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WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
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Lord Greenhalgh	Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Lord Grimstone of Boscobel	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
Lord Kamall	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
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Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Stewart of Dirleton	Advocate-General for Scotland
Lord True	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Wolfson of Tredegar	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 15 December 2021

Afghanistan: Humanitarian Situation

[HLWS476]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Afghanistan is facing a serious and worsening humanitarian crisis. The UN estimates that 22.8 million people, over half the population, are now suffering 'crisis' or 'emergency' levels of acute malnutrition, over a third more than at this time last year. Afghanistan is now estimated to have more people suffering from 'emergency' levels of acute malnutrition, 8.7 million, than any other country.

The UK has been at the forefront of efforts to address the situation, including through our Presidency of the G7. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Minister of State have discussed the situation extensively with world leaders including in the margins of COP26. The Foreign Secretary represented the UK at a G20 Leaders meeting on 12 October that agreed to step up emergency aid. Lord Ahmad visited New York in late October to speak to senior UN officials, and has been in regular contact since August, with the UN's Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, heads of UN agencies including the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs as well as other senior officials such as the head of the ICRC and the Aga Khan Development Network. In November, he also met with Deborah Lyons, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

We have used our engagement with the Taliban to press them to ensure a suitable environment for aid delivery, as well as to respond to international concerns on terrorism, the protection of human rights, especially the rights of women, girls and members of minorities, and the departure of non-Afghan nationals and Afghans eligible for resettlement overseas. These were our top priorities during the visit to Kabul by the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghan Transition, Sir Simon Gass, on 5 October, as well as in telephone calls and subsequent meetings by UK officials with the Taliban in Doha.

The UN Secretary General launched a Flash Appeal for Afghanistan on 13 September. The event was attended by the then Foreign Secretary and by Lord Ahmad. But further efforts will be needed. The UN has requested nearly \$4.5 billion for 2022, the largest humanitarian appeal on record, reflecting the magnitude of the humanitarian challenge ahead.

The UK was at the forefront of this, and in August, the Prime Minister said that the UK would double its assistance for Afghanistan to £286 million this financial year.

On 3 September, the Government announced the allocation of up to £30 million of this for Afghan refugees

in neighbouring countries, of which £10 million has been disbursed directly to humanitarian agencies in the region.

On 31 October, the Prime Minister announced the allocation of £50 million in immediate support for vulnerable communities within Afghanistan. We have now disbursed £49 million of this, in addition to the disbursement of over £32 million for humanitarian activity inside Afghanistan between April and October.

On 12 December, the Foreign Secretary announced the allocation of a further £75 million to provide life-saving food, and emergency health services as well as shelter, water and hygiene supplies. Through the £75 million and £50 million allocations, the UK will support over 3.4 million people, with emergency food, health, shelter, water and protection. We will work with aid agencies to prioritise those most at risk, including households headed by women and people with disabilities. The funding will be channelled through the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, the World Food Programme, the International Organisation for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and International Rescue Committee.

In addition, the Government has today committed to matching donations from the British people to the Disasters Emergency Committee Afghanistan appeal, up to £10 million. This means that public donations will have greater impact and give life-saving support to more people in Afghanistan.

So far this financial year, we have disbursed over £81 million within Afghanistan and £10 million to support Afghan refugees in the region. A full breakdown appears in the annexes attached. All our humanitarian assistance is going to UN agencies or trusted and experienced international NGOs and not to the Taliban.

We are particularly concerned by the impact of the situation on women and girls. We are consulting women's organisations, Afghan women leaders and implementing partners to understand how best to support their needs. In allocating UK funds, we are seeking to ensure that women, girls and other marginalised groups have equal, safe and dignified access to assistance and services.

The humanitarian crisis has been a central subject of all our conversations with the Taliban. We have pressed them to respect humanitarian principles and allow aid agencies to operate freely. The Taliban wrote to the UN's Emergency Response Co-ordinator on 10 September promising to respect humanitarian principles, including free access for aid workers.

We are monitoring the situation carefully. Our partners report that aid delivery channels are open and humanitarian access is reasonable. But aid workers also face challenges as a result of the liquidity shortage, which makes payments more difficult. We are working closely with multilateral organisations, banks and NGOs to address these.

The UK has also taken a leading role in international discussions on how to support essential basic services. We are encouraging the World Bank and its shareholders

to use the \$1.5 billion in the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund for this. We welcome the decision by the World Bank's Board on 30 November to transfer \$280 million to support the humanitarian response and basic health services via UN agencies. We are also working with G7 partners to encourage the World Bank to produce options to allocate the \$1.2 billion remaining in the Fund.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Afghanistan: Humanitarian Situation (Annexes) [Afghanistan - Humanitarian Situation (Annexes).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2021-12-15/HLWS476/>

Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report

[HLWS478]

Baroness Goldie: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today, I am pleased to lay before Parliament the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again seen the Armed Forces step up to support the nation in its hour of need. The UK's promise to support our Armed Forces Community and to ensure they are treated fairly is as important as ever. We owe them a profound debt of gratitude and have a duty to ensure that those who serve, or who have served, in our Armed Forces, and their families, suffer no disadvantage in comparison to other citizens. In some cases, special consideration is appropriate particularly for those such as the injured or the bereaved. This is what the Covenant sets out to do. In the same vein, this Government has committed to making the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran, acknowledging veterans' service to this country and setting out our plans in the Strategy for Our Veterans.

Never has the Armed Forces Covenant and support to veterans been more vital, and we recognise that partners across the UK, at all levels of the public, private and charitable sectors, have been working hard to support the Armed Forces Community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud to lay this report before Parliament, with the full blessing of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Office for Veterans' Affairs, as a demonstration of that work.

Highlights from this year's report include:

- The new Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service in England, which launched in October 2020, with seven regional 'pathfinders' running until the end of March 2023.
- The launch of Operation COURAGE in England in March 2021, bringing together existing mental-health services for veterans into one comprehensive pathway.

- Record levels of investment in Service Family Accommodation in the financial year 2020/21, with a total of £160 million invested – this investment is enabling 775 long-term empty properties to be completely refurbished, and a further 10,200 properties to be significantly improved.

- The development of a new method for recording and reporting cases of suicide within the veteran community, in order to produce a national measure of the total number of veterans who die by suicide each year – this will enable an understanding of its prevalence to better inform future policy.

But while progress has clearly been made, both this year and across the 10 years since the Covenant was established, more still needs to be done. The next reporting period (October 2021 – September 2022) will see the creation of the new Covenant duty, which will require certain public bodies to have regard to the principles of the Covenant when exercising specific functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education. It will also see the delivery and initial implementation of the new Armed Forces Families Strategy, providing a framework that reflects modern and diverse family needs and encourages recruitment to and retention in service.

This year's report is a collaborative effort, with input from service providers and professionals from a diverse array of backgrounds. We would like to thank colleagues across central Government, the Devolved Administrations and local authorities, and those at every level and from every sector who are continuing to drive forward the work of the Covenant and Strategy for Our Veterans. We are also grateful to the external members of the Covenant Reference Group who were consulted throughout the process and provided their independent observations.

Border Controls

[HLWS473]

Lord Frost: On 14 September, the Government [announced](#) a revised timetable for the final stages of the introduction of controls on incoming goods. These controls relate primarily to customs, SPS controls, and safety and security declarations. The first phase of these new controls is implemented on 1 January 2022.

Implementing these arrangements for goods moving from the island of Ireland, whether from Ireland or from Northern Ireland, is particularly complex. This is because there are specific Treaty and legislative commitments to "unfettered access" for goods from Northern Ireland, because there are currently "standstill" arrangements in place for operating the Northern Ireland Protocol, and because negotiations on the Protocol itself are still under way and will not be definitively completed by 1 January.

Given this wider uncertainty and complexity, and the undesirability of bringing in new changes while the Protocol arrangements themselves remain unsettled and

while diversion of trade is already occurring, the Government has decided that the right thing is to extend, on a temporary basis, the current arrangements for moving goods from the island of Ireland to Great Britain for as long as discussions on the Protocol are ongoing.

This means that goods moving from the island of Ireland directly to Great Britain will continue to do so on the basis of the arrangements that apply currently, until further notice; and will not, for now, be affected by the changes being introduced on 1 January for all other inbound goods.

The Government believes that this pragmatic act of good will can help to maintain space for continued negotiations on the Protocol. It also ensures that traders in both Ireland and Northern Ireland are not faced with further uncertainty while the Protocol arrangements themselves are still under discussion.

This will be given effect through legislation by 1 January 2022 and the Government will continue to work with the Devolved Administrations and interested stakeholders.

These arrangements are temporary and we will continue to keep them under review as negotiations on the Protocol continue. We will ensure traders have sufficient time to adapt to any future changes.

The Border Operating Model will be updated to reflect this and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Allocations

[HLWS474]

Lord True: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Paymaster General (Michael Ellis QC MP), has today made the following written statement:

I wish to update the House on the progress of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) for Financial Year 2020/21, as well as to announce the initial regional and thematic allocations for this Financial Year (2021/22).

The CSSF is a cross-government fund which uses both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funding to enable the integrated delivery of National Security Council priorities. In 2020/21, the CSSF spent £1,260.2m million against a final cross-government allocation of £1,264.8m million (99.64% spend). A further breakdown of spend against regional and thematic allocation, by department and by discretionary and non-discretionary spend is included in the CSSF's Annual Report for 2020/21, published today.

The report outlines how the Fund adapted to and tackled challenges caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. It details further improvements made on monitoring and evaluating results to ensure value for money, including the introduction of new fund level outcomes: Conflict and Instability, State Threats, Transnational Threats and Women, Peace and Security. The report demonstrates how CSSF programmes have

delivered clear and impactful results against these fund outcomes across portfolios.

A copy of this document will be placed in the libraries of both Houses and has been published on GOV.UK.

The CSSF allocation for Financial Year 2021/22 is £875.61m, of which £375.48m is ODA and £500.13m is non-ODA. The CSSF will continue to support the delivery of the Government's top national security priorities as set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, including the UK's international response to conflict and instability, transnational threats and state threats.

FY 2021/22 Allocations (millions)

<i>Allocation</i>	<i>Non-ODA</i>	<i>ODA</i>	<i>Total</i>
Middle East North Africa	38.3	60.5	98.8
Eastern Europe, Central Asia	39.66	46.9	86.56
Africa (sub-Saharan)	30.169	36	66.169
Western Balkans	8.5	33.9	42.4
Overseas Territories	34.041	5	39.041
South Asia	4.3	30.2	34.5
Asia Pacific	0.6	8.5	9.1
Americas	1	8	9
REGIONAL TOTAL	156.57	229	385.57
Counter Extremism	13.22	20	33.22
Serious and Organised Crime	6.5	14.5	21
Cyber	6	12	18
Multilateral Strategy	3.8	5.5	9.3
Gender, Peace and Security	0.5	4.88	5.38
Migration	0	5	5
National Security Communications Team	3	0	3
THEMATIC TOTAL	33.02	61.88	94.9
Peacekeeping	229.8	80.4	310.2
AMISOM	30	0	30
MOD UN Ops Africa	28.64	0	28.64
MOD UNFICYP	18.1	0	18.1
Non-Discretionary TOTAL	306.54	80.4	386.94
Corporate Delivery Support & Other (this includes Joint Funds Unit and pilot activities)	4	4.2	8.2
TOTAL CSSF	500.13	375.48	875.61

Covid-19 Vaccines: 15-minute Observation Period

[HLWS482]

Lord Kamall: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid) has made the following written statement:

The UK's COVID-19 vaccine programme continues work tirelessly to protect the nation against the virus. As of 14 December, 51.2 million people have now received their first COVID-19 vaccine dose and 46.8 million have had their second dose. Over 24 million people have also received a third dose/booster vaccine, which we now know is essential in providing the best protection against the Omicron variant.

Temporary Suspension of 15-minute observation period

The SARS-CoV-2 variant B.1.1.529 (Omicron) was designated a variant of concern by the World Health Organisation on 26 November 2021. Since its discovery, scientists around the world have been working at pace to understand whether this strain could escape the vaccine, and if so, to what extent. On Friday 10 December, the UK Health Security Agency, published an early analysis of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines' effectiveness against Omicron. This analysis indicated that two doses of either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccines were insufficient to give adequate levels of protection against infection and mild disease. However, the study estimated that a third booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine increases the protection against symptomatic disease for the Omicron variant to 71% for those who received a primary course of the AstraZeneca, and 76% to those who received a primary course of the Pfizer vaccine.

Based on current trends, the Omicron variant is projected to become the dominant variant of coronavirus in the UK in the coming days and weeks, and therefore it is vital that we increase the pace of the booster programme. To this end, on 12 December 2021, the Prime Minister announced all eligible adults would now be offered a booster jab before the end of the year – bringing forward our target by a month. We need to do everything we can to speed up the pace of the booster programme and that is why I have agreed, based on advice from the UK's Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), and lead Deputy Chief Medical Officers (DCMOs) for vaccines, to temporarily suspend the 15-minute observation period for the mRNA vaccines.

The UK CMOs have advised that the 15-minute observation period should be temporarily suspended for first, second and homologous or heterologous boost vaccinations with mRNA vaccines. The CMOs' views are aligned with those of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's Commission on Human Medicines (CHM). The CHM will keep the suspension under close review. Those individuals with a history of allergic reactions will continue to be managed in line with the advice set out in the UK Health Security Agency's Green Book on Immunisation.

How the 15-minute suspension is operationally implemented will be determined by each nation in line with their needs. The UK Health Security Agency updated the Green Book to reflect the change from on Tuesday 14 December. The updated Patient Group Direction and Protocol will be published shortly.

The advice of the CMOs and DCMOs, and the MHRA, can be found at the following links:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/suspension-of-the-15-minute-wait-for-vaccination-with-mrna-vaccine-for-covid-19-uk-cmos-opinion/suspension-of-the-15-minute-wait-for-vaccination-with-mrna-vaccine-for-covid-19-uk-cmos-opinion

www.gov.uk/government/news/temporary-waiver-of-15-minute-observation-period-after-covid-19-mrna-vaccines

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when there are further important developments in the COVID-19 vaccine deployment programme.

Data Sharing: Immigration

[HLWS475]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding (Rachel Maclean) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today, I am pleased to announce the publication of the Home Office's Review into data sharing arrangements between the Home Office and police on migrant victims and witnesses of crime with insecure immigration status.

The Review follows a commitment made in response to Recommendation 2 of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services 'Safe to Share' Report, published in December 2020.

Having considered the views of domestic abuse and modern slavery sector groups the Home Office review acknowledges the concerns raised around the current data sharing arrangements and recognises that there is room for improvement to give migrant victims greater confidence to report crimes committed against them.

The Home Office is committed to supporting the reporting of crime affecting anyone and this includes migrants who have insecure immigration status. Current data sharing practices between the police and the Home Office are essential in protecting those most vulnerable and protecting the public from individuals who are considered to pose a risk of harm to communities.

The review recommends establishing an Immigration Enforcement Migrant Victims Protocol as an alternative to a data sharing firewall and to give greater transparency to victims on how their data will be shared. The protocol will set out that no immigration enforcement action should be taken against that victim while investigation and prosecution proceedings are ongoing, and the victim is receiving support and advice to make an application to regularise their stay. It will set out, in line with the Code of Practice for Victims rights, what information and

signposting IE could offer to migrant victims to help them regularise their stay and thereby reduce the threat of coercion and control by their perpetrators.

The Review sets out a commitment to identify safeguards to mitigate the deterrence effect of data sharing and explore analytical options to assess the barriers to reporting crime(s) amongst migrants with insecure immigration status within the UK, to identify further initiatives that could encourage reporting.

The police and Home Office will develop and implement a comprehensive stakeholder and outreach engagement programme designed to promote reporting of crime amongst migrants with irregular immigration status. A key component of this work will focus on building trust and confidence in Immigration Enforcement and Police activities in supporting migrant victims.

The Review has been laid before the House and will also be available on GOV.UK.

Electric Vehicles: Grant Scheme and Charging Infrastructure

[HLWS471]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport (Trudy Harrison) has made the following Ministerial Statement:

I am making this statement to update the House on changes being made today to the Government's Plug-in Vehicle Grant Scheme as well as our plans to regulate to improve the experience for drivers charging electric vehicles.

Plug in Grant scheme

For over a decade, the Plug-in Vehicle Grant scheme has helped to boost the uptake of zero and ultra low emission vehicles by offsetting their up-front cost, supporting our goal of eliminating tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions in our drive towards net zero, as well as removing air pollutants that harm human health.

The Government has invested over £1.5 billion since 2010, supporting nearly half a million vehicles. The approach has worked - it has helped to kickstart a market that is now moving forward at pace. Over 150,000 zero emission cars have been sold so far this year, more than 1 in 10 of all new cars sold. Electric van uptake is also accelerating at pace, with grant orders up 250% this year compared with 2020. And almost 50% of mopeds sold in 2021 have been electric, with some models costing the same upfront as an internal combustion engine equivalent.

Last year the Government announced a further £582 million to continue the plug-in grants until at least 2022/23, and more money was allocated at the Spending Review in October. This funding remains in place. However, with demand so strong, it is right that we seek to focus the grants, which are funded by the taxpayer, on the areas where they will have the most impact and where the market still needs Government support.

From today, the Government will provide grants of up to £1,500 for electric cars priced under £32,000, focusing

on the more affordable vehicles and making best use of taxpayers' money. Wheelchair accessible vehicles are being prioritised, with a higher grant of £2,500 for vehicles priced under £35,000. Small vans will also receive £2,500, and large vans £5,000, with a per financial year limit of 1,000 grants per business to ensure that funding is spread fairly. There will be no changes for small or large trucks, which receive £16,000 and £25,000 respectively. Motorcycles priced up to £10,000 (L3e category) will receive £500 and mopeds (L1e) will get £150. These changes will allow the scheme's funding to go further, helping more people and businesses to switch to an electric vehicle.

Generous tax incentives, including zero road tax and favourable company car tax rates, which are a strong driver of uptake and can save drivers over £2000 a year, remain in place. It is expected that the total cost of EV ownership will reach parity during the 2020s compared to petrol and diesel cars.

Improving drivers experience of charging

The UK has been a global front-runner in supporting provision of charging infrastructure along with private sector investment. Our vision is to have one of the best infrastructure networks in the world for electric vehicles, and we want chargepoints to be accessible, affordable and secure. Government and industry have supported the installation of over 27,600 publicly available charging devices including more than 5,000 rapid devices. Government has also supported the installation of almost 250,000 chargepoints in homes and businesses.

Earlier in the year Government consulted to improve the consumer experience at public electric vehicle chargepoints. Next year we will introduce new rules that will increase confidence in our electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This will mandate a minimum payment method – such as contactless payment – for new 7.1 kw and above chargepoints, including rapid. Consumers will soon be able to compare costs across networks in a recognisable format similar to pence per litre for fuel and there will be new standards to ensure reliable charging for electric vehicle drivers.

Conclusion

Today's announcement, which is part of a wider package of £3.5 billion funding that this Government is investing to support the automotive sector and consumers in the transition to zero emission vehicles, is in response to a market-led acceleration towards greater Electric Vehicle ownership.

Energy Retail Market Strategy

[HLWS483]

Lord Callanan: The last few months have seen unprecedented increases in the levels and volatility of wholesale gas prices across the globe. This has been due to multiple international factors in supply and demand and has led to a shift in the size and shape of the energy retail market, with a significantly higher number of supplier exits than would normally be expected during this period.

Three principles have consistently guided the Government's response. Customers, and particularly vulnerable customers, should be protected. We will not be bailing out failed companies with poor business models. And we must not return to the cosy oligopoly of the past.

The energy retail market is the main interface between consumers and the energy system, and its stability and effectiveness is vital. Ofgem have today set out in their [Open Letter to Energy Suppliers](#) the further steps they are taking to protect consumers, provide greater certainty for investors, and strengthen the resilience of the sector.

Future of the Energy Retail Market

Earlier this year, the Government published an [Energy Retail Market Strategy for the 2020s](#). This Strategy set out our vision for a market which enables net zero and where:

- Consumers should receive appropriate levels of protection, pay a fair price for their energy, and be able to easily engage with the market to exercise choice;
- Energy companies should invest in innovative products and services to unlock the benefits of low-carbon technologies; and
- Consumer choice and active market competition contribute towards a lowest-cost flexible energy system, which gives the right price signals and drives the uptake of low-carbon products and services.

This vision remains the right one. However, we also need to take account of the lessons from recent months to ensure that the energy retail market is resilient, sustainable, and continues to protect consumers as we move to a net zero energy system.

The Government therefore intends to review these lessons as part of a wider refresh of the current Energy Retail Market Strategy, with the aim of publishing an updated Strategy as soon as possible, once the market has stabilised. We are inviting views on how future Government policy can best achieve the vision set out earlier this year, and how the lessons from recent market developments should inform this. We are particularly interested in:

- How the retail market can help achieve the best outcomes for consumers, no matter how they engage;
- How energy companies can help drive the private investment needed to achieve Net Zero; and
- How the retail market, its underpinning regulatory framework and the energy price cap, may need to evolve to enable a lowest-cost, flexible and resilient energy system that continues to protect consumers.

To enable this refresh of our overall retail market strategy, and to help stabilise the market in the short-term, the Government is therefore pausing policy development on the recent public consultation on opt-in and testing opt-out switching. The Government is grateful to all those who took the time to respond to this consultation, and to the other recent Government *Calls for Evidence* on third-party intermediaries and on the transparency of carbon content in energy products. The Government will set out

next steps on these issues and publish a summary of responses in due course.

This is a key opportunity to help shape the future of the sector and I would encourage every interested party to engage in this process.

The Energy Price Cap

The energy price cap has shielded millions of customers from price volatility in wholesale markets. As announced earlier this year, the Government remains committed to seeking to legislate to extend the energy price cap beyond the existing longstop date of December 2023, when parliamentary time allows, subject to conditions for effective competition not being in place. We continue to reflect on the price cap's effectiveness and will take this into account in the design of any future cap.

Fairness and Affordability

The Government remains committed to publishing a Fairness and Affordability Call for Evidence on the options for energy levies and obligations to help rebalance electricity and gas prices and to support green choices, with a view to taking decisions in 2022.

Future Building Standard

[HLWS481]

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

I wish to update the House on the publication of the Government Response to the 2021 Future Buildings Standard consultation and the laying of a statutory instrument today to implement the outcomes of this consultation, and our previous consultation on the Future Homes Standard.

Today's publication of the consultation response, and the implementation of an ambitious uplift to the Building Regulations, will ensure new homes and buildings in England are highly efficient, with significantly lower carbon emissions. This marks an important step on our journey towards a cleaner, greener built environment and it supports us in our target to reduce the UK's carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

The Future Buildings Standard consultation

We have recently conducted a two-stage consultation on proposed changes to the Building Regulations and the associated statutory guidance. Today I am publishing the Government's response to the second stage of the consultation, the Future Buildings Standard consultation.

The Government response to the first stage of the consultation, the Future Homes Standard consultation, was published in January this year. It set out our plans for the Future Homes Standard, an ambitious new standard for new homes to be introduced from 2025. It also set out plans for an uplift in standards for new homes in 2021 as a stepping stone towards the 2025 standard.

The Future Buildings Standard consultation built on that by setting out plans for the Future Buildings

Standard, to be introduced for new non-domestic buildings in England from 2025. The consultation also set out plans for an uplift in standards in 2021 in advance of implementing the 2025 standard.

The Government response to the Future Buildings Standard consultation confirms that, with implementation starting from 2025, the Future Buildings Standard will produce highly efficient non-domestic buildings which use low-carbon heat and have the best fabric standards possible. The 2021 uplift to the Building Regulations will support the delivery of the Future Buildings Standard through a 27% reduction in the carbon emissions of new non-domestic buildings in England.

The consultation response sets out the measures we are taking to simplify and clarify the guidance on ventilation and safeguard the health of building residents and users. COVID-19 has also shown the importance of ventilation in reducing the spread of infection. The consultation response confirms that we are introducing new guidance to mitigate the risks of airborne infection.

The consultation response also confirms our intention to introduce a new requirement on overheating mitigation in the Building Regulations. This will mean new residential buildings must be designed to reduce overheating. This is an important part of our work to adapt our country to face climate change, and it will protect people where they live and sleep. Several local authorities have already set overheating mitigation policies for their areas, and we have learnt from them in developing this national standard. The new overheating standard is a part of the Building Regulations and is therefore mandatory, so there will be no need for policies in development plans to duplicate this.

I am placing a copy of the Government Response to the 2021 Future Buildings Standard consultation in the House Library.

Implementation of the 2021 uplift to the Building Regulations

Together, the policies set out in the Government response to the Future Buildings Standard consultation and the policies set out in the Government response to the Future Homes Standard consultation, form the policy for the 2021 uplift to the Building Regulations. The 2021 uplift is intended to provide a meaningful and achievable increase to the energy efficiency standards in the short term and support industry to prepare and position itself to build to the full Standards from 2025, as well as delivering the outcomes on ventilation and overheating covered above.

Alongside publication of the Government response to the Future Buildings Standard consultation, I have laid a statutory instrument to implement the amendments to the Building Regulations and I have published new statutory guidance.

Implementing this uplift is a significant moment for the sector and on our journey to net zero. It provides a pathway towards creating homes and buildings that are fit for the future, and a built environment with lower carbon

emissions and homes adapted to the overheating risks caused by a warming climate.

Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid

[HLWS480]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: My right honourable friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab) has made the following Written Statement:

I am today announcing the publication of Sir Christopher Bellamy's Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid report.

Since his appointment as Chair of the Review at the end of last year, Sir Christopher has undertaken a 'whole-system' review of criminal legal aid fee schemes and the market of providers in England and Wales, considering its role as an enabler of many functions of the criminal justice system. Throughout his review, Sir Christopher has been supported by a dedicated Expert Advisory Panel including legal practitioners, academics and members of the judiciary. Evidence to the review has been wide-ranging, reflecting the experiences of the legal profession, victims, witnesses, and defendants. I would like to thank Sir Christopher for his dedication in undertaking this important review and members of the Expert Advisory Panel and other contributors for their comprehensive work.

I am extremely grateful to members of the Bar, the Solicitor Profession and Chartered Legal Executives for their continued professionalism, dedication, and adaptability in delivering vital public services, particularly against the challenges of the pandemic, including their commitment to reducing court backlogs.

Sir Christopher has set out his vision for the role of legal aid in an efficient and effective criminal justice system. I recognise the importance of remuneration in delivering long term sustainability of the market and I will consider his recommendations on this matter very carefully.

Beyond the important issue of funding, I welcome many of the principles underpinning his vision for the role of legal aid in an efficient and effective criminal justice system. I agree that data-sharing and transparency can enable us to make a better assessment of the efficiency, incentives, costs and effectiveness of criminal legal aid. My department is continuing to explore ways to improve the availability and accessibility of data across the criminal justice system. Alongside the review, the Government has supported greater transparency by launching criminal justice system scorecards, which bring together data on a range of performance measures.

I am committed to ensuring defendants and other users of criminal legal aid services have access to high quality advice from a diverse range of practitioners. I will carefully review Sir Christopher's findings and consider where there are opportunities for Government and the legal professions to work together to improve diversity to achieve a more equal gender and ethnicity balance within

the profession and to support young barristers after pupillage.

I also recognise the importance of ensuring suitably experienced advice is available as early in a case as possible, so that cases are resolved at the earliest opportunity, increasing efficiency and improving outcomes in the criminal justice system. Sir Christopher makes specific recommendations on pre-charge engagement, which I will consider carefully.

It is important that the provision of criminal legal aid services meets the needs of its users, which may differ between regions. We will carefully examine the findings in the review around the potential for improving local outcomes, and in particular the potential future role of local Criminal Justice Boards.

Beyond Sir Christopher's review, the Government continues to support the defence profession and the wider criminal justice system. The Government has committed to invest £2.2bn between 2022/23 and 2024/25 to meet increased demand on the criminal justice system from the additional 20,000 police officers and to fund the system's recovery from COVID-19. As part of the latest spending review, the Government has also committed over £200m across the spending review period to complete the £1.3bn Court Reform Programme by the end of 2023. The Court Reform Programme is an important step towards digitising court and tribunal services and enhancing the experience of their users.

In his review, Sir Christopher notes that listing decisions are for the judiciary. He also notes that how cases are listed is important to efficiency and to the experience of victims, witnesses and practitioners. We will consider Sir Christopher's analysis to see where we can support further improvements.

My department will continue to work with legal professionals and the judiciary on the future of remote hearings. As with listing, whilst the format of hearings is a judicial function, there are issues to consider around consistency.

We will consider Sir Christopher's findings fully, and consult before taking decisions regarding his specific recommendations. It is right that such a detailed report receives the thorough consideration that it deserves, while giving the legal profession an indicative timeline. Therefore, I intend to publish a full response no later than the end of March 2022 alongside a consultation on all policy proposals.

Sir Christopher's report can be found on GOV.UK and I have placed copies in the libraries of both Houses.

National Cyber Strategy 2022

[HLWS469]

Lord True: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Steve Barclay MP), has today made the following written statement:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the new National Cyber Strategy.

This strategy builds on the significant progress made through the National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021 and delivers on a commitment made in the Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy which was published earlier this year.

Exponential advances in technology combined with decreasing costs have made the world more connected than ever before. The pandemic has accelerated this trend, but we are likely still in the early stages of a long-term structural shift. The global expansion of cyberspace is changing the way we live, work and communicate, and transforming the critical systems we rely on in areas such as finance, energy, food distribution, healthcare and transport. In short, cyberspace is now integral to our future security and prosperity. This offers extraordinary opportunities for technologically advanced countries like the UK to pursue their national goals in new ways.

As such, this strategy reflects our ambition to cement the UK's position as a leading cyber power. While cyber security remains at the heart of this strategy, it now draws together the full range of the UK's capabilities inside and outside government, with a particular emphasis on taking the lead in technologies relevant to cyber. It calls for a truly joined up, national strategic approach that is shaped by and helps guide decision-making in organisations across the country, and provides the basis for stronger collaboration with our partners in the UK and around the world.

Our vision is that the UK in 2030 will continue to be a leading responsible and democratic cyber power, able to protect and promote our interests in and through cyberspace in support of national goals:

- a more secure and resilient nation, better prepared for evolving threats and risks and using our cyber capabilities to protect citizens against crime, fraud and state threats;
- an innovative, prosperous digital economy, with opportunity more evenly spread across the country and our diverse population;
- a Science and Tech Superpower, securely harnessing transformative technologies in support of a greener, healthier society; and,
- a more influential and valued partner on the global stage, shaping the future frontiers of an open and stable international order while maintaining our freedom of action in cyberspace.

The strategy is built around five core pillars which focus on: investing in our people and skills; increasing cyber resilience; taking the lead in the technologies vital to cyber power; advancing UK global leadership in cyber; and detecting, disrupting and deterring our adversaries.

As announced in the Spending Review, the government will be investing £2.6 billion in cyber and legacy IT over the next three years to support the strategy. This is in addition to significant investment in the National Cyber Force announced in the Spending Review 2020.

We will invest more than ever before in a rapid and radical overhaul of government cyber security, setting

clear standards for departments and addressing legacy IT infrastructure. Government's critical functions will be significantly hardened to cyber attack by 2025 and we will ensure that all government organisations - across the whole public sector - are resilient to known vulnerabilities and attack methods by 2030.

A copy of the National Cyber Strategy has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Overseas Framework Consultation

[HLWS477]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Chancellor's Mansion House speech and accompanying document – 'A new chapter for financial services' – set out the Government's vision for an open, green, and technologically advanced financial services sector that is globally competitive and acts in the interests of communities and citizens, creating jobs, supporting businesses, and powering growth across all of the UK.

In December 2020, HM Treasury published a call for evidence on the UK's overseas framework, and the regimes within it, to ensure that they continue to work effectively and support the UK's consumers, firms, and markets. The Government issued a response to that Call for Evidence and set out next steps for this review in July 2021.

In doing so, the Government stated that it remains committed to maintaining a safe, open, and globally integrated financial system, enabling international financial services business by reducing barriers and frictions, where safe and practicable. Our overseas framework, including regimes such as the Overseas Persons Exclusion, has been a fundamental part of the success of the UK as a global financial centre.

In responding to the Call for Evidence, the Government said that there were four principal areas that it wanted to look at in more detail:

- The overseas persons exclusion (OPE);
- Investment services equivalence under Title VIII of the Markets in Financial Instruments Regulation (MiFIR);
- Recognised overseas investment exchanges (ROIEs); and
- The Financial Promotion Order (FPO) in general, and specifically in relation to the distribution of certain overseas long-term insurance products in the UK.

The Government's response to the Call for Evidence noted that there are still information gaps about how firms use the OPE, how they might do so in future, and what the implications are for UK financial markets, including their resilience and safety. We have been working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority, the Bank of England and the Prudential Regulation Authority to gather further information in preparation for an upcoming consultation on the UK's regime for overseas firms and

activities. This involves considering whether the access for overseas firms remains appropriate following the UK's exit from the EU and given technological developments that are changing how firms can serve their clients.

The Government is committed to maintaining an overseas access regime that ensures firms based in the UK can connect with counterparties and customers globally, while continuing to ensure that those with significant UK business lines continue to maintain the appropriate operations, regulatory permissions and authorisations in the UK; and are able to be supervised effectively. We want to ensure the UK remains a world-class environment to do business and maintain the ability of UK and global firms to benefit from the UK's deep wholesale markets, which has been key to the UK's leading global role in financial services.

The Government has noted the feedback from respondents to the Call for Evidence that the current overseas framework is complicated, difficult to navigate and that the implications of any changes to the framework should be carefully considered. As such, the Government intends to assess how the current framework is being used and consider the implications of any reforms in careful detail before bringing forward proposals on potential changes to the UK's regime for overseas firms and activities. The consultation will also consider changes to the UK's overseas framework which will make it more coherent and easier to navigate, reinforcing the Government's commitment to maintaining an open financial centre.

In considering how best to move forward, the Government wants to be fully informed about the views of stakeholders. We would emphasise the importance of further evidence being provided on how these regimes are used, and how market participants navigate them, so we can ensure they continue to support the principles that guide our approach to cross-border financial services.

Road Improvements: Consideration of Environmental Matters

[HLWS472]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This statement confirms that it has been necessary to extend the deadlines for decisions on the following two applications made under the Planning Act as indicated below to allow for further consideration of environmental matters:

- M25 Junction 28 Improvement project: for the proposed development by National Highways which would authorise the creation of a new two-lane loop road with hard shoulder, for traffic travelling from the M25 northbound carriageway onto the A12 eastbound carriageway towards Essex. The Secretary of State

received the Examining Authority's report on 16 September 2021 and the current deadline for a decision was 16 December 2021. The deadline is now extended to 16 May 2021.

- A1 Northumberland – Morpeth to Ellingham Improvements: the proposed development comprises the widening of approximately 20.6km stretch of the A1 between Morpeth to Ellingham with approximately 14.5km online widening and approximately 6.1km new offline highway. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on 5 October 2021 and the current deadline for a decision was 5 January 2022. The deadline is now extended to 5 June 2022.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline.

The Department will also endeavour to issue decisions ahead of the deadlines above wherever possible.

The decision to set new deadlines is without prejudice to the decisions on whether to give development consent for the above applications.

Travel Red List

[HLWS470]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

The Government has conducted a review of the temporary and precautionary international travel measures introduced to slow the spread of the new COVID-19 Omicron variant.

From 4am on Wednesday 15 December, all 11 remaining countries and territories will be removed from the red list. As such, passengers arriving from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, will not have to stay in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival in England from this date. As Omicron cases rise in the UK and in countries around the world, the travel red list is less effective in slowing the incursion of the variant from abroad and these temporary measures are no longer proportionate.

While all countries have been removed, the red list policy remains in place alongside the managed quarantine service policy, acting as a crucial line of defence against the importation of variants of concern.

The additional temporary testing measures for passengers taken in response to Omicron also remain in place. The Government recognises the impact that these temporary health measures have on the travel and aviation industry, and they will be reviewed again in the first week of January.

UK and Crown Dependencies: Fishing Licences

[HLWS479]

Lord Benyon: My Hon Friend the Minister of State (Victoria Prentis) has today made the following statement:

This statement provides an update on the Written Ministerial Statement made on 3 November 2021.

It sets out the number of fishing licences issued by the UK and the Crown Dependencies since the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) was signed on 24 December 2020. The information is correct as of 12.30 on 15 December 2021.

This statement now includes the number of licences issued for "direct replacement" vessels. Our approach for licensing replacement vessels will be published by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), which is the UK's Single Issuing Authority, on GOV.UK.

Throughout this process, the UK's approach has been evidence-based and in line with our commitments under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). We have licensed vessels where sufficient evidence has been provided that demonstrates that a vessel qualifies for access under the TCA. Where that evidence has not been provided, licences have not been issued.

UK waters

The number of licences that have been issued to EU vessels to fish in UK waters are as follows.

UK overall total

<i>Applications received</i>	<i>Applications approved</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
1,871	1,822	49

UK 12-200nm zone

The majority of licences were granted on 31 December 2020 with 1,285 EU vessels licensed. The numbers below are accurate as of 13 December 2021.

Applications received: 1,669

Vessels licensed: 1,669

By Member State:

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Applications received</i>	<i>Licences issued</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
Belgium	64	64	0
Denmark	120	120	0
France	736	736	0
Germany	49	49	0
Republic of Ireland	355	355	0
Lithuania	2	2	0
Netherlands	194	194	0
Poland	2	2	0
Portugal	49	49	0

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Applications received</i>	<i>Licences issued</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
Spain	90	90	0
Sweden	8	8	0

UK 6-12nm zone

Vessels over 12m

Applications received: 109

Applications approved: 106

Vessels currently licensed: 99

By Member State:

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Applications received</i>	<i>Licences issued</i>	<i>Approved but unallocated or withdrawn</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
Belgium	21	18	1	2
France	88	81	6	1

Vessels under 12m

Applications received : 50

Applications approved: 20

Vessels licensed: 19

By Member State:

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Applications received</i>	<i>Licences issued</i>	<i>Approved but unallocated or withdrawn</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
France	50	19	1	30

Direct replacement vessels

Applications received: 43

Applications approved: 27

Vessels licensed: 27

By Member State:

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Applications received</i>	<i>Licences issued</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
Belgium	2	1	1
France	41	26	15

Crown Dependency waters

Licensing figures for the Crown Dependencies are as follows:

Jersey

<i>Total applications</i>	<i>Full licences issued</i>	<i>Temporary licences granted. Valid until 31/1/22. lack of evidence</i>	<i>Lapsed on 30/10 due to</i>
		<i>Further information from the Commission/Member State required if they are to become full licences.</i>	
217	130	33	54

Jersey has also received 11 applications for replacement vessels, which are pending until the methodology is finalised.

Guernsey

<i>Total applications</i>	<i>Full licences issued</i>	<i>Approved but unlicensed applications as the vessel is no longer active</i>	<i>Applications not approved</i>
58	40	3 - these will be issued to replacement vessels in due course	15

Guernsey's transitional arrangement which allows 167 French vessels including those that have now been issued with a full licence, to continue fishing on a temporary basis, will remain until 31 January 2022.

Isle of Man: no applications received.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 15 December 2021

3 Commando Brigade: Deployment

Asked by Lord Richards of Herstmonceux

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether it will be possible for a fully formed and equipped 3 Commando Brigade to be embarked on shipping that (1) is owned by, or is under the control of, Her Majesty's Government, or (2) that can be made available to Her Majesty's Government (a) whatever the intentional circumstances, and (b) without significant recourse to the United States assets. [HL4845]

Baroness Goldie: As set out in the Integrated Review, the Royal Marines are now in transition to the Future Commando Force (FCF). The FCF re-designs how Commando Forces operate and fight.

Through one element of this, they will form two Littoral Response Groups (LRG) with associated enablers, including shipping. One LRG will be persistently deployed East of Suez, with an Initial Operating Capability in 2023.

Aircraft Carriers: Deployment

Asked by Lord Richards of Herstmonceux

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether both of the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers are fully operational and can be deployed simultaneously; and in the event of such deployments, how many aircraft would each ship carry. [HL4843]

Baroness Goldie: HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH and HMS PRINCE OF WALES are capable of deploying to protect and enhance the Nation's interests around the globe. The number of aircraft onboard each carrier will be tailored appropriately dependent upon the nature of the tasking. Both aircraft carriers are fully capable of operating a spectrum of Rotary Wing aircraft and Lightning F-35Bs.

Arrests

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they give to the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to the maximum time after an individual has been arrested on suspicion of an offence that they may be charged with that offence. [HL4620]

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: There are a number of different legal provisions that provide a maximum period for the charging of a suspect in England and Wales, but those periods do not usually run from arrest and they only apply in certain cases. In other cases, there is no set time limit from arrest to charge but the courts do have the power to stop a case as an abuse of process if there has

been such delay as to make it unfair that the proceedings should continue.

The decision to charge is made by the police in some cases and by the CPS in other cases. The CPS make the decision to charge in serious cases but over the last five years the police have made the charging decision in 61% to 63% of the cases that are prosecuted by the CPS.

The most significant time limit for the charging of criminal offences is contained in section 127 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980. That provides that summary-only offences must be charged within six months of the offence (not arrest) unless there is any special provision made for that offence. Those special provisions are limited; some provide for longer periods for certain offences and some provide for periods that only start once evidence of an offence comes to light.

There are also time limits contained within the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) that limit the time a suspect can be kept in custody after arrest. That can provide a time limit for the charging of cases when the police seek to charge and keep a suspect in custody for a court appearance. As a consequence of the time limits contained in PACE, decisions as to charge in those cases have to be made swiftly (the usual time limit is 24 hours, but more time can be available in some cases). For that reason, the CPS has prosecutors working 7 days a week, 24 hours a day to make charging decisions in those cases.

In other cases, in which suspects are released with or without bail (also known as released under investigation) there is no general cross government guidance on a maximum period between arrest and charge.

Timescales for charging decisions made by the police are a matter for policing. In cases in which the CPS make the charging decision, the CPS and the police have agreements in place that set a timetable that can change depending on the circumstances of each case. There will be cases in which the CPS cannot make a charging decision on the information provided and the case has to be referred back to the police for further investigation and a submission back to the CPS at a later date. The Code for Crown Prosecutors provides that decisions to prosecute should normally be made only when all outstanding reasonable lines of inquiry have been pursued or if the prosecutor is satisfied that any further evidence or material is unlikely to affect the decision to prosecute.

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the longest time an individual has been under arrest on suspicion of an offence before being charged with that offence. [HL4621]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not collect data on the length of time individuals are under arrest before being charged with an offence.

However, the Home Office collects and publishes Experimental Statistics on durations of pre-charge bail and released under investigation, albeit from a subset of forces. These data are published as part of the 'Police

Powers and Procedures' statistical collection (available on gov.uk).

The published statistics include data on the duration individuals have been on pre-charge bail or released under investigation, as well as the outcome assigned to individuals on pre-charge bail and released under investigation.

The year ending March 2021 is the first year that the Home Office has collected incident-level data for pre-charge bail and released under investigation, with almost all of the data requirement being collected on a voluntary basis. As such, not all forces have provided data, and the statistics are published as Experimental Statistics, which means that the quality of the data are still undergoing development. We are working with forces to make improvements for future publications.

Catering and Retail Services (HL): Eggs

Asked by Earl Cathcart

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker whether the House of Lords Catering and Retail Services have been sourcing egg products from (1) Belgium, or (2) any other non-UK country; and what commitment they have, if any, to only sourcing eggs from British Lion producers. [HL4632]

Lord Touhig: The Senior Deputy Speaker has asked me, as Chair of the Services Committee, to respond on his behalf. The Catering and Retail Service (CRS) source pasteurised egg yolk and egg white products from Cocovite, which are manufactured in Belgium; however CRS are continually working with suppliers to find a British alternative.

The Catering and Retail Service do however source free range whole eggs which are British Lion quality stamped.

Companies: Equality

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 15 November (HL3607), what discussions they have had with the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its proposed requirement for companies to disclose annually whether they meet specific diversity targets as part of changes to its Listing Rules; and, in particular, whether the diversity targets will include targets in relation to biological sex. [HL4594]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: HM Treasury holds regular discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on a range of issues regarding the regulation of financial markets.

The FCA's consultation regarding diversity and inclusion targets for company boards and executive committees (CP21/24) closed on 20 October and the FCA is now analysing the responses. It will be for the FCA as the independent regulator to take forward any changes to their listings rules on this basis.

Developing Countries: Older People

Asked by Baroness Greengross

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assess the effectiveness of their Official Development Assistance disbursement in meeting the (1) rights, and (2) needs, of older women and men; and whether their new International Development Strategy will include specific recognition of the (a) contributions, (b) rights, and (c) needs, of older women and men. [HL4603]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to protecting the human rights of all people at all stages of their lives. FCDO programmes consider the needs of older people, such as through our health systems strengthening and assistive technology activities alongside smaller more targeted projects, such as on social protection. In line with FCDO's commitment to the Inclusive Data Charter, we aim to disaggregate programme data by age, sex and disability where possible, to help us understand the effectiveness and impact of our work.

The forthcoming International Development Strategy will establish an ambitious vision informed by the new global context, aligned with our strategic development goals and demonstrate how the UK plans to remain a global leader on development. The forthcoming refreshes of the Disability Inclusion Strategy and Strategic Vision for Gender Equality will retain a life cycle approach to deliver transformative change for all.

Electronic Tagging: Children

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many 16 year olds have been required to wear an electronic tag. [HL4619]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: Electronic Monitoring is an important tool that can improve supervision in the community and therefore support children to maintain family ties and remain in training, work or education with additional safeguards in place. From 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, 1134 children aged 16 started an Electronically Monitored order.

Equality

Asked by Baroness Noakes

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Sharpe of Epsom 30 November (HL Deb, col 1274), whether the statement that "the UK is committed to the principle of non-discrimination on any grounds" is intended to encompass discrimination which goes beyond the protected characteristics set out in Part 2 of the Equality Act 2010; and if so, in what ways. [HL4610]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My noble friend's answer takes into account the distinction between behaviour that

places someone unjustifiably at a disadvantage compared to others because of a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010, which is potentially unlawful; and similar behaviour that places someone at a disadvantage on other grounds such as socio-economic background.

Ethiopia: Monuments

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the desecration of the grave and memorial of the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zanawi, at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa; and in particular, its implications for the (1) safety, and (2) security, of people in Ethiopia associated with him. [HL4754]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We are concerned by reports of widespread human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia committed by all sides to the conflict. Rhetoric and actions which inflame ethnic tensions serve only to perpetuate 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 to Ethiopian State Minister Redwan on 18 November and the Ethiopian Minister of Justice, Gedion, on 6 December. In all of these meetings, we raised the UK's concerns about human rights and urged all parties to stop fighting and begin talks.

Ferries: Solent

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what grants were made to each of the (1) cross-Solent ferry operators, and (2) Isles of Scilly operators, during the temporary suspension of competition law due to the COVID-19 pandemic; what restrictions, if any, were placed on the grants; and whether they were non-returnable. [HL4698]

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial checks they made before awarding grants to each of the cross-Solent ferry operators during the temporary suspension of competition law due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL4700]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: From April 2020 – April 2021 the Government made a series of grant payments to the Isle of Wight Council and Council of the Isles of Scilly to safeguard lifeline services. In total over £8 million of funding was provided to the Isle of Wight Council for the cross-Solent ferry operators and over £7.5 million to the Council of the Isles of Scilly for Isles of Scilly operators. These grants were paid to the local authorities for the provision of lifeline services, as set out within the conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding agreements made between the individual

Councils and the Department for Transport. They were returnable under specific conditions being met.

Before grant payments were provided to the Councils, the Department, alongside external financial advisors, undertook rigorous financial checks to ensure the levels of funding were appropriate. This included analysis of the operator's financial reports, which included data on the revenue and costs of operating the agreed routes to the minimum service level. Throughout the duration of the scheme, regular checks and monitoring took place to ensure the continued need for support.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they have made to the three cross-Solent ferry operators, to ensure that Isle of Wight residents travelling for NHS treatment on the mainland are able to book ferry travel at relevant and convenient times. [HL4701]

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they hold on the (1) frequency, (2) cost, and (3) reliability, of cross-Solent ferry services for each of the last five years. [HL4702]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport, alongside the Isle of Wight Council, monitors the performance of the cross-Solent ferry operators. The operators frequently publish their own data on reliability of their services, which the Department reviews. The frequency and cost of their services can also be seen from their publicly accessible timetables.

The Department's analysis has consistently found that the three cross-Solent operators offer a good range of services at effective prices, including for those travelling for NHS treatments on the mainland. During the pandemic, a key reason behind the Department providing financial support to safeguard lifeline services was to ensure that residents could continue to travel for mainland NHS treatment. An example of effective services for those needing urgent medical treatment on the mainland can be found with Hovertravel's rapid NHS transfer. This service, established during the lifeline support scheme alongside the Isle of Wight Ambulance Service and the Isle of Wight NHS Trust, continues to support those needing medical care on the Mainland.

Financial Services

Asked by Baroness Hayman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment that have made of the size of the financial services market to which (1) the Financial Services Act 2021 applies, and (2) the climate change provisions of the Financial Services Act 2021 in (a) Schedule 2, section 143G(1)(c), and (b) Schedule 3, section 144C(1)(d) apply. [HL4640]

*Asked by **Baroness Hayman***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment that have made of the size of the financial services market (1) regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), (2) to which the remit, recommendations and priorities letters sent by HM Treasury to the FCA and PRA on 23 March 2021 apply, and (3) to which the provisions of the Financial Services Act 2021 apply with respect to the requirements on the FCA and PRA to have regard to the target in section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008. [HL4641]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulates around 51,000 firms, of which around 1,500 are also regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA). As set out in the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and the Bank of England Act 1998, the letters of recommendations issued by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the FCA and the Prudential Regulation Committee (PRC) apply to the advancement of the regulators' objectives and the discharge of their duties. As such, where relevant and practical, the letters of recommendations apply to the FCA and PRA's policymaking in all areas they regulate.

The Financial Services Act 2021 introduced a number of different measures which are vital to enhance the UK's world-leading prudential standards, promote financial stability, promote openness between the UK and international markets, and maintain an effective financial services regulatory framework and sound capital markets. The government's assessment of the Financial Services Act 2021 was set out in the accompanying Impact Assessment.

Under the Financial Services Act 2021, both the FCA and PRA must have regard to the UK's net zero emissions target when making rules that introduce the Investment Firms Prudential Regime (IFPR) and implement the remaining Basel standards as contained in the Capital Requirements Regulation respectively. This provision applies to those rules made after 1 January 2022.

As noted in the Impact Assessment for the Financial Services Act 2021, there are currently around 3,200 investment firms which fall under the IFPR. There are around 1,500 firms subject to the Capital Requirements Regulation.

Food Supply

*Asked by **Lord Blencathra***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their most recent assessment of the availability of food to meet demand over the Christmas season; and what discussions they have held with major supermarkets in relation to (1) current food availability, (2) any prior expectations of food shortages and how these have been revised. [HL4593]

Lord Benyon: The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19

response, and it is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes.

Defra has well established ways of working with industry, including major retailers, and across Government. These include regular meetings with industry and their representative bodies, and the department will continue to use these channels of communication to monitor and respond to any risks that may arise. As things stand, we do not expect substantive availability of food issues in the run up to Christmas.

Football: Equality

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to require all football clubs to have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan to be assessed as part of the annual club licensing process. [HL4625]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Government welcomes the Independent Fan-Led Review of Football Governance and has endorsed in principle the primary recommendation of the review: that football requires a strong, independent regulator to secure the future of our national game.

The Government will work quickly to review the report in full, including the recommendations made on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Government will continue to engage with interested parties as we work towards issuing a full response to the report in Spring 2022.

Gender Recognition

*Asked by **Baroness Noakes***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 30 November (HL Deb, col 1274), what is their interpretation of the term 'gender identity'. [HL4609]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination and unfair treatment on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

My noble friend was of course speaking more generally rather than in relation to specific legal rights. We are committed to upholding Britain's long-standing record of protecting the rights of individuals against discrimination. The UK Government is committed to promoting equality for LGBT people at home and abroad and we continue to be recognised as one of the top 10 countries in Europe for LGBT rights. We are also clear that we want people who are transgender to be able to live their lives as they wish.

Great British Railways

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the benefits of the Great British Railways programme when it comes into effect. [HL4615]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Rail reform will deliver significant efficiency savings for government and the taxpayer in the long term. Benefits for passengers include:

- Improved services with tough new contracts focused on getting the trains running punctually and reliably;
- Improved ticketing options, providing commuters with significant savings;
- Modern digital payment methods; and
- Improved accessibility getting around stations and on and off trains.

The rail reform programme is expected to generate savings of approximately £1.5bn per year, five years post implementation. This is equivalent to 15% of the network's pre-pandemic income.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a cost-benefit analysis was undertaken for (1) the Eastern leg of HS2, and (2) HS2 Phase 2B West, prior to their decision to cancel those rail projects; and whether they will publish the financial analysis which was undertaken prior that decision. [HL4654]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government has not cancelled either the Western Leg or Eastern Leg of HS2 Phase 2b. The Integrated Rail Plan sets out that HS2 will be built from Crewe to Manchester, and from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway. In addition, £100m has been provided to include work on looking at the best way to take HS2 trains to Leeds. The Government will publish an updated Strategic Outline Business Case for Phase 2b Western Leg alongside the deposit of the Western Leg hybrid bill in early 2022.

Meta: Ofcom

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to give Ofcom emergency powers to investigate Facebook's encrypted messaging plans before they are introduced. [HL4622]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK Government supports the responsible use of encryption. It is critical to protecting UK citizens from harm online. But we are clear that companies such as Facebook – now Meta – should not implement end-to-end encryption unless they can do so in a way that would not reduce public safety.

As the Home Secretary said at the G7 Security and Interior Ministers' Meeting in September, tech companies and national governments must work together to protect the public. It is a vital point of principle that when tech firms are making decisions which affect public safety, representatives of democratically elected governments are closely involved.

Under the Online Safety Bill, tech companies are going to be accountable to an independent regulator (Ofcom) to keep their users safe. It is right that the Online Safety Bill goes through the proper process of parliamentary scrutiny before Ofcom takes up their role as the online safety regulator. We do not intend to give Ofcom emergency powers before then.

Money Laundering

Asked by Lord Sharkey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Viscount Younger of Leckie on 25 November (HL Deb, cols 1002–03), what sanctions may be imposed, and by whom, on financial services organisations that breach Financial Conduct Authority Guidance on the treatment of UK Politically Exposed Persons, their families and known close associates. [HL4618]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Further to the answer of 25 November 2021 by Viscount Younger of Leckie, from April 2018, the Financial Ombudsman has had jurisdiction to consider complaints from Politically Exposed Persons about their treatment by banks, and since 2018, have received fewer than 10 complaints in this area.

Where the Financial Ombudsman find that a bank has not followed regulations, best practice or acted in a fair and reasonable manner, the Financial Ombudsman will tell the bank to put the consumer in the position they would have been in had the bank's error or wrongdoing not occurred. The Financial Ombudsman also has the power to order banks to pay for financial loss, distress or inconvenience depending on the experience of the consumer.

However, the Financial Ombudsman does not apply sanctions or penalties on banks. The Financial Conduct Authority, as anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing supervisor for financial services firms in the UK, has the power to impose civil penalties (fines and censure statements) and prohibitions on management.

Network Rail: Cost Effectiveness

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial (1) efficiencies, and (2) inefficiencies, of Network Rail. [HL4614]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The rail regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (the ORR), ensures that Network Rail's plans include challenging but deliverable efficiency

targets. This is a central part of securing Network Rail's funding through the Periodic Review process for each Control Period.

The ORR continuously monitors Network Rail's delivery of efficiencies against its efficiency plans throughout each Control Period and publishes an annual assessment of Network Rail's efficiency and financial performance, the most recent of which was published in July 2021 and can be found on the ORR's website.

Nicaragua: Elections and Political Prisoners

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Ambassador of Nicaragua on (1) the reported flaws in the election of 7 November in that country, and (2) the conditions in which political prisoners are held. [HL4792]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Nicaraguan presidential election of 7 November was neither free nor fair. The authorities prevented the Nicaraguan people from making a democratic choice, using their powers to detain and threaten candidates. The arrests violated the guarantees in the Nicaraguan Constitution, and the UK calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all opposition leaders, and other political prisoners in Nicaragua, and for the full restoration of all their civil and political rights. We have raised our concerns with the Nicaraguan Government in London, and in Managua, and at multilateral fora. We have published a series of statements highlighting the UK's deep concern about the deterioration of political and human rights in Nicaragua and the subversion of democratic processes. We will continue to work closely with our partners to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Nicaragua.

Public Telephones

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the removal of public telephone boxes; and what steps they will take to retain public telephone boxes in rural areas with poor mobile phone connectivity. [HL4605]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Government recognises the importance of public telephone boxes to people across the UK. The telephony Universal Service Order requires that certain providers maintain telephony services across the UK, including access to public telephone boxes.

It is for Ofcom to designate the providers subject to this Order and set rules for public telephone boxes, including the rules regarding their removal. Ofcom estimates that there are 1500 public telephone boxes in areas with poor mobile coverage, many of which will be rural.

Ofcom has recently announced a consultation designed to strengthen these rules. Ofcom's proposals include a

criterion that protects public telephone boxes where they do not have coverage from all four mobile network providers.

Public Transport

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial implications for public transport providers from the reduction in commuters using public transport due to the increase in home working; and what assessment have they made of the implications for the future of public transport. [HL4612]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: During the pandemic £14bn of financial support has been provided to the rail sector, while £1.5bn in emergency funding was provided to bus operators and Local Transport Authorities through the Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG), which was in operation between March 2020 and August 2021. CBSSG helped ensure services remained available for those who needed them most.

We also acknowledge the need to respond to new ways of working post-pandemic. That's why we have introduced flexible season tickets across the rail network in England this year. This is a national product, priced to provide better value and convenience for commuters travelling two to three days a week. We are working with the rail industry to develop a number of recovery initiatives, focused on restoring passenger confidence in travelling by rail.

Whilst a significant proportion of bus passengers have returned after restrictions were lifted, recognising the financial challenges faced by the sector during this transitional period, the government is providing an additional £226.5m in funding to the sector through the Bus Recovery Grant. This will help operators to continue to run a high level of service, maintain networks and attract passengers back on board.

Railways: Commuters

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent change in the number of (1) rail commuters, compared to (2) leisure travel passengers; and what steps they taking to increase the number of rail commuters. [HL4616]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Rail was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in November 2021, rail journey numbers had recovered to approximately 70% levels of an equivalent day in the previous year.

The Department publish National Statistics on rail journeys by purpose (including commuting, business, and leisure) in the National Travel Survey. The latest data is for calendar year 2020 and show a fall in the proportion of all journeys which are for commuting (summarised in

the table below). The data shows that commuting traffic has been slower to recover than leisure demand.

Table 1: Given journey purpose as a percentage of all rail journeys, and number of trips made per person per year by purpose, in England.

Year	Commuters as a percentage of rail users	Commuting trips per person per year	Leisure trip users as a percentage of rail users	Leisure trips per person per year
2017	47%	10	25%	5
2018	47%	10	26%	6
2019	47%	10	26%	6
2020	37%	4	27%	3

Source: (Table NTS0409).

Transport Focus publishes results of a survey which includes breakdowns of rail journeys by purpose throughout 2021. This survey estimates that throughout November 2021, the proportion of rail journeys that are for commuting are approximately one-third. It should be noted that the sample-size is relatively small at circa 480 per week.

The government is working with the rail industry to develop a number of recovery initiatives, focused on restoring passenger confidence in travelling by rail including for commuting journeys. Including introducing flexible season tickets across England this year, tickets launched on the 21 June and became available for use on the 28 June. This is a national product, priced to provide better value and convenience for commuters travelling two to three days a week.

Railways: Fares

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact reducing rail fares would have on passenger numbers. [HL4611]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department takes guidance from the Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook on the effects of changes to fares on rail demand.

While fares changes do impact total passenger numbers, there are also a number of other elements involved, including most notably at the moment the pandemic's impact on passenger travel.

Railways: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether National Highways' management of Historical Railways estate structures is in accordance with the best practice principles set out in the Conservation of Highways Structures standard; and

what assessment they have made of the environmental impacts of infilling when selecting the preferred asset management option for each structure. [HL4769]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Conservation of Highways Structures standard applies to listed or designated heritage assets.

Although this standard does not apply to much of the Historical Railways Estate, National Highways does manage the structures in accordance with the best practice principles set out in the standard.

National Highways is conducting heritage assessments on each of the Historical Railways Estate structures.

Management of the Estate is kept under constant review and there is an independent quarterly audit. National Highways undertakes repairs to hundreds of structures every year including works to listed structures. Infilling and demolition is a very small proportion (less than 5%) of the work that it does.

National Highways considers environmental issues, relating to ecology and biodiversity, when considering their asset management approach at any given structure. In many cases, National Highways will incorporate ecological features into the structure as part of the scheme e.g. bat hotels. National Highways removes invasive species and leave piles of clippings from trees and shrubs for use by mammals and reptiles.

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many, if any, National Highways contracts were awarded between 21 September and 25 October for preparatory works at structures that the Stakeholder Advisory Forum had not yet considered for infilling; and why preparatory works were undertaken after the pause on such works had been imposed. [HL4770]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: National Highways does not award individual contracts as it has overarching framework contracts in place with call off arrangements.

National Highways has not accepted prices on any preparatory works to specifically prepare for infilling activity between 21 September and 25 October.

National Highways has accepted prices to provide access for ecologists to undertake bat surveys at 12 structures and for a site investigation to be undertaken.

The pause has been applied to infill and demolition work. The only works that have occurred since have been to provide access for ecologists to undertake surveys or to remove vegetation.

National Highways removes vegetation for preventative maintenance reasons. This is something that National Highways is doing across the Historical Railways Estate. Undertaking ecological surveys is not preparatory work for infilling or demolition, it is part of the National Highways' regular routine asset management approach.

Railways: Scotland

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Integrated Rail Plan on rail journey times to Scotland. [HL4657]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The core pipeline set out in the Integrated Rail Plan, which includes completing HS2 Phases One and 2a and completing HS2 Phase 2b from Crewe to Manchester, including the link to the West Coast Main Line, will help reduce journey times between England and Scotland. Birmingham and London to Glasgow and Edinburgh could be cut by between 40 and 50 minutes compared to today. In addition, the package of upgrades to the East Coast Main Line will separately improve journey times for services to Edinburgh from London King's Cross. Journey times could be cut by 25 minutes compared to today depending on stopping patterns. The recent Union Connectivity Review also considered the reduction of rail journey times to Scotland.

Railways: Tree Felling

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what policy Network Rail follows for the felling of trees alongside railway lines; what assessment they have made of the carbon impact of this policy; and what policy they have on replacing felled trees. [HL4656]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Network Rail published its Biodiversity Action Plan in December 2020, committing to achieve biodiversity net gain by 2035, and setting out how it will manage lineside vegetation sustainably for safety, performance, the environment, and its customers and neighbours. Network Rail must balance these objectives to run a safe and reliable rail network whilst also supporting and enhancing lineside biodiversity. In some places it will be necessary to remove trees and other habitats that are not compatible with railway operations, but in other places Network Rail will establish habitats through planting and sustainable management. Following recent surveys and inspections of the estate, Network Rail is developing vegetation and habitat management plans to ensure any necessary vegetation management takes place at the best time of year. Network Rail is also developing a sustainable land use strategic framework which will consider aspects including carbon impacts to support net zero 2050.

Network Rail manages a vast estate, with an estimated six million trees, and approximately 23% woodland coverage, substantially higher than the average woodland coverage across Britain. In 2019, Network Rail pledged £1m to plant trees in communities across England over a four-year period with over 90,000 planted in the first planting season. Network Rail is also working with the Forestry Commission on a feasibility study for tree planting on land neighbouring the railway.

Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation: Hydrogen

Asked by Lord Haworth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reform the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation to stimulate investment in hydrogen production. [HL4679]

Asked by Lord Haworth

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to make a decision on whether to extend the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation to cover hydrogen produced from nuclear energy. [HL4680]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Further to a public consultation earlier this year, we have introduced legislation which would expand support under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) to renewable hydrogen used in fuel cell rail and non-road transports, and in maritime vessels. To further stimulate investment in renewable hydrogen production, we also proposed in the consultation to reward renewable hydrogen more flexibly under the RTFO. A Government Response on proposals to improve flexibility will be published very soon. The Department has no current plans to extend the RTFO scheme to cover hydrogen produced from nuclear energy.

River Fords

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many river fords are on British roads; what records are kept about the location and numbers of river fords; and which authorities keep any such records. [HL4841]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department does not routinely collect this information. Any information that is held on fords on the local road network will be held by the relevant local authority.

Ryde Pier Head Station: Tickets

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that South West Trains provide passengers with the ability to buy all types of train tickets from Ryde Pierhead station. [HL4703]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Ryde Pierhead station is not subject to Schedule 17 of the Ticketing and Services Agreement and ticketing provision remains a matter for South Western Railway. Rail ticketing for Ryde Pierhead station is currently carried out by South Western Railway through their partnership with WightLink, with a range of tickets available to passengers. My officials are working closely with South Western Railway to ensure that passengers travelling from stations on the Isle of Wight have access to a range of fare types.

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