identified, in most cases we expect this to be resolved by opening windows and doors, or in some cases minor estate repairs may be needed. Day to day maintenance and minor repairs, including those to improve ventilation, should typically be funded from school revenue budgets. Schools also receive an annual Devolved Formula Capital Allocation to spend on small capital projects or capital purchases. For more substantial capital works, schools and those responsible for school buildings have access to funding to improve the condition of buildings through different routes depending on their size and type.

The case for additional support for settings to maintain good ventilation will be kept under review as the programme continues and schools and other settings use the monitors to further assess their ventilation needs.



## Summertime

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last assessed the merits of daylight saving time. [HL2963]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government believes that the current daylight-saving arrangements represent the optimal use of the available daylight across the UK.

## Syria: Repatriation

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what assessment they have made of the experience of (a) the United States, and (b) other countries, in repatriating their nationals from detention camps in Syria, (2) whether they are considering individual cases, in particular of (a) widows, and (b) fatherless children, and (3) if so, how many individual cases are currently being considered. [HL2937]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues to work with and learn from our international partners on a range of issues to help address the difficult situation in North East Syria, including in relation to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. It is ultimately a matter for individual countries how they address any situations involving their nationals, including, where applicable, repatriation to the country of origin. We are aware that British nationals, including children, are located in IDP camps in north east Syria. Due to the shifting circumstances on the ground we are not in a position to make an accurate estimate of their number. Where we become aware of British unaccompanied or orphaned children we work with partners to facilitate their return where feasible. Establishing their whereabouts and identity is not straightforward, but we have facilitated a number of such returns to the UK. Each case is considered on a case by case basis, subject to national security concerns.

## Teachers: Equality

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage schools to boost diversity among teachers. [HL2971]

**Baroness Barran:** It is important that teaching is an inclusive profession. Schools, and their leadership teams, should reflect their communities and their pupils.

Whilst the department knows that, in certain areas, the teaching profession is becoming more diverse, there is further to go to both attract and retain diverse, talented teachers and to support them as they enter the profession and develop their career and leadership journeys.

The 'Teaching – Every Lesson Shapes A Life' recruitment campaign is targeted at audiences of students and recent graduates and potential career changers,

regardless of background, and we take every effort to ensure that our advertising is fully reflective of this across the full range of marketing materials we use.

In October, Apply for Teacher Training, the department's new application service for initial teacher training (ITT) in England, was rolled out nationally. Apply has been designed to be as user-friendly as possible and has been extensively tested with a diverse range of potential applicants, to ensure it helps remove barriers to teachers applying for ITT courses. Apply will also allow us to collect more data and insight into candidate behaviour and the behaviour of providers of teacher training. This will mean we have a greater idea of where barriers may occur and allow us to develop and deliver policy interventions where they are most needed.

Alongside a focus on recruitment, it is important we retain people from diverse backgrounds. This will be supported by our work to ensure that all new entrants to teacher training have the best possible start to the early stage of their career.

The department has also developed programmes to support the school workforce, including the Early Career Framework reforms for those at the beginning of their careers and National Professional Qualifications, which are now freely available to all teachers in state-funded schools and 16-19 organisations.

The department understands that creating a culture of flexible working can promote equality of opportunity and diversity in the teaching workforce. We have taken action to expand and promote flexible working practices in schools, including through publishing a suite of supportive resources including guidance and case studies: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flexible-working-resources-for-teachers-and-schools>. We have also appointed eight flexible working ambassador schools to champion flexible working culture and share best practice at a local level: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flexible-working-ambassador-schools>. Alongside this, we are offering free training for head teachers in how to implement effective flexible working arrangements, and how to develop strategic approaches to flexible working.

## Teachers: Qualifications

*Asked by Baroness Wilcox of Newport*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many schools do not have a qualified teacher in a subject they offer. [HL2984]

**Baroness Barran:** Legislation does not specify that teachers must have a degree in a particular subject or discipline. It is the Teachers' Standards that specify the subject knowledge required for the award of qualified teacher status. All trainee teachers must meet these by the time they complete their training.

Of the 2,948 state-funded secondary schools in England that supplied data on curriculum subjects taught and the subject of qualifications held by their teachers, there were



1,386 schools, equivalent to 47%, where at least one subject was taught for which none of its teachers held a relevant post A level qualification in that subject.

The most common subjects where no teachers in a school held a relevant post A level qualification in the subject were: computing (408 schools); media studies (214); religious education (171); citizenship (115); engineering (114) and drama (109).

To reduce burden during the COVID-19 outbreak, schools were not required to provide information on teacher qualifications in 2020. Therefore, the information provided relates to the November 2019 School Workforce Census.

Information on subjects taught and teacher post A level qualifications is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

### **Tigray: Armed Conflict**

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) when the UK's deployed expert from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative in Tigray is due to report on the results of their mission, and (2) when the report will be made available to Parliament. [HL3007]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I am appalled by reports of sexual violence in Tigray, and directly expressed my concerns in the strongest terms to the Ethiopian Ambassador during my first week as Minister for Africa. As you are aware in June we deployed an expert from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative UK Team of Experts to conduct an initial scoping mission to identify tangible ways to enhance the response to gender-based violence in Tigray. An Adviser has now been recruited to implement recommendations from this internal report - including a wider deployment supporting key stakeholders, including the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), to safely document conflict-related sexual violence and support efforts to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice. The UK fully supports the joint investigation involving the UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights and EHRC. We continue to explore options for addressing the immediate needs of survivors, preventing further sexual violence and delivering justice and accountability.

The UK continues to call for a ceasefire to be agreed urgently and for the urgent opening of a humanitarian corridor to provide aid, including food, fuel and medical aid.

### **Toys and Games: Safety**

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) steps they have taken, and (2) further plans they have, to ensure that children are protected from harm caused by toys

sold in online marketplaces which are not compliant with UK safety regulations. [HL2960]

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take following the closure of the UK product safety review: call for evidence on 17 June; and what are the timelines for those steps. [HL2961]

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the ability of Trading Standards to pursue sellers of toys not in compliance with UK safety regulations. [HL2962]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe products can be sold in the UK and existing laws require that all consumer products, including toys sold online, must be safe before they can be placed on the UK market.

The national product safety regulator, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), and Local Authority Trading Standards have powers to take action against manufacturers, importers or distributors who sell unsafe and non-compliant toys, including through online marketplaces. These regulators have access to a national Product Safety Database to share information and to help prioritise and target activity.

The Government recognises the scale of the challenge in regulating online sales and OPSS is taking forward a programme of work to help ensure the safety of products sold online. This includes actively identifying products available online that pose a serious risk and ensuring that non-compliant products being sold by third-party sellers are removed from sale. Since April 2021, OPSS interventions have led to the withdrawal of more than 10,000 unsafe products, including toys, previously listed and available in the UK, via online marketplaces.

The Government's review of the UK's product safety framework aims to ensure it remains robust and is future-proofed so that it continues to protect consumers while enabling businesses to safely innovate and grow. This includes reviewing the impact of eCommerce on the product safety framework to ensure appropriate accountability and clear responsibilities throughout the supply chain.

The Government has analysed submissions to the Call for Evidence and is currently finalising its response which will be published in due course. OPSS officials continue to engage with stakeholders as the review progresses and any proposals for legislative change would be subject to public consultation.

### **Travel: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government which EU countries allow entry to UK nationals based on double vaccination with the Pfizer vaccine. [HL2918]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Entry requirements for EU member states are laid out on the relevant FCDO Travel Advice country page. Border restrictions are a Member State competence and are the decision of the receiving country. As of 12 October, 23 EU member states formally recognise UK vaccine status for purposes of entry. This includes those vaccinated with Pfizer. Entry restrictions will vary from country to country and are liable to change quickly and with little notice: travellers should always ensure they are familiar with the latest restrictions prior to undertaking travel.

### **Type 23 Frigates: Greece**

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications of the transfer of two Type 23 Frigates to the Hellenic Navy for (1) overall frigate numbers, and (2) the minimum level of frigates committed to be held by the Royal Navy. [HL2983]

**Baroness Goldie:** As part of the Integrated Review the decision was taken to decommission two Type 23 frigates, HMS MONMOUTH and HMS MONTROSE. They had been due to enter planned maintenance cycles from 2023. Frigate availability will be maintained through the life extension of three other General-Purpose Type 23s, and the new Type 26 and Type 31 frigates entering service. No decision has been made regarding the disposal of HMS MONMOUTH and HMS MONTROSE.

### **Universities**

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the tables published by different UK organisations ranking universities, and (2) the availability of independent oversight or verification of the accuracy of such tables. [HL2954]

**Baroness Barran:** There is a variety of ranking systems and information sources which are published independently of government which are not verified. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (the designated data body for England), collects and makes openly available

standardised data about UK higher education providers, so that it can be re-used by third parties.

The government's focus is on ensuring all higher education providers deliver a high-quality academic experience. 'Discover Uni' is owned and operated by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies and is an official, reliable source of information to guide student choices. The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework is the Office for Student's scheme for rating the quality of higher education in England, as part of its wider quality regime to help ensure all students benefit from high-quality provision.

### **Visas: Classroom Assistants**

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to speed up the process of visa applications for classroom language assistants. [HL2914]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** With the introduction of the Skilled Worker route on 01 December 2020 we suspended the limit on overseas visas to work in the UK, and removed the Resident Labour Market Test. These changes have reduced the length of the process to recruit a worker from overseas by up to eight weeks in comparison to the former Tier 2 (General) route.

These reforms are part of a wider transformation to make the points-based system streamlined and digital. Enhancements for sponsors, combined with those for applicants, mean a faster end-to-end process from a sponsor getting a licence to an applicant coming to the UK. We have introduced Chip Checker functionality for a fully digital application system for EEA nationals applying through the new points-based system, allowing a fully online application process, reducing the time it takes an applicant to get a decision by up to one week.

The Home Office published its Sponsorship roadmap in August 2021 outlining its plans to deliver further reforms to the points-based system. These planned changes will make it easier for users to navigate the system and further reduce the processing times for employers to bring someone to the UK to work. Further details on the planned reforms can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-points-based-immigration-system-sponsorship-roadmap>.

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