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**Tuesday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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

<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 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

Tuesday, 25 January 2022

Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme Levy

[HLWS545]

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

The Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme (Levy) Regulations 2014 require active employers' liability insurers to pay an annual levy, based on their relative market share, for the purpose of meeting the costs of the Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme (DMPS). This is in line with the insurance industry's commitment to fund a scheme of last resort for persons diagnosed with diffuse mesothelioma who have been unable to trace their employer or their employer's insurer.

Today I can announce that the total amount of the levy to be charged for 2021-22, the eighth year of the DMPS, is £22.0 million. The amount will be payable by active insurers by the end of March 2022.

Individual active insurers will be notified in writing of their share of the levy, together with how the amount was calculated and the payment arrangements. Insurers should be aware that it is a legal requirement to pay the levy within the set timescales.

I am pleased that the DMPS has seen seven successful years of operation, assisting many hundreds of people who have been diagnosed with Diffuse Mesothelioma. The seventh Annual Report for the scheme, along with the annual statistics were published on 29 November 2021 and is available on the gov.uk website. I hope that members of both Houses will welcome this

announcement and give the DMPS their continued support.

Government Cyber Security Strategy

[HLWS544]

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

Further to my statement to the House on Wednesday 15 December on the National Cyber Strategy (HCWS484), I am pleased to announce the publication of the Government Cyber Security Strategy. This will deliver on the public sector resilience aspects of the national strategy which is critical to realising our ambitions as a cyber power.

Government has made significant progress in the last five years. The introduction of the Minimum Cyber Security Standards for Government in 2018, and the underpinning annual 'Health Check', signalled clear requirements for cyber security controls and behaviours and improved government's understanding of its cyber security posture. Yet, while government's recognition and understanding of cyber security risk has evolved, it has also highlighted the gap between where government cyber resilience is now and where it needs to be.

As such, the Government Cyber Security Strategy sets out the vision that core government functions are resilient to cyber attack, strengthening the UK as a sovereign nation and cementing its authority as a democratic and responsible cyber power. The measurable aim is for these critical functions to be significantly hardened to cyber attack by 2025, with all government organisations across the whole public sector being resilient to known vulnerabilities and attack methods no later than 2030.

A copy of the Government Cyber Security Strategy will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 25 January 2022

Afghanistan: Females

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase assistance for women and girls in Afghanistan. [HL5316]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to raise rights of women and girls in our political engagement with the Taliban, including pressing them to ensure full and equal access to education for all. The Government has doubled our aid to £286 million FY 2021/22. We have now disbursed over £145 million which will support over 3.4 million people in Afghanistan and the region, providing emergency food, health, shelter, water and protection. Our humanitarian programmes will provide assistance to the most vulnerable, including women and girls. We are also funding child protection support and supporting access to gender-based violence services. In addition, we are meeting directly with Afghan women to inform our policies and programmes.

Antisocial Behaviour

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of trends in the levels of antisocial behaviour. [HL5342]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and communities. The 'Beating Crime Plan' published on 27 July 2021 laid out the Government's commitment to working with local agencies and partners to drive down anti-social behaviour.

The *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014* provides a range of flexible tools and powers to local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour. Local areas decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances of each individual case.

Police recorded incidents do show a fall in ASB since 2013/2014 from around 2.1m to 1.8m incidents in the year to June 2020/2021.

Home Office statutory guidance, which was updated last year, supports all local agencies in using the powers from the *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014* and in taking the multi-agency approach that is needed to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour in a way that takes account of the needs of the victim and the wider community.

Autonomous Weapons

Asked by **Lord Clement-Jones**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the options beyond the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to address concerns about lethal autonomous weapons systems. [HL5476]

Baroness Goldie: The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) remains the appropriate forum to address the challenges associated with the use of autonomy in weapon systems. The CCW Review Conference renewed the mandate of the Group of Government Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) and the UK will continue to play an active role in it, working with the international community to agree norms and positive obligations to ensure the safe and responsible use of autonomy.

Broadband

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether broadband street cabinets are provided with batteries to be used in case of interruptions in electricity supply; and if not, what is their assessment of the safety implications for areas affected by interruptions in electricity supply given the declining number of homes with landlines. [HL5336]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Most fixed-line broadband street cabinets are fitted with a backup battery, ensuring a continued connection throughout an interruption to the mains electricity supply. For the remaining cabinets that do not have a battery backup capability (or, when a backup battery is depleted), telecoms providers have robust plans in place to prioritise these sites during any loss of power.

Bus Services: Finance

Asked by **Lord Bradshaw**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what criteria they will adopt to allocate the funds available for the Bus Service Improvement Plans, as outlined in the report by the National Bus Strategy for England Bus Back Better, published on 15 March 2021; and whether further funds will be allocated as a result of adjustments to the Department for Transport's budget. [HL5357]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We have received Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) from all English Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) outside London. Those plans will be assessed against criteria including bus priority measures and targeted fares reductions, as set out in the National Bus Strategy and in supplementary guidance to local authorities and bus operators published in May 2021.

At the Budget we announced £1.2 billion of new dedicated funding for bus transformation deals, part of over £3 billion of new spend on buses over this Parliament. We will announce further details on BSIP funding allocations in due course.

Business: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to strengthen UK legislation on supply chain impacts on human rights, given their commitment to implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. [HL5314]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is clear that it expects all UK businesses to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In response to the Guidelines, the UK was the first State to produce a National Action Plan:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522805/Good_Business_Implementing_the_UN_Guiding_Principles_on_Business_and_Human_Rights_updated_May_2016.pdf.

We have enhanced supply chain transparency through the Companies Act (2013, 2016) and continue to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act 2015, including through the on-going review of the Modern Slavery Strategy which is due to be published in Spring 2022. Section 54 of the Act, places a requirement on businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual modern slavery statement stating the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

Following a public consultation in 2019 the Government committed to; extending reporting requirements to public bodies with a budget of £36 million or more; requiring organisations to submit reports by an annual deadline; and requiring organisations to publish their statement on the Government modern slavery statement registry. In January 2021, the Government announced that financial penalties will be introduced for organisations who fail to meet their statutory obligations to publish annual modern slavery statements.

Cabinet Office: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they became aware of the farewell gathering for Kate Josephs in the Cabinet Office on 17 December 2020. [HL5558]

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people attended the farewell gathering for Kate Josephs in the Cabinet Office on 17 December 2020; and whether any

(1) ministers, or (2) special advisers, were present. [HL5559]

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any (1) ministers, (2) special advisers, (3) civil servants, from the Treasury attended the farewell gathering for Kate Josephs in the Cabinet Office on 17 December 2020; and if so, who. [HL5560]

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government who sent the email inviting people to the farewell gathering for Kate Josephs in the Cabinet Office on 17 December 2020; and on what date it was sent. [HL5561]

Lord True: The Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Office's investigation have been published on GOV.UK and deposited in the libraries of both Houses. The work will be concluded by the Second Permanent Secretary.

The Government does not comment on the specifics of an ongoing process.

Climate Change: Arctic

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are their projections for additional greenhouse gas emissions arising from the thawing of the Arctic permafrost between now and 2100; and whether these projections have been taken into account in the COP26 negotiations on reducing national carbon budgets. [HL5318]

Lord Callanan: The projections used by Her Majesty's Government for additional greenhouse gas emissions arising from permafrost thaw between now and 2100 are those provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and amount to 76 [range of 14-177] gigatonne carbon dioxide equivalent per degree of warming globally, by 2100. These estimates were included in the Panel's Sixth Assessment Report, which was officially welcomed by the UNFCCC at COP26, and taken into account in the negotiations.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their projections for additional greenhouse gas emissions from the thawing of the Arctic permafrost are based on a global rise in temperatures or a projected rise in the temperature of the Arctic region. [HL5319]

Lord Callanan: The projections of additional greenhouse gas emissions from the thawing of the Arctic permafrost that are used to inform government policy are taken from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report and take Arctic regional warming rates, including effects such as polar amplification, into account.

Climate Change: Polar Regions

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their assessment of rising sea levels is based on a rise in average global temperatures, or includes modelling of Arctic and Antarctic ice melt taking into account the accelerated rise in regional temperatures at the poles. [HL5320]

Lord Callanan: Our assessment of rising sea levels, derived from the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, includes modelling of the Arctic and Antarctic ice melt and takes accelerated rise in regional temperatures at the poles into account.

Crown Prosecution Service: Police

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the number of police referrals to the Crown Prosecution Service. [HL5337]

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: The Government has committed to publish quarterly criminal justice scorecards which bring together data from across the system on key areas of performance including police referrals. This will allow us to identify problem areas and take a cross-system response to dips in performance. We have a number of measures to monitor different aspects of police referrals to the CPS so that we can identify where in the process issues are occurring. The first national scorecards were published in early December and can be found here:

<https://data.justice.gov.uk/cjs-scorecard-all-crime>.

Developing Countries: Climate Change

Asked by *Baroness Northover*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to establish a process to discuss finance for loss and damage due to climate change in developing countries. [HL5554]

Asked by *Baroness Northover*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assess the level of need for loss and damage due to climate change in developing countries. [HL5555]

Asked by *Baroness Northover*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to identifying new and additional sources of finance for loss and damage due to climate change in developing countries. [HL5556]

Asked by *Baroness Northover*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure developing countries affected by loss

and damage due to climate change are not pushed further into debt. [HL5557]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK is committed to supporting efforts to assist developing countries avert, minimise and address loss and damage.

As COP26 Presidency, the UK will work with the incoming Egyptian Presidency for COP27 and UNFCCC Subsidiary Body Chairs to follow up on the actions set out in the COP26 Decision text. This includes the Glasgow Dialogue which will discuss the arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimise and address loss and damage. As Presidency we will also be supporting the process to operationalise the Santiago Network, which will catalyse and deliver technical support to enable countries to cope with the impacts of climate change.

We are also taking action through our International Climate Finance (ICF) - which will total £11.6 billion over the next 5 years, with an extra £1bn in if fiscal conditions allow - as well as through broader humanitarian assistance. Between 2016 and 2019, the UK spent £2 billion of ICF on adaptation and investments in areas needed to address loss and damage, including around £202 million on humanitarian assistance directly linked to climate change and building resilience to it, and £115 million on financial protection and risk management.

Energy: Small Businesses

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to make a portion of a redress fund overseen by Ofgem available for microbusinesses in trouble due to high energy costs. [HL5348]

Lord Callanan: Decisions on the fund are for Ofgem who have appointed the Energy Saving Trust as the independent Service Provider to manage and allocate funding. Funding is only available to registered charities in England Scotland and Wales, and Housing Associations that are exempted charities. The aim is to deliver energy related projects that meet the scheme's priorities and benefit people in England, Scotland and Wales.

Food: Production

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Whitchurch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there is a target to retain the current levels of food grown and processed in the UK. [HL5323]

Lord Benyon: The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built by supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. This provides us with the resilience we need

in the face of risks such as adverse weather, animal or crop disease, or transport and border disruption.

Our production to supply ratio remains high in comparison with historical levels. We produce 60% of all the food we need, and 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year, and these figures have changed little over the last 20 years. The UK's year-round production includes cereals, meats, milk and some fresh produce. We have very high production to supply ratios in poultry, turnips, carrots, swedes, eggs and beef.

The UK Food Security Report (UKFSR) recognises the contribution made by British farmers to our resilience, and the importance of strong domestic production to our food security. It considers the UK's food supply sources overall, noting that domestic production and diversity of supply are both important to our food security. The UKFSR summarises existing information and understanding. It serves as an evidence base for future policy work, and does not contain policy recommendations.

Foreign Companies: Property

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will implement a public register of beneficial owners of overseas entities that (1) buy, or (2) sell, property. [HL5347]

Lord Callanan: As set out in the Written Ministerial Statement I made on 2nd November 2021, the Government remains committed to establishing a new beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property. Overseas entities selling property will commit an offence if they sell their property at a time when they are in breach of the registration requirements. This register will help combat money laundering and achieve greater transparency in the UK property market. We will legislate when parliamentary time allows. Overseas entities in scope that already own land in the UK will be given 18 months to comply with the new requirements or dispose of their land.

Freezing of Assets: Libya

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any (1) capital, (2) interest, or (3) dividend revenues arising from frozen Libyan assets held in the UK have been distributed since the invocation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 in 2011. [HL5307]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Each year OFSI carries out an annual review of frozen assets held by UK institutions. £11.53 billion of Libyan frozen funds were reported to be held by UK businesses in OFSI's 2020-21 Annual Review. This includes interest and other earnings accrued to frozen assets.

As set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2009 (2011), a key aim of the Libya financial sanctions regime is "to ensure that assets frozen pursuant to resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) shall as soon as possible be made available to and for the benefit of the people of Libya".

Until that time, HM Treasury may only license the release of frozen funds according to the derogations set out in the Libya sanctions regime regulations. The Annual Review includes information about licences granted by OFSI under financial sanctions regimes.

Under the terms of the Libya financial sanctions regime, frozen assets continue to belong to the sanctioned entity or individual. However, the use of any frozen assets, or profits arising from those assets, is tightly constrained by the Libya financial sanctions regime.

Fuels: VAT

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received from industry and consumer groups to end or suspend VAT on fuel bills; and what steps they intend to take on this matter. [HL5284]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: In recognition of the fact that families should not have to bear all the VAT costs they incur to meet their needs, domestic fuels such as gas and electricity are already subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent of VAT. The Government keeps all taxes under review but going further would impose significant additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution.

The Government has introduced a raft of measures to support vulnerable households with the cost of energy, including increasing the Warm Home Discount, Winter Fuel Payments, and Cold Weather Payments. This is alongside introducing the £500 million Household Support Fund and giving working families on Universal Credit an average of £1,000 more per year.

Global Navigation Satellite Systems

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 29 July (HL2255), whether the Space Board Positioning Navigation and Timing programme has now reported on the options for the development of these services to the UK; and if not, when the report is anticipated. [HL5300]

Lord Callanan: The Programme has now reported on the options for improving the resilience of space-based PNT services, and the Government is considering the findings to determine the next steps as part of the business planning process.

Government Departments: Bain and Company

Asked by *Lord Hain*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord True on 10 January (HL5119) and 18 January (HL5234, HL5235, HL5236 and HL5360), whether they will now answer the questions fully by (1) listing in the text of their answer the contracts they have entered into with Bain & Company since June 2010 and the lead department for each contract, and (2) setting out what assessment they have made, if any, of the report of the South African Judicial Commission of Inquiry into State Capture: Part 1, published on 5 January. [HL5539]

Lord True: Cabinet Office does not hold a central record of contracts awarded by departments.

Details of Government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder (<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>). Accounting records are required to be kept for six years.

Cabinet Office is considering the report of the South African Judicial Commission of Inquiry into State Capture: Part 1.

Hereditary Peers: By-elections

Asked by *Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ask the House of Lords Appointments Commission to vet the candidates who stand in the hereditary peer by-election to be held on 8 February. [HL5486]

Lord True: There are no plans for candidates who stand for election to hereditary seats in the House of Lords to be subject to vetting by the House of Lords Appointments Commission.

Home Shopping: Taxation

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have considered the introduction of an online sales tax for the purpose of levelling the playing field between high street and online retailers, with particular regard to the sale of books. [HL5381]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: At Autumn Budget 2021, the Government announced that it will continue to explore the arguments for and against an Online Sales Tax (OST), the revenue from which would be used to provide business rates relief for in-store retail. The consultation will launch shortly.

No decisions on whether to proceed with an OST have yet been made. It is the Government's intention to use the forthcoming consultation to consider in detail the issues surrounding proposals for an OST. This will include

exploring the range of products, both physical and digital, which are sold online, including books.

Immigration: Afghanistan

Asked by *Lord Goodlad*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to give (1) former interpreters, and (2) the families of these interpreters, from Afghanistan indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK; and if so, when. [HL5311]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was launched on 1 April 2021, offering relocation to former Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan who have been assessed to be at serious risk as a result of their work. Work is underway across the whole of Government to ensure the Afghans who stood side by side with us in conflict, their families and those at highest risk who have been evacuated, are supported as they now rebuild their lives in the UK.

All those brought to the UK under the ARAP scheme will have the right to work, access to education and healthcare, and will be able to apply for public funds.

The Home Office has established a dedicated caseworking team, which is working jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence. This team will contact all those who arrived to discuss their leave arrangements and ensure they get the right form of leave.

Details of the type of leave to be granted to those arriving from Afghanistan, and how they will be supported in obtaining this leave, can be found in the Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration policy statement.

The policy statement can be viewed here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanist-an-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version#afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanist-an-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version#afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab)).

Further information regarding Locally employed staff, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-locally-engaged-staff>.

Immigration: EU Nationals

Asked by *Lord Bowness*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why EU citizens with pre-settled status have to re-apply at the end of the five year period to obtain settled status; and what are the consequences of a failure to make the second application within time. [HL5299]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It has been the UK's long-standing position that EU citizens and their family members granted pre-settled status under the EU

Settlement Scheme will have to apply for settled status before their pre-settled status expires in order to stay in the UK. This will ensure they have the immigration status, and secure evidence of this, which they will need to access their rights and entitlements in the UK for years to come.

Requiring an application for settled status enables us to confirm the person has fulfilled the requisite criteria and passes appropriate criminality and security checks. They will be reminded of the need to make an application before the expiry of their pre-settled status. We will also allow late applications where there are reasonable grounds for doing so.

Imports: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Hannan of Kingsclere

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the cost to business of applying VAT on imports from EU states. [HL5237]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Before the UK left the EU, sales of goods from the EU to UK customers were already subject to VAT. This has not changed. Prior to the end of the transition period, VAT was collected and paid through the VAT return system. For sales to consumers or non-VAT-registered businesses, VAT was either due in the EU Member State or in the UK, depending on whether the volume of the supplier's sales made into the UK breached an annual threshold. For sales to VAT-registered businesses, the VAT registered-business would be responsible for accounting for the VAT on a VAT return through what is known as a 'reverse charge'. The VAT-registered business could reclaim this VAT as input tax on the same VAT return, subject to the normal recovery rules. Only sales to the UK from outside the EU were subject to import VAT collection at the border.

Now that the transition period has ended, the UK has used its freedom from EU rules to create a fairer and more robust tax system, while also complying with World Trade Organisation rules by treating EU and non-EU goods the same. For goods in consignments up to £135, VAT is due at the point of sale. Where a UK VAT-registered business provides its VAT registration number to the supplier, the VAT registered business is responsible for accounting for the VAT due on the goods through a reverse charge. For goods in consignments over £135, import VAT is due and UK VAT-registered businesses can choose to use 'postponed VAT accounting'. Accounting for VAT on a VAT return in these ways allows businesses to reclaim it as input tax on the same VAT return, as was the case under the previous rules, and ensures continuity for businesses.

Innovation: Research

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 6 August 2020 (HL7418), (1) whether they are on track to increase

public spending on research and development to £22 billion per year by 2024/25; and if not (2) why not, and (3) how they intend to increase spending on research and development to reach the OECD average for gross domestic expenditure on research and development by 2027. [HL5282]

Lord Callanan: At the Spending Review 2021 (SR21), my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's plan to cement the UK as a global science and technology superpower, with public spending on R&D rising to £20 billion in 2024/25, an increase of around a quarter in real terms over the SR period. This settlement will make significant progress towards the government's ambition to increase R&D spending to £22 billion by 2026-27, and drive economy-wide R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP in 2027, with over £5 billion of additional annual investment per year by 2024/25.

This settlement represents a significant uplift against one of the most challenging fiscal positions of the last century and provides certainty to our R&D partners of government plans for the next three years. This will help the whole R&D sector plan ahead, which will be particularly welcome given recent fiscal challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Private investment forms over two-thirds of current R&D activity, so it is only by working with innovative businesses and funders from the private sector that we will reach our goal. The Innovation Strategy sets out how we will use enablers such as procurement, regulation, and the identification of key technologies to create the conditions for private sector investment in innovation across the country.

Internet: Fraud

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of trends in levels of online fraud. [HL5340]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office collects quarterly data on the number of reports of fraud and Computer Misuse Act (CMA) incidents made to Action Fraud that have been recorded as criminal offences by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB).

This data is published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on a quarterly basis and is available from June 2015 to June 2021 in table A5, which are attached.

Action Fraud reported that levels of fraud have increased since the pandemic. Fraud and CMA offences are collected and presented separately, though some fraud offences will often involve an element of online activity, but we are unable to provide a breakdown of these offences.

Crime Survey for England and Wales data for the proportion of offences flagged as cyber are collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are available for 2016/17 to 2019/20. The latest estimates by ONS for the

year to March 2020 suggest that around 53% of all fraud is online enabled.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table A5 - June 2015 - June 2021 [June 2015-June 2021.xls]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-01-11/HL5340>

Internet: Pornography

Asked by **Baroness Merron**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they consider the Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) Age Appropriate Design Code to apply to providers of online pornography; and, if not, what plans they have to (1) direct the ICO, or (2) legislate in this area. [HL5330]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Age Appropriate Design Code sets out the privacy standards companies must adopt when offering online services that are likely to be accessed by children. If a service is one that children should not be using, such as a pornography service, the Code does not apply. It is the government's view that the focus of such a service should be on how to prevent children's access to it rather than undertaking a data protection impact assessment with the aim of making the service child-friendly.

The Online Safety Bill will deliver comprehensive protections for children from accessing pornography by placing new duties on in-scope companies to protect children from harmful content online. The Bill will cover many of the most visited pornography sites, social media, video sharing platforms, forums and search engines, thereby capturing sites through which a large proportion of children access pornography. We recognise the concerns that have been raised about protecting children from online pornography on services which do not currently fall within the scope of the Bill. We are exploring ways to provide wider protections for children from accessing online pornography through the Bill.

Asked by **Baroness Merron**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect children from the harms of online pornography prior to the introduction of the Online Safety Bill. [HL5331]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Online Safety Bill aims to make the UK the safest place in the world to be a child online, but the Government is not waiting for it to become law in order to protect children from online pornography. Ofcom already has responsibility for the regulation of video-sharing platforms and video-on-demand services, which includes requirements to protect children from harmful content such as pornography.

Furthermore, in July 2021, the government published the Online Media Literacy Strategy. The strategy supports the empowerment of users, including young people, with

the skills and knowledge they need to make safe and informed decisions online. In June 2021, we also published Safety by Design guidance and a "One Stop Shop" on child online safety. These provide guidance on steps that platforms can take to design safer services and protect children.

In addition, the new Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum is clear that, by the end of secondary school, pupils should be taught about the impact that viewing harmful content, such as pornography, can have on the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners.

Internet: Safety

Asked by **Baroness Merron**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report of the Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill (Session 2021–22, HL Paper 129), what plans they have to adopt recommendations relating to (1) the statutory regulation of, and (2) minimum standards for, age assurance technologies. [HL5332]

Asked by **Baroness Merron**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to instruct Ofcom to develop (1) mandatory age assurance technology, and (2) a governance code for age assurance, ahead of the Online Safety Bill being introduced to Parliament. [HL5333]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: We are considering fully and carefully the recommendations from the Joint Committee and are grateful to its members for their work scrutinising this important Bill. The Bill will not mandate that companies use specific technologies for protecting children online, as it is vital that the Bill is future-proofed. However, Ofcom will set out in its codes of practice the steps companies need to take to comply with their child safety duties. We expect this to include, where appropriate, age assurance technologies. Ofcom will also be able to include in its regulatory codes specific standards relating to age assurance. Companies would need to follow these steps, including putting in place these technologies and following these standards, or demonstrate that the approach they are taking delivers the same level of protection for children. If they do not, they risk facing enforcement action from Ofcom.

In the meantime, DCMS is already working closely with Ofcom to ensure that the implementation period that will be necessary following passage of the legislation is as short as possible. We expect companies to take steps now to improve safety, and not wait for the legislation to come into force before acting.

Interpreters: Afghanistan

Asked by **Lord Goodlad**

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) whether they intend to establish university scholarships for former

interpreters, and the families of these interpreters, from Afghanistan who are resident in the UK, and if so, (2) how many they plan to establish, and (3) when they will be established. [HL5312]

Baroness Barran: The government welcomes our responsibility to those who have worked for the British forces in conflict zones. Many have served with distinction and at great personal risk, working in dangerous and challenging situations. We would not have been able to carry out our work there without them.

We are doing what is right to honour their service by providing generous support that properly reflects their work and the risks involved, especially to interpreters and translators who worked alongside us in frontline roles; through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), details of which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>.

In addition to the ARAP, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will welcome up to an additional 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK, including women, children, LGBT and religious minorities, details of which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

A significant cross-government effort is under way, dubbed 'Operation Warm Welcome', to ensure Afghans arriving in the UK receive the vital support they need to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education, and integrate into their local communities.

As part of Operation Warm Welcome, we announced there would be further funding for up to 300 undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships for Afghans at UK universities. The department will update with further details of this programme in due course.

Jerusalem: Christianity

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to concerns expressed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem that "radical fringe groups" are trying to drive Christians out of Jerusalem, what assessment they have made of the future status of Christians in Jerusalem. [HL5344]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. The UK condemns all attacks on the right to freedom of religion or belief.

The UK is committed to working with all parties across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to ensure the safety and security of the holy sites and all who worship there, including Christians from all nations. Israel is a thriving democracy, and has made clear its commitment to freedom of religion. We encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws.

Key Workers: Pay

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the claim by the Trades Union Congress that thousands of key workers are earning less in real terms than they were a decade earlier. [HL5367]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: To examine the real terms earnings of key workers, we focus on public sector workers - which represent the majority of key workers.

Public sector pay in real terms (total pay, deflated by CPI) has grown at an annualised rate of 0.2% over the last decade (since the three months to November 2011). The level of public sector average weekly earnings (in real terms) is now in line with that of the private sector in the three months to November 2021.

The public sector has, on average, better remuneration packages than the private sector. ONS suggested a 7% premium in 2019 (controlling for characteristics, including pensions). In 2020, the median salary in the public sector was £3,500 higher than the private sector, this gap is most acute amongst the lowest paid, where ONS data suggests public sector average hourly wages are 20% higher.

Looking ahead, pay for most frontline workforces – including nurses, police officers, prison officers and teachers is set through an independent Pay Review Body process. Public sector workers will see pay rises across the whole Spending Review period (2022/23-2024/25) as the strong recovery in the economy and labour market has allowed us to return to a normal pay setting process.

Knives: Crime

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent steps they have taken to tackle knife crime. [HL5338]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Tackling knife crime is a priority and the Government is determined to crack down on the scourge of violence devastating our communities.

We are supporting the police every step of the way in this effort. We have given them more powers and resources to go after criminals and take knives and other dangerous weapons off our streets, including through the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers and increasing police funding.

The Government has made £130.5m available this year to tackle serious violence, including murder and knife crime. This includes: £35.5m for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) which bring together local partners to deliver a range of early intervention and prevention programmes and tackle the drivers of violence in the 18 areas worst affected by serious violence; £30m to support the police to take targeted action in parts of England and Wales most affected by serious violence through the Grip programme, which uses data to identify violence hotspots

and target operational activity in those areas; and £20m for new early intervention programmes that will help stop young people from being drawn into violence, including cognitive behavioural therapy, family therapy, as well as specialist support in crisis moments such as when a person is admitted to A&E with a knife injury.

We have also invested £200m over 10 years for the Youth Endowment Fund, which is funding projects to support children and young people at risk of violence and exploitation and to steer them away from crime.

We acknowledge there is more to do which is why we are bringing forward the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill so the law-abiding majority can be confident they are safe. The Bill includes: Serious Violence Reduction Orders, which will give the police the power to stop and search adults already convicted of knife or offensive weapons offences; the Serious Violence Duty, which will require authorities and bodies delivering public services to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence in their areas; and offensive weapons homicide reviews which will be introduced to improve the national and local understanding of causes, patterns, victims and perpetrators of violence and homicide.

We have also prohibited certain particularly dangerous types of knife through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 and have introduced the offence of possessing specified offensive weapons in private. The Act also introduced Knife Crime Prevention Orders which will provide the police with a vital means to steer those most at risk away from serious violence. On 5 July 2021 we introduced a pilot for KCPOs across the Metropolitan Police area.

Libya: Corruption

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (HL13254 and HL13255) on 24 February 2021, what discussions they have had with the government of Belgium regarding reports that the Chairman of the Libyan Investment Authority is being sought by Belgian authorities in connection with charges of corruption and embezzlement. [HL5306]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Her Majesty's Government has not engaged the Belgian authorities on this matter. Any criminal investigation is a matter for the relevant Belgian authorities.

Lockheed Martin and Virgin Orbit

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 28 July 2021 (HL2257), what is the investment to date in (1) Spaceport Cornwall, and (2) Saxa Vord in Shetland; what is the state of launch operations at both sites funded by grants to (a) Virgin Orbit, and (b) Lockheed

Martin respectively; and when they anticipate that there will be any launches from sites in the UK. [HL5303]

Lord Callanan: *Spaceport Cornwall:* The UK Space Agency (UKSA) awarded £7.35m to Virgin Orbit to support horizontal launch from Spaceport Cornwall. £4.2m of the UKSA grant has already been disbursed to the grantee for completed milestones. Virgin Orbit's plans currently anticipate launching from Cornwall Spaceport in the Summer of 2022.

Saxa Vord Spaceport: The UK Space Agency awarded £23.5 million, in two separate grants, to Lockheed Martin. This includes £13.5m to establish launch operations at Saxa Vord Spaceport in Shetland and £10m for the research and development, build and flight demonstration of an Orbital Manoeuvring Vehicle (OMV). £5.3m and £8.5 respectively have been disbursed for completed work. Lockheed Martin are currently aiming to launch from Saxa Vord Spaceport in Autumn 2022.

National Security

Asked by Lord Fox

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many additional people have been recruited by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to staff the monitoring unit following the implementation of the National Security and Investment Act 2021. [HL5308]

Asked by Lord Fox

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how many referrals have been received, and (2) what is the average wait time for processing cases, following the implementation of the National Security and Investment Act 2021. [HL5309]

Asked by Lord Fox

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many referrals have been called in to date following the implementation of the National Security and Investment Act 2021. [HL5310]

Lord Callanan: The National Security and Investment Act 2021 commenced on 4 January 2022 and represents the biggest shake-up of the UK's investment screening regime in 20 years, while keeping the country firmly open for business.

The Act requires the Government to publish an annual report setting out information about the numbers and types of trigger events that it has been notified about and those it subsequently called in for a national security assessment. The first annual report will be published later in 2022, after the conclusion of the financial year.

We have ensured that we have the people, the technology and the processes we need so that the Investment Security Unit is as effective and efficient as possible.

Natural Gas: Storage

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of national gas storage capacity as a percentage of annual national domestic demand; whether they consider current capacity to be sufficient; and what plans they have, if any, to increase gas storage capacity. [HL5285]

Lord Callanan: A strength of the UK is that the Government have a diverse gas supply which prevents over-reliance on natural gas storage which instead plays an important role in providing system flexibility.

Its exposure to global gas prices underscores the importance of its plan to build a strong, home-grown renewable energy sector to reduce further its reliance on fossil fuels. This is why the Government outlined measures to transition to more nuclear and renewable electricity for the future whilst acknowledging the role gas will play in the future for essential security of supply.

Offshore Industry: North Sea

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a windfall tax on North Sea oil and gas producers to support relief for households struggling with their energy bills. [HL5345]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The UK Government places additional taxes on the extraction of oil and gas, with companies engaged in the production of oil and gas on the UK Continental Shelf subject to headline tax rates on their profits that are currently more than double those paid by other businesses. To date, the sector has paid more than £375 billion in production taxes.

All taxes are kept under review and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

OneWeb: Government Shareholding

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their golden share in OneWeb enables them to influence policy decisions, or whether they are limited to preventing disposals of shares; what percentage of the share capital in OneWeb they hold; and what financial benefits have been received since their purchase of the company. [HL5304]

Lord Callanan: The Government's golden share in OneWeb provides us with the final say over any future sale of the company and over future access to OneWeb technology by other countries on national security grounds. The Government will own an approximate 17.6% stake in OneWeb when Hanwha System's investment closes later this year.

OneWeb: Satellites

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 28 July 2021 (HL2253), whether OneWeb is still using the Soyuz launcher at Vostochny in Russia for heavy launches; and what plans they have, if any, to use other facilities instead of Russian ones. [HL5301]

Lord Callanan: OneWeb's launches are currently contracted with Arianespace, a French-headquartered multinational company. Arianespace use Russian launch vehicles, launching from the Far-East in Russia and Kazakhstan.

Out-of-school Education: Islam

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Barran on 18 January (HL5056 and HL5057), what steps they take to ensure that radical Islamism is not being taught in madrassas in the UK; whether they have any evidence that radical Islamism is being taught in those settings; and if so, what further steps they intend to take. [HL5587]

Baroness Barran: The government is committed to ensuring all children are safe, wherever they are educated, including safe from extremism and radicalisation. The department is actively working with the education sector, national partners, and local partners to safeguard children and young people from these risks. In addition to the work that we do with schools and colleges to ensure our children and young people are resilient to extremist ideology, we jointly fund with the Home Office a network of experts who provide frontline support to education providers.

We have also established an online form to allow concerns regarding extremism within the education sector to be reported directly to the department, to complement our existing counter extremism helpline, and we encourage anyone with a concern to use this service.

As mentioned in my answer of 18 January, in instances where the department becomes aware of a provider where extremist activity might be taking place, we will also work closely with relevant agencies, such as the local authority, Ofsted and the police to act. In those rare cases, such as the case of Umar Haque in 2018, which saw the attempted radicalisation of several children in a London Madrassa through devious and sophisticated grooming techniques, we have worked closely with safeguarding partners to intervene and safeguard the children, and to act against the perpetrators. In the case of Umar Haque, we saw multi-agency action result in the conviction of him and his associates under the Terrorism Act 2006.

However, while there are many legal powers in place to protect children in out-of-school providers including

madrassas, which have been proven to be effective, we have not ruled out further action.

As outlined in my previous answer, the department has been taking forward a package of activity aimed at further enhancing safeguarding in this sector. This includes the provision of over £3 million of targeted funding to pilot ways in which we can boost local capacity further to identify and intervene in out-of-school providers of concern, and testing the utility of existing powers held across multiple agencies, such as local authorities, the police and Ofsted, to safeguard children attending these providers.

These pilots were taken forward with the intention of building our evidence base to inform our national next steps for supporting safeguarding in the sector, including the need for any legislation. This work concluded at the end of last year, and we are currently evaluating the outcome of these pilots. We will set out our next steps to this work in due course.

Pensioners: Fuel Poverty

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what new measures they have put in place, or plan to introduce, to ensure elderly pensioners who are facing sharply rising fuel bills are able to afford to keep their homes sufficiently warm this winter. [[HL5286](#)]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Act 2021 introduced a double lock and allowed the Government to increase pensions by the higher of inflation or 2.5 per cent. From April 2022 state pensions will be increased by 3.1 per cent and this represents an additional £4bn spend on pensioner benefits in 2022/23. It should also be remembered that last year when earnings were negative this would have resulted in pensions being frozen, despite CPI being 0.5 per cent pensioners in receipt of state pension saw an increase of 2.5 per cent.

Pension Credit also provides invaluable financial support for vulnerable pensioners. Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5bn in Pension Credit, which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

Local Authorities in England have discretion to design their own bespoke local schemes within the overall parameters of the Household Support Fund, with support primarily focused on food, energy & water bills and wider essentials. Up to 50 per cent of the Fund is available for councils to spend on households without children, including those of State Pension age.

Other support for pensioners includes Winter Fuel Payments which continue to be payable to customers of State Pension age. We pay £200 to households with a customer aged between 66 and 79 and £300 to a household with someone aged 80 or over. We pay over 11

million winter fuel payments annually at a cost of £2bn which is a significant contribution to winter fuel bills.

Cold Weather Payments are also available and help vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet additional heating costs, during periods of unseasonably cold weather between 1 November and 31 March. This includes older people in receipt of Pension Credit.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit a discount of £140 on their energy bill providing their supplier is part of the scheme. There are now 200 thousand fewer pensioners in absolute poverty (both before and after housing costs) than in 2009/10.

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Post Codes

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the current postcode system in Britain. [[HL5334](#)]

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ability of the British postcode system to meet changing demand, including from delivery drivers, and the efficiency and sustainability of the system. [[HL5335](#)]

Lord Callanan: The postcode system is an operational tool, owned and maintained by Royal Mail, with its primary purpose being to ensure the accurate sorting, routing and delivery of customers' mail. Royal Mail keeps this under review for its purposes.

Postcodes may be used for other purposes including by private and public sector organisations with the terms of access to the postcode address file being regulated by Ofcom, the independent regulator. However, other means of identifying locations for the purposes of deliveries are also available.

Post Offices: ICT

*Asked by **Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what provision they will make for oversight, independent of the Post Office and Government, of the Alternative Dispute Resolutions in the Horizon compensation cases. [[HL5290](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government will monitor the Post Office's progress on compensation cases as well as the approach being taken when making offers of compensation and track for consistency and fairness. Furthermore, a QC or other suitably qualified legal professional will review the proposed approach for

assessing claims for at least an initial cohort of cases, and will be available to advise POL and the Government on issues arising as required.

Postal Services: Standards

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any delays in Royal Mail postal services caused and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the effects of such delays on wellbeing and the economy; and what measures they are considering to remedy these delays. [HL5298]

Lord Callanan: The Government recognises the importance of a reliable universal postal service to customers, businesses, and local communities across the UK, and we know postal workers have been working exceptionally hard to meet demand over the recent peak period and in light of Covid-19 related absences.

Royal Mail has publicly stated that it is aware of the reduction in service levels in some areas and is taking action to reduce delays to deliveries. Its contingency plans to mitigate disruption to postal services are overseen by Ofcom, the independent regulator responsible for monitoring the delivery of the universal postal service.

Ofcom continues to monitor Royal Mail's performance to ensure it is providing the best service it can to customers and has powers to investigate and take enforcement action if Royal Mail fails to achieve its performance targets.

Rape: Prosecutions

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the prosecution rate for rape. [HL5339]

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: The stark drop in the number of cases that have gone before a jury in recent years means too few victims are seeing justice. Closing the gap between reports of rape and prosecutions is an absolute priority for this Government. The CPS are undertaking extensive work to drive up and improve prosecutions through the Joint National RASSO Action Plan with the police, RASSO 2025, and the Operation Soteria pathways, which are currently underway in five CPS Areas.

Work already delivered by the CPS includes the publication of a National Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Framework outlining baseline standards around the CPS' work with ISVAs, the publication of a memorandum of understanding with the police on seeking early advice to support effective and efficient decision-making in rape cases, and the publication of a digital walk through, which explains for victims the process of a criminal trial.

Refugees: Afghanistan

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have been made with implementing Operation Warm Welcome. [HL5313]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have offered sanctuary, food, medical care, education and support to at least 13,000 people in bridging hotels during and since Operation Pitting.

Since the Minister for Afghan Resettlement announced Operation Warm Welcome, in September 2021:

- More than 4,000 people have moved or are being moved into their new homes since the first ARAP flights in June – this is an unprecedented pace of resettlement.
- All children who were evacuated under Op Pitting are now in school and those children who have joined us since then are either in school or being placed in schools as quickly as possible.
- 97% of evacuees are registered with GPs and everyone has been offered Covid vaccinations.
- We have launched a brand new housing portal on gov.uk for members of the public to offer accommodation.
- We have made it easier for local community groups to support Afghans through the Community Sponsorship Scheme, which will begin welcoming Afghan families later this month.
- We have developed an integration package for Afghan families.

We have launched the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme which will welcome up to 20,000 Afghans at risk over the coming years, a brand new safe and legal migration route.

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will grant refugee status to Afghans who have fled the Taliban and are seeking refuge in the UK. [HL5315]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual facts and merits in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Those who need protection are normally granted five years' limited leave, have full access to the labour market and mainstream benefits, and can apply for settlement after five years.

Our country policy and information notes contain an assessment of risk and makes it clear that each case will be considered on its own merits and that no one who is at real risk of persecution or serious harm in Afghanistan will be expected to return there. The country policy guidance for Afghanistan is available on gov.uk.

Regional Planning and Development

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to publish their plan to spread research and development funding across all nations and regions of the UK; whether that plan will seek to address the imbalance of research and development spending between London and the South East and other regions and nations; and how that plan will link with other Government policies aimed at supporting the levelling up agenda. [HL5283]

Lord Callanan: The 2021 Spending Review set out the government's plan to increase public R&D spending from £14.9bn in 2021/22 to £20 billion per annum by 2024/25. The substantial uplift to research and science funding will not only allow the UK to build on our core strengths but will also provide opportunities to grow research and innovation investment across the entire country as part of the Government's approach to levelling up the UK economy. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

The Government's Innovation Strategy, published in July, outlined our thinking on how to grow innovation clusters and ensure that research and innovation benefits the economy and society across the UK. The forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper will take a comprehensive place-based approach to economic growth and will set out more detail on how Government will support levelling up through R&D.

The Government is taking steps to increase the transparency of how places benefit from R&D funding. UKRI are publishing detailed breakdowns of their funding data at a regional level annually – the latest available data is on UKRI's website.

Rivers: Pollution

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the targets for each of the coming five years for reducing (1) nitrogen, (2) phosphate, and (3) sediment pollutants, entering UK watercourses. [HL5324]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We have existing regimes to set ambitions for local water bodies through River Basin Management Planning, including nutrient limits in certain areas. The draft River Basin Management Plans were published on 22 October 2021 for consultation, which will end on 22 April 2022.

The Government has taken powers in the Environment Act to create new, legally-binding targets in four priority areas including water, to complement the existing framework. These new targets will be an important mechanism to drive environmental improvement and meet our ambitious objectives for clean and plentiful water in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

We plan to publish our proposed targets along with supporting evidence for public consultation shortly. I

would encourage all interested parties to engage in this process.

Satellites: Manufacturing Industries

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 28 July 2021 (HL2254), what progress they have made, if any, to manufacture satellites in the UK. [HL5302]

Lord Callanan: Details of satellite production and manufacturing are a commercial matter for the company.

The Government is using its position on the board of directors to encourage expansion of OneWeb's UK content including onshoring the manufacture of its Generation 2 satellites.

Schools: Mental Health Services

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many trained mental health first aiders there are in secondary schools in England. [HL5394]

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce a dedicated mental health first aider in every secondary school in England. [HL5395]

Baroness Barran: The department does not hold data on the number of Mental Health First Aiders in schools and we believe it is important that schools are able to decide what training they offer to their staff based on the individual circumstances of the school.

However, we have made sure that schools have access to a range of training, so teachers understand and respond to the mental health and wellbeing issues that pupils face, including those issues that are as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The response to the consultation on the 'Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper', published in July 2018, confirmed our commitment to provide mental health awareness training for a member of staff from all state-funded secondary schools in England by March 2020. The Department of Health and Social Care awarded the final year (19-20) of this 3 year programme to deliver Mental Health Awareness Training to all eligible secondary schools to the Anna Freud Centre, having previously been delivered by Mental Health First Aid England.

For the longer term, we announced £9.5 million on 10 May 2021 to offer senior mental health lead training to around a third of all state schools and colleges in the 2021/22 academic year, as part of its commitment to offer this training to all state schools and colleges by 2025. A senior mental health lead is a strategic leadership role in a school or college, responsible for overseeing the settings

whole school or college approach to promote children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, as well as supporting those who need help with their mental health to receive appropriate support. The role is not mandatory, and the senior mental health lead training will not be compulsory.

Since applications opened in October 2021, over 8,000 eligible schools and colleges have applied for a senior mental health training grant. Over 6,500 of these have booked onto a Department for Education quality-assured training course and over 3,500 senior leads are estimated to have begun their training.

Ahead of this, to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, our recent £15 million Wellbeing for Education Recovery and Return programmes provided free expert training, support and resources for school and college staff dealing with children and young people experiencing mental health issues. Information provided by 95% of local authorities, on how they delivered training and support using Wellbeing for Education Return funding, suggests that training and support reached over 12,000 education settings. Many local authorities have also told us that this funding has enabled and accelerated cross-system collaboration to support education settings, staff, children and young people and their families. Local areas continue to share examples of practice (promotional materials, worksheets, presentations, links to recorded sessions and local directories and evaluations) with us and each other.

Spiking: Drugs

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the prevalence of drug spiking. [HL5341]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Reports of spiking, whether that is adding substances to drinks or injecting people with needles, are extremely concerning, and this is an issue that government and law enforcement are taking very seriously. We have every sympathy with victims and anyone who might feel unable to enjoy a night out without fear. We utterly condemn anyone who perpetrates such attacks, and they should be brought to justice.

In September 2021, the Home Secretary asked the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to urgently review the extent and scale of the issue. We continue to receive regular updates from the police and are working together to understand the issue locally, regionally and nationally, including working with our partners in the National Crime Agency.

The abhorrent crimes of spiking also speak to broader issues of violence against women and girls. We published our new cross-Government tackling violence against women and girls strategy last Summer, to help to ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere. We are delivering a pilot £5 million safety of women at night fund, focused on preventing violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, particularly in the night-

time economy. That is in addition to the £25 million safer streets fund, which focuses on improving public safety, with an emphasis on the safety of women and girls, and their feelings of safety in public spaces.

State Retirement Pensions

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to address the issue of new state pension claimants waiting weeks or months for their pension payments to start; and whether everyone reaching state pension age is now being paid their state pension on time. [HL5287]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: We have deployed significant additional resource into the processing of new State Pension claims, the payment of which was particularly affected by the impact of the pandemic.

As a result, all claims received by DWP for UK State Pension should be paid on time, other than for those customers where further information is required, or evidence is awaited. State Pension is paid in arrears and, in most instances, the first payment will be due four weeks after the customer's 66th Birthday.

State Retirement Pensions: Females

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many women who were receiving less state pension than they were entitled to have (1) had their payments corrected, and (2) received back payments. [HL5288]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: I refer you to the information published on gov.uk on 22 October 2021. Please see attached document.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL5288 Attachment [HL5288 Attachment.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-01-11/HL5288>

Water: Pollution

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Whitchurch**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they expect the Environment Agency to inspect all reports of water pollution to ascertain the seriousness of the incident. [HL5325]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Environment Agency (EA) receives over 100,000 incident reports a year, every one of which is recorded and assessed. The EA then focuses its efforts and resources on where they will have the most impact - so those which pose the greatest risk to the environment.

The EA's Incident Triage Project is looking at how the EA can best use its resources and maximise benefits for

the environment. While it continues to attend the most serious incidents, the EA will concentrate its efforts on regulatory activities which prevent incidents from happening in the first place. Intelligence from incident reporting helps the EA plan and prioritise work to protect the environment.

Youth Evidence Review

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the findings of the Youth Evidence Review, published in

December 2021, when they expect to publish their final summary report outlining the implications of the review on Government policy. [[HL5296](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Last year, DCMS conducted a Youth Review to ensure that our spending, policy and programmes meet the needs of young people. The review heard from over 6,000 young people and 120 youth organisations. The Youth Evidence Review, which was published in December 2021, although separate, informed the DCMS-led youth review. The findings from the Youth Review will be published shortly.

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