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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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Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
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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
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 Harrington of Watford	Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
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 and Whip
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
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Thursday, 19 May 2022

Ajax Update

[HLWS41]

Baroness Goldie: My hon. Friend, the Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin) has made the following written ministerial statement:

As part of my commitment to keep Parliament informed on the programme, I wish to provide a further update on the Ajax equipment project being delivered as part of the Armoured Cavalry Programme.

1. Programmatic Issues

Work continues on the noise and vibration issues.

The independent Millbrook trials have now concluded. The initial findings informed the consideration by the safety panel on the next step of conducting User Validation Trials.

The aim of the User Validation Trials is to help establish the effectiveness of the modifications to address the noise and vibration problems and thereby deliver a safe system of work under which we could conduct Reliability Growth Trials on the modified vehicles.

Following agreement by the Safety Panel, User Validation Trials by Army personnel resumed at the Armoured Trials Development Unit on 12 May, supported by the independent Millbrook trials team. Data was successfully collected during the trials for analysis. In particular, as a result of the trials, an issue has been raised on the effectiveness of the internal communications system which requires additional analysis.

The Safety Panel have set cautious parameters within which the user validation trials are to be conducted. This included the temporary use of Crewgard headsets to allow the modifications proposed by General Dynamics to be trialled. Hearing checks were conducted on all personnel before and after the trials took place. These checks identified hearing anomalies in some personnel (including personnel not involved in the trials who were part of the “control” sample). We intend to resume trials once these anomalies are understood.

User trials are required to allow Millbrook to continue to gather additional data to provide an independent assessment on the effectiveness of the modifications proposed by General Dynamics. We will then analyse the data, alongside feedback from the Army crews involved. This analysis will help define a safe system of work for the Reliability Growth trials on the modified vehicles.

These Reliability Growth Trials are planned to commence later this year. As with any armoured vehicle procurement, the aim of the Reliability Growth Trials is to test the vehicle more thoroughly over an extended period. This will identify any issues beyond noise and vibration that need to be addressed before we can be confident that the vehicle meets the Army’s contractual requirements.

Identifying and resolving a range of such issues is a normal part of the acquisition process for all military equipment.

Once we are satisfied that there are long-term solutions to the noise and vibration problems, we will need to agree with General Dynamics a realistic schedule to Initial Operating Capability and Full Operating Capability. We will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose and we are continuing to take all steps necessary to secure our contractual and commercial rights under the contract with General Dynamics.

2. Update on Personnel

It remains the case that of the 310 people identified as working with Ajax, thirteen individuals have had long term restrictions on noise exposure recommended, potentially requiring a limitation in their military duties. The majority of these had pre-existing hearing issues prior to working on Ajax; some did not. A further five individuals remain under specialist outpatient care for hearing and other ENT issues. In addition, it remains the case that four individuals who worked on Ajax have been discharged on health grounds, in some cases for reasons wholly unrelated to hearing loss.

Assessments continue for both hand-transmitted and whole-body vibration. To date, fewer than five individuals have been identified with conditions which could be aggravated by vibration; these individuals have been recommended for a limitation in their military duties whilst they undergo further investigation and treatment. It is not possible to determine clinically whether Ajax exposure has caused or aggravated the clinical conditions of any of these individuals. I am withholding a more precise breakdown because, given the small number of service personnel involved, individuals could be identified resulting in a potential breach in medical confidentiality.

3. The Sheldon Review

Following Parliamentary clearance of the associated contingent liability, I am pleased to announce that we have now formally appointed Clive Sheldon QC. The review will have full access to all relevant MOD papers and personnel. I encourage all those who wish to provide evidence or other input to the review to contact the independent review team at Ajax-Review@mod.gov.uk. Copies of the Terms of Reference of the Review are available in the Library of the House. I will update Parliament in due course on the likely duration of the Review once Mr Sheldon has had the opportunity to consider the issue in detail.

4. Conclusion

The focus for the MOD and General Dynamics remains on developing and delivering long-term solutions for noise and vibration and vehicles that comply with General Dynamics contractual obligations. We want Ajax to succeed and to deliver what the British Army requires. We have a robust firm price contract for the delivery of 589 vehicles at a cost of £5.5 billion. We will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose.

Commonwealth Chair-in-Office Report Addendum 2020-22

[HLWS37]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has been Commonwealth Chair in Office (CiO) since hosting the 25th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in April 2018, during which Heads committed to a range of ambitious actions to build a fairer, prosperous, more sustainable and more secure Commonwealth. In September 2020, we published a comprehensive report detailing our work with Commonwealth member states and partners to deliver against the 2018 Commonwealth summit commitments, entitled *UK Commonwealth Chair-In-Office Report 2018-20*: this document was deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

CHOGM is normally convened every two years and the 26th CHOGM was due to be held in Kigali, Rwanda, in June 2020. Due to the pandemic, it has been postponed twice and the UK's tenure as CiO subsequently extended. Having now served four years as CiO, the UK will pass on the baton to Rwanda as CHOGM host this June. Given these developments, I am pleased today to give notice to the House that a further short report entitled *UK Commonwealth Chair-in-Office Report Addendum 2020-2022* has been deposited in the Libraries of the House.

The report sets out the UK's continued delivery and achievements against Heads' commitments under the CHOGM18 themes. It highlights specific action taken on health security given the critical need to adapt and respond to the pandemic, which included the UK supporting the delivery of over 1.4 billion vaccine doses to 52 Commonwealth countries.

The UK has prioritised the strengthening and renewal of the Commonwealth and remains the largest single donor to the Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations and their programmes. It has worked to boost the voice of the Commonwealth on the world stage: in October 2020, the first Commonwealth statement in the UN Human Rights Council was delivered on behalf of all member states by the UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French.

As Chair-in-Office, the UK has aimed to build a fairer Commonwealth for all its citizens, highlighting member states' collective commitment to the shared values of human rights and the rule of law, as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter. Through the UK's continued funding of dedicated Human Rights Advisers at the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO), we have helped to strengthen the capacity of small and developing Commonwealth member countries to participate more actively across a range of human rights fora.

The Commonwealth has an important role to play in supporting global growth, creating employment, and reaffirming commitment to a rules-based, free, open and fair multilateral trading system. In this regard, the UK has been an unwavering advocate for intra-Commonwealth trade and has worked to remove trade barriers and deepen

economic partnerships. For example, the UK-funded She Trades Commonwealth programme has helped over 3,500 women-owned businesses become more competitive and generate over £32 million in sales.

At CHOGM18, Heads recognised the unprecedented impacts of climate change across the world, and launched the Commonwealth Blue Charter to respond to the existential threat posed by the deteriorating health of the ocean. The UK has been a consistent champion of the Blue Charter over the last four years and co-funded the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CFAH), which has mobilised over US\$38 million to support some of the most climatically vulnerable Commonwealth countries.

Heads pledged to build a more secure future for all citizens at CHOGM18. Backed by over £15 million of programme funding, the UK has worked with all Commonwealth countries to strengthen their cyber security in support of an open, democratic, peaceful and secure cyber space.

The UK looks forward to the gathering of the Commonwealth family in June, falling in between the celebrations of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games. We remain steadfastly committed to our partnership with this unique association of 54 equal and independent member states, which continues to deliver robust benefits to Commonwealth citizens across the globe.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Addendum Report 2020-2022 [FCDO0106 Commonwealth Chair in Office Addendum 2020-2022.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2022-05-19/HLWS37/>

David Fuller Case: Independent Inquiry

[HLWS40]

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

Following earlier statements by Department of Health and Social Care Ministers, I would like to inform the House that the Independent Inquiry into the issues raised by the David Fuller case has today published a progress update on its work to date. This can be found at: <https://fuller.independent-inquiry.uk/announcements/>.

The progress update sets out the transition from a local, independent investigation initiated by the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to the current Independent Inquiry that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced in November of last year. It describes how the work already undertaken as part of the independent investigation is feeding into the inquiry; as well as the important common themes that emerged from families / other interested parties which gave rise to amendments to the inquiry's Terms of Reference. The

Independent Inquiry published its final Terms of Reference on 23 February 2022.

Although the local investigation was constrained from taking evidence while the criminal prosecution of David Fuller was underway, Sir Jonathan Michael does set out some urgent, high-level themes and areas of concern arising from the investigation at the time in his progress update:

- Responsibilities between NHS Trusts and contractors / subcontractors.
- Security and access.
- Policies and procedures versus practice.
- Oversight of regulated activities.
- Management of areas and services not covered by regulation.

These themes had been shared with the Trust in August 2021 and subsequently with NHS England and NHS Improvement. The Trust has been putting its own steps in place regarding its mortuary practices ahead of the substantive, initial report of the Inquiry. NHS England and NHS Improvement has continued to work with Trusts to provide assurances against current guidance from the Human Tissue Authority (HTA), and on the additional measures that have been taken to improve the effectiveness of security in place for all their mortuaries and post-mortem activities.

The progress update makes clear that the first phase of the Independent Inquiry is firmly underway and describes the rapid progress that it has so far achieved. Also, from the inquiry's engagement with witnesses so far, it has experienced a high degree of co-operation and expects this to continue. Both are testament to the hard work of Sir Jonathan and his team.

The progress update also sets out the next steps, including a revised timing for the initial report on matters relating to Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. Due to the volume of evidence that is emerging, the initial report will now be available later this year. This will be followed by a final report next year, looking at the broader national picture and the wider lessons for the NHS and for other settings. Whilst there is real urgency in understanding how Fuller was able to carry out his shocking and unlawful actions, and why these went unnoticed, the Inquiry must be allowed the time it needs to fully consider all of the relevant evidence and assemble its findings. The Inquiry continues to liaise with Kent Police to ensure that if it identifies possible criminal conduct, this is referred swiftly for further investigation, in line with its Terms of Reference.

The HTA was asked by the Secretary of State to provide advice on its regulatory framework following the conclusion of the murder trial of David Fuller and the public revelation of his sexual offending against bodies in a hospital mortuary at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

The HTA advice, received in December 2021, along with a short progress update, has been published today. Both can be found at <https://www.hta.gov.uk/news/december-2021-advice-published>.

The HTA has focused on three areas since December 2021; preparation for the Inquiry, working with stakeholders on licensed mortuary security, and starting the revision of HTA guidance for licensed mortuaries in the post-mortem sector, with implementation planned later this year.

Further details will be available on GOV.UK via the following link which will 'go live' from noon today.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-fuller-inquiry-update-to-the-secretary-of-state-19-may-2022>.

Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System

[HLWS39]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (David Rutley MP) has made the following Written Statement:

Fraud is an ever-present challenge in both the private and public sector.

Fraud committed against the welfare system – whether by individuals or criminal gangs – is not a victimless crime. It is felt throughout society, upon the services people rely on and by honest, hard-working taxpayers who expect to see public money spent on the purpose for which it was intended, rather than going into the hands of fraudsters.

Our fundamental approach has always been to prevent fraud from entering the system in the first place, to detect and root out fraud when it does, and to deter would-be fraudsters through a robust penalty system, including recovering the debt owed. These principles were bringing fraud down before the pandemic.

During the early months of the pandemic, we took a decision to implement temporary easements to ensure we could prioritise payments to those who needed help during a difficult time. It is regrettable that some unscrupulous people sought to exploit these extraordinary circumstances for their own illegitimate gain.

Later today, I will publish a paper on Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System which sets out our plan to address the challenge of fraud, to stay ahead of evolving threats, and to reduce the levels of fraud and error in the welfare system.

This plan sets out how we are investing £613m over the next three years in our frontline counter-fraud professionals and in enhanced data analytics. This funds 1,400 more staff in our counter-fraud teams, a new 2,000-strong team dedicated to reviewing existing Universal Credit claims and an enhanced data analytics package to develop new ways to prevent and detect fraud. We

estimate this will stop £2.1bn of loss in fraud and error over the next three years.

When parliamentary time allows, we will bring forward new powers to investigate potential fraud and punish fraudsters. We will:

- Bring the department in line with counter-fraud functions elsewhere in government, by creating powers to enable our officers to undertake arrests, and to search and seize evidence.
- Bolster our penalty system – creating a new type of civil penalty to ensure that those who commit fraud face punishment.
- Create new powers that will require organisations, such as banks, to securely share data on a larger scale to find and prevent fraud.
- Establish new powers to improve the department's access to information from a wider range of organisations and to assist counter fraud and compliance activity into all payments made by the department, modernising our ability to drive fraud out of the system.

Technological advances give fraudsters new opportunities to find ways to attack. To make sure we stay ahead of the fraudsters, we need to bring together the full force of government and the expertise of the private sector. We are creating a new Fraud Prevention Advisory Group to bring together government and external experts to identify and develop innovative ways to crack down on fraudsters, including through more flexible and proactive use of data. We will work hand-in-hand with the new Public Sector Fraud Authority to ensure all of government steps up its efforts to reduce fraud and error and bring fraudsters to justice.

This plan will help us to defend the welfare system against those who seek to take advantage of it. It will allow us to dig deeper in rooting fraud out wherever it occurs in the welfare system, to catch and punish fraudsters and to protect taxpayers' money.

Modernising Lasting Powers of Attorney: Response to Consultation

[HLWS38]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Tom Pursglove) has made the following written statement:

'Today I am launching the government response to the consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney.

A lasting power of attorney (LPA) is a legal agreement that helps people plan for their future. It lets someone (the 'donor') choose people they trust ('attorneys') to support them and make decisions for them if they lose the mental capacity to make their own decisions in the future.

The LPA was introduced by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) in 2007 to improve safeguards from the old enduring power of attorney. The MCA also created the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), an executive

agency of the Ministry of Justice. OPG is responsible for registering LPAs so they can be used and investigating concerns about an attorney's use of the LPA.

LPAs are reliant on an out-dated paper system, which increasingly doesn't meet the needs of society. In our day to day lives we expect more and more services to be available digitally, more so with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which has changed the way many people think and act. Modernisation provides us with the opportunity to improve safeguards against fraud, abuse and undue pressure by using technological advancements to strengthen the overall security of the LPA service.

The introduction of a digital channel is necessary to find the right balance between increasing protection against abuse and ease of use for people legitimately creating LPAs. Automation of OPG's processes will allow the OPG to carry out identification checks to protect against fraud. Reducing the resources needed for administrative tasks could allow an increase in those involved in supporting donors and investigating abuse.

It was for this reason that the MOJ launched its consultation last summer; to increase safeguards, improve access and achieve sustainability for the OPG. The consultation closed on 13 October 2021 and received 313 responses. It has allowed us to identify some of the key changes needed to address the aims of modernising LPAs which are covered in more detail in the government response published today. While it is clear to me that digitisation is needed, it is important that a paper channel will remain to ensure access for all.

Publication of the government response is a significant step forward on the journey to reform the LPA service for the public. Today, I therefore lay in parliament this command paper that sets out the views of the stakeholders that engaged in our consultation and how the government proposes to move forward to implement changes to the LPA service. These changes will make the service safer, easier to access and more efficient to administer.'

Northern Ireland Abortion Services

[HLWS36]

Lord Caine: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis) has today made the following statement:

Section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act 2019, places me under a legal duty to ensure that women and girls in Northern Ireland can access abortion services. I am determined to ensure that that women and girls in Northern Ireland can access abortion services in the same way as those living in the rest of the United Kingdom.

On 22 July 2021, I gave a direction to the Northern Ireland Department of Health, and to the Health and Social Care Board, to commission and make abortion services available by 31 March 2022. The Department of Health has not met that deadline, and it is now clear that no progress will be made towards the provision of these services.

It has always been my preference that, as a devolved matter, the Department of Health delivers these services. However, with over two years having passed since the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 established a framework, women and girls are still unable to access high-quality abortion and post-abortion care in Northern Ireland. This is entirely unacceptable.

Today, I am therefore laying regulations that:

- remove the need for Executive Committee approval before services can be commissioned and funded by the Department of Health. The Regulations will do this by providing that directions under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021, which require action to be taken to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Report), must be complied with irrespective of whether the matter has been discussed or agreed by the Executive Committee; and
- confer on a Secretary of State the power to do anything that a Northern Ireland Minister or department could do for the purpose of ensuring that the

recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW report are implemented. For the purpose of determining what a Northern Ireland Minister or department could do, any need for Executive Committee approval will be disregarded. Whilst the regulations will also provide a Secretary of State with the power to provide financial assistance for the same purpose, as a devolved matter it remains the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive to fund abortion services in Northern Ireland.

This means that the Department of Health will have no further barriers to commission and fund services. I am steadfast in my belief that the Department of Health should drive forward the commissioning of abortion services without further delay in Northern Ireland.

If the Department of Health does not commission and fund abortion services as directed, I will intervene further. To ensure I have all the information required in those circumstances, a small team that I am establishing in the Northern Ireland Office will work alongside the Department of Health and take this forward.

Written Answers

Thursday, 19 May 2022

Energy: Billing

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what figures they have on the increase in the number of people in the UK using high-cost credit, such as 'buy now pay later' debt schemes, to pay their energy bills since 1 April. [HL211]

Baroness Penn: HM Treasury regularly monitors developments in the consumer credit market, including the use of Buy-Now Pay-Later (BNPL) credit products, as part of its normal process of policy development.

However, it does not hold information regarding the number of people using BNPL or other types of credit to pay their energy bills. Instead, HMT draws on the research of various stakeholders, including consumer groups and the wider financial services industry, to inform policy development.

As an interest free product, the government does not consider BNPL to be high-cost credit.

However, the government recognises that BNPL products do pose several potential risks of consumer detriment, as set out in The Woolard Review into the unsecured credit market. That is why on 2 February 2021, the Government announced its intention to regulate BNPL products in a proportionate manner.

The Government published a consultation on policy proposals for the regulation of BNPL on 21 October 2021, which closed on 6 January 2022. The Government is now reviewing responses to this consultation and considering next steps and intends to publish a consultation response in the coming weeks.

Newport Wafer Fab: Takeovers

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what impact the proposed takeover of Newport Wafer Fab will have on the UK's ambition in the Global Britain in a Competitive Age integrated review, published March 2021, for the UK to be a "digital and data hub" and transition to a "zero-carbon economy"; whether this will require the UK's semi-conductor supply chain to be secured; and what is the basis for their belief that the government of China has stated its aim to buy the UK's (1) semi-conductor capabilities, and (2) the associated intellectual property. [HL237]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Her Majesty's Government recognises the importance of semiconductor technology to key UK industries, our ambitions in the Integrated Review, and the wider digital ecosystem. The Government is reviewing its approach to the UK's global

semiconductor sector, working with industry experts, international partners, and representative bodies.

Her Majesty's Government will not accept investments which compromise our national security, and all investment must meet stringent legal and regulatory requirements to protect the UK's national interest. As an open economy, however, we welcome foreign trade and investment where it supports UK growth and jobs.

North Wales Coast Line: Standards

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards re-establishing the frequency of through-trains between Holyhead and London, that existed prior to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. [HL120]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The frequency of through trains between Holyhead and London was reduced due to the impact of COVID-19 on passenger demand. Avanti West Coast will be increasing its service provision from 15 May 2022 from the two direct trains per day from London Euston to Holyhead currently provided, to three direct trains and four from Holyhead to London Euston during the week as well as an increase to three direct trains per day in both directions at weekends.

The Department continues to work closely with operators in their development of attractive timetables that are reliable, deliver excellent performance for passengers, and offer good value for money. All timetables remain under review as demand returns.

Railways: Tickets

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that over 1,000 rail ticket offices are being considered for closure; which ticket offices are currently being assessed for closure; what steps they intend to take to ensure that passengers who (1) do not have access to bank cards, or (2) who may need assistance with accessing rail services, are protected by having access to staff at ticket offices; and what is the status of stations which no longer have staffed ticket offices. [HL224]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: No proposals have yet been made.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Lord Crathorne*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Ukraine regarding the protection of collections in museums in Ukraine to protect them from possible looting during the current conflict; and what support they are providing to the government of that country. [HL192]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has written to, and met virtually, the Ukrainian Minister of Culture, offering whatever practical support is feasible, and has since been keeping in regular contact, discussing, among other issues, the protection of cultural property in Ukraine. I also met the Deputy Minister, Kateryna Chuyeva, at the Venice Biennale this year where I reinforced this offer.

As of 9 May, UNESCO had verified damage to 127 cultural sites in Ukraine since Russia's illegal invasion. We are continuously working with UNESCO, Blue Shield International, the British Council, and other allies to

ensure Russia meets its obligations under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Through the Cultural Protection Fund – a partnership between DCMS and the British Council – Her Majesty's Government is also directly supporting the Cultural Emergency Response for Ukraine, an international effort co-ordinated by the Prince Claus Fund. The Cultural Emergency Response has provided urgent assistance to Ukrainian museums and collections at risk from looting, damage, and destruction. This includes providing materials and technical assistance to safely package and secure collections.

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