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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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Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
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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

Wednesday, 15 June 2022

Defence AI Strategy Launch

[HLWS99]

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

Today I am pleased to publish the Defence Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy. This strategy sets out our ambitious plans to harness responsibly the game-changing potential of these ubiquitous, enabling technologies to rapidly modernise the UK's Armed Forces and secure our military edge. Our vision is that, in terms of AI, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will be the world's most effective, efficient, trusted and influential Defence organisation for our size.

The Strategy articulates how we will transform the culture of Defence to become truly 'AI ready', developing the skills, technical enablers and Research and Development programmes to dramatically accelerate the adoption of AI-enabled systems and capabilities. In doing so we will champion and strengthen the UK's industrial and academic base to secure national strategic advantage in AI technologies, supporting the Government's wider ambitions for the UK to become a Science and Technology Superpower by 2030. The strategy also sets out how we will address the global security policy challenges associated with the use of AI in a defence context, from geostrategic technological competition to counter proliferation and strategic deterrence.

We recognise that getting right the ethics of military AI is a particularly important requirement. That is why, alongside the strategy, we are also publishing a policy document: *'Ambitious, Safe and Responsible - Our approach to the delivery of AI-enabled capability in Defence'*. This document sets out the robust controls framework that will be applied for all AI-enabled military capabilities, throughout system lifecycles, providing assurance to the public and our partners that our use of these systems will always be in line with UK values, standards and legal obligations.

We have engaged extensively with partners across Government, civil society and our allies in developing these approaches, and will continue to do so over the coming months.

I am placing copies of both documents in the Library of the House.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Ambitious Safe and Responsible [20220614-Ambitious Safe and Responsible_Final.pdf]

Defence AI Strategy [20220610-Defence_AI_Strategy_Final.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2022-06-15/HLWS99/>

Drugs Strategy Guidance

[HLWS100]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

As the cross-government minister with responsibility for combating drugs, I am pleased to announce today the publication of guidance for local partners helping to deliver the commitments and ambitions laid out in the 10-year drugs strategy by this government in December.

This is an important next step in the ambitious whole-of-government plan to cut crime, save lives, and sets out a framework to help local partners reduce drug-related harm and monitor their progress.

Drugs can have devastating effects on individuals, families and neighbourhoods, and the cost to society is nearly £20 billion a year in England alone. Drug-related deaths are at the highest levels recorded, and drug use is associated with nearly half of all homicides and acquisitive crimes such as robberies, burglaries, and thefts. The drivers behind drug-related harm are clearly complex and cut across the responsibilities of a range of different organisations.

As a result, dedicated funding of nearly £900m was announced with the strategy in December, taking the investment in combating drugs to £3 billion over three years across enforcement, treatment and recovery, and demand reduction.

Now, as the focus turns to implementation and delivery, local partners such as local authorities, public health services, police forces, prisons, and probation services are being asked to step up and fulfil their collective role as the engine room of this drugs strategy. It is these local delivery partners that are best placed to address the needs of their local communities.

The new guidance provides an important framework for how local partners in England should work together to reduce drug-related harm and drive join up across sectors and a framework for Combating Drugs Partnerships. A single Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) in each locality will chair these partnerships and be responsible for reporting to central government on local cross-cutting delivery against the National Combating Drugs Outcomes Framework, alongside their own specific organisational objectives.

The outcomes and metrics included in the framework aim to provide a clear line of sight between action and the impact experienced by individuals, families, and neighbourhoods across the country and in local areas. This is how delivery of the commitments and ambitions of the 10-year drugs strategy to level up the country will be most effectively monitored. The potential benefits are significant and wide-ranging, including improving people's safety, productivity and wider health and well-being.

I look forward to confirmation of the partnerships and working with the local SROs.

While this guidance is aimed primarily at partners in England, we have referenced Wales where it touches on reserved matters. More broadly we will continue to work with the devolved administrations to embed collaboration on these issues.

The guidance will be available on gov.uk and placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Royal Navy, Royal Military and Royal Air Force Police: Inspection Reports

[HLWS101]

Baroness Goldie: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Leo Docherty) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I wish to inform the House that I am laying today, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence, the reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) Inspection of the Service Police (the Royal Navy Police, the Royal Military Police and the RAF Police).

The Armed Forces Act 2011 places a duty on HMICFRS to inspect and report to the Ministry of Defence on the independence and effectiveness of investigations carried out by each Service police force, and this is HMICFRS third statutory inspection report on the Service Police.

I welcome these reports on Service Police investigations into Rape, serious sexual assault, and domestic abuse investigations from an independent

civilian authority. While the reports recognise that such investigations are done to comparable or higher standards than most civilian police forces, some areas of concern have been raised, specifically around the safeguarding of victims. We have work in hand to improve the safeguarding and support to victims of these most serious offences including through the setting up of the Victims and Witness Care Unit (VWCU), under the Defence Serious Crime Command which will be fully operational by December 2022. More widely, there were a total of 30 recommendations and 13 areas of improvement for the Royal Naval Police, 32 recommendations and 19 areas of improvement for the Royal Military Police and 30 recommendations and 21 areas of improvement for the Royal Air Force Police. A third of these were common to all three Services. The Department accepts the reports' findings and will consider the recommendations and areas for improvement in detail.

Copies of the reports will be available through the Journal Office.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Royal Air Force Police [royal-air-force-police-rape-serious-sexual-assault-and-domestic-abuse-investigations.pdf]

Royal Military Police [royal-military-police-rape-serious-sexual-assault-and-domestic-abuse-investigations.pdf]

Royal Navy Police [royal-navy-police-rape-serious-sexual-assault-and-domestic-abuse-investigations.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2022-06-15/HLWS101/>

Written Answers

Wednesday, 15 June 2022

Accountancy: Standards

Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 23 May (HL294), whether (1) the International Accounting Standards Board's Framework extant in 2001, (2) the Conceptual Framework published in 2018, or (3) some other "Framework" or "Conceptual Framework", applies to UK adopted accounting standards under IAS1. [HL757]

Lord Callanan: The Conceptual Framework issued by the International Accounting Standards Board is not an international accounting standard and therefore is not adopted into UK law. Nevertheless, it does provide a basis for the use of judgement in resolving accounting issues. It is only of relevance in situations where no specific international accounting standard applies to a transaction, event or condition (as set out in IAS 8 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors).

Aviation: Vetting

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to temporarily reduce the length of the employment history which is subject to background checks for potential new employees in the aviation industry. [HL741]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We do not currently intend to temporarily reduce the length of the employment history check for background references for new employees in the aviation sector.

We have instead worked to provide different support to help industry manage background checks and reduce the time it takes to recruit staff. In early May the Secretary of State for Transport agreed that the aviation industry could use HMRC employment history letters that cover the required period, as a suitable form of reference check (with safeguards) for those wishing to work in the aviation industry.

Civil Servants: Training

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they take to ensure that material used in training programmes for civil servants is in accordance with the law. [HL627]

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the contents of the civil service 'inclusion workshop' run by A:gender in respect of its compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act. [HL628]

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what processes the civil service 'inclusion workshop' run by A:gender went through before approval was given for its delivery. [HL629]

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will publish the contents of the civil service 'inclusion workshop' run by A:gender. [HL630]

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the impact of the civil service 'inclusion workshop' run by A:gender on the development of Government policy. [HL631]

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will withdraw their support for the civil service 'inclusion workshops' run by A:gender. [HL632]

Lord True: This A:gender 'inclusion workshop' is not recognised as civil service training. The Government Skills and Curriculum Unit (GSCU) manages the design and quality assurance process for all government training, provided within the new Campus for skills, and defined by the new curriculum.

The five strands of the curriculum outline the knowledge and skills required to be effective in any role in the Civil Service, and as such the training and development provided in the Campus. This sets the standards for training provided centrally for all Civil Servants, alongside the responsibilities of Government Professions to determine the qualifications and capabilities for specialist and technical skills.

The A:gender workshop is not advertised as training, attendance at the workshops was voluntary.

Company Accounts: Standards

Asked by **Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 27 May (HL403), what "other criteria" must be assessed under Part 23 of the Companies Act 2006, in addition to those set out in sections 833A and 844, before paying a dividend. [HL758]

Lord Callanan: Companies are required to take account of all of the matters in Part 23 of the Companies Act 2006 before paying a dividend.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 23 May (HL404), what assessment they have made of whether directors and auditors should be making "adjustments" at the time the accounts are signed, because the lack of such adjustments could hamper the determination of solvency/going concern position of a company. [HL759]

Lord Callanan: The directors are responsible for signing off the accounts and making sure they comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. The Companies Act requires that companies take into account the additional factors in Part 23 of the Companies Act when calculating distributable profits. This is to ensure that a company may only make distributions out of profits available for the purpose of distribution.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 23 May (HL404), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, whether the result of companies having to do adjustments has been subject to an impact assessment in terms of (1) burdens on business, and (2) the risk of hiding insolvency. [HL760]

Lord Callanan: The matter in the question was not considered in the January 2007 impact assessment on the Companies Act 2006.

Directors: Females

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a quota ensuring that women have at least 40 per cent of the seats on corporate boards. [HL804]

Lord Callanan: Since 2011, the Government has supported a series of business-led independent reviews, increasing participation of women on FTSE boards via progressive targets: 25% women (Davies Review); 33% (Hampton-Alexander Review) and, to date, 40% (FTSE Women Leaders Review, published 22nd February 2022).

Women's representation has grown from 9.5% FTSE board members in 2011, to 37.6% to the end of 2021. The UK is ranked second only to France, compared to other nations working to gender balance public listed companies' boards. The Government continues to commit targets, but, given the successes of the voluntary approach, has no plans to introduce mandatory quotas.

Driving Tests

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the time taken to issue dates for driving tests. [HL664]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has a 24-week forward booking window and tests are not available to book beyond this. The DVSA adds new test appointments to the booking system on a weekly basis when the 24-week forward booking window refreshes.

All available practical driving test appointments, including cancellations, show on the live booking system to everyone at the same time. The DVSA adds any additional tests to the system as soon as they become available.

East West Rail Line

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government when work on the proposed rail link between Bedford and Cambridge will (1) start, and (2) be completed. [HL711]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: CS2 (Bletchley to Bedford) and CS3 (Bedford to Cambridge) are at development stage, and options for the sections were consulted on as part of a wide-ranging non-statutory consultation from March-June 2021.

EWR Co. is currently reviewing submissions to this and intends to publish the response to the consultation later this year.

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), EWR Co. is planning to submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) to secure the relevant planning and permitted development powers and the Government and EWR Co. will set out next steps for the project in due course.

Heat Pumps

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how collaborative training can be developed between manufacturers, colleges, and other training providers to (1) develop, and (2) roll out, heat pump system training. [HL672]

Lord Callanan: Training courses are available for existing heating engineers to learn to install heat pumps and can be completed in one week. Industry groups are confident that there will be enough training capacity to be able to meet demand for heat pump upskilling as heat pump deployment increases.

The Government is also updating the apprenticeship framework for heating and plumbing to ensure this offers the right skills to deliver Net Zero. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is working with an industry group to revise the existing Plumbing and Domestic Heating apprenticeship, and to develop a new Low Carbon Heating Technician apprenticeship.

Immigration: Applications

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government which companies they have outsourced immigration processes to; and in which country each of those companies is registered. [[HL254](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The core suppliers, those who support the visa application service for immigration to the UK are Sopra Steria Ltd, TLS and VFS Global Service PLC are all registered in the UK.

UK Endorsement Board

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 27 May (HL402), whether the Secretary of State or the UK Endorsement Board have been endorsing International Accounting Standards as set out in Regulation 7 of The International Accounting Standards and European Public Limited-Liability Company (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 only, and without reference to section 403(1) of the Companies Act 2006. [[HL762](#)]

Lord Callanan: As set out in the answer I gave the noble Baroness on 27 May 2022 to Question HL402, both the Secretary of State and, following the delegation of statutory functions, the UK Endorsement Board have adopted international accounting standards in accordance with the International Accounting Standards and European Public Limited-Liability Company (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

UK Endorsement Board: Public Appointments

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 23 May (HL245), why the post of Chair to the UK Endorsement Board was not regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. [[HL761](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Chair campaign was not regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments as the role is not currently included on the Public Appointments Order in Council. Only roles included on the Order are regulated by the Commissioner. The classification and form of the UK Endorsement Board means it was not included on the Order, however this position may be reviewed in future.

Nevertheless, the campaign was run in accordance with the usual regulated process in all respects other than the advert remaining on the Cabinet Office website after the closing date.

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