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

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

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Written Statements

Thursday, 9 December 2021

Brexit Opportunities: Review of Retained EU Law

[HLWS445]

Lord Frost: On 16th September 2021 I announced a review of “retained EU law” (REUL). This refers to the very many pieces of EU legislation which have flowed into the UK legal system during our EU membership, through the European Communities Act 1972 as an obligation of membership and without any ability for Parliament to change them. It also covers EU case law and principles. To ensure continuity and certainty immediately after Brexit, REUL was taken onto our own statute book through the European Union (Withdrawal) Act of 2018.

However, while this was an important short-term bridging measure, it does not represent the right long-term end point for the UK and our statute book. Many laws that were retained are not necessarily right for the UK as an independent country, and there are anomalies and uncertainties which remain over the precise status of REUL as part of the UK’s domestic law. Accordingly, we have now launched two reviews: the first into the substance of REUL, and the second into its status in law.

This statement sets out the progress that has been made so far and the next steps.

Our overall intention remains, in time, to amend, replace, or repeal all the REUL that is not right for the UK.

On the substance review, I have directed Government departments to establish the content of REUL in policy areas for which they are responsible, and to consult stakeholders as necessary. There is no authoritative assessment by Government of which policy areas are most affected by REUL. This first review will deliver such an assessment, and enable us to establish which sectors of the economy and which departments are most affected by REUL.

On the second review, into the legal status of REUL, we have identified the following seven areas where EU law concepts, retained by the EU Withdrawal Act, still affect the UK even though we have left the EU:

1. Under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act, rights under treaties and directives which had direct effect in UK law whilst we were a Member State have been incorporated into domestic law. Many of these rights - like respect for human rights and equal pay for men and women - replicate rights that were already part of UK law, separately from our EU membership. We want to ensure, to the extent appropriate, that the UK law-derived rights relied on in our legal system are not confused or overlaid with EU-derived rights. If required, we will also clarify the scope of directly effective rights in directives, saved as REUL under section 4 of the Act, to make it clear that only those rights which have already been recognised by the CJEU or the UK courts are incorporated.

2. Even though we have left the EU, the UK courts are still required to interpret REUL in accordance with retained general principles of EU law, such as proportionality and the protection of legitimate expectations, so far as those principles are relevant. These general principles have developed in the EU over the years to apply to the laws as they exist in the EU system. But REUL is now UK law derived from EU sources - so we need to consider whether this new body of UK law should be interpreted under UK principles of interpretation, or under those that apply to the EU treaties and legislation developed for Member States.

3. Currently, under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, REUL has a special and unusual status in UK law. Whatever its original EU legislative form (for example, a regulation or treaty article), for some purposes REUL is treated as UK primary legislation, and in other cases its status depends on its original form (with a significant number automatically accorded the status of primary legislation). Accordingly, we will be revisiting the legislative framework in the European Union Withdrawal Act and the operation of such REUL, so that it is given a more appropriate status within the UK legal system for the purposes of amendment and repeal. That status should reflect the fact that Parliament had no ability to block or amend such legislation once agreed in Brussels - indeed it often had no meaningful democratic scrutiny in the UK at all. Accordingly, this aspect of the review will consider whether, and if so, how, REUL could be amended or repealed by an accelerated process, with appropriate oversight, given the unsatisfactory nature of its original incorporation.

4. The EU concept of the ‘supremacy of EU law’ - which forces all other UK legislation to be interpreted so as to give way to EU law where there is a conflict (even if EU law was overridden by subsequent non-EU sourced UK law) - has been preserved by the 2018 Act so far as relevant to the interpretation, disapplication or quashing of domestic law passed or made before the end of the transitional period. This interpretative concept is alien to the UK legislative principles, whereby later parliaments (and their laws) can override earlier parliaments. This concept never sat well with our long established democratic and parliamentary traditions, and now we have left the EU is clearly no longer appropriate. We will consider the issue and it is likely that we will propose removing the concept from the statute book.

5. Under the 2018 Act, in interpreting REUL, UK courts remain bound by EU courts and their decisions issued before the transition period ended. Only the Supreme Court or certain appellate courts have the power to depart from such case law. REUL is UK law which is derived from a (now) foreign source. In all other cases, when UK legislation draws on foreign
models, its courts are not bound by foreign case law, although it may be persuasive. Accordingly, we need to consider the anomalous status of EU case law, and we will be revisiting the issue of which UK courts should be able to depart from retained EU case law, and on what basis.

6. The Court of Justice of the EU may, from time to time, declare an EU instrument invalid under EU law. In addition to the general process for addressing REUL which is no longer right for the UK, we propose to ensure that the retained version can be swiftly removed when the original EU law measure has been declared invalid under EU law.

7. The review will also consider any consequential actions, such as updated guidance relating to the courts (for example, on the treatment of EU case law) and the place of EU law in legal education.

We will continue to develop policy proposals at pace. My officials will be consulting widely with internal and external stakeholders, including from the judiciary, legal practice, academia, and industry to ensure that any proposed legislative and non-legislative solutions are thoroughly tested.

We will incorporate Parliament’s views, including through targeted engagement with select committees, to ensure the outcomes of the review into REUL, status are robust. Our aim will be to issue proposals in the spring, and legislate as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Any individual or group with relevant expertise that wishes to be involved in this review should contact the Brexit Opportunities Unit in the Cabinet Office. (brexit.opportunities@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).

Delivering Justice for Victims

[HLWS442]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: My right honourable friend the Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice has made the following written statement:

Today the Government is publishing a package of measures that will collectively raise the voice of victims in our criminal justice system and strengthen the accountability of all the agencies charged with supporting them.

We are publishing a consultation on a new Victims’ Law: “Delivering justice for victims - a consultation on improving victims’ experiences of the justice system”. The consultation seeks views on how we can:

• Improve communication from agencies with victims, including through an explicit requirement for a prosecutor in a case or certain types of cases to have met with the victim before the charging decision, so that victims’ voices are amplified in the criminal justice process.
• Mainstream the use of community impact statements, so that the voice of whole communities is strengthened and the police, CPS and court understand the wider scale and extent to which crime can blight whole neighbourhoods.

• Clarify and sharpen accountability for when victims do not receive the right level of service, by enshrining the Victims’ Code in law and strengthening oversight mechanisms through reinforced inspection regimes nationally and Police and Crime Commissioners locally.

• Increase the Victim Surcharge so criminals pay millions of pounds more towards crucial victim services and therefore take greater responsibility for the cost of supporting victims to recover from what they have suffered.

• Improve provision of community-based services and strengthen support available from Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs).

The Government is also announcing:

• The start of a national roll-out of provision of pre-recorded cross-examination for sexual and modern slavery victims to all Crown Courts, which will mean that more victims can benefit from recording their evidence earlier in the process and outside of the courtroom, subject to judicial discretion.

• The publication of national criminal justice scorecards which will give a cross-system view of performance, so we can better monitor performance, understand problems in the system, and address them more effectively, whilst spreading the very best practice widely.

• The publication of a progress report on the end-to-end Rape Review Action Plan and the first ever scorecard on adult rape, which will mean that we can hold criminal justice agencies to account for delivering improvements in outcomes for this horrendous crime.

Together these measures will contribute to our plan to give victims the justice they deserve, and build back a better, stronger, fairer country. The consultation is available at: https://consult.justice.gov.uk/victim-policy/delivering-justice-for-victims’.

Deployment of UK Military Engineers to Poland

[HLWS447]

Baroness Goldie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today informing the House of the deployment of UK military personnel to Poland to provide assistance to the Polish Armed Forces.

For a number of months Poland, along with their Baltic neighbours Latvia and Lithuania, have been under significant pressure from irregular migration originating across their border with Belarus, and facilitated by the
Lukashenko regime. Poland has every right to protect its borders within international law in the face of an unprecedented and volatile situation. The UK is committed to standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our close Allies as part of our commitment to European security.

For this reason, the UK is deploying a squadron of Royal Engineers (along with associated support elements) to Poland in order to support Polish troops with specific engineering tasks. This follows the deployment on 11 November 2021 of an initial engineer reconnaissance element. This is not a combat deployment.

This engineer squadron will be in addition to, but separate from, the 150 UK personnel based in Poland since 2017 as part of the US-led multinational battlegroup under NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence. The engineering personnel will be deploying on a bilateral basis, as UK national activity in support of a close Ally. They are not deploying as part of a NATO response or operation and will not be under NATO command or control. The engineers are planned to be deployed until the end of April 2022.

**European Union (Withdrawal) Act: Common Frameworks Report and Repeal of Section 12 Powers**

**Lord Greenhalgh:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister for Levelling Up - Local Government, Constitution and the Union (Neil O’Brien) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today laying before Parliament a report, ‘The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 June to 25 September 2021’. I am laying this report because it is a legal requirement under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for quarterly reports to be made to Parliament on the progress of the work to develop Common Frameworks. The report is available on GOV.UK and details the progress made between the UK Government and devolved governments regarding the development of Common Frameworks. This report details progress made during the thirteenth 3-month reporting period, and sets out that no ‘freezing’ regulations have been brought forward under section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act. As a result of the progress that has been made to establish Common Frameworks in collaboration with the devolved governments, the Government intends to repeal section 12 powers through the enabling power set out in section 12(9) of the Act. A copy of the ‘The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 June to 25 September 2021’ report has been placed in the library of both Houses. The publication of the report reflects the Government’s continued commitment to transparency.

**Maximum Student Loan Interest Rate**

**Baroness Barran:** My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan), has made the following statement:

I am announcing today a temporary reduction in the maximum student loan interest rate following the continued reduction in the prevailing market rate for comparable unsecured personal loans.

In accordance with the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, where the Government considers that the student loan interest rate is higher than the prevailing market rate for comparable unsecured loans, we will take steps to reduce the maximum student loan interest rate.

The Government regularly monitors the interest rates set on student loans against the interest rates prevailing on the market for comparable loans.

Following the continued reduction in the prevailing market rate, I have today [9 December] laid legislation to cap the maximum Post-2012 income contingent repayment undergraduate and the Postgraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rate in line with the prevailing market rate. The cap will come into effect from 1 January 2021 and last for a period of two months.

The reduction will be 0.1 percentage point on the maximum student loan interest rate to reflect the average market rates during the preceding monitoring period.

The maximum Post-2012 undergraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rate and the Postgraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rate will be 4.4% between 1 January and 28 February.

From 1 March 2022, the Post-2012 undergraduate and Postgraduate income contingent repayment student loan interest rates will revert to the standard rate +3%.

Further caps may be put in place should the prevailing market rate continue to be below student loan interest rates.

**UK Internal Market Act Exclusions: Common Frameworks**

**Lord Greenhalgh:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister for Levelling Up - Local Government, Constitution and the Union (Neil O’Brien) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

During the passage of the UK Internal Market Act my ministerial colleagues made clear that the powers under the Act may be used to give effect to agreements reached within a Common Framework regarding exclusions from the market access principles. The Government brought forward amendments to delegated powers under the Act to that effect.
The relevant powers, under sections 10 and 18 of the Act, permit a Secretary of State, by regulations, to amend the schedules of the Act so that “certain cases, matters, requirements, or provision” can be excluded from the application of the Act’s market access principles. A process for agreeing such exclusions in areas of policy divergence within a Common Framework has been developed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. A copy has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be published on the UK Government’s website www.gov.uk.

New exclusions from the UK Internal Market Act’s market access principles require the approval of both Houses of Parliament through the affirmative resolution procedure. Accordingly, where agreement to such an exclusion is reached within a Common Framework, the relevant department and minister will seek that approval by laying a draft statutory instrument before Parliament in accordance with the UK Internal Market Act.

UK-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council

[HLWS441]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister for Asia (Amanda Milling), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 November, I chaired the ninth UK-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council in London. The Council was the first in person since 2018 and was attended by elected leaders and representatives from Anguilla, Ascension Island, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, St Helena, the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, Tristan da Cunha and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The key themes of discussion at this year’s Council were environment and oceans, the International Maritime Organisation III Code audit, the UK-Overseas Territories relationship, economic resilience, law enforcement, the response to and recovery from Covid-19, the importance of mental health and protecting the vulnerable, and the improving inclusivity in our societies.

Mr Rt Hon Friends the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Secretary, as well HRH The Duke of Cambridge, addressed the Council. Other Ministerial colleagues attending the discussions included the Minister for the Pacific and International Environment (Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith), the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Robert Courts MP), the Minister for Security and Borders (Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP), the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Helen Whately MP), the Minister of State (Edward Argar MP), and the Minister for Children and Families (Will Quince MP). I was also joined by my Hon Friend the Minister for Europe and Americas (Wendy Morton MP).

The Council agreed priorities and set out a number of important commitments and areas for joint work in the year ahead.

We discussed the importance of protecting the unique environments and biodiversity in the Overseas Territories, recognising that these are on the frontline of the effects of climate change. The Territories expressed thanks to the UK for facilitating their presence at the COP26 summit. We agreed to prioritise climate change and environmental issues in future funding for the Territories.

We reaffirmed our commitment to supporting the Overseas Territories in building successful and resilient economies, acknowledging the impact of external shocks, such as the Covid-19 and natural disasters on the small and vulnerable economies of Territories.

We recognised that the impacts of Covid-19 were not yet over and committed to continue working together collaboratively to bolster the health services in the Territories through existing and new links with the UK. We committed to work with the Territories to access the limited supply of the UK’s therapeutics supply. We reaffirmed our commitment to improving the lives of people with mental health problems, including children and young people.

We reaffirmed our joint commitment to build upon the cross-multi-agency law enforcement working to enhance co-operation and increase capacity in the Territories. We also discussed the important role that governments can play in promoting inclusive societies.

We agreed a joint communiqué, which was issued following the conclusion of the conference and was published on the gov.uk website.

The communiqué and associated press statement reflects the commitment of the Governments of the Overseas Territories and the UK to continue to work in partnership to achieve the vision set out in the June 2012 White Paper: The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability.

In line with our commitment in the White Paper, we will continue to report to Parliament on progress by Government departments.

UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement

[HLWS446]

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:

Following intensive negotiations on the UK Singapore digital agreement launched in June this year, I am pleased to report that we have now reached Agreement in Principle on what will be the world’s most comprehensive digital trade agreement.

The UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement (the “DEA”) will take our trading relationship with Singapore – worth £16 billion in 2020 – to the next level by overhauling outdated trade rules that affect both goods and services exporters, making it easier for UK business
to target new opportunities in both Singapore and lucrative Asian markets. This means that modern trade in services, financial services, agricultural goods, manufactured goods, legal advice, architecture, and many other sectors can operate more easily, supported by their all-important underlying data.

The deal that reflects the objectives for digital trade that I set out in September this year, namely:

- Securing open digital markets, including through important commitments such as a prohibition on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions.
- Championing cross-border data flows and prohibiting the unjustified forced localisation of data as well as committing to high standards of personal data protection.
- Championing consumer benefits and necessary business safeguards in digital trade. This includes important issues such as the protection of source code and online consumer protection.
- Promoting digital trading systems that cut red tape and make trade cheaper, faster, and more secure for businesses. This includes commitments around electronic signatures and contracts.
- Promoting collaboration with Singapore to shape the rules that govern digital trade and ensure they free, fair, and inclusive. This includes commitments to collaborate with Singapore in emerging fields such as fintech and lawtech.

The deal also closely reflects the ground-breaking G7 Digital Trade Principles that the UK brokered in October under our Presidency. This includes recognition of the importance of decent conditions of work for those employed in the digital economy.

Following the agreement in principle, the legal text will now be finalised. Signature of the agreement will take place at a future date, at which point the agreement will also be presented to Parliament for scrutiny.


Baroness Stedman-Scott: My honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Chloe Smith MP) has made the following Written Statement:

Today I will place in the House Library a copy of the UK’s 2021 follow-up report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Disabled People following the 2016 inquiry.

This Government is more committed than ever to eliminating barriers so that everyone can participate in society. This commitment aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention), which protects and promotes the rights of disabled people. The follow-up report demonstrates how we are implementing the Convention and showcases the UK’s progress over the past 2 years in creating more opportunities for disabled people to participate and thrive in society.

The report shows positive action taking place across the UK to support disabled people, through policies and programmes that tackle the barriers faced by disabled people.

As a key element of this, in July 2021 we published the National Disability Strategy, which sets out steps to improve disabled people’s everyday lives. It offers both a positive vision for long term societal change and a wide-ranging, practical plan for action now. The strategy includes over 100 practical actions from right across government to improve the lives of disabled people, across education, employment, housing, transport, shopping, culture, justice, public services, and data and evidence.

In July 2021, we published Shaping future support: the health and disability green paper, which explores how the welfare system can better meet the needs of disabled people. We are committed to improving access to crucial support.

We also published our response to Health is Everyone’s Business (HiEB) in July 2021, which sets out measures Government is taking to provide greater clarity around employer and employee rights and responsibilities; address the need for employers to have access to information and advice that is easy to understand, trustworthy and accessible, and encourage more employers to provide access to expert support services such as Occupational Health (OH).

Together these publications show the government’s holistic approach to supporting disabled people and those with long-term health conditions to live full and independent lives.

The report shows that we are continuing to support disabled people in all aspects of everyday life. We are investing more than ever before in disability benefits and providing more personalised and tailored employment support to help more disabled people start, stay and succeed in work. As set out in the National Disability Strategy, we are committed to improving the accessibility of housing and are investing further in making public spaces accessible to all. We are prioritising funding for adult social care and personalised care reform to ensure everyone receives the right care they need; and we have increased grant funding across the UK for children and adults to support this. We are continuing to put the voices of disabled people first by engaging with disabled people and stakeholders through DPOs, networks and relevant organisations.

Everyone should be able to participate fully in society - whoever you are, wherever you live, and importantly, whether you have a disability or not. That is the vision we have set, accompanied not by rhetoric but with tangible action plans, to create a society that is safer and fairer for all.
West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust: Publication Independent Review Report

[HLWS450]

Lord Kamall: My Hon. Friend the Minister of State (Minister for Health) (Edward Argar), has today made the following written ministerial statement:

Today NHS England and NHS Improvement have published the report of the independent investigation to review whistleblowing at West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. This review was commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement at the request of the Department for Health and Social Care. It followed widely reported events arising from an anonymous letter sent to the relative of a patient who had died at the Trust.

The review led by Christine Outram MBE has considered as its starting point the appropriateness and impact of the actions taken by the Trust and other relevant bodies in response to the issues raised by and connected with the October letter. The review was also asked to produce advisory recommendations and learnings.

The findings of the review describe a breakdown in working practices and shine a light upon an executive team that was not sufficiently held to account by its Board. In particular, the review found that fingerprinting and use of biometrics such as handwriting experts is not appropriate in any NHS context. The review also found that in handling whistleblowing material made available through unconventional or even inappropriate means, the NHS should still focus on what and why something is being raised, rather than who has raised it.

There is significant learning to be gathered from the report in relation to how Freedom to Speak Up was implemented in the Trust; and how Freedom to Speak Up concerns should be separated from performance and disciplinary matters. The report also emphasises the importance of having strong Board governance and checks and balance processes in place.

The Trust and other relevant organisations including NHS England and NHS Improvement, the GMC and CQC will need to take stock of the findings of this important report. Indeed, this is a lesson for all NHS organisations to actively work to promote an open culture.

The Government takes the issue of speaking up extremely seriously and has put in place clear sources of support for staff to help them raise a concern, including the Speak Up Direct helpline and website and the National Guardian to help drive positive cultural change across the NHS so that speaking up becomes business as usual. The National Guardian also provides support and leadership to a network of over 700 Local Freedom To Speak Up Guardians, covering every Trust, whose role is to support staff who want to speak up about something.

The Government has also enhanced the legal protections available for those who speak up to prohibit discrimination against job applicants on the grounds that they have raised concerns. This is additional to the longstanding provisions of the Employment Rights Act 1996, amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which gives legal protection against detriment to all workers who speak up. We will continue to support the right of all workers in the NHS and wider health and care sector to speak up.

This review and its report have been delayed in part by the Covid pandemic and complicated by the sheer scale of the issues that have emerged from this investigation. I would therefore like to thank Christine Outram and her team for their diligence, commitment, and hard work in getting to the heart of these matters.

This is a comprehensive report describing a complicated set of circumstances. Much has happened in the Trust since the review was first commissioned. The report outlines the changes and actions the Trust has taken to improve its HR, culture and leadership practices. These are encouraging signs that the Trust is learning and should be better placed in the future.

Whilst the response to the anonymous whistleblowing letter represents an unusual set of events specific to one organisation, the Department will absorb the report and consider the learning for the wider system and discuss with NHSEI what the next steps might be.

I have placed a copy of the report of the independent review into West Suffolk Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in the Libraries of both Houses.
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We share the concerns raised by Dr Alakija, co-chair of the African Union Vaccine Delivery Alliance, on the inequity in Covid-19 vaccine coverage across Africa compared with the rest of the world. That is why under our G7 Presidency, we gained commitment from G7 Leaders to share at least 870 million surplus doses with low- and middle-income countries by 2022. This includes 100 million by the UK. As of 29 November, over 6 million UK donated doses have gone to 14 African countries. The UK has also donated £548 million to the COVAX Facility, set up to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines for 92 low- and middle-income countries, 46 of which are in Africa.

To reduce the likelihood of further mutations, we will continue to push for accelerated vaccine coverage through our existing support. We are also supporting work beyond vaccines to strengthen global surveillance, including through the UK Health Security Agency's New Variant Assessment Platform. This will help identify new variants of interest and support a rapid response.

Community Centres and Village Halls: Broadband

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Building Digital UK (BDUK) has a growing evidence base of the importance of connectivity in rural communities delivered through BDUK programmes, including community Hubs such as village halls and community centres. For instance, our recent research on the impact of gigabit connectivity in rural schools finds there to be time saved and improved pupil experience with high-speed broadband access. BDUK anticipates the benefits to village halls and community centres to follow similar themes in a different context - for example, for local businesses and administration.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Accommodation for supported asylum seekers is arranged by private sector providers through contractual arrangements with the Home Office.

- AASC: Serco, provision of asylum accommodation in NW and Midlands;
- AASC: Mears, asylum accommodation in Scotland, NI and NEYH;
- AASC: Clearsprings, asylum accommodation in South and Wales; and
- AIRE: Migrant Help, Provision of support services for asylum seekers.

Details of these contracts can be found on gov.uk under ‘New asylum accommodation contracts awarded’.

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by an independent third party, Migrant Help.

Prepaid Finance Services are contracted to provide Asylum Seekers with ASPEN cards.

approximately 10% of public sector buildings receiving subsidised connections through our Local Full Fibre Networks Programme (LFFN) are community centres and/or village halls. BDUK has an ongoing programme of evaluating the benefits of its different broadband interventions, and initial outcomes for the LFFN programme should be available in 2023.

Academics at the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE) are also currently researching the benefits of digitally connected village halls and the barriers associated. Their research so far suggests that, following the pandemic, more communities would like their village halls to have an internet connection and that it can broaden the scope of activities provided by the halls. The research will be published on the NICRE website once complete.

Contracts: Private Sector

To ask Her Majesty's Government which private providers in each region of England have contracts to provide (1) accommodation, (2) welfare, or (3) financial support, for asylum seekers. [HL4439]

Crime: Victims

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the practice of referring to proposed Home Affairs legislation by the name of individual victims of crime; and if they have made any such assessment, whether they plan to cease this practice. [HL4425]
Baroness Williams of Trafford: In bringing forward changes to the criminal law, it is fitting that we honour those who have campaigned for justice on behalf of a victim of crime by informally naming a new law after the victim concerned. Such colloquial naming of a new law is not used in the legislation itself. We have no plans to change this practice.

Ethiopia: Christianity

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of the freedom of religion for Christians in Ethiopia. [HL4497]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We are extremely concerned by reports of widespread human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia committed by all sides in the conflict. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 5 November. Our Ambassador in Addis Ababa spoke to Prime Minister Abiy on 28 October. The Minister for Africa spoke at a Westminster Hall Debate on 3 November and highlighted the horrific scale and nature of human rights abuses against civilians as reported by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is essential that all those responsible for human rights violations and abuses be held to account. All parties must implement the report’s recommendations and ensure that victims have access to support. We have stressed the need for Ethiopia to safeguard its incredible diversity of faith and identity in order to uphold freedom of religion and belief.

The Foreign Secretary, our Ambassador in Addis Ababa and the Minister for Africa continue to raise human rights issues in our discussions with the Ethiopian Government and more broadly we have reminded all warring parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The Minister for Africa raised our concerns about ethnic profiling and detentions with Ethiopian State Minister for Africa on 18 November, and made clear our concerns about hate speech in her tweet of 30 November. Our priority is to ensure that Ethiopians, irrespective of ethnicity, religion and political affiliation, receive life-saving aid and that humanitarian access to areas affected by conflict and insecurity is restored.

Government Departments: Disability

Asked by Baroness Garden of Frognal

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what plans they have, if any, to publish the minutes of the most recent cross-departmental meeting of Disability Champions. [HL4421]

Asked by Baroness Garden of Frognal

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of the main objectives of the cross-departmental meeting of Disability Champions. [HL4422]

Asked by Baroness Garden of Frognal

To ask Her Majesty’s Government whether attendees of the cross-departmental meeting of Disability Champions need to report the number of disabled people employed in each department. [HL4423]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: At the request of the Prime Minister, the first Ministerial Disability Champions were appointed in summer 2020 to drive the development and delivery of the National Disability Strategy (NDS).

Their objectives include championing disabled people and driving the delivery of the NDS in their respective departments. All champions contributed a statement of intent, and a specific range of commitments published in the strategy. They are not required to report on the number of disabled people employed in their department.

In the strategy, the Cabinet Office Disability Unit committed to publishing an annual report in summer 2022, which will detail the progress made against the commitments, including efforts to rebuild the economy and society post pandemic, and to which the Ministerial Disability Champions will have direct input.

The most recent Ministerial Disability Champions meeting was on 16 November 2021 where the ministers discussed the progress of NDS commitment delivery; championing disability policies within departments; engaging with Disability and Access Ambassadors; and Disability Confident. The government does not plan to publish the minutes from champion meetings, but as with previous meetings, will update the Ministerial Disability Champions GOV.UK page with discussion highlights.

Hamas

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what new evidence they used to inform their decision to list Hamas as a terrorist organisation. [HL4426]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government cannot comment on specific intelligence matters.

It has been longstanding policy to keep the list of proscribed organisations under review. Hamas’ listing has been extended to cover the totality of the organisation, following an assessment that the distinction between the military and political wings is artificial and that Hamas is currently concerned in terrorism. Full details can be found at the Explanatory Memorandum to the Order on the legislation.gov.uk website.

Kyrgyzstan: Foreign Relations

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what plans they have, if any, for the Prime Minister to extend an invitation to the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic
to mark 30 years of bilateral relations and to support a continuing commitment to democracy, sovereignty and national development in the Kyrgyz Republic. [HL4662]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The United Kingdom looks forward to celebrating 30 years of bilateral relations with the Kyrgyz Republic in 2022. Plans for how best to mark this important occasion are still under consideration. We continue to strongly support the democratic development of Kyrgyzstan, as the Minister for Europe and Americas reiterated when she met the outgoing Kyrgyz Ambassador, Edil Baisalov, on 2 December.

**Military Alliances: Australia and USA**

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to appoint someone to report directly to the National Security Adviser (1) on military co-operation with Australia and America, and (2) to help Australia develop SSN submarines. [HL4591]

**Lord True:** The National Security Adviser has appointed Whitehall leads to report to him directly on the UK’s collaboration with the US and Australia on AUKUS. The Ministry of Defence reports regularly to the National Security Adviser on the programme of work, conducted alongside US and Australian colleagues, to identify the optimum way to deliver new submarine capability to the Royal Australian Navy.

**Ports: Christmas**

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent steps they have taken, together with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, to help prevent disruption at UK ports during the Christmas 2021 period. [HL4575]

**Lord Frost:** The Government has engaged extensively with ports and carriers to ensure they are ready for the end of staged customs controls. We are confident that arrangements are in place to ensure the continued flow of trade over the Christmas period.

The Government has invested £470 million for new infrastructure to carry out customs and biosecurity checks, including £200 million Port Infrastructure Fund grants for ports to build infrastructure onsite and £270 million for Inland Sites.

**Prison Sentences**

*Asked by Lord Moylan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish data on (1) the number of offenders subject to indeterminate sentences for public protection who became eligible for licence review over the past year, and (2) the number of those who applied for a licence review over the same period. [HL4437]

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**Written Answers**

9 December 2021

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**Asked by Lord Moylan**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many offenders subject to indeterminate sentences for public protection will be eligible for a licence review each year for the next five years. [HL4438]

**Lord Wolfson of Tredegar:** We do not publish the data at the present time; however, we continue to review processes to allow the publication of more information in the future.

The accumulative number of IPP offenders, who will become eligible for a licence review each year for the next five years is set out below.

*Table: IPP cases with at least one release by 30/09/2021 by eligibility to apply for licence termination:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of cases eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End of 2021</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2022</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2023</td>
<td>1,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2024</td>
<td>1,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2025</td>
<td>2,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2026</td>
<td>2,829</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. Number of Cases Eligible is Cumulative (i.e. cases eligible in 2021 will also be eligible in 2022 etc).
2. Data is taken from administrative sources (nDelius) and subject to the inherent inaccuracy in any such large-scale data source.

Statistics on the prison population are routinely published as part of the quarterly Offender Management Statistics on Gov.uk:


**Prisoners: Ethnic Groups**

*Asked by Baroness Whitaker*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Wolfson of Tredegar (HL3924) on 24 November, what plans they have, if any, to introduce an ethnic group for those in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in statistics related to people in prisons. [HL4443]

**Lord Wolfson of Tredegar:** There are no current plans to alter the ethnic groups for the regular quarterly published data on the prison population which formed the basis of the answer to HL3924. The broad categories included in the information released are in line with current guidance from the Race Disparity Unit of the Cabinet Office.

Numbers self-designating as ‘Irish Traveller or Gypsy’ are published as part of a more detailed data set which are released annually as part of the series Offender...
Management Statistics Quarterly. The most recent release of this data formed part of the January to March 2021 issue, published in July 2021. Figures were included in Table A1.9ii of the Annual Prison Population: 2021 document. This showed that as of 30 June 2021 1,365 prisoners self-designated as Irish Traveller or Gypsy. This number was further broken to show that 1,337 were male and 28 were female.

**Summit for Democracy**

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are their priorities for the Summit for Democracy in December; and who will be attending on behalf of the UK. [HL4432]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The PM welcomes this initiative from President Biden to help rejuvenate the world's democracies and defend them from harm. The summit, with its themes of defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights, offers an opportunity to promote the Open Societies commitments made as part of our G7 Presidency.

The UK is working closely with the United States on preparations for the virtual Summit in December, including finalizing arrangements for UK attendance. The Prime Minister will lead the UK's engagement through a summit statement. As full details of the Summit emerge, we will consider further opportunities for UK engagement.

**Village Halls: Broadband**

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Benson Village Hall in Wiltshire will benefit from their Project Gigabit. [HL4428]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** We are backing Project Gigabit with £5 billion of taxpayers’ money, so that hard-to-reach communities are not left out - starting to level up now, not waiting for the end of the commercial rollout, and adding to the 600,000 rural homes and businesses already covered by gigabit connection with our support.

As set out in our latest publication, *Project Gigabit Delivery Plan: Autumn update*, Wiltshire is included in Phase 2 (Lot 30) of Project Gigabit. This project aims to give all residents and businesses in Wiltshire access to future-proofed very high-speed connectivity. Procurement for Lot 30 is planned to launch between August and October 2022, before a contract commencement date of July to September 2023.

In the meantime, Benson Village Hall can investigate the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS). As part of Project Gigabit, the Government is investing up to £210 million in the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) to support rural communities with the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections. The scheme provides a micro-grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband. It enables households and businesses to club together to increase the total subsidy of a project to cover most or all of the costs for installation to eligible areas.

I am pleased to confirm that, having checked the eligibility of Benson Village Hall in Wiltshire on the GBVS website, it appears that Benson Village Hall is likely to be eligible for the scheme. Further information on how the scheme works is available on our website.
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