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**Thursday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

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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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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, Treasury and Cabinet Office
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Benyon	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
Lord Caine	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
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
Lord Offord of Garvel	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office
Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Penn	Whip
Baroness Scott of Bybrook	Whip
Lord Sharpe of Epsom	Whip
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

Thursday, 6 January 2022

Annual Fisheries Negotiations

[HLWS507]

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

The UK and EU have now reached an agreement on fishing opportunities for the 2022 fishing year. This is the second time the UK has entered into bilateral negotiations with the EU as an independent coastal State, following the signing of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and EU in 2020.

In its second year negotiating as a coastal State, the UK has also successfully concluded the UK-EU-Norway trilateral negotiations and UK-Norway bilateral negotiations. Both agreements mark the start of new fisheries arrangements in the North Sea and a strong willingness from all Parties to collaborate closely in the future.

The UK Government has worked closely with Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, and the outcomes secured by the UK will enable us to improve the sustainable management of our fish stocks in support of the whole of the UK fishing industry in the short and long term.

Collectively from the EU-UK bilateral, EU-UK-Norway trilateral, and Coastal States negotiations, the UK has secured agreement on the Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for 86 stocks.

UK-EU Agreement

The agreement we have reached with the EU covers 69 UK-EU TACs, resulting in a total value of fishing opportunities for the UK in 2022 of approximately 140,000 tonnes, worth around £313 million, based on historic landing prices.

Guided by best available scientific advice as part of sustainable fisheries management, the UK and EU agreed reductions across a number of TACs, meaning that overall the UK will have around 12,000 tonnes less quota compared to 2021 from these negotiations. However, even with this reduction, the UK has around 28,000 tonnes more quota from these negotiations than it would have received with its previous shares as an EU Member State. This is estimated to be worth around £45 million based on historic landing prices.

As in previous years, the UK negotiated this year's TACs taking account of sustainability principles. A full assessment of the number of individual TACs set consistent with International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) advice on catch opportunities will be published shortly and after the conclusion of all the UK's annual fisheries negotiations and the setting of consultative TACs.

On exchanges of quota with the EU, the UK and EU agreed to the continuation of the interim exchange mechanism which has operated successfully since July 2021, enabling voluntary exchanges between the UK and Member States. This will continue until the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) can agree a permanent mechanism, as required by the TCA. The UK and EU agreed to hold a final round of exchanges on 21 January 2022 to allow for the wrapping up of this year's exchanges.

On non-quota stocks (NQS), the UK and EU resolved the outstanding provisional historic baseline tonnage figures, this includes the removal of catches from Crown Dependency waters. The revised baseline figures are 12,365 tonnes for UK vessels in EU waters, and 33,023 tonnes for EU vessels in UK waters. It was also agreed to hold further technical discussions from January 2022 to ensure that future data exchanges on NQS uptake are robust and accurate.

Exceptionally, the UK and EU agreed not to apply the NQS tonnage limits provided for in the TCA for 2022. We will closely monitor uptake data and in the event either Party reaches 80% of their total, a discussion will be held in the SCF to consider next steps.

The UK and EU also committed to work at pace to develop multi-year strategies for shared NQS as set out under the TCA, with the aim of developing the first of these by 31 July 2022. Both Parties confirmed our shared priority to ensure the sustainable management of NQS stocks from 2023 onwards.

The UK and EU agreed to roll forward the previously agreed measures for seabass. In addition, it was agreed that further adjustments would be introduced in 2022. These include an increase in the annual limits for landings of bass from hook and lines and fixed gillnets, as well as an amendment to the commercial trawl/seine flexibility.

Finally, the UK and EU agreed to prioritise and handle NQS, seabass (including the ICES assessment tool), stock without ICES advice, inter-annual quota flexibility and other topics through the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

UK-EU-Norway Trilateral Negotiations

The UK reached an agreement with Norway and the European Union on catch limits for 2022 for six jointly managed stocks in the North Sea. The catch limits agreed for 2022 are worth over £184 million to the UK fishing industry.

The agreement demonstrates the Parties' continued commitment to the sustainable management and long-term viability of cod, haddock, plaice, whiting, herring, and saithe stocks in the North Sea. Alongside the total allowable catches (TACs) for 2022, the agreement puts in place a process to review the distribution and management of shared stocks which are important for the whole UK catch sector.

UK-Norway Bilateral Negotiations

The agreement reached with Norway includes reciprocal access to each other's waters. The UK will gain access to 30,000 tonnes of whitefish stocks such as cod, haddock and hake. There will also be access to fish pelagic stock: the UK industry will be able to fish its full quota of Atlanto-scandian herring in Norwegian waters, and up to 17,000 tonnes should it swap in additional quota from the EU in 2022. In return, Norway will be able to fish up to 17,000 tonnes of North Sea herring in UK waters. This is less than a third of the level of access for North Sea herring enjoyed by Norway while the UK was a member of the European Union. We also agreed some quota exchange, estimated to be worth just over £5m. This includes bringing in stocks such as North Sea whiting, hake and anglerfish, and arctic cod.

The agreement puts in place a process which ensures that the fishing arrangements do not have detrimental consequences for fish stocks and the wider marine environment. The mutual access will also allow respective fleets more flexibility to target the stocks in the best condition throughout the fishing year, supporting a more sustainable and economically viable fishing industry.

In parallel to the conclusion of these negotiations, Norway has allocated to the UK 6,550 tonnes of cod around Svalbard. This means the UK can fish over 7,000 tonnes of cod in the arctic in 2022, estimated to be worth around £16 million, and 1,500 tonnes more than in 2021.

UK-Faroe Island Negotiations

Bilateral fisheries negotiations between the UK and Faroes are ongoing. Both parties are pursuing a pragmatic and well-balanced agreement. The UK's overriding priority is to ensure that the deal is in the best interests of the UK industry and protects the marine environment, promoting sustainable stock management.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)

The UK is a Contracting Party to five RFMOs and played a central role in negotiations in 2021 in securing a number of important new RFMO measures for 2022 and beyond. These include a new rebuilding plan for North Atlantic shortfin mako shark in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), a new management measure for yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), an interim measure for the Greenland salmon fishery in the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), new 'area closures' to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), and a measure to protect juvenile haddock at the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). The UK also confirmed its 2022 shares in the four ICCAT stocks negotiated with the EU under the TCA.

The UK will build on these successes in 2022 and beyond, working to achieve rapid progress on our priority

objectives for RFMOs both in terms of fishing opportunities where appropriate, and furthering our marine conservation priorities.

Multilateral 'coastal State' negotiations

The UK and other coastal States (the parties responsible for a stock's management due to it being distributed in their waters) for mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring agreed to set the global TACs for 2022 in line with the advice provided by ICES.

We have also agreed to discuss sharing arrangements for each stock in 2022. The UK will chair discussions on mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring.

Departmental Contingent Liability Notification: Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime

[HLWS509]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change (Greg Hands) has today made the following statement:

Today I will lay before Parliament a Departmental Minute describing a contingent liability arising from the issuance of a letter of credit for the Energy Administrators acting in the Special Administration Regime for Bulb Energy Limited ('Bulb').

It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability of £300,000 and above, for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present Parliament with a minute giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances.

I regret that, due to recess, I have not been able to follow the usual notification timelines to allow consideration of these issues in advance of issuing the letter of credit.

Bulb entered the Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime on 24 November 2021. Energy Administrators were appointed by court to achieve the statutory objective of continuing energy supplies at the lowest reasonable practicable cost until such time as it becomes unnecessary for the special administration to remain in force for that purpose.

My Department has agreed to provide a facility to the Energy Administrators, with a letter of credit issued, with my approval, to guarantee such contract, code, licence, or other document obligations of the company consistent with the special administration's statutory objective. I will update the House if any letters of credit are drawn against.

The legal basis for a letter of credit is section 165 Energy Act 2004, as applied and modified by section 96 Energy Act 2011.

HM Treasury has approved the arrangements in principle.

Investigatory Powers Commissioner: Annual Report

[HLWS511]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement:

I have today laid before both Houses a copy of the annual report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Rt. Hon. Sir Brian Leveson.

Overall, this report demonstrates that the security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies and other relevant public authorities' use of investigatory powers shows extremely high levels of operational competence combined with respect for the law. The report also sets out the breadth and complexity of the powers covered by the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and other legislation and offers constructive criticism on the practical framework and individual instances of how these are used. Where the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) has identified problems, departments and agencies have worked hard to address these.

This year the Commissioner has decided not to include a confidential annex to the Report, as allowed under Section 234 of the 2016 Act, as all relevant issues have been covered in this report. This has been subject to consultation with relevant government departments and agencies and I am content it is not prejudicial to national security.

I would like to add that this Report demonstrates the high quality of the oversight of our intelligence and security agencies' use of the most intrusive powers. I am satisfied that our arrangements are amongst the strongest and most effective in the world. Despite the unique challenges which COVID-19 created, the Commissioner notes their oversight has been no less rigorous than in previous years and his report details the changes they made to their inspection practice to ensure this.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the current and previous Commissioners and their staff for their work, as well as echoing the Commissioner's thanks to the agencies and departments and civil society organisations which have helped with the establishment of IPCO over the past few years. I join him in extending my particular thanks to all those who took on the responsibility of serving as temporary Judicial Commissioners under Section 22 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 during the lockdown period, who ensured the work of IPCO was able to continue uninterrupted.

I commend this report to the House.

Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England

[HLWS510]

Lord Kamall: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under State (Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care) (Maria Caulfield) has made the following statement:

Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England was published on 23 December 2021. This sets out our ambitions and next steps for women's health, mapped against what we have been told through the Women's Health Strategy Call for Evidence. It reflects the commitment this government is making to women's health and will set the direction of future work.

The Vision is informed by the evidence we received in our Call for Evidence. This was announced in March this year on International Women's Day, to support the development of the Women's Health Strategy. It ran for 14 weeks to 13th June 2021 and comprised three components:

1) A public survey

We received nearly 100,000 responses from individuals in England who wanted to share their own experiences, the experiences of a female family member, friend or partner, or their reflections as a healthcare professional.

2) Written submissions

We received over 400 written responses from organisations with expertise in women's health which were used to inform the Vision document.

3) Focus groups

We also commissioned focus groups with women to acquire depth of insight. The resulting independent academic report has recently been published on the University of York website and can be found here: <https://www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/research/health-policy/research/health-policy-projects/prepare/reports/>.

I would like to extend my thanks to every person and organisation who took the time to share their experiences through the Call for Evidence and spread the word about the consultation. It is thanks to these participants that we were able to acquire such rich insights into views on women's health.

Recent progress on women's health

Whilst we have been working to analyse the huge number of responses for the Call for Evidence, we have not waited to take action. In July we published the government response to the Cumberlege report which focussed on how the system listens to women when they raise concerns about their health and safety.

In October, I announced several measures designed to improve menopause care. This included amendments to the charging regulations to reduce the cost burden of HRT for menopausal women and a new UK-wide menopause taskforce which will hold its inaugural meeting shortly.

Earlier this year, we committed to ban the abhorrent practice of virginity testing in our strategy for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls as part of our commitment to safeguard women and girls. In November 2021, the government delivered on this commitment by bringing forward a government amendment to the Health and Care Bill to ban Virginity Testing, which was passed unopposed in the House.

This activity marks a significant improvement in many areas which touch upon women's health. However, there is clearly much more to be done.

Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy and Analytical Report of the Call for Evidence

On 23 December 2021, the government published the analytical report of the Call for Evidence and Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England.

The analytical report of the Call for Evidence sets out the findings from the public survey. This has provided rich insight into women's experiences and priorities for their health and care, and at times makes for sobering reading.

For example

- 84% of respondents said there have been instances when they were not listened to by healthcare professionals.
- Nearly 2 in 3 respondents with a health condition or disability said they do not feel supported by the services available for individuals with their condition or disability.
- 58% of respondents said they felt uncomfortable talking about health issues with their workplace and 7% were not sure how they felt. These issues do not affect all women equally. White respondents felt the most comfortable discussing health issues at work (37%), while the Asian and Other ethnic group felt the least comfortable (30% and 29% respectively).

There are no quick and easy solutions to some of the entrenched problems within the system. However, I am determined to make sure that we act on the concerns that women have shared with us. This government and our stakeholders across the system are committed to doing better for women.

Priority topics

Respondents were also given the opportunity to share the conditions which were most important to them. Their responses give us the mandate to look carefully at women's health across the life course and make meaningful change.

The priority topics for women varied by age, broadly aligning with the stage of their life. However, the overall top five topics respondents want to see prioritised for inclusion in the Women's Health Strategy are:

- gynaecological conditions;
- fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and post-natal support;
- the menopause;
- menstrual health; and
- mental health.

Insight from the written submissions has also informed the development of the Vision. We will publish a separate report, based on the written evidence submitted by organisations and individuals with expertise in this field, in early 2022.

The Vision

Alongside the analysis of the Call for Evidence, we also published Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England which sets out our ambitions for women and girls' health in England.

The phenomenal volume of responses to the Call for Evidence has meant that analysis has taken longer than anticipated. It was essential that we gave the analysis the level of rigour it deserved, in order to understand fully what we have been told by the public.

It was also important to me to share the analysis with parliament and the public as soon as possible and show the clear direction it has given us. As such, we are publishing our Vision now and will follow up with the full Women's Health Strategy in Spring 2022.

The Vision document first sets out our life course approach to women's health, and our thematic priorities which cut across all stages of the life course.

On women's voices, our ambition is for all women to feel comfortable talking about their health and to no longer face taboos when they do talk about their health. We will also work to better understand the causes of women not feeling listened to make sure any interventions address the root cause.

On healthcare policies and services, our ambition is that women can access services that meet their needs across throughout their lives. We want to support local systems to deliver models of care that work for women. We will also work to explore improvements in care for specific conditions where disparities are greatest.

On information and education, our ambition is to make sure that all women will have access to high quality information and education from childhood through to adulthood, in school and beyond. Further, clinicians must feel confident to deliver information and high-quality care more broadly to women. To do this, clinicians need to have high quality, relevant training on women's health.

On health in the workplace, our ambition is that all women feel supported in the workplace and can reach their full potential at work. We are conducting work relating to the menopause in the workplace which we hope will act as best practice for other conditions.

On research, evidence and data, our ambition is to embed routine collection of demographic data of participants in research trials to make sure that our research reflects the society we serve. We are also committed to looking into the gender data gaps further and identifying where there are differences in conditions between genders.

Priority areas

In addition to these themes, the Vision sets out our ambitions on priority conditions where the call for evidence highlighted particular issues or opportunities. These include but are not limited to:

- menstrual health and gynaecological conditions;
- fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and postnatal support;

- the menopause;
- healthy ageing and long-term conditions;
- mental health; and
- the health impacts of violence against women and girls.

On this last point on violence against women and girls, I was pleased to be able to announce on the 23 December 2021 the immediate action that this government is taking to protect women and girls from harm.

When the government published the tackling violence against women and girls strategy earlier this year, we committed to establishing an expert panel to review whether we should ban hymenoplasty. This is a procedure to reconstruct the hymen, with the intended purpose of causing bleeding during sexual intercourse.

We established the independent panel due to concerns that the uptake for the procedure, which although it is regulated, is intrinsically linked to virginity testing, and stems from the same repressive attitudes towards a women's sexuality and the concept of virginity.

In December, the Panel recommended to Government that hymenoplasty should be banned.

As announced before Christmas, the Government agreed with this recommendation and will introduce legislation ban hymenoplasty as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Next Steps for developing the Women's Health Strategy

In Spring 2022 we will publish the full Women's Health Strategy, building on our Vision and ambition, and set out in detail our plans for meeting the specific health needs of women throughout the different stages of their lives.

To support this, we will appoint the first ever Women's Health Ambassador for England.

This person will focus on raising the profile for women's health, increasing awareness of taboo topics, and bringing in a range of collaborative voices to develop the Women's Health Strategy.

The Ambassador will develop networks across and outside of government to champion women's health and break down stigmas which surround particular areas of women's health.

I am pleased to announce that we will shortly be launching an expression of interest for this role. I would encourage applications from candidates who have experience in the sector and a passion for women's health. I look forward to working with the post-holder to drive forward this agenda even further as we develop the Strategy.

This Vision speaks to the commitment of this government to women's health. It sets the direction for the strategy we are developing over the coming months. In Spring 2022, we will publish the full Women's Health Strategy building on our Vision and ambition and set out in detail our plans for specific health needs that women experience throughout their lives.

I am excited about the coming months and what we will be able to achieve in the long-term. The publication of Our Vision for Women's Health and the analytical publication of the Call for Evidence marks a key milestone in women's health.

I am confident that based on the evidence and a clear vision, we will be able to make progress on the issues that matter most to women, in developing the Strategy for Spring 2022.

Outdoor Marriages and Civil Partnerships

[HLWS508]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Tom Pursglove) has made the following Written Statement:

'On 20 December, the Government launched a public consultation on outdoor weddings and civil partnerships. This consultation sets out, and seeks views on, the Government's proposals to continue to permit outdoor civil marriages and civil partnerships on approved premises, and to permit outdoor religious marriages in the grounds of places of worship.

Since 1 July 2021, couples have been able to have their civil marriage and civil partnership proceedings in the open air, in the grounds of buildings such as stately homes and hotels which are approved or became approved for these civil ceremonies. Previously, these proceedings could only take place indoors or otherwise within permanently immovable structures. These outdoor ceremonies were made possible because the Government laid a statutory instrument ('SI') putting in place these flexibilities, in order to give couples more choice of setting, and to support the wedding and civil partnership sector. However, that SI has effect only until the end of 5 April 2022.

We are now proposing to lay a further SI so that these outdoor civil marriage and civil partnership proceedings can continue beyond 5 April 2022 indefinitely, and to extend the policy of permitting outdoor ceremonies to religious marriages using a separate legislative reform order. Together, these proposals would ensure that the provision for outdoor marriages and civil partnerships on approved premises continues indefinitely and would extend similar arrangements to religious weddings in the grounds of places of worship. The proposals would enable couples to have a greater choice in relation to the location of their ceremonies, and for approved premises and religious bodies to have more flexibility in the locations for ceremonies, should they choose to offer it. No religious group would be obliged to provide outdoor ceremonies, and existing protections to safeguard religious freedoms would remain in place.

The consultation can be found here: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/outdoor-marriages-civil-partnerships>. A copy of the consultation paper will be deposited in the Libraries of the House.'

Protecting the Integrity of our Elections

[HLWS512]

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

I am pleased to update Parliament today on amendments the Government will shortly be bringing forward to the Elections Bill which will help to ensure we fully deliver on our commitment to protecting our democracy.

The changes brought forward by the Bill are vital to ensure our democracy remains secure, fair, modern and transparent and I am therefore pleased to also update Parliament today with further information on their implementation. It is our expectation that all the measures will be in place within the lifetime of this Parliament and implementation will be staged over a sensible and pragmatic timetable; it is imperative that this is done properly and with sufficient time for the elections sector and for voters to prepare for the new requirements.

Voter identification and the Voter Card

I am today publishing a policy statement, 'Protecting the integrity of our elections: voter identification at polling stations and the new Voter Card,' which sets out more detail on the Government's proposals for the voter identification policy.

The statement includes details of the rationale for the list of accepted photographic identifications in the Elections Bill and further information around our plans for the application process for Voter Cards.

A Voter Card will be available free of charge to ensure that all electors have access to an accepted form of identification. The Government is clear that the process for applying for this card must be accessible for all those who need it. There will therefore be a range of application routes, Voter Cards will be valid across all of Great Britain - not just in the issuing area - and the Government will shortly be tabling amendments to adjust some of the current drafting of the Bill to increase the accessibility and security of the Voter Card and ensure the Voter Card system works for all eligible voters.

Voters in Northern Ireland have been required to show identification when voting at polling stations since 1985, and the photographic voter identification system has been in place there for almost 20 years since it was brought in by the last Labour Government in 2003. Since its introduction, this requirement has successfully helped to tackle electoral fraud and has been operating with ease. In their 2021 Public Opinion tracker, the Electoral Commission recorded not a single Northern Ireland respondent reporting 'I don't have any identification / I would not be able to vote'.

It is our expectation that voter identification will be in place in Great Britain in time for polls taking place in spring 2023, with the Voter Card system in operation in good time ahead of this.

Absent Vote Applications

The Government will be introducing a further amendment to the Bill to require identity verification for absent vote applications, as is already the case for Northern Ireland. This will ensure that applications are legitimate, protecting the system from fraud.

A further amendment will provide for an online absent vote application service, making this process more efficient for both citizens and electoral administrators and placing both integrity and elector participation at the heart of our democracy. The new online application service, as well as existing paper applications, will require electors to have their identity verified as part of the process, ensuring that the system is as streamlined as possible for users. As we legislate to update our electoral system we are therefore also ensuring public confidence that our elections will remain secure well into the future.

In order to ensure efficiency of electoral administrative processes, it is our ambition to align the new online application process with other changes to absent vote arrangements and the delivery of overseas electors' voting rights. Rollout of the online service will be conditional on the identity verification processes being in place and the timing of rollout in Northern Ireland will be dependent upon meeting the particular safeguards required in Northern Ireland. This is in order to reduce any opportunity for individuals to exploit the processes and steal votes.

Technical amendments to the Elections Bill

The Bill will be amended to reflect that responsibility for elections has moved from the Cabinet Office to the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. In addition, an amendment will be made to provisions in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 regarding membership of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, to allow for the most relevant minister to be appointed by the Prime Minister to be able to deputise for the Secretary of State on the Committee as and when needed. These changes will not increase the Government's allocated representation on the Committee.

Several amendments will also be made to the clauses in the Bill relating to the new digital imprints regime. These amendments include clarifying the enforcement responsibilities of the Electoral Commission and the police, and improving consistency between the clauses that relate to 'paid material' and those that relate to 'other electronic material' (or unpaid material). They will also clarify that the imprint rules will only apply to unpaid electronic material wholly or mainly related to referendums, when published during the referendum period. Further, these amendments will ensure that the regime covers all relevant elections, including all City of London elections. These amendments will help ensure transparency and empower voters to make informed decisions about the material they see online.

The associated document has been placed in the libraries of both Houses and amendments to the Elections Bill will be tabled in due course.

Written Answers

Thursday, 6 January 2022

Bosnia and Herzegovina: EU Accession

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take, if any, to progress the candidacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards full European Union membership in 2022. [HL5010]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Decisions on EU enlargement are for EU Member States to make. We will continue to support all countries of the Western Balkans in their sovereign choice to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their position on Dayton Accords (1) revisions, and (2) international actions, including negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, in order to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's central government. [HL5005]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The importance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which brought an end to the 1990s conflicts, cannot be overstated. However, it was worded to enable local actors to make changes in the future. As Lord Ashdown said, "Dayton is the floor, not the ceiling". The United Kingdom remains committed to BiH's security, democracy and prosperity. The international community will offer support, but it is essential that the authorities in BiH themselves make reforms based on broad consensus and for the greater good of all citizens.

Coronavirus: Drugs

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the (1) planned order quantities, and (2) delivery dates, for the COVID-19 antibody drugs Molnupiravir and Ritonavir; and what is the (a) current, and (b) planned, geographic distribution of Molnupiravir and Ritonavir across England. [HL3500]

Lord Kamall: The Government has secured 480,000 patient courses of molnupiravir and 250,000 patient courses of PF-07321332 in combination with ritonavir. Information on delivery and distribution of these items is dependent on the companies' supply chains and receipt of the appropriate marketing authorisations from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. We are working with NHS England and NHS

Improvement, the UK Health Security Agency and the devolved administrations to ensure that, when available, these treatments will be accessible to those who are most at risk of developing severe disease. Further details will be announced in due course.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce compulsory COVID-19 vaccine certificates in order to help reduce the spread of the Omicron variant. [HL4813]

Lord Kamall: Certification based on vaccination or testing is now mandatory in certain settings. Visitors to these settings are required to have completed a full-course of COVID-19 vaccination with two doses of an approved vaccine or one of the single-dose Janssen vaccine; or be exempt from requirements to be vaccinated; or have taken a lateral flow device test or polymerase chain reaction test which has returned a negative result within 48 hours before visiting the venue or event.

Asked by Lord Jordan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide COVID-19 vaccines to (1) the Republic of Barbados, and (2) other small island states which may currently be experiencing COVID-19 vaccine shortages; and whether they intend to support the proposal of the governments of India and South Africa to suspend parts of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights as they relate to COVID-19 vaccines. [HL5015]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to help bring the acute phase of the pandemic to an end as soon as possible and strongly supports the COVAX Facility as a key mechanism to deliver this. The majority of the UK's doses are being donated via COVAX. We are donating a smaller quantity to bilateral partners and countries facing their own health emergencies, to further support the global response to Covid-19. We are only donating vaccines to countries which are eligible for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). The FCDO has responded to the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) which includes a breakdown of where doses have been sent to as of the end of November.

Throughout the pandemic our top priority has been to save lives. We firmly believe the best way to do this is to support the world's leading scientists to develop our most important weapon in the fight against COVID-19: vaccines. Our robust international intellectual property framework protects the ability of these pioneering minds to come up with new ideas and innovations. It has and will continue to allow us to develop vaccines and treatments at unprecedented pace and meet our ultimate goal of saving lives. There is no evidence that an IP waiver would help us to meet this goal. The reality is that the proposal for a TRIPS waiver would dismantle the very framework that helped to produce COVID-19 vaccines at

an unprecedented pace. More worryingly, the waiver proposal could lead to a dangerous reduction in the quality of products being manufactured and in the already limited supply of key raw materials. This risks compromising vaccine efficacy and patient safety.

Whilst the UK Government has not seen evidence that Intellectual Property is a barrier to the production or supply of COVID-19 goods, including vaccines, the Government will continue to engage constructively in debates at the World Trade Organisation Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Council and other international institutions to promote affordable and equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines for all. The UK affirmed this commitment in the 22 October G7 Trade Ministers' communique, which notes our determination to achieve an impactful outcome on trade and health, including how the international Intellectual Property framework can best support the WTO's pandemic response. The UK remains open to all initiatives that will have a demonstrable impact on vaccine production and distribution. We will continue to engage constructively in discussions at the WTO to that end. To end this pandemic sooner, we must focus efforts on the things that will make a real difference. That includes the promotion of voluntary licensing and technology transfer agreements - several of which have already proven to be successful.

Eastern Europe: NATO

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assurances, to which they were a party, were given to (1) Mikhail Gorbachev, or (2) other representatives of the government of the Soviet Union, on NATO expansion into Eastern Europe at the time of German reunification; whether any such assurances remain valid; and what assessment they have made of whether those assurances are being met. [HL5004]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: During the 1990 discussions on German reunification, no written assurances about the further enlargement of NATO beyond Germany were made to Mr Gorbachev or other representatives of the Government of the Soviet Union. Despite consistent assertion, Russian leaders have been unable to produce any written evidence that such assurances were made.

Medical Treatments

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's proposed severity modifier being introduced in an "opportunity cost neutral" package. [HL3496]

Lord Kamall: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for determining the methods and processes used in the development of its recommendations. Therefore, the Department has made no such assessment.

NICE's recent consultation, Review of methods for health technology evaluation programmes: proposals for change, issued as part of the ongoing review of its methods and processes for health technology assessments, states that the proposed severity modifier is intended to "to put more weight on treatments for people with severe diseases across all types of disease" reflecting evidence "that society values health gains from treatments for very severe diseases over other treatments". The consultation also states that: "With the proposed approach, there are very few topics ... which met the end-of-life criteria previously, but which would not receive an additional weighting with the severity modifier." A copy of Review of methods for health technology evaluation programmes: proposals for change is attached.

NICE will consider the consultation responses in developing the final changes to its methods.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Review of methods for health technology evaluation [NICE
Review of Methods - Proposals for Change.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-10-27/HL3496>

NHS Trusts: Military Aid

Asked by Lord Coaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many NHS trusts have requested support from the UK armed forces in every month of 2021 so far; which NHS trusts made such requests; and of those that made such requests, which ones were (1) successful, and (2) rejected. [HL4539]

Asked by Lord Coaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government which (1) NHS trusts, and (2) ambulance trusts, currently have UK armed forces deployed to them; and how many personnel are deployed to each trust. [HL4540]

Lord Kamall: The information on National Health Service trusts which have requested and received support from the armed forces is not held in the format requested. However, the following table shows the number of Military Aid to Civilian Authorities applications made by NHS England and the number of rejected applications in each month in 2021. Data for December 2021 is not yet available therefore we are unable to provide the information requested on the number of personnel currently deployed to all NHS trusts.

	<i>Military Aid to Civilian Authorities applications from NHS England</i>	<i>Number of rejected applications</i>
January	32	2
February	14	0
March	2	0
April	1	0
May	1	0
June	1	0
July	1	0
August	3	0
September	0	0
October	0	0
November	2	0

Russia: Ukraine

Asked by **Lord Truscott**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what diplomatic effort they are making to revive the Minsk Agreements. [\[HL5068\]](#)

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: As G7 Foreign Ministers made clear in their 12 December statement, we support the efforts of France and Germany in the Normandy Format to achieve full implementation of the Minsk agreements in order to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Prime Minister underlined to President Putin on 13 December that Russia had to respect the terms of the Minsk agreements. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the UK's support for the Minsk agreements in her 2 December meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and in her 8 December talks with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba. The UK regularly calls on Russia to end the conflict by immediately ceasing its support for the armed formations it backs, withdrawing its military personnel and weapons from the territory of Ukraine and fulfilling its obligations under the Minsk agreements.

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