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

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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<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
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<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
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# Written Statements

*Friday, 2 December 2022*

## **Water Company Fines: Environmental Improvements**

[\[HLWS399\]](#)

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

On Wednesday 30 November the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs announced that future funding from fines handed out to water companies that pollute our rivers and seas will be invested in schemes that benefit our natural environment.

At present, money from fines imposed by Ofwat and those arising from Environment Agency prosecutions is returned to the Treasury. Under the new plans, ringfenced

funds will be invested directly into environmental and water quality improvement projects.

Further details on the plans will follow next year.

Since 2015, the Environment Agency has concluded 56 prosecutions against water and sewerage companies, securing fines of over £141m. Defra is bringing forward proposals to raise the civil penalty for water companies who pollute the environment.

We are going further and faster than any other government to protect and enhance the health of our rivers and seas. Our new Environment Act puts in place more protections against water pollution than ever before.

The government has also launched an ambitious plan to tackle sewage discharges from storm overflows. The Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan will require water companies to deliver the largest infrastructure programme in water company history – a £56 billion capital investment by 2050.

# Written Answers

Friday, 2 December 2022

## Africa: Malaria

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the spread of *Anopheles stephensi* mosquito in Africa, and (2) the challenges posed for people's health. [HL3557]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The *Anopheles stephensi* mosquito is a malarial mosquito species that thrives in cities and has been expanding in Africa. The World Health Organisation has estimated that the species could put an additional 126 million people at risk of malaria if it were to spread unchecked. The WHO has launched an initiative to research the spread of the strain and to protect against further spread. The UK recently pledged £1 billion to the seventh replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. This investment will help to protect millions of people from malaria.

## Avian Influenza: Gardens

Asked by *The Earl of Caithness*

To ask His Majesty's Government what advice they are giving to those who wish to feed birds in the coming winter and spring seasons to minimise the risk of transmission of avian influenza from bird feeders. [HL3534]

**Lord Benyon:** We encourage anyone feeding wild birds to do so responsibly and not feed them in the vicinity or on the same premises as poultry or other captive birds and to be aware of the risk of carrying contamination back to their poultry or other captive birds, for example on their footwear.

The feeding of wild garden birds is not prohibited by the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) measures or other avian influenza disease control legislation. Where an AIPZ has been declared wild gamebirds should not be fed within 500m of a premises where more than 500 poultry or other captive birds are kept (where this area is under the control of the keeper).

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has said that avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health is very low. However, members of the public should not touch, pick up or transport dead or sick birds and should keep away from bird droppings if possible, and wash their hands thoroughly if they accidentally come into contact with any bird faeces, feathers or other potentially contaminated material. The NHS website [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bird-flu/prevention] has further information.

Wild birds are susceptible to a range of different pathogens. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) provides advice about keeping bird feeders and water baths clean to prevent transmission between wild birds, this guidance will also help minimise the risk of transmission of avian influenza.

## Bank of England Asset Purchase Facility Fund

Asked by *Lord Tyrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Penn on 28 March (HL7077), whether they will describe the risks that they have assessed regarding their decision not to publish the Asset Purchase Facility deed indemnity; and which of these risks would "not advance the public's understanding" of the arrangement by which HM Treasury indemnifies the Asset Purchase Facility. [HL3569]

**Baroness Penn:** The Asset Purchase Facility (APF) deed indemnity will not be published. The disclosure of the APF deed indemnity would be likely to expose sensitive information relating to the quantitative easing scheme and related processes.

HM Treasury indemnifies the APF which means that any losses or gains from the APF accrue to HM Treasury. This is public knowledge and the publication of the deed of indemnity will not advance the public's understanding of that arrangement.

The Bank of England publishes quarterly reports for the APF, which explain to the public the implications of indemnity for the Treasury and the cash transfer arrangements between the Bank and Treasury.

## Blockchain and Non-fungible Tokens

Asked by *Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) operation, (2) benefits, and (3) risks, of (a) Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), and (b) the wider blockchain. [HL3559]

**Baroness Penn:** The Government established a Cryptoassets Taskforce in 2018, consisting of HM Treasury, the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Taskforce's objectives include exploring the impact of cryptoassets, the potential benefits and challenges of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT, which includes blockchain technology) in financial services; as well as monitoring ongoing developments in cryptoasset markets.

These crypto technologies could have a profound impact across financial services, including reducing risk, working capital, and disintermediating friction. However, there are also associated risks. As the Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee noted, as crypto technologies grow and become more interconnected with the core financial system we'll need to ensure that regulators have

the right tools to manage the associated risks. That is why the Government is taking forward a number of regulatory initiatives to manage risks and support innovation so that people and businesses can use new technologies both reliably and safely.

The Government is putting in place a Financial Market Infrastructure (FMI) Sandbox, which will enable firms to experiment with the use of new technologies like DLT in providing the services that underpin financial markets. The Government is also exploring the possible use of DLT in the issuance and lifecycle of a sovereign debt instrument. Further details on this research programme will be set out in due course.

The non-fungible tokens (NFTs) market is evolving rapidly and remains at an early stage of development. Most NFTs are not currently subject to financial services regulation in the UK and the Government has proposed to exclude them from the financial promotions regime on the basis that NFTs can represent a wide array of different assets which might constitute non-financial services products. The Government will continue to closely monitor how NFTs are used in financial services and take further action if necessary.

### Carbon Dioxide and Hydrogen: Recycling

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what work they are undertaking, if any, on converting carbon dioxide and hydrogen into methanol. [HL3556]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government is supporting innovation in the synthesis of methanol from low-carbon hydrogen through the UKRI Hydrogen and alternative energy vectors innovation programme.

Where transport fuels are produced by converting carbon dioxide and hydrogen into methanol using renewable inputs, they are eligible for support under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO). The RTFO is a certificate trading scheme that has been successful in reducing carbon emissions from road transport since 2008 through incentivising the use and production of low carbon fuels.

### Children's Social Care Independent Review

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will issue their response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in May. [HL3572]

**Baroness Barran:** The department is working up an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy in response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care which we will publish early in 2023.

### Civil Servants: Flexible Working

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many civil service employees who have requested flexible working hours have had that request accepted; and how many civil service employees made similar requests in the last three years. [HL3635]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The data of the nature being requested is not routinely captured or reported on by the Cabinet Office. Decisions on flexible working requests are made locally by departments, based on their business needs and delivery requirements.

As departments are individual employers they set out their employees' terms and conditions, including any flexible working policies.

The Civil Service is fully focused on delivering for the British people and we have been clear on the benefits of face to face working, and departments across government remain committed to having staff working in offices at pre-pandemic levels.

### Climate Change Convention: Egypt

*Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the outcome of COP27; and what plans they have, if any, to address the issues raised at the conference. [HL3563]

**Lord Callanan:** COP27 established a new fund for responding to loss and damage as part of other funding arrangements relevant for loss and damage. This progress is significant in supporting the most vulnerable.

We maintained the focus from Glasgow on the urgent action needed to keep 1.5 alive and secured further work on mitigation to accelerate and implement emission reductions.

The deal in Egypt preserves the historic commitments countries agreed to last year in the Glasgow Climate Pact, and the UK will continue to push for international ambition and implementation of the Glasgow Climate Pact and the Paris Agreement.

### Economic Growth

*Asked by Lord Truscott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have carried out any assessment of the costs to pension funds and pensioners from the impact of the Growth Plan statement by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, on 22 September; and what those costs are forecasted to be. [HL3780]

**Baroness Penn:** Pension funds are managed by independent trustees and managers and the performance of funds can vary significantly, depending on the investments that have been made, or as a consequence of market fluctuations.

Over time, the value of pension funds will change and its value at a point in time will depend on several factors, including the length of time it has been invested and the performance of the investments.

Changes to the value of pension funds in the U.K are not measured by any single data source, making it difficult to assess the impact of a particular event.

The Pensions Regulator is also actively monitoring the financial markets to assess the impact on defined benefit pension scheme funding and liquidity and they continue to meet with the Bank of England and other regulators on this.

### Gift Aid

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the current Gift Aid scheme. [HL3708]

**Baroness Penn:** The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review, and is committed to providing support to the charitable sector worth over £5 billion per year. Gift Aid - a key part of this- is worth £1.4 billion per year to charities and £500 million to their donors (through higher rate relief).

HMRC works closely and regularly with representatives from across the charity sector reviewing Gift Aid and exploring ways in which it can be improved and made fit for the future, as well as raising awareness amongst donors. It places a high priority on this collaborative work, which remains ongoing, and is always interested in ideas to improve the take-up and raise awareness of Gift Aid.

Charities also have a key role to play in raising awareness of Gift Aid, as they are best placed to educate eligible donors about the benefits of Gift Aid at the point of donation.

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce measures to improve awareness and uptake of Gift Aid. [HL3709]

**Baroness Penn:** The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review, and is committed to providing support to the charitable sector worth over £5 billion per year. Gift Aid - a key part of this- is worth £1.4 billion per year to charities and £500 million to their donors (through higher rate relief).

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Charities also have a key role to play in raising awareness of Gift Aid, as they are best placed to educate eligible donors about the benefits of Gift Aid at the point of donation.

### Internet: Education

*Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much Ofcom has spent on its work to promote online media literacy in each of the last three years. [HL3527]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** Ofcom is operationally independent from His Majesty's Government and is accountable to Parliament. Information on Ofcom's budget and funding arrangements can be found in its Annual Report and Accounts, which are lodged in the House of Commons Library and published on Ofcom's website.

### Mobile Phones: Ukraine

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to making provision for (1) free roaming for Ukrainian phones in the UK, and (2) free roaming for UK phones in Ukraine. [HL3576]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** Mobile telephone operators currently offer a range of surcharge-free or low-cost options, both for Ukrainian telephones in the UK, and for UK telephones in Ukraine. For example, the UK's largest mobile telephone operator, EE, has made mobile roaming free for both Ukrainian phones in the UK, and UK telephones in Ukraine.

### Nuclear Power Stations

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect new nuclear power generating capacity to come online in the UK. [HL3554]

**Lord Callanan:** The target date for commercial operations of reactor 1 at Hinkley Point C (HPC) is 1 June 2027. In order to achieve the up to 24GW deployment pathway by 2050, as set out in the British Energy Security Strategy, the Government intends to take one project to Final Investment Decision (FID) this Parliament and two projects to FID in the next Parliament, including Small Modular Reactors.

The Government is in constructive, ongoing negotiations on the Sizewell C project, which would be a replica of HPC. As announced in the Autumn Statement, subject to final approvals, the Government intends to

support further development of the project, with an investment of £700m.

### Plastics: Compost

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the compostability of plastics certified as home compostable. [HL3555]

**Lord Benyon:** HM Government notes 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.

### Reconstruction: Ukraine

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to securitising a war risk insurance scheme for investors from the UK of seized assets. [HL3782]

**Baroness Penn:** UK sanctions legislation does not provide powers to seize frozen assets. Under the Russia sanctions regime, assets are frozen immediately by the person in possession or control of them. An asset freeze does not involve a change in ownership of the frozen funds or economic resources.

I can confirm, however, that the Government is considering all options on the seizure of Russian-linked assets in the UK, including for the purposes of supporting Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction.

Several existing products developed by UK Export Finance already have the scope to support UK exports and investors as part of reconstruction efforts, and cover war and political risks in Ukraine.

### Republic of Ireland: Airspace

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they last met the government of Ireland to discuss co-operation on defence of Irish air space. [HL3543]

**Baroness Goldie:** There have been no discussions between His Majesty's Government and the Government of Ireland on co-operation on the defence of Irish air space.

### Retail Trade

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the UK economy of any decline in trading businesses. [HL3672]

**Baroness Penn:** The Government considers a variety of factors to understand the health of the UK corporate sector and economy. This includes monitoring official data, economic modelling and regular engagement with firms and business groups.

Like other advanced economies, the UK is affected by global economic challenges, including the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine. Support provided over the past two years has put businesses and the UK economy in a good position to deal with these challenges.

Insolvencies fell below the historical average during the pandemic as the Government supported businesses through this economic shock. As we exit the pandemic, and pandemic related support has unwound, insolvencies have risen. This is in line with industry expectations though, and total insolvencies since the start of 2020 remain below what would have been expected based on pre-pandemic trends.

The number of new incorporations remains above pre-pandemic levels, showing that the UK continues to offer good opportunities to setup new businesses.

### UK Trade with EU: Exports

*Asked by Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to return the level of exports from to UK to countries in the EU to the exports level prior to the UK leaving the EU. [HL3640]

**Lord Johnson of Lainston:** The EU is a vital export destination for British businesses, with exports to the EU totalling £298 billion in the 12 months to the end of June 2022.

The Government's refreshed Export Strategy helps businesses at every stage of exporting and our Export Support Service is a single point of access digital enquiry service, assisting business in trading with the EU. In addition, the Department for International Trade has around 300 trade experts across Europe, including a dedicated Trade Commissioner for the continent, and we will have facilitated almost 500 activities and events to support UK exporters between April 2022 and March 2023.

## Young People: Education

Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many 18 to 24 year olds started a course at (1) Level 4, and (2) Level 5, in (a) 2019, and (b) 2022. [HL3571]

**Baroness Barran:** The department publishes an overview of participation and achievements in learning at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 4 to 8 at further education (FE) providers and higher education (HE) providers in its annual statistical release 'Higher-Level Learners in England'. The latest release for the 2020/21 academic year can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/higher-level-learners-in-england/2020-21#dataBlock-a5a1ee87-ec4e-44ee-776a-08da3e21c130-tables>. The statistical release includes counts of entrants across different types of higher-level learning, including apprenticeships and Office for Students (OfS) recognised HE.

The specific age range requested is not available in the statistical release. The tables below show the number of entrants to NQF level 4 and 5 learning who were aged 18 to 24 in the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21. (Student age is taken as the age as at 31 August of the reporting period). The statistics are disaggregated by the type of higher-level learning undertaken and figures are rounded to the nearest 5, in line with Higher Education Statistics Agency rounding conventions.

*English-domiciled higher-level entrants to NQF level 4 learning aged 18 to 24 at English providers in 2019/20 and 2020/21*

Type of Study	2019/20	2020/21
OfS Recognised HE	9,125	8,355
Apprenticeship	10,435	10,780
Institutional credit in Higher Education Providers	1,250	1,340
Other Higher Level	3,705	3,285
Level 4 total	24,520	23,765

*English-domiciled higher-level entrants to NQF level 5 learning aged 18 to 24 at English providers in 2019/20 and 2020/21*

Type of Study	2019/20	2020/21
OfS Recognised HE	16,450	17,730
Apprenticeship	3,070	2,735
Institutional credit in Higher Education Providers	230	265
Other Higher Level	895	760
Level 5 total	20,645	21,485

Statistics for the academic year 2021/22 will be published in Spring 2023 and statistics for 2022/23 will be published in Spring 2024.



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