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**Wednesday**  
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

**Written Statements .....1**

**Written Answers.....3**

[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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<b>Lord True</b>	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
<b>Earl Howe</b>	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Baroness Barran</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
<b>Lord Bellamy</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
<b>Lord Benyon</b>	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist</b>	Spokesperson, Wales Office, Whip
<b>Lord Caine</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
<b>Lord Callanan</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
<b>Earl of Courtown</b>	Deputy Chief Whip
<b>Lord Davies of Gower</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Harlech</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Markham</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Lord Murray of Blidworth</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
<b>Baroness Neville-Rolfe</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Lord Offord of Garvel</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
<b>Baroness Penn</b>	Parliamentary Secretary, HM Treasury
<b>Baroness Scott of Bybrook</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
<b>Lord Sharpe of Epsom</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
<b>Baroness Stedman-Scott</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Lord Stewart of Dirleton</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

Wednesday, 23 November 2022

## Bank of England Asset Purchase Facility

[HLWS373]

**Baroness Penn:** My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Jeremy Hunt) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England (“the Bank”) decided at its meeting ending on 3 February 2022 to reduce the stocks of UK government bonds and sterling non-financial investment-grade corporate bonds held in the Asset Purchase Facility (APF) by ceasing to reinvest maturing securities. The Bank ceased reinvestment of assets in this portfolio in February 2022 and has since commenced sales of corporate bonds on 28 September 2022, and sales of gilts acquired for monetary policy purposes on 1 November 2022.

The then Chancellor agreed a joint approach with the Governor in an exchange of letters on 3 February 2022 to reduce the maximum authorised size of the APF for asset purchases every six months, as the size of APF holdings reduces.

On 4 November the Governor and I agreed to reduce the maximum size of the APF from £966bn to £886bn to reflect the unused portion of the recent financial stability related APF expansion. Since 05 May 2022, the total stock of assets held by the APF for monetary policy purposes has fallen from £866.6bn to £851.6bn. In line with the approach agreed with the Governor, the authorised maximum total size of the APF has therefore been reduced to £871bn.

The risk control framework previously agreed with the Bank will remain in place, and HM Treasury will continue to monitor risks to public funds from the APF through regular risk oversight meetings and enhanced information sharing with the Bank.

There will continue to be an opportunity for HM Treasury to provide views to the MPC on the design of the schemes within the APF, as they affect the Government’s broader economic objectives and may pose risks to the Exchequer.

The Government will continue to indemnify the Bank, the APF and its directors from any losses arising out of, or in connection with, the facility. If the liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal supply procedure.

A full departmental Minute has been laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

## Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust: Edenfield Centre

[HLWS372]

**Lord Markham:** My Hon friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women’s Health Strategy) has made the following Written Statement:

Yesterday, NHS England announced an independent review will be taking place regarding the unacceptable incidents which took place at the Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust this year. It will focus on how these incidents were able to happen and why the failings were not picked up.

The abhorrent treatment of vulnerable people at the Edenfield Centre shown in the Panorama episode was completely unacceptable. Every patient has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, in a caring and therapeutic environment where their rights are upheld, their needs are met, and they feel supported and listened to.

This is why I welcome the steps taken by colleagues in the NHS to investigate these events. As my Honourable friend, Will Quince MP, stated in Parliament on 13 October 2022, this should not have happened. Therefore, it is vital that we get to the bottom of what went wrong so that we can make sure we do better in the future. As I said at the dispatch box, I have also instructed my officials to consider what is needed on wider issues for mental health inpatient care, separately to this independent review. I will give an update on this in due course.

## Publication of the UK Joint Fisheries Strategy

[HLWS371]

**Lord Benyon:** My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey) has made the following Statement:

The UK Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) has been published today that sets the direction of fisheries management in the UK over the coming years.

The four fisheries Administrations have worked together to develop shared policies which as a package, will deliver or contribute to delivering the eight objectives set out in the Fisheries Act 2020.

A copy of the JFS has been placed in the library of both Houses and is available on GOV.UK.

## UK Earth Observation

[HLWS370]

**Lord Callanan:** My Honourable friend the Minister of State (George Freeman) has today made the following statement:

The government is announcing today a package of up to £200m funding to invest in the UK Earth Observation sector to protect the future of UK talent and industry in earth observation and mitigate the impact of ongoing delays to UK participation in the EU Copernicus programme, while the EU continues to block our association.

Earth observation (EO) is a vital science and a growing industry. This is the right time to invest in projects which benefit our planet and grow our economy – EO supports the UK to become a science superpower and prioritises our space and Net Zero ambitions – more than half of key climate data comes from space.

The UK has a vibrant landscape of world leading EO academic and industrial organisations and a well-founded reputation for excellence in EO. For example, in climate science, leading UK research institutions have been measuring Sea and Land Surface Temperature from space for over three decades (Oxford University, RAL Space, Reading University and Leicester University); this data is used by meteorological agencies around the world to improve weather forecast accuracy – helping to save lives, infrastructure and crops.

In the National Space Strategy, HMG committed to remain at the forefront of earth observation technology and knowhow. The investments announced today will deliver an essential funding boost to recognise the importance of this work/market and will benefit academia and industry and build our national capability. The funding is spread across 17 projects delivered through the following government partner organisations:

- £137.6m UK Space Agency (UKSA)
- £19.3m Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- £14.7m Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)
- £11.7m Met Office

- £4.2m Innovate UK

These projects will deliver benefits across the UK and include a broad range of activities from measuring wind speeds to improving the accuracy of climate data, and from funding SME projects to additional PhD places. Some projects will involve new or extended collaborations with international partners such as Australia.

Investing in the UK EO sector is a vital part of achieving our ambitions in space and with the range of applications of EO data including Net Zero targets, but it is just the first step.

Over the last few months, my officials have begun discussions with the earth observation community about the longer term plans for the sector. The package announced today provides an interim response to what we have been hearing are their biggest challenges. We will continue to work with the sector to identify strategic priorities to keep building on the world-leading excellence in UK earth observation.

These investments are UK wide and will provide targeted support during this time of uncertainty. They aim to support the retention of talent and firms across the sector, and we have particularly focused on how to ensure both academia and industry can benefit from these projects.

*Context*

The EU has now delayed our association for nearly two years. The UK has done everything it can to secure association, including entering into formal consultations to encourage the EU to implement their obligations.

The Government remains ready to discuss association with the EU, but with the EU continuing to refuse our request to formalise association, we cannot wait forever. Our priority is to invest in the UK's EO sector, and protect our knowledge and capabilities.

# Written Answers

Wednesday, 23 November 2022

## Aviation: Fuels

Asked by **Baroness Scott of Needham Market**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the combustion of synthetic fuels or biofuels of similar chemical composition to fossil kerosene has the same net radiative forcing effect as burning fossil kerosene when used as aviation fuel. [HL3481]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Aviation has climate impacts from both CO2 emissions and other (non-CO2) emissions, that need to be addressed. The impact of CO2 emissions can be quantified, while scientific evidence suggests that non-CO2 impacts from aviation currently represent two thirds of the net effective radiative forcing (ERF). However, this is not a fixed number and is scenario dependent, and there are large uncertainties that exist over the magnitude of non-CO2 impacts on the climate.

Sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) can deliver significant greenhouse emission savings. Scientific evidence suggests that SAF could also have a positive impact in reducing non-CO2 emission impacts. Recent research indicates that SAF can produce 50-70% fewer soot particles, which could reduce the overall warming effect of contrails.

Through the Jet Zero Strategy, we aim to address non-CO2 emissions by better developing our understanding of their impacts and potential mitigations.

## Compost

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to make (1) regulatory, or (2) other, responses to findings in the Big Compost Study which concluded that 60 per cent of items sold as "home compostable" did not degrade in homes under real world conditions. [HL3266]

**Lord Benyon:** HM Government has no immediate plans to regulate in this area but welcomes the findings from UCL's study into the home composting of plastics and will use this to inform our evidence base.

The study has shown that home composting is not a viable destination for managing plastic waste and this echoes HM Government's existing position to prioritise the reduction, reuse and recycling of plastics before anything else.

In April 2021 we published our response to the call for evidence on the need for standards for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics. The Government response acknowledges that compostable plastics must be treated in industrial composting facilities to be broken down and, when processed incorrectly, can be a source of

microplastics and contaminate recycling streams. Therefore, our focus will be on reducing unnecessary consumption and working towards a circular economy, not composting of plastics.

## Coronavirus: Hospitals

Asked by **Lord Mendelsohn**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of (1) a report by BioMed Central (BMD) which suggests that the average length of stay in hospital for COVID-19 patients in England is between 16-29 days; and (2) a report by the US National Library of Medicine which suggests that estimated hospital costs per day for COVID-19 patients in England are (a) £876 for patients not in intensive care units (ICU) or invasive mechanical ventilation (IMV), (b) £1978 for patients in ICU, without IMV, (c) £2043 for patients not in ICU with IMV, and (d) £3145 for patients in ICU and with IMV. [HL2698]

**Lord Markham:** No specific assessment has been made. Since the start of the pandemic, progress has been made in improving the treatment of COVID-19 in the community. This has helped to reduce hospital admissions, with individuals at the highest potential risk from COVID-19 infection benefiting from access to the latest and potentially life-saving therapies, including antivirals and monoclonal antibody treatments.

The Government has also recognised the cost to the National Health Service of managing new pressures from COVID-19 and increased overall NHS resource funding by £36 billion over the last two years.

## Electric Vehicles

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the FairCharge report Driving away from fossil fuels: consumer attitudes to electric vehicles, published in July, whether they will introduce the recommendations that (1) "the proportion of new cars required to be Battery Electric Vehicles should be set at the level of the Climate Change Committee's Balanced Net Zero Pathway", and (2) there should be "further consumer incentives for lower income drivers, such as zero-interest loan schemes". [HL3475]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The UK zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate will set targets requiring a percentage of manufacturers' new car and van sales to be zero emission each year from 2024. The technical consultation on the design of this ZEV mandate and proposed trajectories closed in June 2022. The Department is now analysing consultation responses, and will bring forward the Government's response, and a full regulatory proposal, in due course.

The Government has no plans to introduce a zero-interest loan scheme for electric vehicle (EV) drivers. In many cases, EVs continue to benefit from significant

savings on the cost of fuel. Charging a medium-sized electric car at home at rates equivalent to the electricity price cap from 1 October equates to around half the cost of filling up an equivalent petrol vehicle. In addition, EVs generally cost less to maintain due to fewer moving parts than their petrol or diesel equivalents.

### Electronic Commerce

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact that the Electronic Trade Documents Bill [HL] would have, if enacted, broken down by local authority area. [HL3329]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** His Majesty's Government has conducted its own impact assessment of the benefits of the Electronic Trade Documents Bill and found that, in our best estimate scenario, the benefits to UK businesses involved in international trade will be £1.137 billion over 10 years. We intend to publish the impact assessment shortly.

There is a diverse and geographically dispersed range of businesses involved in international trade in the UK, according to [ONS figures](#). In 2020, there were 263,000 exporting businesses in the UK, 124,000 of which exported goods; further [ONS estimates](#) show that around 75% of UK businesses which exported in 2020 are based outside London. Current research does not allow us to assess impacts at the local authority level, however.

### Energy: Conservation

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to introduce new energy efficiency standards; and when they expect those standards to be introduced. [HL3328]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government is considering a number of options for increasing energy efficiency standards. For the domestic Private Rented Sector, the Government has consulted on raising the standard to EPC Band C for new tenancies from 1 April 2025, and for all tenancies by 1 April 2028. The Government has also consulted on raising the minimum energy efficiency standard of privately rented non-domestic buildings to EPC C by 1 April 2027, and EPC B by 1 April 2030.

The Department have analysed the responses, and we will publish the Government Responses in due course.

### Ethiopia: War Crimes

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the peace process in Ethiopia; and what representations they plan to make to the government of Ethiopia on the need to investigate atrocity crimes committed in recent months and bring those responsible to account. [HL3304]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** We welcome the recent peace agreement between the Ethiopian Government and Tigray People's Liberation Front and the agreement to implement a comprehensive national transitional justice policy aimed at accountability, redress for victims, reconciliation, and healing. We have long called for accountability for the many atrocities and human rights violations and abuses carried out by all parties to this conflict, and are providing support to build the investigative capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

The former Minister for Development raised justice and accountability on several occasions with the Ethiopian Ambassador and our Ambassador to Ethiopia has raised regularly with the Ethiopian Government. We continue to support the International Commission for Human Rights Experts in Ethiopia, and urge all parties to co-operate with the Commission.

### Football: Clubs

*Asked by Lord Pendry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce the restrictions placed on football clubs wishing to upgrade their facilities. [HL3322]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** Many clubs choose to upgrade their facilities, or do so to meet league and safety requirements. All facilities for football clubs must meet the requirements prescribed by their league organiser, the relevant football authority, the Sports Ground Safety Authority, the relevant local authority, and legislation. This ensures that facilities, particularly stadia, are appropriate and safe for all. Football clubs may be subject to the same planning restrictions as any other business or community facility.

His Majesty's Government confirmed in July that Premier League and Championship clubs wishing to introduce licensed 'safe standing' areas at football stadia can apply to do so from the beginning of the current season, increasing the range of options football clubs can offer their supporters when considering their facilities.

*Asked by Lord Pendry*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether their assistance with rising energy costs will extend to football clubs. [HL3323]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** His Majesty's Government recognises the importance of football clubs, both professional and at grassroots level, which provide valuable opportunities for communities to come together and to take part in sport.

The Government also understands the impact rising energy prices will have on organisations of all sizes. In September we announced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, under which businesses and other non-domestic energy users will be offered support. This includes support to football clubs.

After an initial six months of the scheme, the Government will provide ongoing focused support for vulnerable industries. A review is currently underway to determine where this should be targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

### Former Ministers: Redundancy Pay

*Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether ministers appointed by Prime Minister Elizabeth Truss who were either (1) demoted, or (2) dismissed on the appointment of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak are entitled to (a) severance, or (b) any other form of payment for the period during which they were in office. [HL3410]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** Under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, Ministers who leave office are entitled to receive a payment equal to a quarter of their annual salary. This applies only where a Minister is under 65 and is not appointed to a ministerial office within three weeks of leaving government.

Salary entitlements for ministers are set out in Schedule One of the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1975, and ministerial salary information is published on GOV.UK.

### Health Services and Social Services: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact the absence of the Northern Ireland Health Minister will have on the delivery of health and social care services in Northern Ireland this winter; and what steps they intend to take to ensure the safe delivery of critical services. [HL3346]

**Lord Caine:** The Government is acutely aware of the pressures facing the health service in Northern Ireland. The absence of a functioning Executive is exacerbating the severe challenges that the healthcare system in Northern Ireland is facing.

People in Northern Ireland deserve locally-elected decision-makers who are working for them to address these important issues. That is the best way to progress the necessary long term solutions to healthcare and make best use of the substantial UK Government funds announced in the Autumn Statement which will see the budget to the Northern Ireland Executive increase by £650m over two years.

In the absence of an Executive, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland outlined to Parliament on Wednesday 9 November, and which I shared with the House on 14 November, his intention to introduce legislation to enable Northern Ireland Departments to maintain delivery of all vital public services including health and social care.

### HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Interpreters

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the invitation to tender for the new contract for provision of court and tribunal spoken word interpreters will be issued. [HL3342]

**Lord Bellamy:** The Ministry of Justice has been assessing options for tendering the new contract for provision of spoken word interpreters. Our plans remain commercial in confidence at this time. Information will be published to the market in due course.

### Housing: Energy

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch*

To ask His Majesty's Government what long-term impact assessments are required for home insulation and energy efficiency products in order for them to qualify for the PAS2035 standard. [HL3316]

**Lord Callanan:** Products used within the PAS 2035 process for measures referenced in the Annexes of PAS 2030:2019 standard must be compliant with the relevant British Standards which are referred to within the PAS 2035 document. These products are tested and certified by specialist industry bodies such as The British Board of Agrément (BBA), which include robust processes including research, auditing and inspection of the respective products. Products that have been tested and certified as safe and fit-for-purpose by product certification bodies are subjected to continuous inspection to ensure they remain so.

### Iraq: Chemical Weapons

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 21 June (HL724), what assessment they have made of further reports of chemical weapons being used against the Kurds in Northern Iraq. [HL3273]

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government, as a member of the OPCW (Organisation for the Prevention of use of Chemical Weapons), what plans they have, if any, to request an investigation into the allegations of chemical weapons being used against the Kurds in Northern Iraq. [HL3274]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK takes all allegations of chemical weapons use seriously. The use of chemical weapons is prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and is a clear threat to international peace and security. We will continue to uphold and protect the Convention's ban on the use of chemical weapons. The Government is aware of reports that chemical weapons were used in northern Iraq. We

have no direct evidence to support these claims. We continue to monitor reports of use of riot control agents in Northern Iraq.

### **Iron and Steel: Russia**

*Asked by Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the volumes of Russian steel entering the UK that have been processed in third countries; and whether steel entering the country in this way would violate existing sanctions. [HL3324]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The UK has been at the forefront of efforts to restrict imports from key Russian industries following their illegal invasion of Ukraine. This includes steel products, where we have banned the import of all finished steel, and put in place tariff increases of 35 percentage points on all steel. Since April, the UK has imported no steel defined as finished or semi-finished directly from Russia.

The Government recognises that any circumvention of sanctions measures through third countries undermines their wider impact, and we are working alongside international partners to address any potential loopholes in our sanctions regimes.

### **Patient Choice Schemes**

*Asked by Lord Warner*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the training and support currently delivered to GPs to ensure that they make patients aware of their choices when selecting a provider for consultant-led treatment. [HL3396]

**Lord Markham:** The National Health Service Commissioning Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups Responsibilities and Standing Rules Regulations 2012 state that integrated care boards and NHS England, in exercising its commissioning functions, have a duty to ensure that the awareness and availability of choice is publicised to referrers and patients. NHS England has regulatory oversight and operational implementation of patient choice and provides advice and guidance to the public, patients, referrers, commissioners and providers on the choices available in England and how patient choice can be facilitated.

### **Police: Football**

*Asked by Lord Pendry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of policing football clubs in the coming season; and what comparison they have made with the previous season. [HL3321]

**Lord Sharpe of Epsom:** This information is not collected centrally.

### **Regional Planning and Development: Public Appointments**

*Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Regional Levelling Up Directors have been appointed so far. [HL3305]

*Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what the annual pay rate will be for a Regional Director of Levelling Up. [HL3306]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** The Government is committed to delivering Levelling Up. The posts were advertised at salaries of up to £144,000 per annum. No appointments have yet been made. More details will be available in due course.

### **Sickle Cell Diseases: Prescriptions**

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Markham on 27 October (HL2574), what assessment they have made of the financial impact of suspending prescription charges for 2022/23 on people living with sickle cell disease. [HL3227]

**Lord Markham:** No specific assessment has been made and we have no plans to implement a suspension. However, officials are working with organisations in the health and care system on how we can continue to protect the health of those with sickle cell disease. NHS England has also launched a sickle cell clinical pathway review, with contributions from patients living with sickle cell disease. Recommendations from this review will be made to NHS England's Executive Quality Group at the end of November 2022.

### **Tigray: Famine**

*Asked by The Duke of Montrose*

To ask His Majesty's Government what resources they are providing to the administration in Tigray to assist with the famine in that area; and what steps they are taking to increase such resources. [HL3320]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** We welcome the recent peace agreement between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. We hope this will lead to unfettered humanitarian access and the restoration of essential basic services. In the last eighteen months the UK has provided almost £90 million of humanitarian support to people affected by crises throughout Ethiopia. Our support has reached civilians in Tigray and other regions.



### **Trade Promotion: China**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the brief of the new Trade Envoy for the Indo-Pacific includes the promotion of trade with China. [HL3332]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** Richard Graham MP has been reappointed as PM's Trade Envoy to Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and ASEAN. The role does not include the promotion of trade with China.

### **Water Companies: Fines**

*Asked by Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to reports that the fines paid by water companies in England and Wales will be reimbursed to customers, whether the bills that customers receive will be itemised to show the reduction on their individual bills. [HL3293]

**Lord Benyon:** HM Government welcomes the robust regulatory response from Ofwat to incentivise water companies to deliver for their customers, the environment and wider society.

The financial penalties imposed for missing performance commitments will rightly be returned to customers in the next financial year. There is no requirement from HM Government for companies to itemise these reductions on individual customer bills and individual company billing practices will differ.

### **Wildlife: Crime**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce (1) sentencing guidelines for (a) raptor persecution, and (b) other wildlife crimes, and (2) vicarious liability for landowners and tenants in

England and Wales employing those convicted of such crimes. [HL3268]

**Lord Benyon:** HM Government takes wildlife crime seriously. Significant sanctions are available to judges to hand down to those convicted of wildlife crimes. Raptor persecution is a national wildlife crime priority and there are strong penalties in place for offences committed against birds of prey and other wildlife. Most wildlife crimes carry up to an unlimited fine and/or a six-month custodial sentence.

Sentencing those convicted of wildlife crimes, including raptor persecution, is a matter for judges; these decisions are rightly taken independently of HM Government. Within the maximum limits it is up to the court to decide the appropriate sentence, having considered the facts of the case.

However, HM Government does recognise that stakeholders are often disappointed with the sentences that are passed down for wildlife crimes. The UNODC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit Report, published in 2021, suggested that support should be given to the Sentencing Council for England and Wales in developing prescriptive sentencing guidelines, where appetite permits. As with all the recommendations of the report, it will be considered by the relevant agencies.

Defra does not currently have any plans to introduce vicarious liability in England. The introduction of new regulation, such as vicarious liability, requires evidence that it will be effective. In the context of wildlife crimes, vicarious liability was introduced into Scotland by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. HM Government is not aware of any compelling evidence that the introduction of the provisions in Scotland has had a significant deterrent effect on those who persecute birds of prey. We will continue to monitor the situation in Scotland to consider whether this, or a similar offence such as strict liability, is necessary and proportionate to assist in tackling wildlife crime in England.

## Index to Statements and Answers

### **Written Statements.....1**

Bank of England Asset Purchase Facility.....	1
Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust: Edenfield Centre.....	1
Publication of the UK Joint Fisheries Strategy ....	1
UK Earth Observation .....	1

### **Written Answers.....3**

Aviation: Fuels .....	3
Compost.....	3
Coronavirus: Hospitals .....	3
Electric Vehicles.....	3
Electronic Commerce .....	4
Energy: Conservation .....	4
Ethiopia: War Crimes .....	4
Football: Clubs .....	4
Former Ministers: Redundancy Pay .....	5
Health Services and Social Services: Northern Ireland.....	5
HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Interpreters ...	5
Housing: Energy.....	5
Iraq: Chemical Weapons .....	5
Iron and Steel: Russia.....	6
Patient Choice Schemes .....	6
Police: Football.....	6
Regional Planning and Development: Public Appointments .....	6
Sickle Cell Diseases: Prescriptions.....	6
Tigray: Famine .....	6
Trade Promotion: China .....	7
Water Companies: Fines.....	7
Wildlife: Crime.....	7