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

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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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 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, 27 January 2022

Covid-19: Adult Social Care

[HLWS553]

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

Thanks to the success of the vaccination booster roll out, and the reducing level of both infection and hospitalisations across the country, the government has been able to announce the end of Plan B. This means we are now able to take steps towards getting care homes back to normal, easing some of the difficult restrictions which both staff and residents have had in place which I know have been incredibly challenging for all, whilst still protecting residents from the continued risk of COVID-19.

From Monday 31st January, there will no longer be nationally-set direct restrictions on visiting in care homes and there will be no limit on the number of visitors a resident can receive. Residents should be supported to undertake visits out of the care home without the need to isolate on their return, but should continue to take reasonable precautions and undertake testing arrangements for high-risk visits.

As well as removing those additional precautions we put in place in response to the Omicron variant, we are now able to reduce isolation periods for residents in care homes so that they are the same as for the general public in most cases.

Residents who need to isolate will now only need to do so for a maximum of 10 days. The 10-day maximum period will apply to those residents who test positive, are identified as a close contact or have had an unplanned stay in hospital. For some residents, the isolation period could be as short as five days subject to the testing regime that will be outlined in guidance.

Today I am also announcing changes to regular testing for staff. For all adult social care staff, we are moving to lateral flow testing every day before work and removing weekly PCR testing. Recent clinical advice is that following the pre-shift testing regime provides better protection than the current regular testing regime of weekly PCR with three lateral flow tests a week in high-risk settings.

As restrictions are relaxed for care home residents and for the general population, testing continues to be essential for providing the protections needed to support this relaxation of restrictions. The introduction of pre-shift rapid lateral flow tests should help identify and isolate positive cases quicker rather than waiting for PCR results to return from the lab.

This change applies only to regular asymptomatic testing for staff meaning PCR tests will remain available

for symptomatic staff and residents. Outbreak testing and monthly resident testing will also remain unchanged.

By maintaining a robust regime of testing in adult social care, continuing to press ahead with our vaccination programme and maintaining high standards of infection prevention and control, we are able to support residents of care homes and recipients of care to gradually return to enjoying life as it was before the pandemic.

Defence Estate: Annington Property Ltd

[HLWS549]

Baroness Goldie: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to review its estate to ensure value for money.

In 1996, the Ministry of Defence, in what was effectively a sale and leaseback agreement, granted a 999-year lease of over 55,000 Service Family Accommodation homes to Annington Property Ltd and immediately leased the homes back on 200-year underleases. In 2018, the National Audit Office concluded in its review of the arrangements that taxpayers are between £2.2 billion and £4.2 billion worse off as a result of the sale and leaseback arrangements.

Given our obligations to secure value for money, we have reviewed MOD's current arrangements with Annington and now set out the steps that MOD is taking to deliver greater value for money for the taxpayer in relation to Service Family Accommodation.

First, MOD engaged highly experienced advisers and counsel to deliver a settlement with Annington in the site rent review process. This settlement achieves value for money, and removes ongoing uncertainty for the Department; we believe it to be a good outcome and a fair settlement. The settlement resulted in a change in the overall adjustment to open market rents from 58% to 49.6%.

Secondly, MOD continues to reduce the number of untenanted properties which it holds since these otherwise represent a liability for the taxpayer, by returning these to Annington under the terms of the lease.

Thirdly, MOD can confirm that the Department will explore the exercise of its statutory leasehold enfranchisement rights to buy out Annington's interest in the homes and gain full ownership rights. Initially, the MOD has made a single claim for one house, with the intention to submit a further claim in respect of another house in the near future. It is hoped that this test case will establish certain key principles. The cost of enfranchising these houses will be in accordance with the statutory enfranchisement formula, fixed at the date of the notice of claim, and the price will be agreed between the parties or determined by an independent Tribunal. If the cost of recovering full ownership of the units from Annington is less than the present value of MOD's ongoing liabilities, such a transaction is likely to represent good value for

money. The MOD would then benefit from any future appreciation in value of the units. Accordingly, the MOD has served notice on Annington under Section 5 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 of its desire to enfranchise a house currently leased from Annington. Annington, through its lawyers, has notified the MOD that it is considering the impact of the claim and has put the MOD on notice of a potential dispute.

A successful enfranchisement programme would also provide the MOD with more flexibility in the management of its estate to the benefit of Defence, tenants, and potentially wider Government objectives.

Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

[HLWS550]

Lord Callanan: My Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Industry) (Lee Rowley), made the following Statement on Friday 14th January:

This Statement concerns the application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by NNB Generation Company (SZC) Limited for the construction and operation of the Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station, with associated infrastructure near Leiston in Suffolk.

Under section 98(3) of the Planning Act 2008, the Examining Authority must submit its report to the Secretary of State by the end of the period of three months beginning with the deadline for completion of its examination of the application, or (if earlier) the end of the day on which it completes the examination, unless the Secretary of State sets a new deadline under section 98(4) of that Act. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it.

A request has been made to the Secretary of State by the Planning Inspectorate to extend the report writing stage of the Examination by six working weeks, from 14 January 2022 to 25 February 2022. The reasons given for this request were that a significant number of change requests were submitted by the Applicant during the Pre-Examination and Examination stages of the planning process. These changes require significant additional consideration from the Examining Authority. The Examining Authority has also been affected by unexpected health issues which have impacted upon the reporting stage of the process.

Taking these reasons into account and, after careful consideration, the Secretary of State has decided to reset the statutory timescale for the report writing stage, extending the deadline for the Examining Authority to submit its report to the Secretary of State by six working weeks, from the original deadline of 14 January 2022 to 25 February 2022.

However, mindful of the need to avoid unnecessary delays to the development consent processes, the Secretary of State requests the Examining Authority make best efforts to complete its report as soon as is reasonably practicable within the extended period.

The decision to set the new deadline for the report writing stage for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

NHS Constitution and Handbook

[HLWS551]

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

In accordance with the Health Act 2009, I have laid before Parliament a report on the effect of the NHS Constitution. The report has also been published on the Gov.uk website, alongside an updated version of the Handbook to the NHS Constitution.

The NHS Constitution, like the NHS, belongs to us all. It empowers patients, public and staff by bringing together in one document the founding principles and values of our NHS. It sets out the legal rights to which patients, the public and staff are entitled and the pledges that the NHS has additionally made towards them. Just as importantly, it makes clear the responsibilities which we all have for supporting the NHS to operate fairly and effectively.

Throughout this extraordinary time where we have seen the huge impact of the pandemic on staff, patients and society as a whole, our NHS workforce have strived tirelessly to protect the people we love. It is therefore more important than ever that patients, public and staff know their rights, responsibilities and what they can expect from their NHS.

The report is based on an independent survey of staff, patients and the public. It describes how they view the impact of the NHS Constitution, and its value in promoting and raising standards of care.

While the report shows that public awareness of the Constitution is still low, we are pleased to see it has increased since the 2018 report, and staff awareness remains significantly higher than public awareness. We know that those informed about the NHS Constitution are more likely to use it and so there is further work to do in improving awareness to ensure we all get the most out of our interactions with the NHS.

Looking forward, a full review of the NHS Constitution itself is due in January 2025. The scoping for this review, including a statutory consultation with patients, carers and staff will begin this year. We will use the findings from today's report to shape the consultation and explore how to increase awareness and use of the NHS Constitution across all public and staff groups.

Alongside this report we have also published a revised version of the Handbook to the Constitution. The Handbook explains each right, pledge and responsibility in the NHS Constitution. It is designed to give the public, patients, their carers and families, and NHS staff fuller information about what the Constitution means for them. This revision ensures the information given in the Handbook remains accurate and up to date.

OSCE: Ministerial Council and Priorities for 2022

[HLWS552]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) faced a challenging year in 2021, with geopolitical tensions leading to a failure to reach consensus on a range of important issues. Sweden, as 2021 Chair-in-Office, steered the organisation through this period with a focus on addressing protracted conflicts, strengthening democracy and enhancing gender equality. The UK worked closely with Sweden, including as chair of the OSCE's Security Committee, which we have now concluded after two successful years.

On 2 and 3 December, Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde hosted the 28th Ministerial Council meeting of the OSCE in Stockholm. The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, represented the United Kingdom. The Ministerial Council is the key decision-making body of the OSCE and was attended by Ministers and senior officials from across its 57 participating States, including US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The Council agreed a decision on increasing cooperation to address the challenges of climate change. Due to the positions of certain participating States, there was difficulty in reaching agreement on a number of other valuable decisions, reflecting wider difficulties in reaching consensus. In 2021, the OSCE's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Europe's largest annual human rights and democracy conference, did not take place because we were unable to reach agreement on the agenda.

The Foreign Secretary's intervention at the Ministerial Council underlined the need for all participating States to respect OSCE commitments. The Foreign Secretary raised concern over the impact of ongoing conflicts on regional stability and the threats facing freedom and democracy across the region, placing a particular emphasis on the importance of the OSCE's work in election observation.

The Foreign Secretary's statement also emphasised our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, calling on Russia to use OSCE tools to build trust and live up to their commitments on military transparency. The UK and allies made clear to Russia that its military build-up on the border of Ukraine and in illegally annexed Crimea is unacceptable. We reiterated these points in our closing statement and also regretted Russia's decision not to renew the mandate of the Border Observation Mission along the Ukraine-Russia state border.

During the ministerial working dinner, the Foreign Secretary led a discussion on conflict resolution focusing on the importance of finding the political will to implement existing tools. She also co-hosted a side event on the human rights situation in Belarus, alongside Denmark and Germany, with 36 co-sponsors. Her

Majesty's Ambassador to the OSCE, Neil Bush, represented the UK in a discussion focused on the potential OSCE role in Afghanistan particularly in supporting regional stability.

Poland have taken on the OSCE Chair for 2022 and will face another challenging year, at a particularly tense moment for the region. They plan to prioritise conflict prevention and resolution, with a focus on protection of civilians, and will champion building back better through effective multilateralism.

At the first OSCE Permanent Council in 2022, the UK offered Polish Foreign Minister Rau our full support. Our statement underlined our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's aggressive acts and urged participating States to robustly defend the principles and commitments we signed up to. We also emphasised the importance of the cross-dimensional approach to security, which includes support for democracy and human rights, and called for adequate financing of the OSCE's autonomous institutions and field missions in the Unified Budget. As a consensus-based organisation, where all countries in the Euro-Atlantic Area are represented and have an equal voice, the OSCE has a unique and valuable role in resolving tensions and avoiding escalation.

In 2022, the UK remains committed to supporting the work of the OSCE. We will focus on conflict prevention and resolution, ensuring in particular that we use the OSCE platform to hold Russia to account for its ongoing aggression in Ukraine. We will continue to work closely with the OSCE Chair-in-Office, Secretary General Helga Schmid, and other participating States to build an effective organisation which maintains comprehensive security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area.

Sizewell C: Update on Negotiations with EDF

[HLWS548]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng) has today made the following statement:

The UK was the first major economy to legislate for a target of Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. As set out in the Net Zero Strategy and the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, nuclear will continue to be an important and reliable source of clean electricity as we strive to decarbonise the UK economy. By 2050, we expect that the electricity system will be built on a foundation of renewables such as wind and solar, but these will need to be bolstered by reliable low-carbon power. The UK Government recognises that large-scale nuclear is the only proven technology available to provide continuous, low carbon electricity at scale. Ministers are therefore firmly committed to deploying new nuclear in order to strengthen Britain's energy security and reduce our exposure to volatile global gas prices, provided there is clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers.

In 2016 we took the decision to enter into a Contract for Difference over Hinkley Point C in Somerset, which is currently under construction and expected to begin generating power by 2026, when it will start providing 3.2GW of electricity. However, with 5 of the UK's 6 nuclear stations scheduled to close by 2028, the Government has made a commitment to bring a further large-scale nuclear project to a Final Investment Decision during this Parliament, subject to value for money and all relevant approvals. To facilitate this, we have introduced legislation for a new financing mechanism, the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model, through the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Bill. It is estimated that RAB could lower the cost of each new large-scale nuclear power projects by more than £30bn, compared to the existing Contracts for Difference model. The RAB model is also expected to reduce Britain's reliance on overseas developers for finance by substantially widening the pool of private investors to include British pension funds, insurers and other institutional investors from like-minded countries.

After Hinkley Point C, the Sizewell C Project in Suffolk is the most advanced nuclear project in the UK. As a replica of Hinkley Point, Sizewell offers a high level of design maturity and an identified supply chain. The company developing the project has applied for both a Development Consent Order and Nuclear Site Licence and believes it can begin construction during this Parliament. If built, the new plant could deliver around 7 percent of the UK's current electricity needs (enough to power the equivalent of around 6 million homes) and create tens of thousands of jobs across the country. New nuclear is not only at the heart of our plans to ensure greater energy independence, but to drive economic growth.

The Government entered into Sizewell C project discussions in January 2021. Following significant investment from EDF, the project requires additional financial support to further mature it to a point where other private investors (and, subject to value for money considerations and relevant approvals, the Government) could consider a direct investment in the project development company. Sufficient early development funding prior to the construction of major projects is a key determinant of subsequent project performance, and to this end the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan committed in 2020 to provide nuclear development funding for this purpose.

I am pleased to announce that I will today enter into an option agreement with EDF Energy Holdings Ltd, which provides Government with an option over the land at Sizewell C and conditionally over the shares in the development company in exchange for an option fee of £100m. EDF Energy Holdings Ltd will invest that £100m in further developing the Sizewell C electricity infrastructure project. Should the project reach a successful Final Investment Decision, subject to value for money and all relevant approvals, the Government would recover this funding together with a financing return, either through an equity stake in the project, or in cash.

This agreement represents an important milestone for both the Government's nuclear strategy and the project, which has the potential to significantly contribute to the UK's decarbonisation and security of supply objectives. However, I am clear that this agreement does not represent a Government decision that the Sizewell C project will progress. Neither is it an indication that similar commercial arrangements would necessarily be desirable for other prospective nuclear projects. Decisions on the Sizewell C Project will be dependent on decisions in respect of planning and designation under the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Bill if passed into law.

Noting that the future of the Sizewell C Project is not confirmed, the agreement the Government has reached with EDF provides the taxpayer with downside protection should the project not proceed. In return for the £100m, the Government will be granted an option on the Sizewell site and conditionally over the shares in certain circumstances of the development company. In the event the negotiations with EDF do not successfully result in a positive investment decision satisfactory to all parties, then subject to certain conditions, taxpayers would be entitled to seek acquisition of either EDF's shares in the Sizewell C development company or the site itself or if neither can be delivered by EDF, the taxpayer would be entitled to a reimbursement of the £100m with a financing return. This in turn would provide Government with the possibility of proceeding with alternative nuclear or low-carbon infrastructure, and therefore support the realisation of our net zero objectives.

Today's announcement further demonstrates our commitment to energy security, investing in our thriving nuclear sector and creating thousands of jobs.

UK-Greenland Free Trade Agreement Negotiations

[HLWS554]

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

The United Kingdom has today launched negotiations with the government of Greenland on a continuity free trade agreement to reduce the costs of trading and to identify areas of strategic interest for future cooperation. While we introduced temporary measures to secure some continuity of trade with Greenland at the beginning of 2021, we never closed the door to securing a more permanent arrangement at an appropriate time.

These negotiations will seek to ensure that British firms can once again import popular products from Greenland tariff free. This will also support processing industries in Scotland, the North East and North West of England. As Greenland is the largest supplier of cold-water prawns in the world, as well as being a leading source of fish, these negotiations will help ensure the stability and resilience of British supply chains for consumers and the hospitality sector. The negotiations will also lay the groundwork for

potentially tackling market access barriers for British businesses in Greenland in the longer term, including by liberalising professional business services trade, facilitating inward investment, and agreeing mutual recognition and double taxation arrangements. These discussions will therefore pave the way to potentially unlocking significant new opportunities for British exporters and investors looking to extend their presence across the Arctic.

Additionally, Greenland is an important partner in the Arctic – an increasingly important geo-political area. These negotiations provide an opportunity to establish a dialogue through which to broaden our cooperation with Greenland on our priorities, such as climate change,

science and research, and potentially the supply of critical minerals.

As the Arctic continues to grow in strategic importance, Greenland will be a key partner in ensuring a secure, stable, and sustainable future for the region.

In parallel, we expect the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to enter into negotiations with Greenland on our access to Greenlandic fishing waters.

This agreement will constitute Greenland's first bilateral agreement with a third partner country, and we look forward to using this opportunity to solidify and strengthen our trading relationship in the future.

We will ensure Parliament is regularly updated on the progress of these negotiations.

Written Answers

Thursday, 27 January 2022

Afghanistan: Diplomatic Relations

Asked by *Lord Sheikh*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reopen the diplomatic mission in Afghanistan; and what discussions they have had with the government of France concerning a joint mission. [HL5405]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We intend to re-establish a diplomatic presence in Kabul as soon as the security and political situation in Afghanistan allows, and are coordinating this effort with allies. We are in regular contact with the French Government.

Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by *Lord Sheikh*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to provide official channels to support charities sending aid funding to Afghanistan. [HL5403]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On 22 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2615 which added a humanitarian exception to the sanctions regime established by resolution 1988 (2011), enabling the provision of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The UK government is now working as a priority to update the relevant UK legislation to implement this exception. The UK government continues to work closely with the UN and non-governmental organisations (NGO) to ensure that UK aid benefits Afghans in need while meeting our international obligations. We are providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan through the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement on the ground, who are continuing to ensure vital aid reaches those who need it most. We have made the humanitarian situation and access a major subject of our engagement with the Taliban. We continue to monitor this closely.

Asked by *Lord Sheikh*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given in collaboration with the United Nations about granting an exemption from sanctions for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan; and how they and international partners will monitor the effectiveness of any agreed resolutions. [HL5406]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On 22 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2615 which added a humanitarian exception to the sanctions regime established by resolution 1988 (2011), enabling the provision of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. This resolution will help save lives, by ensuring that the 1988 sanctions regime poses no obstacle to the provision of humanitarian assistance and other activities that support

basic human needs in Afghanistan. This directly responds to what the humanitarian community told us they needed. The UK government is now working as a priority to update the relevant UK legislation to implement this exception. The UN will report on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan while the exception is in place.

Arts: Coroanvirus

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have measured the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on (1) creative freelancers, and (2) other creative workers; and if so, by what means. [HL5382]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: We recognise the significant challenge the pandemic poses to our arts and creative sectors and to the many individuals and freelancers working across these industries.

DCMS officials have been engaging with HMRC, the Creative Industries Federation (CIF), Arts Council England, and leading organisations such as 'What's Next' and individual freelancers within the sector to better understand the level of impact the pandemic has had on the sector and those working in it.

We have supported freelancers through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) which was extended at Budget to September 2021. Freelancers are also supported through the unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund support package, which has helped ensure the venues and organisations which support them have survived the pandemic. We were also pleased to announce Government funding via Arts Council England last December of an immediate £1.5 million emergency support for freelancers affected by the pandemic, alongside a further £1.35 million contribution from the theatre sector.

We will continue to work closely with freelancers and organisations across the sectors to see how we can best provide support to those affected.

Autonomous Weapons

Asked by *Lord Clement-Jones*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they maintain the position that the UK does not possess fully autonomous weapon systems and has no intention of developing them. [HL5479]

Baroness Goldie: Our position on fully autonomous weapon systems is clear and unchanged. The UK does not possess fully autonomous weapon systems and has no intention of developing them.

When deploying autonomous weapon systems we will always ensure meaningful and context-appropriate human involvement across the system lifecycle from development to deployment, ensuring human responsibility for outcomes.

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of increasing autonomy in weapons systems on (1) civilian protection, and (2) compliance with international humanitarian law. [HL5480]

Baroness Goldie: The deployment in armed conflict of any weapon system - including one with autonomous functions - which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians would be contrary to International Humanitarian LAW (IHL) and therefore unlawful. We strongly believe that AI and autonomy within weapon systems can and must be used lawfully and ethically. Autonomous systems have the potential to support the better application of IHL by improving the evidence, analysis and timeliness of decision making.

Autonomous Weapons: Treaties

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the International Committee for the Red Cross's analysis that a new legally-binding instrument, including prohibitions and positive obligations, is required to regulate autonomous weapons systems. [HL5477]

Baroness Goldie: We regularly engage with a wide range of stakeholders on lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS), including those - such as the International Committee of the Red Cross - that believe a new legally binding instrument on LAWS is necessary. The UK does not support calls for a legally binding instrument on LAWS. Our view remains that International Humanitarian Law (IHL) provides a robust, principle-based framework for the regulation of weapons development and use, and we will continue to engage at the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons seeking to clarify the prohibitions and positive obligations around the use of autonomous weapon systems under IHL.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to communicate the need for public take-up of the COVID-19 booster vaccination via (1) national, and (2) local, media. [HL3668]

Lord Kamall: The national 'Get Boosted Now' campaign was launched on 12 December 2021 in both national and local media, highlighting the importance of those eligible receiving a booster dose. Ministers, scientists, clinicians and celebrities have shared messaging, supported by a large-scale marketing campaign, including TV, radio, press partnerships, and digital and social media.

There is also ongoing local engagement with stakeholders, community groups and faith leaders to reinforce the booster vaccination campaign with ethnic minority communities, patient groups and disproportionately impacted communities. We are also sponsoring information articles in more than 600 newspaper titles, including multicultural newspapers in multiple languages. The COVID-19 vaccination leaflets produced by the UK Health Security Agency have been translated into 28 languages including Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Panjabi and Urdu.

Counter-terrorism

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to lay before Parliament the report of the Independent Review of the Prevent Programme; and whether the review is still accepting further comments or evidence. [HL5385]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Independent Review of Prevent is currently ongoing. The Independent Reviewer of Prevent will complete and present his report to the Home Secretary. The Government will consider its findings and recommendations very carefully once it is completed and will publish the review and the Government response in due course. The Review's call for evidence closed on 9 June 2021.

Defence: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the Artificial Intelligence Defence Strategy; and what consultation, including public consultation, they have carried out to inform the strategy. [HL5478]

Baroness Goldie: The Defence AI Strategy is in the final stages of review. We expect to publish the strategy in spring 2022. This Strategy has been informed by consultations with key AI industry leaders, UK academia, and our Allies.

Defence: Innovation and Technology

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they seek to reconcile a focus on tackling the proliferation of advanced military technologies with prioritising the development and integration of new technologies "required for near-peer, high-tech warfighting", such as "AI-enabled autonomous capabilities" as identified in the Ministry of Defence's Defence in a Competitive Age paper, published in March 2021. [HL5481]

Baroness Goldie: The Ministry of Defence is committed to developing and deploying AI-enabled systems responsibly and promoting responsible use worldwide.

The UK will work with allies and partners to address the issue of proliferation of advanced military technologies such as AI-enabled autonomous capabilities. This will include reinforcement of the disarmament and export control regimes, treaties and organisations; development of the means of preventing AI proliferation or misuse; and monitoring the risks of AI exacerbating existing counter-proliferation and arms control challenges. This will ensure that the opportunities gained from the development and integration of new technologies are balanced with appropriate controls.

Integrated Care Systems

*Asked by **Baroness Merron***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce greater transparency over how Integrated Care Systems will be (1) scrutinised, and (2) held to account, in relation to patient care. [HL5550]

Lord Kamall: NHS England will continue to transparently scrutinise and hold to account National Health Service organisations which form part of an integrated care system (ICS). Subject to the passage of the Health and Care Bill, NHS England will publish an updated Oversight Framework in 2022/23 that reflects the new statutory basis for integrated care boards (ICBs) and ICSs. The Bill will also place a new duty on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to review each ICBs' provision of NHS care, public health, adult social care, the functions of the ICB, local authorities and CQC-registered providers for that provision and the system as a whole. ICBs will also be subject to transparency requirements, including the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, to allow patients and the public to hold their ICB to account.

Jerusalem: Housing

*Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) reports that 3,500 new homes for Israeli settlers are planned for construction in East Jerusalem, and (2) the impact that any such housing developments in Givat Hamatos and Har Homa would have on the contiguity of Palestinian land in the Occupied Territories. [HL5391]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law. Minister Cleverly raised UK opposition to settlement expansion with the Government of Israel on 9 November.

Kazakhstan: Demonstrations

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many human rights and social media activists they believe to have been arrested in Kazakhstan in the last month; what is

known about their status and wellbeing; and what estimate they have made of the number of fatalities involving protestors. [HL5375]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of reports that human rights activists and social media activists were among those detained during recent unrest in Kazakhstan and we are seeking further information from the authorities.

In recent meetings with the Special Representative of the President of Kazakhstan, the Deputy Foreign Minister and the Kazakh Ambassador to the UK, I underlined the importance of respect for international human rights obligations, including commitments to freedom of speech and expression. I also sought assurances that due process will be followed as those who were arrested are processed through the Kazakh judicial system.

We greatly regret the loss of life during the recent violent clashes. We are aware of figures from official sources that indicate that as many as 225 were killed in addition to 19 law enforcement officers. Many hundreds are reported to have been injured. We have urged the Kazakh authorities to make available further information, including numbers of casualties, as part of a thorough and transparent investigation into the causes and consequences of recent events.

Kazakhstan: Politics and Government

*Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current political and security situation in Kazakhstan, following the recent protests and violent unrest in the country. [HL5390]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is closely following events in Kazakhstan. We greatly regret the loss of life and injuries sustained as a result of recent unrest and condemn the violence and destruction of property that occurred, particularly in the city of Almaty. The reasons behind the violence remain unclear, although we note that President Tokayev has characterised what happened as an 'attempted coup'. We also take note of the President's decision to establish an investigative commission and await a full account of what led to these unprecedented events and loss of life. I was assured by President Tokayev's Special Representative, Ambassador Kazykhan, that the work of the commission would be transparent and effective.

The Government's long-standing position is that legitimate protest must be peaceful and genuine grievances resolved through dialogue. We have called for law enforcement responses to be proportionate, and for freedom of speech and expression to be respected in line with Kazakhstan's international commitments. We will continue to underline these points in our engagement with the Kazakh Government, as we seek to understand the chain of events and to ensure that human rights are upheld.

Mental Capacity Small Payments Scheme

Asked by *Lord Young of Cookham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many responses the Ministry of Justice have received to their recent consultation on the Mental Capacity Small Payments Scheme. [HL5408]

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: We received 228 responses to the consultation on the Mental Capacity Small Payments Scheme. Officials are currently analysing the responses with the aim of publishing the Government response in the Spring.

NHS: Patients

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to create formal roles for patient representation at all levels of NHS decision-making structures, including Integrated Care Boards. [HL5548]

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of existing levels of accountability of NHS decision-making; and what plans they have to increase the centrality of patients in decision-making structures in future. [HL5549]

Lord Kamall: The Health and Care Bill includes duties on integrated care boards (ICBs) to involve patients, carers and the public in their decision making, which applies at all levels of the organisation. Currently, NHS England assesses each clinical commissioning group on its delivery against the patient and public involvement duties through the NHS Oversight Framework. We anticipate that this will continue for ICBs. The assessment includes providing evidence of how the involvement of people and communities has informed the organisation's decision-making about commissioning and changes to services.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, NHS England will produce statutory guidance to support integrated care systems to effectively involve people and communities. This will clarify the responsibilities of all ICB members to provide leadership and accountability for how people and communities are involved.

Office for Environmental Protection: Disclosure of Information

Asked by *Baroness Parminter*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to add the Office for Environmental Protection to the list of protected (1) persons, and (2) bodies, for whistleblowers. [HL5399]

Lord Callanan: The Government is considering adding the Office for Environmental Protection as a Prescribed

Person for whistleblowing disclosures and work is underway to confirm that it satisfies the relevant criteria.

Petrol: Prices

Asked by *Lord Naseby*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with petrol retail companies regarding the reported increase in profit margin per litre of petrol; and what assessment they have made of the reasons for this increase. [HL5398]

Lord Callanan: The Department's officials are in regular contact with the major companies in the fuel supply industry, including those with petrol retail operations, to discuss a range of issues.

This Department's analysis shows that retail prices of petroleum products, such as petrol and diesel, are primarily driven by the underlying price in the global market of crude oil and by exchange rates.

The Government has kept fuel duty frozen for the twelfth consecutive year, helping the average UK driver save a cumulative £1,900.

Public Lending Right: Finance

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential to support authors by increasing the Public Lending Right Fund. [HL5380]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: There has been no assessment of an increase of the Public Lending Right (PLR) central fund. The PLR central fund is part of the overall funding for the British Library, which is set for each Spending Review period.

The PLR Scheme is a valued right for authors and other contributors to receive payment when their books are borrowed from public libraries. My department conducts an assessment of the rate per loan annually following a recommendation by the British Library. The PLR rate per loan calculation is based on the annual number of 'notional loans' of books from public libraries in the UK.

Refugees: Afghanistan

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many refugees have been evacuated from Afghanistan to the UK since August 2021; how many of those are currently living in temporary accommodation in the UK; and how many of those have been found permanent homes in England. [HL5386]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Over 15,000 people have been evacuated from Afghanistan under Operation Pitting. A further 1,500 people have been given assistance to enter the UK since the initial evacuation took place.

Those who we evacuated were a mixture of British Nationals, mixed family units and those who qualified for ARAP and who will qualify for ACRS.

There are currently 12,000 in Bridging Hotel Accommodation.

To date we have successfully moved over 4,000 people into permanent accommodation and are working at pace with our Local Authority partners in order to secure permanent accommodation for those still in temporary accommodation.

Road Traffic Offences: Mobile Phones

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to implement the plan they announced on 19 November 2021 to expand the circumstances in which it is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. [HL5526]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government's response to the consultation on using a hand-held mobile phone while driving was published in November 2021. The response confirmed that the Government would be implementing the change proposed in the consultation

document to broaden the offence of using a hand-held mobile phone while driving so that it captures standalone functions (such as taking a photo or scrolling for music stored on the phone) as well as the interactive communication functions covered now. The Government intends to make the change later this year.

Transport: Schools

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to bring into effect Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to allow local authorities outside London to enable school street schemes to be enforced by cameras. [HL5471]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We plan to introduce the regulations early this year, to come into force in the summer. Once the powers are commenced, local authorities wanting to undertake civil enforcement of moving traffic contraventions, including prescribed traffic signs for use at school street schemes, will need to apply to the Secretary of State for an Order to be made designating the council as the enforcement authority in their area.

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