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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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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

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

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Written Statements

Thursday, 8 December 2022

Devolution: England

[HLWS414]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (The Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Levelling Up White Paper set out the Government's ambition that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement. Stronger, more empowered, and more accountable local leadership is core to our levelling up mission, to delivering on the ground, to growing our local economies and to improving public services.

In Summer 2022, the Government concluded devolution deals with York and North Yorkshire, and that part of the East Midlands which includes Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire. Subject to the ongoing local consultations and satisfactory completion of the statutory processes, including local consent by the councils and Parliamentary approval of the secondary legislation to implement the deals, the inaugural mayoral elections are planned for May 2024. The East Midlands deal is also dependent on the enactment of provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill necessary for the establishment of the proposed East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority.

The Government has now concluded three more devolution deals with Cornwall, Norfolk and Suffolk. These are the first set of the new County Deals that extend devolution to more of England. Each deal will result in the election of a mayor or directly elected leader to champion the area with government and business. These deals are subject to locally run consultations, resolution by each of Cornwall Council, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council to change their governance models so that electors directly elect the council leader, and to the satisfactory conclusion of the statutory processes, including local consent from the councils and Parliamentary approval to the secondary legislation to implement the deals. Inaugural elections for a mayor or directly elected leader in each of the areas are planned for May 2024. They will have the choice of alternative titles to "mayor" for these elections, subject to provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill being enacted.

These five new devolution deals will drive forward improved outcomes for the 5 million people that live in

those areas. Taken together, they take the proportion of England now covered by a devolution deal to above 50% for the first time. They will deliver new funding including long-term investment funds to invest in local priorities that drive growth and levelling up, totalling over £3 billion over 30 years.

The Government is also in advanced negotiations on a North East devolution deal that will supersede the current North of Tyne Combined Authority that covers only Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. A deal is expected to be concluded shortly and further details will be announced.

Negotiations on trailblazer deeper devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities are progressing well and expected to conclude early in 2023. These deals seek to devolve further powers in areas such as skills, transport, housing and net zero, alongside potential department-style single funding settlements and stronger accountability focussed on outcomes. They will act as a blueprint for other areas to follow. We are interested in other MCAs coming forward with ideas for new functions. We will begin talks with other MCAs on deeper devolution from next year. The Government will set out more on plans for those talks soon.

Effective devolution requires local leaders and institutions that are transparent and accountable. This is why the Government will be publishing the Devolution Accountability Framework in early 2023, alongside a Funding Simplification Plan, setting out the accountability mechanisms for MCAs, the Greater London Authority and other institutions that have agreed a devolution deal. It will set out how they are scrutinised and held to account by the UK Government, local politicians and business leaders and above all by the residents and voters of their area. This work will be supported by planned improvements to the broader Local Government Accountability Framework including the establishment of the Office for Local Government.

The Government will step ahead in extending devolution in England further. We will continue to work with local government in England to roll out further mayoral combined authorities, combined county authorities, and county deals. Discussions with places to identify potential candidates for the next set of new devolution deals will start in early 2023. The Government is particularly interested in exploring opportunities for devolution deals that will empower local leaders and communities where places want a directly elected leader, in line with the devolution framework published in the Levelling Up White Paper.

The above demonstrates strong progress towards achieving the 2030 local leadership mission, which is essential to levelling up. In these areas across England, more of the decisions which matter to people – on transport, housing, and skills – will be taken by locally elected, democratically accountable leaders rooted in their place and empowered to level up.

Telecoms Diversification: International Co-operation

[HLWS413]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure, Julia Lopez MP:

I would like to inform the House that, today, DCMS is announcing a joint statement on telecoms diversification alongside the governments of Australia, Canada and the United States of America. This further progresses HM Government's efforts to build global support for our approach to telecoms diversification and identify tangible opportunities for collaboration with a range of international partners as set out in the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy in 2020, and following the recommendations of the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce in 2021.

The joint statement marks the one-year anniversary of the 2021 Prague Proposals on Telecommunications Supplier Diversity, to which our four governments have reaffirmed our commitment. It also announces the endorsement of the UK's Open RAN Principles by the governments of Australia, Canada and the United States of America, which I would like to welcome.

Collectively, these governments hold a shared view that open and interoperable solutions could help to create a more diverse, competitive and innovative telecoms supply market. To support this we intend to work together across a number of areas ranging from sharing information on our respective policy approaches, to supporting greater transparency in industry-led standard setting processes. We also intend to seek ongoing support from other like minded countries truly to realise the benefits of a diverse telecoms supply chain on a global scale.

This announcement builds on the strong progress we have made to increase the resilience and security of the UK's telecoms critical national infrastructure since the publication of the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy, which is backed by the £250 million Open Networks Fund committed at the 2021 Spending Review. The fund aims to accelerate the adoption of Open RAN solutions as a means to diversify the market. It includes research and development interventions of up to £36 million for the Future RAN Competition (FRANC), up to £25 million for Future Open Networks Research Challenge, as well as funding for testing facilities such as the SmartRAN Open Networks Interoperability Centre (SONIC), and the UK Telecoms Lab. HM Government has also previously announced a joint ambition with UK mobile network operators to increase the share of open and interoperable equipment in UK networks by 2030. Indeed we are also seeing positive progress from industry - for example, Vodafone and Telefonica have now deployed their first live Open RAN sites with both using new market entrants.

While there is still more to do, today represents a significant milestone in the Government's efforts to grow international consensus on telecoms diversification. In order to support a lasting and meaningful change it will be crucial for the global community to work together.

I am grateful to the governments of Australia, Canada and the United States of America and look forward to working with them, along with partners around the world, to achieve our vision of a more innovative, competitive and diverse telecoms supply market.

Full details of the announcement will be published on www.gov.uk today.

Written Answers

Thursday, 8 December 2022

Active Travel England: Finance

Asked by *Lord Young of Cookham*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Active Travel England budget will be protected. [HL3871]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department is considering the budget for Active Travel England and for active travel more generally as part of its examination of all future spending plans following the Autumn Statement.

Alaa Abdel Fattah

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions the Prime Minister has had with the government of Egypt both (1) during, and (2) after, COP27, regarding the release of Alaa Abdel Fattah, who is currently imprisoned in that country. [HL3760]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Since Mr Alaa Abdel Fattah's sentencing in December 2021 HMG has made numerous representations concerning his welfare, need for consular access, and pressed for release, including recently at COP27. The Prime Minister raised Mr Alaa Abdel Fattah's detention with President Sisi on 7 November, stressing HMG's deep concern and that he hoped to see the case resolved as soon as possible. COP26 President, Alok Sharma raised Mr Alaa Abdel Fattah case with Foreign Minister Shoukry on 11 November. The Foreign Secretary is also in regular contact with Foreign Minister Shoukry. We continue to use every opportunity to raise Mr Alaa Abdel Fattah's case and seek his urgent release.

Burundi: Refugees

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the recent visit to Nyankanda camp by the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly T. Clements, what support they are providing (1) the 87,000 refugees from other countries currently residing in Burundi, and (2) the 200,000 Burundian former refugees who have returned to that country in the last five years. [HL3752]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK Government welcomes the visit by the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees to the Nyankanda refugee camp in Burundi. The UK has funded humanitarian programming in Burundi over the last five years. Through a needs-based approach, our programming has targeted the most vulnerable returning refugees and Internally Displaced People providing shelter, protection, re-

integration and livelihood support, as well as psychosocial and medical support and legal assistance.

Capital Gains Tax

Asked by *Lord Lee of Trafford*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of (1) the number of additional taxpayers who will have to complete Capital Gains tax returns as a result of the proposed reduction in threshold, (2) the amount of additional tax revenue that is likely to be raised, and (3) the extra cost of administration that will be required as a result of those changes. [HL3755]

Baroness Penn: A measure was announced at Autumn Statement 2022 to reduce the annual exempt amount (AEA) for capital gains tax (CGT) to £6,000 for tax year 2023 to 2024, with a further reduction to £3,000 for tax year 2024 to 2025 and subsequent tax years.

In 2024 to 2025, 260,000 individuals and trusts are estimated to be brought into the scope of CGT as a result of the measure.

However, some of those taxpayers brought into the scope of CGT would already have been expected to complete the capital gains tax supplementary pages within Self Assessment for the following reasons:

- To report a loss;
- To claim a relief; and
- Where the total amount or value of the consideration for all 'chargeable disposals' of assets made by the person in the year exceeds four times the AEA before April 2023 (£50,000 from April 2023)

The amount of additional tax revenue that is expected to be raised as a result of the measure is set out in the table below:

Tax Year	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025	2025 to 2026	2026 to 2027	2027 to 2028
Exchequer impact (£million)	0	+25	+275	+425	+435	+440

These figures are set out in table 5.1 of Autumn Statement 2022 and have been certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility. More details can be found in the policy costings document published alongside Autumn Statement 2022 which is available on the gov.uk website.

A cost in the region of £100,000 will be incurred in delivering the relevant IT changes to support safe implementation of this measure. HMRC also expects to receive additional contact from customers who require support as a result of this change.

Civil Society: Energy

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the recommendation in the report by THEOS A Torn Safety Net, published on 7 November, whether they

plan to introduce a cap on energy prices in community spaces to provide support for communities. [HL3754]

Lord Callanan: Applying a price cap in the non-domestic market would be impractical given the number of different contractual arrangements, range of prices offered, number of meter/location combinations impacting non-energy costs, and the risk of distorting the market.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme came into force on the 1 November to provide a discount on energy bills for all eligible non-domestic customers, including community spaces on non-domestic tariffs. It is designed to offer an equivalent level of support to the Energy Price Guarantee for domestic customers and will initially cover energy use from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Armed Conflict

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and relations between that country and Rwanda; and what steps, if any, they are taking to de-escalate that conflict. [HL3751]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK condemns the escalation in fighting in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Foreign Secretary has raised our concerns with both the President of DRC and the Foreign Minister of Rwanda; The Minister for Africa also recently spoke to the Rwandan Foreign Minister. We welcome agreement on a ceasefire as agreed at the Luanda summit in Angola on 23 November. It is vital that all parties implement it to secure a real de-escalation on the ground in Eastern DRC. We call on all sides to do everything they can to ensure armed groups respect the terms of the ceasefire and engage with the regional political processes, in order that an enduring political solution can be found.

The UK remains committed to supporting efforts to build stability and reduce violence in the country, including through the UN Peacekeeping Mission, MONUSCO, which plays a vital role in protection of civilians and supporting the government to tackle violence and instability. The UK is also a major humanitarian donor to DRC. In November, the pooled SMART fund, supported by the UK, announced £300,000 of additional funding to support people displaced by the recent violence in North Kivu, including with shelter and food security.

Energy: Storage

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the planning barriers to the installation of significantly scaled battery storage units

in England; and what plans they have to boost their rollout. [HL3743]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: It is for local authorities to determine planning applications for battery storage installations where development comes forward, taking into account the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration which is clear that the planning system should support our transition to a low carbon future. As set out in the Net Zero Strategy, and as part of our programme of changes to the planning system, we will review the NPPF to ensure it contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation as fully as possible.

The Government's British Energy Security Strategy reflects the importance of flexibility for our energy security.

Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Goldie on 22 November (HL Deb cols 1272–5), what is the total cost of the contract; and how much of that will be spent in the UK accruing (1) corporation tax, (2) National Insurance contributions, and (3) income tax. [HL3788]

Baroness Goldie: No contract has yet been signed. His Majesty's Government anticipates that the value of the contract will be £1.6 billion. The majority of this sum will be spent in the United Kingdom. As with any contract it is for the contractor to agree a price that takes into account its costs, including normal business costs such as taxes and national insurance payments.

Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Goldie on 22 November (HL Deb cols 1272 to 1275), whether British steel will be used in the construction of the ships. [HL3787]

Baroness Goldie: I refer the noble Lord to the answer provided by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Defence Procurement (Alex Chalk), in the House of Commons on 22 November 2022 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey), in response to Question number 88822.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel [UIN 88822.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-11-24/HL3787>

Global Navigation Satellite Systems

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress has been made on the preparation of a Resilient Position Navigation and Timing Strategy; and how it addresses the UK replacement of the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) system. [HL3745]

Lord Callanan: BEIS has created a Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) team to strengthen cross-Government PNT resilience, in line with the 2021 Integrated Review commitment to strengthen the resilience of the PNT services on which the UK's Critical National Infrastructure and economy depend.

The team will take forward the PNT agenda initially as a 'concept demonstrator' project to develop a cross-government position on national PNT resilience through a better understanding of national needs, risks, and mitigations. This includes consideration of European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) type services. The team is building on the work already undertaken within Government on PNT.

Harland and Wolff

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Goldie on 22 November (HL Deb cols 1272–5), what is the size of the current Harland & Wolff workforce; and when it last built a ship for the Royal Navy. [HL3785]

Baroness Goldie: The size and distribution of the current Harland and Wolff workforce is a matter for the company.

Harland and Wolff was last awarded a Ministry of Defence contract to build RFA Fort Victoria in 1986. The ship was launched in 1990 and completed in 1994.

Harland and Wolff: Fleet Solid Support Ships

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Goldie on 22 November (HL Deb cols 1272–5), whether (1) pre-built, and (2) fitted, modules from Spain will be put together in Harland & Wolff. [HL3786]

Baroness Goldie: I refer the noble Lord to the answer provided by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Defence Procurement (Alex Chalk), in the House of Commons on 24 November 2022 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey), in response to Question number 89737.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts [UIN 89737.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-11-24/HL3786>

High Speed 2 Line

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any ministerial direction in relation to (1) costs, or (2) programme, has been sought by any of the accounting officers responsible for HS2; if so, when; and for what purpose. [HL3797]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: All ministerial directions are published online on Gov.UK if carried out. Since the appointment of the current Permanent Secretary in April 2017, no ministerial directions have been sought on HS2 as accounting officer responsible for the project.

Higher Education: Overseas Students

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely impact on (1) the UK economy, and (2) the financial viability of Britain's higher education sector, of overseas students being deterred from coming to the UK for their (a) graduate, and (b) post-graduate, studies. [HL3843]

Baroness Barran: International students make an estimated contribution to the UK economy of at least £25.9 billion per year, with every part of the UK being financially better off because of international students. International students also make a significant economic and cultural contribution to the UK's higher education (HE) sector, which is important for our universities and delivers growth at home.

The department continues to work to ensure that the UK remains an attractive destination to international students. The government looks forward to continuing to welcome international students to our world class HE institutions. We remain committed to the targets set out in the International Education Strategy to continue to host at least 600,000 international students in the UK per year, by 2030. With 605,130 international students in the UK hosted in the 2020/21 academic year, the government has met its International Students ambition for the first time, nearly ten years early.

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely impact of overseas students being prevented from entering the UK for their (1) graduate, and (2) post-graduate, studies on UK universities' reputation internationally. [HL3845]

Baroness Barran: The UK's HE sector has a strong reputation globally. The department is committed to maintaining the UK as an attractive study destination for international students. As set out in the International

Education Strategy, we are working closely with the higher education (HE) sector and other government departments to ensure international students are welcomed and supported.

The department works with colleagues across government to ensure up-to-date immigration advice is available to students to help with their student visa journey.

The department has met the International Education Strategy's ambition to host at least 600,000 international students per year in the UK, nearly ten years early, with a total of 605,130 international students in the UK in the in the 2020/21 academic year.

Iran: Gender Based Violence

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports on the use of rape and sexual violence against protesters in Iran; and what representations they have made to the government of Iran on this issue. [HL3737]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking at the United Nations to prevent any human rights violations by the government of Iran in that country, and to support the upholding of the rights of women. [HL3738]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the rights of women and girls in Iran, and specially of the issue of violence against women and girls in that country; and what steps they are taking in connection with International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November) to highlight and address any challenges they have identified. [HL3739]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Mahsa Amini's death is a shocking reminder of the repression faced by women in Iran. On 14 November the UK sanctioned 24 leading political and security officials in Iran for their role in the brutal crackdown on protests, which included unacceptable violations of the rights of women and girls. This followed our earlier sanctions against the Morality Police and other leading security figures. The UK continues to urge Iran to improve its human rights record, including on women and girls, at all appropriate opportunities. The UK is also working with international partners to ensure Iran is held to account. On 24 November, the UK voted in support of the UN Human Rights Council's resolution to establish an investigation into human rights violations by the regime during the protests. We are also working with partners to ensure Iran is removed from the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Iran: UN Commission on the Status of Women

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, given current events in Iran and the actions being taken against women and girls in that country, what assessment they have made of Iran's membership of the UN Commission on the Status of Women; and whether they are taking steps to remove Iran from membership of that Commission. [HL3741]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Through its actions, words and repression of women's rights, Iran has proven it is not fit to sit on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The UK fully support the United States' proposal to seek Iran's removal from the CSW, and will do what we can, together with our partners, in support of this. On 24 November, the UK supported a successful Human Rights Council resolution to establish a UN investigation into the regime's appalling human rights violations during the protests.

Iran: Women's Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assistance they are providing to women and girls in Iran, or organisations working with them; how many beneficiaries are benefiting from these projects; and what further assistance they are considering to address the position of rights of women and girls in Iran. [HL3740]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Mahsa Amini's death is a shocking reminder of the repression faced by women in Iran. The UK is working with international partners to urge Iran to improve its human rights record, including on women and girls, at all appropriate opportunities. We work closely with several international bodies, including the UN, that operate humanitarian programmes within Iran.

Land Drainage

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to bring fully into force Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. [HL3762]

Lord Benyon: HM Government is completing a review of the case for implementing Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and will confirm the outcomes in due course.

Liverpool Strategic Futures Advisory Panel

Asked by *Lord Storey*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Liverpool Strategic Futures Panel has met yet. [HL3776]

Asked by *Lord Storey*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 25 October (HL2504 and HL2506), what update they can now provide regarding the Strategic Futures Advisory Panel. [HL3777]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: On 18 August 2022 the Liverpool Strategic Futures Panel was announced. The independent Panel will work alongside Liverpool City Council. The Panel will craft a plan for the future of Liverpool and the wider city region with a particular focus driving growth in skills, jobs and opportunities, that stretches beyond the current temporary intervention. Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram was invited to work with Baroness Blake of Leeds and Sir Howard Bernstein to agree a Terms of Reference and membership for the Panel. We are working closely with Mayor Rotheram's team and will make an announcement in due course to confirm details of its first meeting including how the Panel will operate, and how elected members from Liverpool City Council engage with the Panel and its work.

Migrants: Children

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children subject to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions are in receipt of the 15 hours a week of free early education available to disadvantaged two-year old children. [HL3886]

Baroness Barran: Following a consultation in May 2022, the department extended eligibility for the 15 hour early education entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds to children in no recourse to public fund households in September 2022.

However, the department does not hold data on the number of children specifically with no recourse to public funds that are currently in receipt of the two-year-old early education entitlement.

Northern Ireland Protocol

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will take steps to protect Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the UK in any agreement they have with the EU on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. [HL3849]

Lord Caine: There has never been a question over Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the UK

as a result of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The Protocol also makes clear that Northern Ireland remains part of the UK internal market and customs area.

However, I fully acknowledge that the Protocol, in its current form, is causing real problems in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Agreement requires both Unionists and Nationalists to be part of a power-sharing Government, but the Protocol is acting as a barrier to the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive and a functioning assembly. There is also trade disruption, significant costs and bureaucracy for traders and areas where people in Northern Ireland have not been able to benefit fully from the same advantages as those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

That is why the Government is engaging in constructive dialogue with the EU to find solutions to these problems while proceeding with legislation, which aims to fix the practical problems the Protocol has created. At the core of the solutions, we will ensure the integrity of all parts of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland's position within it.

Oak National Academy: Publishing

Asked by *Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government who in law will be the publisher of Oak National Academy publications when it becomes a non-departmental public body. [HL3827]

Baroness Barran: Building on its success in the COVID-19 pandemic, Oak National Academy was established as an arm's length body on 1 September 2022, working independently of government and collaboratively with the sector. It works with teachers across the country, giving them and their pupils access to high-quality digital curriculum resources which are free, optional, and adaptable.

As an arm's length body, Oak National Academy will procure resources, own the intellectual property of those resources and make them available online.

Pensions: Insolvency

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take in response to representations made to them by the Pensioners Action Group on behalf of persons now of pensionable age whose sponsoring companies closed in the 1990s through insolvency and who consequently suffered substantial pension losses. [HL3789]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The taxpayer funded Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) has been operational since 2005. It was set up to award financial assistance to members of eligible defined benefit pension schemes which started to wind up underfunded between 1 January 1997 and 5 April 2005. Since it was established, the FAS

has been extended and improved several times, making the financial help more generous and encompassing more schemes and members. Therefore, the Government does not intend to take any steps in response to the Pensions Action Group.

Public Spaces Protection Orders: Enforcement

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 27 October where he stated that "local authorities are obliged to follow the rules set out in the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in their appointment of such companies" (HL Deb col 1545), whether these (1) regulate private incentivised enforcement, and (2) limit injustices; and whether they restrict fining for profit. [HL3749]

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 27 October where he stated that "local authorities are obliged to follow the rules set out in the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in their appointment of such companies" (HL Deb col 1545), given that 90 per cent of all private enforcement uses a (1) 'payment per fine' model, or (2) some other incentives system, whether these practices are in breach of the Regulations; and if so, whether they will conduct an investigation. [HL3750]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Public Contract Regulations 2015 do not regulate these issues. It is a matter for local authorities which models they use to enforce fixed penalty notices. There are no plans to conduct an investigation into these practices of local authorities.

Social Security Benefits

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made with the roll-out of changes to social security benefits. [HL3779]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Movement of legacy benefit recipients to Universal Credit (UC) started in May 2022, with the first 500 notices taking place in Bolton and Medway. Since then, the Discovery Phase of Move to UC issued over 1500 Migration Notices across 5 geographical areas including Truro & Falmouth, Harrow, Northumberland, and Cornwall.

By the end of 2024 we estimate nearly 90% of households claiming working age means tested benefits will be on UC.

South Africa: Development Aid

Asked by The Earl of Sandwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they are holding with (1) churches, and (2) non-governmental organisations, in South Africa in relation to any UK sponsored work to tackle rural poverty in that country. [HL3722]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: President Ramaphosa's recent State Visit to the UK on 22-23 November highlighted the wide range of work the UK undertakes with South Africa's government to support sustainable economic growth, across both rural and urban communities. As part of the State Visit, we launched new Economic, Infrastructure, and Education and Skills Partnerships, to work with the government and other stakeholders to support South Africa's economic growth agenda. In taking forward all our work, we engage with a range of stakeholders including NGOs and religious leaders.

Asked by The Earl of Sandwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support new projects to address poverty in South Africa. [HL3724]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK and South Africa agreed new partnerships to support economic growth, education and skills and health system strengthening during President Ramaphosa's State Visit on 22-23 November. These partnerships, as well as ongoing co-operation e.g. through the Just Energy Transition Partnership, cover a range of collaborative activities, including programmes that will help South Africa reduce poverty.

South Africa: Land

Asked by The Earl of Sandwich

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have supported any land redistribution projects in South Africa since the 1994 general election in that country. [HL3723]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: A broad process of land reform has been in progress in South African since Apartheid ended in 1994, and parliamentary processes are ongoing. We have no record of UK Government supporting the implementation of land redistribution projects in South Africa.

Turkey: Syria

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Turkey's current position in relation to the plans announced by the President of that country for a full-scale ground offensive against Kurdish militants in Syria. [HL3758]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK recognises Turkey's legitimate security interests in Syria and Iraq and is closely monitoring the situation. It is important that the risks to civilians and to the security and stability of the region are minimised. FCDO Ministers and senior officials engage with Turkey regularly on issues of regional security. The Foreign Secretary last met Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on 30 November.

Ukraine: Reconstruction

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to offering a war risk insurance plan for investors from the UK in order to facilitate (1) trade, and (2) jobs, in the reconstruction of Ukraine. [HL3781]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to helping Ukraine rebuild to emerge from the war with a modernised economy resilient to Russian threats. UK Export Finance (UKEF) is supporting the Government of Ukraine with £3.5 billion of financial capacity available for priority projects. UKEF is open to cover war and political risks in Ukraine through a number of different products to support UK exports and investors as part of reconstruction.

Unboxed: Public Expenditure

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government how much central government funding they provided towards the £120 million cost of the Unboxed festival. [HL3790]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: In 2018 HM Government announced that £120 million would be made available for UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK.

HM Treasury provided £98.3 million to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport for the programme, and the remainder was provided to the devolved administrations via the Barnett formula.

UNRWA: Finance

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Commissioner-General for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on 17 November that the global economic situation has pushed the agency into a "danger zone", whether they have held

any emergency meetings with UN partner countries to discuss funding for that agency. [HL3756]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are longstanding supporters of The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and their work to provide essential services to 5.8 million Palestinian refugees across the OPTs, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. We are aware that the agency has faced funding shortfalls in recent years, which has made it even more challenging to continue service delivery. At the UNRWA pledging conference in New York in June 2022, we announced a new multi-year funding programme with the agency and will provide £15m in 2022. On 22 September in New York, I [Lord Ahmad] attended a Ministerial dialogue on UNRWA's financial situation where I reiterated UK support for the agency and the need for the international community to support it to be on a more viable financial footing.

Voluntary Organisations: Cost of Living

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the report by THEOS A Torn Safety Net, published on 7 November, what steps they are taking to support charities and organisations who have experienced a decline in volunteers and donations, and an increase in costs, as a result of the increased cost of living. [HL3753]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: We know that, as households and communities face rising prices, many charities and civil society organisations are contending with the same price increases themselves while also seeing more demand for their services.

With the support of His Majesty Government, charities and civil society organisations have shown significant resilience over the past two years, and will again be crucial in supporting people through the winter.

We are providing support to all charities, public sector organisations, and businesses with their energy costs this winter by offering an energy price guarantee for six months through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. This scheme will benefit charities and civil society organisations across the country.

DCMS will keep engaging constructively with the sector and across HM Government to monitor the impact of rising costs on volunteers and donations. We will ensure that DCMS is engaged on policy which affects charities and civil society organisations.

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