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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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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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<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

Monday, 19 December 2022

Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report 2022

[HLWS456]

Baroness Goldie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today, I am pleased to lay before Parliament the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report 2022. This year has thrown into sharper focus the importance of our Armed Forces as standard bearers for the values we hold dear as a nation. This includes the support the Armed Forces have provided to Ukraine to defend its sovereign territory against Russian aggression, the role the Armed Forces played during the ten days of national mourning and State Funeral of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and in this year's commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the Falklands Conflict. More than ever, our Armed Forces community is central to our national life, and about who we are as a country.

The UK's promise to support our Armed Forces community and to ensure they are treated fairly is as important as ever. We owe them a vast debt of gratitude and have a duty to ensure that those who serve, or who have served in our Armed Forces, and their families, suffer no disadvantage in comparison to other citizens. In some cases, special consideration is appropriate, particularly for those such as the injured or the bereaved. This is what the Covenant sets out to do. In the same vein, this Government has committed to making the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran, acknowledging veterans' service to this country and setting out our plans in the Strategy for Our Veterans.

Never has the Armed Forces Covenant and support to veterans been more vital, and we recognise that partners across the UK, at all levels of the public, private and charitable sectors, have been working hard to support those who serve or have served, and their families. I am proud to lay this report before Parliament as a demonstration of that work.

Highlights from this year's report include:

The Government has fulfilled its 2019 Manifesto commitment to 'further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into law'. A new Armed Forces Covenant Duty has been created, that places a new legal obligation on specific public bodies to have due regard to the Covenant principles when delivering certain services, or deciding certain policies, in healthcare, education and housing, that could impact the Armed Forces Community.

Armed Forces Covenant signings are rapidly approaching 10,000, with 1,634 signing over the last 12 months alone.

The inclusion of veterans' health in the GP training curriculum and national GP licensing assessment in England and Scotland, and the launch of a Veterans' Health Innovation Fund.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs published the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-24, setting out over 60 commitments, with over £70m of additional funding, from across Government to further improve the lives of our veteran community.

A Servicewomen's Health Improvement Team worked on an eight-month sprint to address issues related to Servicewomen's health, resulting in ground-breaking new policies and guidance to support Servicewomen throughout the Armed Forces.

There were record levels of investment in Service Family Accommodation in financial year 2021-22, with £179 million invested overall.

The Ministry of Defence has published its new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy, which provides the framework for an ambitious ten-year programme. Delivery of initiatives under each workstream has begun.

This report is a collaborative effort with input from service providers and professionals from a diverse array of backgrounds. I would like to thank colleagues across central Government, the Devolved Administrations and Local Authorities, and those at every level and from every sector who are continuing to drive forward the work of the Covenant and the Strategy for Our Veterans in support of our Armed Forces community. We are also grateful to the external members of the Covenant Reference Group who provided their independent observations.

British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22

[HLWS454]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Hon Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Americas and Caribbean) at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, has made the following statement:

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. It does this by uniquely combining the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, its global presence and relationships in over 100 countries and its unparalleled access to young people and influencers around the world.

In 2021/22 the British Council received £183m grant-in-aid from the FCDO.

With a total reach of 648 million people in 2021/22, the British Council creates mutually beneficial relationships between the people of all four nations of the UK and other countries. Such connections, based on an understanding of each other's strengths and shared values, build an

enduring trust. This helps strengthen the UK's global reputation and influence, encouraging people from around the world to visit, study, trade and make alliances with the UK.

Copies of the British Council's Annual Report and Accounts for the 2021-22 financial year have been placed in the Library. The Annual Report can also be found at the British Council's website:

www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/corporate-reports.

Health Update

[HLWS452]

Lord Markham: My Hon friend the Minister of State (Minister for Health and Secondary Care) (Will Quince) has made the following Written Statement:

The NHS Workforce is the key component of the NHS. It is one of the largest single employers in the country and globally. Around 5% of the England workforce is employed by the NHS, so the way in which we value the workforce matters, both in ensuring delivery of health services and as a role model for other employers.

The Autumn statement has made up-to £14.1bn available to Health and Social Care service over the next two years. This funding will help enable us to continue to support the NHS in England. I am therefore pleased to report that there are a record number of people working in the NHS. Latest data for September 2022 shows almost 1.4 million full time equivalent staff working across NHS hospital trusts and primary care in England.

Within this workforce there are a record number of over 168,000 full time equivalent doctors across hospitals and general practice. This includes over 131,000 in NHS hospitals and over 37,000 in general practice. There are also a record number of over 333,000 nurses across the NHS, with over 316,000 working in NHS hospital and over 16,000 across primary care.

We now have over 32,000 more nurses now than we had in September 2019, putting us well on the way to meeting the Government's commitment of 50,000 more nurses across hospital and general practice settings by March 2024. Over the last three years, this speed of growth in nursing numbers is faster than we have seen since 2009 when current recording began.

Internationally trained staff are an important component of the 50,000 nurse target. They have been an integral part of the NHS since its inception in 1948 and continue to play a vital role. We hugely value their contribution to providing excellent care. Whilst we are working hard to increase our homegrown supply of health and social care staff, ethical international recruitment remains a key element of achieving our workforce commitments.

I am also pleased to see that other key NHS hospital workforce groups continue to grow, such as the now almost 18,000 professionally qualified ambulance staff, 12% more than in 2019 and over 81,000 allied health professionals, 20% more than 2019. These staff work

hand in hand with the over 380,000 clinical support staff who are so vital to the effective delivery of patient care.

We are also growing new professions to support patient care and I am pleased to see over 2,500 physician associates and over 4,600 nursing associates working across hospitals and primary care.

We also have a very healthy pipeline of people training to work in the NHS. There are record numbers of medical students in undergraduate training and graduates from recent expansion in medical school places and schools are starting to enter foundation training. Large numbers of candidates also continue to choose courses in nursing and midwifery in England, and since September 2020 all eligible nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students have received a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year.

For the third consecutive year we have seen over 26,000 acceptances to undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery programmes. There were 3,700 more acceptances in 2022 than in 2019 – a 16% increase. This is alongside substantial expansion of nursing apprenticeships, with over 3,000 people starting in 2021/22 compared to less than 1,000 in 2019/20.

However, in spite of the growth we are seeing, we know health and care staff are facing ongoing challenges. The rising demand for services due to the pandemic, service recovery and an ageing population means that staff continue to work under pressure.

Therefore, alongside expanding the workforce we must therefore work to retain the staff that we have and ensure NHS is an attractive place to work.

The NHS People Plan and the NHS retention programme are focused on improving the experience of staff working in the NHS, as well as seeking to address the reasons that they leave. This means ensuring we support staff health and wellbeing, improve the leadership and workplace culture of NHS organisations, and increase opportunities to work flexibly.

To help with flexible working, we are making changes to NHS pension rules to help retain experienced doctors and nurses, and remove barriers for retired staff who want to return. We have therefore launched a consultation on detailed proposals to enable staff to work more flexibly up to and beyond retirement age, and protect them from unintentionally higher annual allowance pension tax charges driven by inflation.

Looking to the future, we must ensure that the future workforce is both large enough to meet the challenges it will face and has the right people with the right skills working in the right places to address future demand.

To that end, we have commissioned NHS England to develop a Long-term Workforce Plan for the NHS workforce for the next 15 years. This will look at the mix and number of staff required across all parts of the country and will set out the actions and reforms that will be needed to reduce supply gaps and improve retention. We have committed to independently verifying this report, and publishing it next year.

HM Revenue and Customs Update

[HLWS457]

Lord Harlech: My honourable friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Victoria Atkins) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Across the globe, digitalisation of tax is increasingly the norm. Modernisation of UK businesses and the tax system remains of crucial importance to the UK.

Making Tax Digital (MTD) for VAT is already demonstrating the benefits to businesses that digital ways of working can bring.

MTD for Income Tax Self-Assessment (ITSA) will follow, with businesses, self-employed individuals, and landlords keeping digital records and using MTD-compatible software to submit updates to HM Revenue and Customs.

The government understands businesses and self-employed individuals are currently facing a challenging economic environment, and that the transition to MTD for ITSA represents a significant change for taxpayers, their agents, and for HMRC.

That means it is right to take the time needed to work together to maximise those benefits of MTD for small business by implementing gradually.

The government is therefore announcing more time to prepare, so that all businesses, self-employed individuals, and landlords within scope of MTD for Income Tax, but particularly those with the smallest incomes, can adapt to the new ways of working.

The mandation of MTD for ITSA will now be introduced from April 2026, with businesses, self-employed individuals, and landlords with income over £50,000 mandated to join first.

Those with income over £30,000 will be mandated from April 2027.

The government will now review the needs of smaller businesses, and particularly those under the £30,000 threshold. This will look in detail at whether and how the MTD for ITSA service can be shaped to meet the needs of smaller businesses and the best way for them to fulfil their Income Tax obligations. Once that review is complete - and in consultation with businesses, taxpayers, agents, and others - the government will lay out the plans for any further mandation of MTD for ITSA.

Following the phased approach, the government will not extend MTD for ITSA to general partnerships in 2025. It remains committed to introducing MTD for ITSA to partnerships at a later date.

The new penalty system, harmonising late submission and late payment penalties for Income Tax Self-Assessment with those for VAT, will come into effect for taxpayers when they become mandated to join MTD. This makes penalties fairer and simpler for taxpayers. The government will introduce the new penalty system for Income Tax Self-Assessment taxpayers outside the scope of MTD after its introduction for MTD taxpayers.

The government anticipates that most taxpayers within the scope of MTD for ITSA will be able to sign-up voluntarily before they are mandated to do so. HMRC will keep this under review to ensure all taxpayers using the MTD for ITSA service receive a high-quality service.

Household Energy Bills: Support

[HLWS459]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Minister of State for Energy and Climate (Graham Stuart) has today made the following statement:

Help with household energy bills – Widening the support

On 29 July the government announced details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme which is now providing a £400 discount on electricity bills to households across Great Britain, delivered over six months. On the same date we announced Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding would be developed to deliver the same level of support to households without a domestic electricity account.

The Government announced further support in September with the Energy Price Guarantee which is reducing energy bills for households across the United Kingdom. It currently brings a typical household energy bill in Great Britain for dual-fuel gas and electricity down to around £2,500 per year, and at an equivalent level of support in Northern Ireland to around £1,950 per year.

Energy policy is devolved in Northern Ireland and it would normally be the responsibility of Northern Ireland Ministers to put in place support for households with energy costs. In the absence of a functioning Executive but in consultation with Northern Ireland Ministers, the UK Government committed in August to develop and deliver a scheme comparable to that being delivered in Great Britain.

I am now able to update you on both the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding process in Great Britain and a scheme for Northern Ireland to ensure payments reach all eligible households this winter.

Energy Bill Support Scheme - Alternative Funding

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding is for households in Great Britain who are not eligible for the Energy Bill Support Scheme which started delivering in October, as they do not have a direct relationship with a domestic electricity supplier. This includes many of the most vulnerable in our society. Those set to benefit include residents of park homes, some care home residents, tenants in certain types of private and social rented homes, homes supplied by private wires, residents of caravans and houseboats on registered sites, farmers living in domestic farmhouses without a domestic electricity connection, and households off-grid.

It is important to note that most households who don't have a direct relationship with a domestic energy supplier benefit from a discount on their energy bills through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which is already providing

support to intermediaries such as landlords and park home operators. The Energy Prices Act legislation passed earlier in the year ensures those benefits are passed on to consumers who do not pay their energy bills directly to an energy supplier.

In January we will publish details on eligibility and open a portal on gov.uk offering a short online application process for those eligible households to apply for Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding. A helpline will be available for those unable to apply online. Applications will be validated, and payments processed by the relevant local authority. The £400 government credit will be paid this winter to all eligible households who apply.

Northern Ireland Energy Bills Support Scheme

For Northern Ireland we have developed and will deliver a separate and bespoke Energy Bills Support Scheme, working with the separate Northern Ireland electricity suppliers, and respecting the very different nature of the energy market in that part of the United Kingdom. This scheme will also deliver for households this winter, with payments starting in January.

The payment will be for £600, comprising £400 for the Energy Bills Support Scheme and £200 for the Alternative Fuel Payment, which all Northern Ireland households will receive, given the high level of alternative fuel use. The single payment will reach customers through their supplier, either direct to the relevant electricity bill payer's bank account, or as a voucher which will need to be redeemed into a bank account or as cash.

We are making funds available to suppliers for this purpose by the end of this year, so suppliers will be able to start paying customers in January.

A further announcement will be made in respect of Alternative Funding support for those in Northern Ireland without a domestic electricity supply.

I have also written to Northern Ireland energy suppliers setting out expectations for them to suspend all debt recovery and enforcement activity until the end of January, as well as provide payment holidays until the end of January when customers are struggling to pay their bills.

Alternative Fuel Payment Scheme

I can also set out today our intended timings for the £200 Alternative Fuel Payment scheme for households in Great Britain who use fuels such as heating oil, LPG or biomass to heat their homes. Payments will commence in February, with most payments being made that month through electricity suppliers. More details about how we will target the scheme will follow soon in the new year. Households which will not receive automatic payments will be able to apply to the same gov.uk portal used for the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Fund from February.

The Treasury has approved these extensions to the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

I will continue to update Parliament.

Licensing Hours Extension Consultation

[HLWS451]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My right hon Friend the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On 6 May 2023, the Coronation of King Charles III will take place. To celebrate this historic occasion, events will likely be taking place throughout the weekend, both in the UK and across the Commonwealth.

The Government has already announced an additional Bank Holiday on 8 May and celebrations will include public events and local community activities.

I am pleased to launch a consultation on extending licensing hours throughout the Bank Holiday weekend to allow those who wish to make the most of this opportunity. The consultation proposes that an extension would take place on 5, 6 and 7 of May to 1am the following day on each day.

Opportunities to gather with our families, friends and local communities were severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. His Majesty the King's Coronation provides an opportunity to come together and celebrate this great nation and enjoy our renewed ability to spend time together in marking this historic occasion.

A copy of the consultation will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and also made available on GOV.UK.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24

[HLWS458]

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:

Introduction

On 12 December, I published a Policy Statement outlining proposals for the 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement and details of funding in 2024/25. Today, I have set out the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 and launched our formal consultation on the proposals. This Settlement provides a 9% increase in national level Core Spending Power, making available almost £5 billion in additional resources, demonstrating how Government stands behind councils up and down the country.

Together, the Policy Statement published on 12 December, and this proposed Settlement:

- Give multi-year certainty to local authorities, allowing them to plan ahead with more confidence over the rest of the Spending Review period.
- Ensure stability by introducing a one-off Funding Guarantee to ensure that every council sees at least a

3% increase in Core Spending Power next year before any local decisions on council tax rates.

- Provide around £2 billion in additional grant for children's and adult social care in 2023/24.
- Maintain a balance on Council Tax, protecting residents from excessive increases while allowing councils to generate income to deliver local services.

Certainty

Local government has long called for greater certainty on funding following repeated one-year settlements. In the Policy Statement published on 12 December, the Government has provided this certainty by setting out clearly our intentions and proposals for the 2024/25 Settlement.

Stability

Government recognises that all local authorities are facing pressures. In this proposed Settlement we are taking action to provide stability for all local authorities, across all tiers of local government, to support the vital work they undertake for communities across the country.

We are introducing a new, one-off Funding Guarantee that ensures every local authority will see a minimum 3% increase in their Core Spending Power, before taking any local decisions to increase council tax rates.

Social Care

Adult and children's social care services provide crucial support to care users and young people in need, and this proposed Settlement provides significant additional funding for this key area of concern. Government has listened, and we know that many local authorities are already facing difficult decisions brought on by inflationary and demand pressures. This is why we are providing around £2 billion in additional grant for social care, compared to 2022/23. Additionally, for social care authorities, we are consulting on a 2% precept for 2023/24. The council tax referendum provisions are not a cap, nor do they force councils to set taxes at the threshold level. When taking decisions on council tax levels, local authorities should recognise the pressures many households are facing

We have also listened to councils' concerns about implementing adult social care charging reform in light of these pressures. That is why Government has made the difficult decision to delay these reforms, and to prioritise core pressures rather than risk destabilising the market. The funding intended for implementation will be retained in local authority budgets.

Council Tax

The Government's manifesto commits to continuing to protect local taxpayers from excessive council tax increases. This is an additional local democratic check and balance to avoid the repeat seen under the last Labour Government when council tax more than doubled. Government intends to proceed with a core referendum principle of 3% for 2023/24. Furthermore, we are proposing a bespoke council tax referendum principle of

up to 3% or £5, whichever is higher, for shire districts. On top of this, we intend to proceed with a £5 referendum principle on Band D bills for all fire and rescue authorities and a £15 referendum principle on Band D bills for police and crime commissioners.

This proposed package of referendum principles strikes a fair balance. The council tax referendum provisions are not a cap, nor do they force councils to set taxes at the threshold level.

The Mayor of London has requested flexibility to levy an additional £20 on Band D bills to the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept to provide extra funding for Transport for London (TfL). The Government has expressed ongoing concern about the management of TfL by this Mayor, and it is disappointing that London taxpayers are having to foot the bill for the GLA's poor governance and decision-making. Whilst the Government will not oppose this request, any decision to increase the precept is solely one for the mayor, who should take into account the pressures that Londoners are currently facing on living costs and his decision to raise his share of council tax by 8.8% last year.

We are also today announcing £100 million of additional funding for local authorities to support the most vulnerable households in England. This funding will allow councils to deliver additional support to the 3.8 million households already receiving council tax support, whilst also providing councils with the resources and flexibility to determine the local approaches to support other vulnerable households in their area.

Conclusion

These proposals will provide councils with the support they need. It gives certainty, ensures stability, provides significant additional resources for social care, and maintains balance on Council Tax.

I welcome representations from all interested parties on the consultation we have launched today. The consultation will run until 16 January. The Local Government Minister will also be holding engagement sessions for Members of Parliament in the week commencing 9 January 2023.

OBR Forecast: Spring Budget

[HLWS455]

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

Today I can inform the House that I have asked the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to prepare a forecast for 15 March 2023 to accompany a Spring Budget.

This forecast, in addition to the forecast that took place in November 2022, will fulfil the obligation for the OBR to produce at least two forecasts in a financial year, as is required by legislation.

Protect Duty Bill: Martyn's Law

[HLWS453]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My right hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am pleased to announce the foundational policy elements that will form the basis of this Government's upcoming Protect Duty Bill, also known as Martyn's Law. These proposals have been developed in response to feedback received to the Government's 2021 consultation on policy, where seven in ten respondents supported the concept that businesses should protect the public, and in partnership with key stakeholders. Government will continue to work closely with business stakeholders to ensure that guidance and support is bespoke, accessible and easy to understand, enabling Martyn's Law to be implemented successfully in an effective and proportionate manner.

As you will be aware, the Chair of the Manchester Arena Inquiry recommended the introduction of a Duty in June 2021. This was further to the 2017 London Bridge Prevention of Future Deaths Report, which recommended introduction of legislation setting out the duties of public authorities. Martyn's Law has been championed by the Martyn's Law Campaign (led by Figen Murray, the mother of Martyn Hett killed in the Manchester attack) and the Survivors Against Terror network, whom I would like to pay tribute to today. It is also supported by expert security partners such as the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) and the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) within Counter Terrorism Policing.

Overview

The proposed Martyn's Law will seek to improve the safety and security of our citizens so they can enjoy public premises without fear of terrorism by improving protective security and organisational preparedness at a wide range of locations across the UK. It is emphatically in the public interest for the Government and business to work together to ensure people are protected when visiting venues, retail areas, and other publicly accessible venues without introducing undue burden. Those responsible will be required to consider the threat from terrorism and implement appropriate, proportionate mitigation measures. The two primary objectives for Martyn's Law will be to i) clarify who is responsible for security activity at locations in scope, thereby increasing accountability; and ii) improve outcomes UK-wide so that security activity is delivered to a consistent level. An inspection and enforcement regime will seek to educate, advise, and ensure compliance with Martyn's Law.

Proportionate requirements

In developing Martyn's Law policy, I have been clear that proportionality and clarity are fundamental to successful delivery. Legislation will therefore establish a tiered model, introducing a requirements framework that is linked to the type of activity that takes place at eligible

locations and the number of people (occupancy) that the location can safely accommodate at any time. Wherever possible and appropriate the policy has been aligned to wider regimes designed to keep the public safe (e.g., Health and Safety and Fire Safety) to increase ease of understanding. The distinct requirements for each tier are:

- **Standard-** will drive good preparedness outcomes. Locations with a maximum occupancy of greater than 100 people at any time will be required to undertake low-cost, simple yet effective activities to improve protective security and preparedness. This will be achieved by accessing free awareness raising materials and development of a basic preparedness plan considering how best a location can respond to a terrorist event in their locale.
- **Enhanced-** focussed on high-capacity locations in recognition of the potential consequences of a successful attack. Locations with an occupancy of 800+ at any time will additionally be required to take forward a risk assessment and subsequently develop and implement a security plan. Enhanced Duty holders will be required to meet a reasonably practicable test.

Locations with a maximum occupancy at any time of less than 100 will fall out of scope, however, they will be encouraged to adopt good security practices on a voluntary basis. This will be supported by free guidance and training materials. To ensure that Martyn's Law is agile and responsive, Government will have the ability to adjust capacity thresholds in response to changes in the nature of the terrorist threat.

Definitions

Premises will fall within scope of Martyn's Law where "qualifying activities" take place. This will include activities such as entertainment and leisure, retail, food and drink, museums and galleries, sports grounds, public areas of local and central Government buildings (e.g., town halls), visitor attractions, temporary events, Places of Worship, health, and education. It is proposed that Martyn's Law will apply to eligible locations which are either: a building (including collections of buildings used for the same purposes, e.g., a campus); or location/event (including a temporary event) that has a defined boundary, allowing capacity to be known. Eligible locations whose maximum occupancy meets the above specified thresholds will be then drawn into the relevant tier. This would include, for example, music festivals, where there are known and controlled boundaries in place.

Responsible Parties

To deliver clarity of responsibility and accountability, Martyn's Law will define parties obliged to meet its requirements. This will be a simple formulation to establish persons in control of a premise. Where there are multiple parties at a location, Martyn's Law will primarily place obligations on a lead party whilst placing requirements on others to co-operate with that party, such as in the development of risk assessments and security plans. Martyn's Law Guidance will detail how and where

it would be envisaged that parties will need to co-ordinate on assessments and plans and provide examples of good practice.

Exemptions

I intend that there will be some limited exclusions and exemptions from the Duty. This includes locations where transport security regulations already apply; and those that are vacant over a reasonable period or are permanently closed. Those with a large floor space and low occupancy in practice (e.g., warehouses and storage facilities) as well as offices and private residential locations, will not be in scope.

As a unique cohort, Places of Worship (PoW) will receive bespoke treatment under Martyn's Law. All PoW will be placed into the standard tier, with a small cohort of locations that charge for entry placed into the enhanced tier. Similarly, given the existing safety and safeguarding policies in place at under 18 educational settings, such sites will be placed into the standard tier regardless of their occupancy. However, due to the accessible nature of higher educational settings I consider there is no case for any special treatment. I also consider that given their iconic status, with many locations operating as high-footfall visitor attractions, there is no case to provide any exemption for publicly accessible Defence, Royal and Crown Estate sites.

Regulation

To limit burdens on the Criminal Justice System (CJS), avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of individuals, enforcement will predominantly be delivered via a civil sanctions regime (to a civil standard). In all but the most serious cases a civil monetary penalty is likely to be issued to provide a backstop to the civil sanctions. However, in the case of the most egregious breaches a limited number of criminal offences will be available. It is not my intention for a failure to comply with standard Martyn's Law requirements to result in criminal prosecution. In line with recent, comparable regimes, to disincentivise financial benefit from non-compliance, variable monetary penalties will be available. A maximum penalty of up to £18m or 5% of worldwide turnover will be available for Enhanced sites. Standard locations will be subject to a maximum £10,000 penalty. Civil liability for failure to comply with the requirements will be precluded by way of express provision for all duty holders.

Sensitive Information in Licensing Applications (SILA)

I intend to introduce the Sensitive Information in Licensing Applications (SILA) protocol (by way of an amendment to the Licensing Act 2003 (LA2003)) to align to the similar system already in place within planning legislation (Sensitive Information in Planning Applications (SIPA)), to reduce the risk of misuse of sensitive information in the public domain.

Bill preparation and Government support

I am pleased to have set out the above elements of Martyn's Law, on the basis of which Government will introduce measures to the House as soon as parliamentary

time allows. Statutory guidance to support duty holders in fulfilling Martyn's Law requirements will also be developed. This will encourage a culture of continuous improvement. In addition, a range of initiatives are already in train to support understanding of Martyn's Law and its requirements. ProtectUK will be a key tool for the effective delivery of support to all owners and operators of PALs, providing guidance and advice, training options and, engagement opportunities through webinars and forums.

An impact assessment has been developed to robustly assess the expected impact on organisations in scope.

Publication of Resilience Framework

[HLWS450]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Right Honourable Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Oliver Dowden MP), has today made the following written statement:

I wish to inform the House that I am publishing the UK Government Resilience Framework further to the commitment made in the Integrated Review for greater strategic planning in this vital area. With the increasing volatility and interconnectedness of risks and hazards, a strong resilience system is more important than ever. In March 2021, the Integrated Review committed the government to developing a new resilience strategy to strengthen our approach to preparedness and civil protection. This new Framework delivers on that commitment and takes a systemic approach to all national threats.

The UK Government's Resilience Framework articulates our ongoing plan to strengthen the systems and capabilities that underpin the UK's resilience to all civil contingencies risks, from extreme weather to supply chain challenges or public health emergencies. It is ensuring that as well as managing immediate crises, we maintain a greater collective focus on preparation and preventing crises from happening in the first place.

The Framework is built around three core principles:

- A shared understanding of the risks we face is essential: it must underpin everything that we do to prepare for and recover from crises;
- Prevention rather than cure wherever possible: resilience-building spans the whole risk cycle so we must focus effort across the cycle, particularly before crises happen; and
- Resilience is a 'whole of society' endeavour: so we must be more transparent and empower everyone to make a contribution.

Work is already underway across government to deliver on these principles and act on lessons from recent crises, but the Framework outlines our further ambition on priorities such as:

- Becoming more transparent on the risks we face so that businesses, charities, individuals and all levels of government can prepare.

- Protecting the most vulnerable in our communities and helping responders to target support effectively before, during, and after emergencies.
- Strengthening accountability on resilience within government and externally, including through an annual statement to Parliament on civil contingency risk and resilience.
- Ensuring that Local Resilience Forums have the resources, capacity, information, and capability needed to plan for and respond to the risks that we face.
- Incentivising and supporting businesses, including operators of Critical National Infrastructure, to strengthen their resilience to real world risks.

Implementation of the proposals in the Framework has already started. We have already made changes at the centre of government to strengthen our approach to long-term resilience and short-term crisis management, and to embed a culture of resilience in all government departments. We have refreshed the classified National Security Risk Assessment and will update the public version, the National Risk Register, in the new year.

The Prime Minister has approved a new sub-committee of the National Security Council on resilience which I will chair. I look forward to establishing the committee in the new year, when the Terms of Reference and membership will be published in the usual way.

I have requested that a copy of the Resilience Framework be deposited in the Libraries of the Houses of Parliament.

Work of the Home Office

[HLWS460]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am updating Parliament on Home Office delivery since the previous Written Ministerial Statement of 5th September 2022. In the face of an increasingly complex operational context, the Home Office continues to make a significant positive impact. We have faced substantial external pressures which have continued over the last three months, including the ongoing arrival of small boats and war in Ukraine. The department remains committed to delivering better outcomes for the public and continues to work to deliver a safer, fairer and more prosperous United Kingdom.

Following the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Home Office successfully delivered departmental responsibilities and assurance of police and security plans for Operation London Bridge from 8th-19th September 2022. Keeping the capital safe during an event on this scale - the equivalent of 160 state visits within three days - was a major achievement. This was the largest no-notice policing operation of a generation which included over 12,000 police officers deployed on the day of the state funeral.

Reducing Crime

The first job of any government is to keep its people safe, which is why we have put more police on our streets, are cutting crime and protecting the public. Over the last three months, the Home Office has worked hard to achieve these priorities. Overall crime has fallen by 10% since December 2019, equivalent to 1m fewer crimes.

Neighbourhood Crime

Neighbourhood crime is down 20% since December 2019, and burglary has fallen by 30% over the same time period. Since the Safer Streets Fund was established, we have awarded £120 million to local projects in high-crime areas across England and Wales through four rounds of funding, supporting over 250 projects. I am pleased that the NPCC has announced that all Police chiefs in England and Wales committed in September to attend all home burglaries. An example of this in action is Operation Tenacity, which saw the Metropolitan Police attend most burglaries, resulting in 1,700 arrests in just 6 weeks during October and November this year.

Serious Violence

Hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object among under 25s - our primary metric for measuring serious violence - have fallen by 22% since December 2019. Our Violence Reduction Unit programme alongside targeted police enforcement activity has prevented over 49,000 violent offences since funding for the programmes began in March 2019. In addition, 260,000 vulnerable young people have been supported through Violence Reduction Units in their second year alone, and 90,000 weapons have been taken off our streets since 2019.

The 'Grip' police enforcement programme is supporting the police to take targeted action in parts of England and Wales most affected by serious violence. Grip is helping to drive down violence by using a highly data-driven process to identify violence hotspots - often to individual street level - to target operational activity in those areas.

We are seeing impact in areas we are funding: for instance, hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object amongst under 25s in the Metropolitan Police Force area fell from 465 in 2020/21 to 410 in 2021/22.

Drugs

We know that the drugs trade is at the heart of much of the homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime that blight our communities. Our 10-year cross-Government Drug Strategy published in December 2021 includes £300 million of dedicated investment over the next three years, to drive work on tackling drug supply. We are breaking drug supply chains: our work to tackle the supply of drugs through county lines is already making an impact. Through the County Lines Programme since launching in 2019, Police have closed down more than 2,900 deal lines (including over 500 lines since April 2022) and made over 8,000 arrests. Dedicated specialist services are supporting children and young people and their families to escape county lines exploitation and

rebuild their lives. Drug data from Project ADDER (Addiction, Disruption, Diversion, Enforcement and Recovery), a programme trailblazing a whole system response to combatting drug misuse, shows positive early signs. Between January 2021 and September 2022, the ADDER programme has supported over 1,600 Organised Crime Group disruptions, over 20,500 arrests, and over £7m cash seized. We are also diverting people into treatment and wider support. For example, 12,400 Out of Court Disposals have been offered and over 8,000 naloxone kits distributed in the community.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls: Between January 2021 and August 2022, a team of academics conducted sequential deep dives on the police response to rape in 5 police forces: Avon and Somerset Police, the Metropolitan Police Service, Durham Constabulary, West Midlands Police and South Wales Police. A wide range of data and information was gathered and examined during the deep dives - including reviews of case files, observations of investigations and training, focus groups with support services and victims. Following the deep dives, the forces have developed tailored improvement plans to address the findings; which has led to the roll out of Operation Soteria.

We continue to implement the Rape Review Action Plan, investing £6.65 million in Operation Soteria to deliver the national operating model for the investigation of rape for all forces to adopt from June 2023; introducing new powers to stop unnecessary and intrusive requests for victims' phones; and continuing to work with police forces to ensure they have the capability to return victims' devices within 24 hours. In the year-ending June 2022, the police recorded 196,889 sexual offences, the highest level recorded within a 12-month period. This is a 21% increase compared to year ending March 2020.

On 15 December, the Government published its third six monthly Rape Review Progress Update, which showed that – although there is still more to do - the Government is on track to meet its Rape Review ambition to more than double the number of adult rape cases reaching court by the end of this parliament. In the most recent data for 2022, the number of cases referred by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) was up 95 percent; the volume of cases charged was up by two-thirds; and the number of cases reaching the Crown Court was up 91 percent compared to 2019 averages.

We have continued to implement the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, and have enshrined into law the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. We have introduced new offences relating to non-fatal strangulation, hymenoplasty and virginity testing. We have strengthened protections and support for victims of domestic abuse and the response to perpetrators through the provisions in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. We have made the regime for managing sex offenders and those that pose a risk of sexual harm more robust through provisions in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022.

In January 2020 we introduced Stalking Protection Orders to protect victims of stalking at the earliest possible opportunity; 456 orders were issued in their first year. Extensive work is also under way to launch the pilot for the new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders early next year.

On 25th October, we launched the second phase of our multimedia 'Enough' national campaign which promotes safe ways for bystanders to intervene if they witness VAWG. The campaign has reached millions of individuals across England and Wales, with thousands of clicks through to organisations offering support for victims of VAWG.

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

We received the final report of the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse after seven years of investigation into institutional failings to properly safeguard children from this most horrific abuse. I commend the bravery of the thousands of victims and survivors for sharing their testimonies and perspectives with the inquiry. We will continue doing everything we can to combat this crime, pursue these vile offenders, bring them to justice, and ensure supports are in place for all victims and survivors to help them build their lives.

Public Order

The Public Order Bill will further enhance the police's ability to deal with disruptive protests that prevent ordinary people going about their daily lives and divert police resources from communities where they are needed most to prevent serious violence and neighbourhood crime. So far disruptive protests in London alone have taken up over 12,500 police officer shifts. The Metropolitan Police Service have made over 750 arrests since the beginning of October.

Fraud

My department is launching a new fraud strategy including stepping up our response to pursuing and disrupting fraudsters, working with industry to stop frauds, and empower and support victims.

This Government is delivering the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill which will deliver the largest reform to Companies House in recent history. It will give law enforcement and industry the tools to bear down on the use of UK companies as vehicles for economic crime, including fraud. It will also better protect personal information and addresses provided to Companies House.

We have seen the success of the National Crime Agency's Operation AGADE where we have recovered £54 million of criminal proceeds using a first of its kind Civil Recovery Order.

We have seen Operation Elaborate, the largest anti-fraud operation in the UK to date dismantling a website which was responsible for 3.5 million fraudulent calls in 2022. Involving many agencies and forces, and led by the Metropolitan Police there have been over 100 arrests made across the country so far.

Policing

Police Uplift: The Police Uplift Programme continues to support forces with additional police officers, and we remain on-track to recruit 20,000 additional officers by March 2023. Data published on 30th September 2022 shows that 15,343 additional officers have already been recruited, accounting for 77% of our target. There are now 11 forces with the highest number of officers they have ever had – Cheshire, Dyfed-Powys, Essex, Kent, City of London, the Metropolitan, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, South Wales, Suffolk and Thames Valley.

The police workforce is more representative than ever before. For the first time ever, there are over 50,000 female officers (50,364), as at 30th September 2022, 34.9% of all officers in post. There were 11,477 ethnic minority officers, as at 30th September 2022, 8.2% of all officers in post the highest figures on record.

Police Performance

His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) continues to shine a light on force performance. Humberside received an excellent report from their latest inspection, with six "outstanding" grades. Humberside was awarded the "outstanding" grade for preventing crime, treatment of the public, protecting vulnerable people, managing offenders, developing a positive workplace and good use of resources. It received a further two "good" grades and one "adequate" grade.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has made great strides in getting the basics right. Under strong leadership they are responding faster to emergency calls and halved the number of open investigations since 2021. HMICFRS removed GMP from their "engage" phase in October 2022. I am pleased to see GMP working so constructively with HMICFRS and others to act on their inspection findings. I encourage others to learn from their experience.

Six police forces remain 'engaged' by HMICFRS and I expect all forces to make the necessary improvements and work towards restoring public trust and confidence in the police.

Police Culture: We recognise that police culture and standards need to improve to rebuild public trust and confidence. We are bringing forward part two of the Angiolini Inquiry to focus on these issues and are reviewing the process of dismissals to ensure that policing can swiftly remove officers who fall well short of the standards expected of them.

We have commissioned the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to conduct a review of operational productivity in policing, led by Sir Stephen House. This will address issues which may affect the anticipated outcomes from our investment in policing.

We believe that a policing career must be open to talented and committed people from across our communities, including those who do not have a degree or want one. That is why I have commissioned the College of Policing to develop options for a new non-degree entry

route. The current transitional non-degree entry route will be kept open in the meantime.

Reducing the risk to homeland security

The Home Office has continued to focus relentlessly on reducing risk across the full range of threats to our homeland security. In October, counter-terrorism police responded swiftly to an attack on a migration facility in Dover that was declared as terrorism.

On 30th October we announced a refresh of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. This will ensure we are able to best protect the public from the enduring threat of terrorism. The refresh will maintain clarity and consistency of purpose, and ensure the necessary tools are in place to tackle terrorist hatred and violence.

Our counter-terrorism system never stops learning. Volume 2 of the Manchester Arena Inquiry was published on 3rd November 2022. This covered the emergency services' response on the night of the attack. The Government will respond fully when all three volumes have been published. However, we are already enhancing our response using the learning from the attacks – for example, in improving joint working between the emergency services - which will feed the refreshment of CONTEST. We have also received the Independent Review of Prevent, which we will look to publish next year alongside the HMG response. We will reflect the lessons and learning from the Shawcross Review, along with those from the numerous inquests, Inquiries and other reviews from recent years through the CONTEST refresh.

I have today issued a further written ministerial statement updating on our progress developing Martyn's Law, also known as the Protect Duty. This is a significant milestone in the development of this first of its kind piece of legislation, which will keep people safe by scaling up preparedness for, and protection from, terrorist attacks. This legislation will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time allows. This is a recommendation in Volume One of the Manchester Arena Inquiry. This duty has been tirelessly campaigned for by Figen Murray who tragically lost her son, Martyn, in the Manchester Arena attack. I would like to pay tribute to her alongside all other victims, survivors and those affected by these heinous events.

Access to data is fundamental to the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes. The UK-US Data Access Agreement entered into force on 5th October 2022. This world-first capability will fundamentally change the way we are able to fight serious crime across the UK, including terrorism, organised immigration crime, and child abuse. The Agreement permits certain UK public authorities to obtain data directly from US-based communications service providers. This will allow us to access vital data more quickly than ever before. Operational benefits are already being derived from the Agreement.

Earlier in the year, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Home Office delivered a transformative

package of work through emergency legislation to strengthen financial sanctions legislation, creating new Register of Overseas Entities and reforming Unexplained Wealth Orders.

We are building on that work through the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill that was introduced in Parliament on 22nd September 2022. This cracks down even further on kleptocrats, criminals, and terrorists who abuse our open economy and ensures we drive out dirty money from the UK. It strengthens the UK's reputation as a place where legitimate businesses can thrive and enhances our ability to tackle new and emerging threats like the use of crypto-assets, ransomware and the growth of cyber-enabled fraud.

The National Crime Agency's Combatting Kleptocracy Cell is also delivering significant success, with nearly 100 disruptions against Putin-linked elites and their enablers. It has frozen over £18 billion worth of assets in the UK. On 1st December 2022 it conducted a major operation to arrest a wealthy Russian businessman on suspicion of offences including money laundering, conspiracy to defraud the Home Office and conspiracy to commit perjury.

The National Security Bill, which is now at its Committee Stage in the House of Lords, represents a fundamental reform of our framework for tackling state threats. It includes a suite of new measures to tackle the full range of modern-day state threats, from sabotage and spying to foreign interference and economic espionage. It will ensure our world-class law enforcement and intelligence agencies have the modern tools, powers, and protections they need to counter those who seek to do the UK harm.

The first meeting of the new Defending Democracy Taskforce took place on 28th November 2022. The Taskforce's primary focus will be to protect the democratic integrity of the UK from threats of foreign interference. The Taskforce will work across government and with Parliament, the UK Intelligence Community, the devolved administrations, local authorities, and the private sector on the full range of threats facing our democratic institutions.

Tackling illegal migration, removing those with no right to be here, and protecting the vulnerable

This year has been challenging for our efforts to tackle illegal migration due to pressures on the system, particularly due to consistently high numbers of arrivals by small boats and pressures on available accommodation, which have been exacerbated by responding to the war in Ukraine and continued instability in Afghanistan. I will continue to protect the public and keep our borders secure and the British people safe from harm.

The Prime Minister recently set out a range of significant new steps the Government is taking to tackle the challenge of illegal migration including:

- A new deal with Albania and changes to our approach to speed up the removal of Albanians with no right to

be here. This includes assurance from Albania that they can offer the required protection, in line with our international obligations, to genuine victims of modern slavery, embedding Border Force officers in Tirana Airport, increasing the threshold for people referred to the modern slavery system, establishing a unit to expedite Albanian claims with 400 specialist staff and new country guidance for our caseworkers making it clear that Albania is a safe country.

- Establishing a new, permanent unified Small Boats Operational Command with 700 additional dedicated staff to deliver a more coordinated response to tackling crossings, bringing together military, civilian and NCA expertise to coordinate our intelligence, interception, processing, and enforcement.

- Clearing the initial asylum decision backlog of legacy cases by the end of next year. We will make an initial decision in all cases that have been outstanding since before 28th June 2022.

- Plans to bring forward legislation next year to prevent abuse of our legal framework which will make it unambiguously clear that people entering illegally should have no right to stay here, and will be returned to their home country or a safe country for their asylum claim to be considered.

- Due to the unprecedented number of small boat arrivals and the pressure from COVID-19 on the asylum system it has been necessary to use hotels to accommodate some asylum seekers. This is only ever a short-term solution and we are working with our accommodation providers to find appropriate dispersed accommodation across the UK.

The new UK-French agreement I agreed with my counterpart lays the foundations for deeper co-operation to tackle illegal migration and marks the next step for the close operational partnership between the two countries which has prevented over 31,500 crossings, nearly 50% more than to this point in 2021.

The arrangement means, for the first time, specialist UK officers will also be embedded with their French counterparts, which will increase information-sharing, improve understanding of the threat, and ensure UK expertise is at the heart of efforts to disrupt crossings and clamp down on people-smugglers. This more integrated approach will also include strengthened operational co-operation, including joint UK-France analysis teams supporting the co-ordination and exchange of information by French-command HQ. We have signed the biggest small boats joint bilateral deal with France, we have put the Calais group on a permanent footing showing the importance of this issue to our European partners and we have agreed new levels of intelligence co-operation with our European neighbours.

These measures build on the progress we have made through the year. We have introduced Part 5 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, which provides legislative clarity to victims and decision-makers on

victims' rights, including the entitlement to a recovery period and the circumstances in which it may be withheld.

We continue to return foreign national offenders (FNOs) by scheduled and charter flights. From January 2019 to March 2022, we have removed 11,532 FNOs. Since April 2020, we have chartered 156 flights to Europe and around the World. In the year ending June 2022, there were 3,250 enforced returns, of which 1,600 were to EU countries.

Safe and Legal Routes

We have continued to support those fleeing conflicts abroad, granting Indefinite Leave to Remain to over 11,300 individuals from Afghanistan under ARAP or ACRS Pathway 1.

As of 24th November, 202,710 visas have been granted and 146,222 have arrived in the UK from Ukraine. 59,480 have been granted and 41,093 people have arrived under the Ukraine Family Scheme. 143,230 visas have been granted and 105,129 arrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Through the Hong Kong British National Overseas route, there have been a total of 150,600 applications since its introduction on 31st January 2021 up to the end of September 2022 of which there were 144,576 grants (96%).

Enabling the legitimate movement of people and goods

Passports are about to enter the busy period in January, and plans are well advanced in preparation for that and for a high level of demand forecast across 2023. There was record demand for passport applications this year – with approximately 7.4 million applications processed by the end of October. Service standards have remained high since November and 99.9% of UK standard applications were completed within the 10-week service standard in the week ending 20th November. Every effort is being made to return to the three-week service standard.

The visa service has faced significant demands post-pandemic and following Ukraine and higher than forecast levels of demand. Considering this, it is performing well under pressure, and through supportive contingency measures, standard applications have returned to service

standards and we are on track for complex applications to also return to service standards in December.

Despite these challenges staff productivity has remained high, and we continue to manage staff flexibly across services to reduce work in progress to minimal levels for passport and deliver the visa recovery by the year end.

Border Force have seen passenger numbers increase to near pre-pandemic levels by the end of summer and also managed the introduction of post EU exit goods checks and the first full year of EU citizens requiring passports and additional checks. eGates have performed well and IT resilience has been strong enabling over 90% of passengers to cross borders within tolerance levels.

Border Force also reached its annual Target for Cigarette and Tobacco seizures within 7 months of 2022-23/ In October, £35 million in cigarettes and tobacco were seized bringing the YTD total to £255 million (101%) of the annual target of £252 million. On alcohol, Border Force seized £4.3 million, bringing the YTD total to £25.1 million (63%) of the annual target of £40 million.

The FBIS programme has built-up the expertise and capability to reduce significantly the time taken to launch a brand-new visa route or to amend criteria for existing visa applications.

We have made significant progress in digitising the immigration system. We are increasingly replacing physical and paper-based products and services with accessible, easy to use online and digital services. This has provided applicants with an easy online application process, including providing biometrics and establishing or verifying identity using their smartphones. A fully digital application process has been delivered for the BN(O) route and some points-based system routes and now for Ukraine schemes.

All these achievements have been delivered against a challenging background and represent a significant effort across the Home Office in continuing to deliver on the people's priorities. The Home Office remains committed to keeping the public safe, protecting our borders, and countering hostile state threats.

Written Answers

Monday, 19 December 2022

Air Pollution: Business Premises

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce schemes which rate the indoor air quality of commercial premises and their associated risks of viral transmission. [HL3875]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the regulator for workplace health and safety. Whilst HSE expects businesses to consider any risks arising from the quality of the air in their premises and to ensure they have mitigations in place where, for example, work generates fumes or dust that is harmful to workers this does not extend to general infection control. As such HSE has no plans to introduce any schemes to rate indoor air quality or the risks of viral transmission.

Asylum: Housing

Asked by *Lord Rosser*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many asylum seekers are currently housed in private accommodation; and, for each month in 2021 and 2022, what was the cost of providing this accommodation. [HL4036]

Asked by *Lord Rosser*

To ask His Majesty's Government how areas are chosen to provide accommodation to asylum seekers; and what consideration is given to fair distribution across the country when making these decisions. [HL4037]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The United Kingdom has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and other support whilst their application for asylum is being considered. Private accommodation is sourced through our Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) providers. The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>. Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 24 November 2022.

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential, therefore the Home Office does not publish this information. However, total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

From 13 April 2022, all Local Authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales were obliged to participate

in a new system of full dispersal accommodation. This will help the Home Office to move from using hotels to less expensive and more suitable dispersed accommodation. The Full Dispersal model allows the Home Office to procure dispersal properties within the private rental sector in all Local Authority areas across England, Scotland and Wales, rather than the minority of Local Authorities which currently participate. This approach will reduce pressures on those Local Authorities that already participate.

Burma: Overseas Companies

Asked by *Baroness Cox*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps, if any, they are taking to ensure that British accreditation and verification companies operating in Burma are not providing services to Burmese military-owned companies. [HL4001]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Department for International Trade publishes guidance setting out what UK businesses can do, this was last updated in February 2022. The guidance makes it clear the UK businesses should conduct thorough due diligence to avoid inadvertently supporting military-linked businesses in Myanmar.

We have a comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar, as well as multiple targeted sanctions on the military and its associated businesses. We have clear penalties for breaches of sanctions. We will continue to closely monitor how the military finances and equips itself and we will continue to use sanctions as a lever to put pressure on those who support the military.

Curriculum

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide students under the age of 17 with a wider choice of subjects to study, in order to bring an end to the division in employability between academic and technical education. [HL3909]

Baroness Barran: Up to the age of 16, young people are introduced to a broad and balanced curriculum, which provides music, sport, citizenship, and cultural opportunities.

The department reformed GCSEs from 2013 to ensure that they rigorously assess the knowledge pupils have acquired and are in line with expected standards in countries with high performing education systems.

The computing curriculum supports pupils to become active creators of digital technology. Programming, algorithms, and the use of information technology are taught to pupils at key stage 3 to provide the foundation for pupils to acquire further knowledge about artificial intelligence, data science, cyber security, and other fields. In November 2018, the department launched the National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE), backed by £84

million of government funding. The NCCE provides high-quality, continuing professional development and resources to teachers of all key stages and engages with schools and colleges across England to improve their computing provision.

To ensure a strong pipeline of qualified students into higher education and careers in STEM areas, the department has committed substantial spending on subjects, including science with the aim of increasing take up. This includes funding of programmes such as the Stimulating Physics Network and the Isaac Physics programme which both aim to increase rates of progression to physics A level, a subject which could lead a student into a technical career.

Post-16 students are able to specialise, with a range of high quality academic and technical qualifications options. This includes a rigorous suite of A levels, T Levels, and apprenticeships. The content of T Levels is designed in collaboration with employers. Each course includes a 45-day industry placement, so students are equipped with industry related skills. The department is also streamlining and improving the quality of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below.

Electric Scooters: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, in the absence of a Northern Ireland Assembly and Northern Ireland Executive, they plan to legislate to regulate the use of electric scooters in Northern Ireland. [HL4173]

Lord Caine: In the absence of Northern Ireland Executive ministers, the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act provides Northern Ireland civil servants with the clarity they require to take the limited but necessary decisions to maintain delivery of public services and operate in the public interest. The Act does not give the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland direction powers on specific policies, other than in relation to pressing public appointments and the requirement to set the regional rate.

Legislation on Northern Ireland affairs should rightly be considered and passed by a local and accountable Northern Ireland Assembly and it remains the Government's priority to work towards the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland.

Garden Communities: Construction

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made in delivering their policy of creating new garden cities in England; when they expect the builds to be completed; and how many dwellings will be created. [HL4135]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Garden Communities Programme is supporting 47 locally led Garden Communities (12 Garden Towns and 35 Garden Villages)

to deliver over 320,000 homes by 2050. The programme has awarded c.£58 million of capacity support funding to assist places in delivering against their proposals, plus c.£12 million funding to help deliver infrastructure to unlock homes. As of December 2021, local authorities report that over 33,000 homes have been completed across 17 projects supported by the programme.

As well as homes, we expect the programme to support the delivery of over 200 schools, c.68 health and care centres, almost 200,000 jobs, green infrastructure and over 150 community facilities.

Government Departments: Procurement

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of their commitment to pay (1) 90 per cent of undisputed and valid invoices from SMEs within five days, and (2) 100 per cent of all undisputed and valid invoices within 30 days, as part of their Prompt Payment Policy. [HL4010]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: (1) In terms of the 90% of undisputed and valid invoices from SMEs within 5 days target: at the end of the previous financial year, 13 of 16 departments were exceeding 85% payment of all invoices within 5 days, with 7 departments paying over 90% of all invoices within this time period.

(2) In terms of the 100% of valid and undisputed invoices being paid in 30 days target: as of the same date, 14 of 16 departments were paying in excess of 95% of their invoices within 30 days, with 6 of these exceeding 99%. This information is published quarterly on GOV.UK.

Cabinet Office works with departments to improve payment performance. In addition, the Procurement Bill will ensure that 30 day payment terms are included in government supply chain contracts.

Great British Railways

Asked by Lord Haworth

To ask His Majesty's Government when Great British Railways will be (1) established, and (2) fully operational. [HL4225]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We are working closely with the Great British Railways Transition Team and the sector to tackle the challenges facing the railways. We are considering the best way to take forward reform, listening to a range of views, and will set out next steps in due course.

Groceries Code Adjudicator

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure the continuation of the independent Groceries Code Adjudicator; and whether they plan to

extend the role to allow the adjudicator to open an investigation on their own initiative. [HL4013]

Lord Callanan: The Government is currently undertaking the third statutory review of the effectiveness of the Groceries Code Adjudicator in enforcing the Groceries Supply Code of Practice and is considering the results of the public consultation that ended on 11 October. The consultation sought views on a range of issues including abolishing the GCA, transferring the GCA functions to another public body and whether the GCA has sufficient powers. The Government will carefully consider the views and evidence received and our conclusions will be published and a report laid before Parliament in due course.

Help to Buy Scheme

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to support first-time buyers of houses once the current Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme finishes on 31 January 2023. [HL4021]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government is committed to helping first time buyers to get on the housing ladder. We operate a range of other government schemes including First Homes, Shared Ownership and the Lifetime ISA and we continually keep options to support first-time buyers under consideration.

Help to Save Scheme: Universal Credit

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of expanding the Help to Save scheme to all Universal Credit claimants and broadening points of access to include credit unions and other providers of low-cost credit. [HL4150]

Lord Harlech: Help to Save aims to support individuals to kickstart a regular, long-term savings habit and build a rainy-day savings fund by providing a generous government bonus on savings over four years.

The scheme's eligibility criteria target working individuals in low-income households, who may be able to save a small amount each month due to their employment or self-employment income. Individuals are eligible to open a Help to Save account if they are: receiving Working Tax Credit; receiving Child Tax Credit and are entitled to Working Tax Credit; or receiving Universal Credit and had take-home pay of £658.64 or more in their last monthly assessment period.

As the scheme is targeted towards working individuals, the Government has no current plans to broaden the scheme's eligibility criteria.

Help to Save is currently delivered by NS&I on behalf of HMRC. This delivery model provides national coverage with a single provider, maintaining simplicity for scheme participants and providing a single point of

entry to the scheme. The Government has no current plans to alter this delivery mechanism to allow credit unions or other providers of low-cost credit to offer Help to Save.

Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Homelessness

Asked by Baroness Hamwee

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support Ukrainian refugees and host families over the Christmas period to ensure that any breakdowns in host relationships under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme do not lead to homelessness. [HL4097]

Asked by Baroness Hamwee

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support Ukrainian refugees over the Christmas period to ensure that issues with re-matching under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme do not lead to homelessness. [HL4098]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: We are greatly appreciative of the overwhelming generosity shown by sponsors in accommodating guests under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The Government has been working closely with local councils, voluntary and community organisations to ensure sponsors and their guests can access the support they need from public services. We have developed advice on hosting and provide training courses to help sponsors welcome and host their guests which can be accessed (attached) here: www.gov.uk/guidance/sources-of-support-for-sponsors-hosting-people-from-ukraine.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Sponsors hosting people from Ukraine [HL4097 - Sources of support for sponsors hosting people from Ukraine - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-07/HL4097>

Iran: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of children detained in prisons in Iran. [HL3973]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The treatment of juvenile offenders in Iran falls short of international standards. The Iranian judicial system is deeply flawed with frequent and well-documented violations of fair trial rights. The use of death sentences against minors is also a regular occurrence. Because of the lack of transparency of the Iranian judicial system, it is difficult to calculate with accuracy the number of children detained in Iran. In recent months, we have observed a significant increase in the rate at which children are arrested and a disproportionate number who have died during the protests. This was also noted by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 17 October. The UK

will continue to work with partners to hold Iran to account for its actions.

Iran: Human Rights

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Iran regarding human rights violations against children in that country. [HL4038]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to holding Iran to account for the appalling treatment of children throughout the brutal crackdown of protests. The UK highlighted this issue at the UN Human Right Council on 24 November, at which we supported a successful Resolution to establish a UN investigation into the human rights violations committed by the regime during the protests. The Foreign Secretary also called out Iran's treatment of children alongside his G7 partners at the meeting of Foreign Ministers on 4 November. The UK will continue work with partners at international fora to call on the Iranian authorities to abide by their obligations under international law and to improve the practices surrounding children in detention.

Iraq and Syria: Yazidis

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assistance they are providing to the Yazidi community in Iraq and Syria, including (1) how many projects they are funding, (2) how many people benefit from these projects, and (3) how these projects are helping the Yazidi community under threat in the region. [HL3981]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Since 2012, the UK has committed over £370 million and £3.8 billion in humanitarian and stabilisation assistance in Iraq and Syria respectively to support communities affected by conflict. In Iraq, this includes humanitarian assistance, basic services and reconstruction to support Yazidis communities which suffered immensely through the abhorrent crimes inflicted by Daesh. The UK continues to lobby for the full implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law in Iraq, which is crucial for securing justice for survivors and to help Yazidi communities rebuild their lives.

Life Peers

Asked by Lord Grocott

To ask His Majesty's Government how many life peers have been appointed on the advice of the former Prime Minister, Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP; and how these appointments were distributed between the following parliamentary groupings: (1) Conservative, (2) Labour, (3) Liberal Democrat, and (4) the Crossbenches. [HL4290]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Publicly available information shows that 87 peerages have been created on the advice of Rt Hon Boris Johnson. 44 of these were Conservative, 13 were Labour and 19 were Crossbench. Ultimately it is for the Prime Minister to recommend to the Sovereign which individuals ought to be appointed to the House of Lords.

Lighting: Natural Gas

Asked by Lord Inglewood

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to retain gas lamps on (1) their own, and (2) other publicly-owned, land. [HL4008]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Royal Parks, a public corporation and independent charity, is contracted by DCMS to manage the Royal parks, which are Crown land for which management responsibility rests with His Majesty's Government. There are approximately 360 gas lamps within the sites which The Royal Parks manages, of which approximately 215 are listed. There is no programme currently in place to switch existing gas lamps to electricity, but such matters are kept under review. My Department is not aware of any other gas lamps within our own estate.

Marine Environment: International Cooperation

Asked by Baroness Parminter

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made regarding the classification and implementation of Other Effective Area-Based Measures; and whether these measures will contribute towards their 30by30 target. [HL3946]

Lord Benyon: HM Government is committed to protecting 30% of land and sea in the UK by 2030 (30by30). We consulted on our approach to 30by30 in the Nature Recovery Green Paper earlier this year and are now working at pace to develop the assessment criteria, in line with international standards, that will inform what land will count towards 30by30.

We expect land recognised as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), meeting our assessment criteria, to play a part in achieving this ambitious commitment. For OECMs to count, we know that they need to be effectively managed and deliver positive outcomes for biodiversity. We continue to explore next steps for identification and classification of OECMs in England.

Marriage: Tax Allowances

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the marriage tax allowance. [HL4266]

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the effectiveness of the current rate of marriage tax allowance in supporting couples financially. [HL4267]

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask His Majesty's Government what financial assistance they are providing to couples who (1) are getting married, or (2) have recently married. [HL4268]

Lord Harlech: The Marriage Allowance (MA) is designed to recognise marriage, and the commitment it entails, in the tax system. The MA is targeted at married couples and civil partners where one partner earns below the Personal Allowance (PA) and the other is a basic rate taxpayer. In 2022-23 the MA is £1,260 and is worth up to £252 per year.

The transferable amount has been fixed at 10 per cent of the Personal Allowance since it was introduced in 2015. Setting the value of the allowance considerably higher would increase the cost and the Government must ensure the tax system supports strong public finances.

Even with the decision to maintain the current level of the Personal Allowance and consequently the current level of the MA, the PA has increased by over 40 per cent in real terms since 2010, ensuring some of the lowest earners do not pay income tax. Thanks to the PA, in 2021-22 around 30% of earners didn't pay tax.

The Government understands that people are worried about the cost of living challenges ahead. That's why decisive action has been taken to support households across the UK through cost of living challenges ahead, whilst remaining fiscally responsible.

The Government has announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost of living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities.

Mental Health Services: Children in Care

*Asked by **Baroness Merron***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, and if so how, they track the mental health outcomes of care-experienced children and young people. [HL4014]

Baroness Barran: The department is working closely with other government departments to increase our ability to track many aspects of care-experienced children's outcomes, including their physical and mental health.

Statutory guidance is clear that local authorities are responsible for making sure a health assessment takes place annually for every child in the social care system. This health assessment includes a strengths and difficulties questionnaire that measures any emotional or behavioural difficulties experienced by the child. This provides an outcomes measure within our data collection

for care-experienced children that tracks emotional and behavioural needs at a national level.

*Asked by **Baroness Merron***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that children and young people in care can receive mental health assessments and support from specialist practitioners who can tailor support for their particular experiences. [HL4016]

*Asked by **Baroness Merron***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of barriers for care-experienced children and young people in accessing mental health support. [HL4018]

*Asked by **Baroness Merron***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to overcome the barriers for care-experienced children and young people in accessing mental health support. [HL4019]

Baroness Barran: The department recognises the importance of securing appropriate support for children who have experienced trauma, which may include children in care, kinship care or who have been adopted.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote the welfare of all looked after children. They are responsible for carrying out an annual health assessment for every child in the care system to produce a health plan that addresses the child's physical, emotional, and mental health needs. This health assessment is reviewed at least annually and is part of a dynamic and continuous cycle of care planning.

Foster carers should be involved in drawing up the health plan as part of the overall care plan for their foster children. Foster carers should be supported by named health professionals for looked-after children on how to access services, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service consultations, that the child needs.

For adopted children and children under Special Guardianship orders who were previously in care, the Adoption Support Fund is designed to complement the healthcare system and provide support for those who are suffering trauma and attachment issues. An assessment of need will always be undertaken beforehand, to ensure that the most appropriate support is provided.

The healthcare system is of course available to all children, and parents and carers will be able to receive appropriate advice on how to access this, including support for trauma-related issues as appropriate.

Military Attachés: Visas

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government when the current visa of the Myanmar military attaché expires. [HL3977]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: We do not routinely comment on individual cases. All visa applications are

carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with the Immigration Rules.

Myanmar: United Nations

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of the role of the United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar. [HL4002]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK supports the UN Special Envoy (UNSE) for Myanmar. It is vital the UNSE is able to fulfil her mandate and engage with all stakeholders, including the democratic opposition. We regularly work with the UNSE, most recently on 30 November by co-chairing a Women, Peace and Security roundtable to amplify the voices of Myanmar Civil Society Organisations.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Peace Negotiations

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan that the Lachin corridor "is not being used for its intended purpose and this must be stopped", what assessment they have made of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh; and what steps they have taken to urge restraint by all sides to prevent any new escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh. [HL3942]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government continues to monitor the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Following the closure of the Lachin Corridor the UK Government has urged restraint and the immediate re-opening of the corridor given the significant humanitarian risks. The UK Government also continues to urge both Governments to engage with international negotiation efforts to secure a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the conflict. These are the messages the Minister for Europe reinforced during calls with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 15 and 17 September respectively, and subsequently in meetings in London with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ambassadors and other senior officials from both countries on 12 December and 9 November respectively.

Northern Ireland: Domestic Visits

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government how many times the Minister of State for Northern Ireland has stayed overnight in Northern Ireland since his appointment. [HL4194]

Lord Caine: Since his appointment by the Prime Minister in October, the Minister of State has undertaken six official overnight visits to Northern Ireland. My Noble Friend will be pleased to note that the Minister travels frequently on official business.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what are their priorities for the OSCE Ministerial Council Annual Meeting in Poland; and what steps they are taking to ensure the OSCE is able to deal with regional security issues and remain relevant in spite of the challenges posed by the war in Ukraine. [HL3943]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government's priorities for the OSCE Ministerial Council were to demonstrate strong support for Ukraine and highlight Russia's violations of the OSCE's core principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the non-use of force. In his interventions, the Foreign Secretary also underlined our enduring support for the OSCE as a forum for dialogue, transparency, and confidence-building. We will continue, with like-minded partners, to work closely with the OSCE's leadership to hold Russia to account for its actions, support vulnerable countries in Russia's neighbourhood, and defend the OSCE's unique role in Euro-Atlantic security.

Parking: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with councils across England about waiving or reducing car parking charges in the run up to Christmas in order to assist businesses in town centres. [HL4161]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government recognises the important link between parking provision and the vitality of our high streets and town centres. However, in line with the Government's position on localism, management of parking facilities is the responsibility of local authorities, and it is for them to determine what is appropriate in their own area, including setting of parking tariffs.

Poverty: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Department for Work and Pensions annual official statistics 'Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2021', what assessment they have made of the reasons for the increase in (1) the number of, and (2) the proportion of, children living in relative poverty in every local authority area of the North East between 2014/15 and 2020/21. [HL4049]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Department for Work and Pensions official statistics 'Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2021', what assessment they have made of the

reasons for the increase in (1) the number of, and (2) the proportion of, children living in absolute poverty in every local authority area of the North East in every year since 2017/18. [HL4050]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions have taken place between the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on child poverty. [HL4053]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department for Work and Pensions has made no assessment.

Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions engage regularly with their Ministerial counterparts in other Departments, taking a collective approach to the policies and interventions that can make a difference.

The Government is committed to reducing child poverty and supporting low-income families. We will spend over £242bn through the welfare system in 2022/23 including £108bn on people of working age.

From 10 April 2023 we are uprating State Pension and benefit rates by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap will also be increased by 10.1%. These increases are subject to Parliamentary approval.

With over 1.22 million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting parents to move into, and progress in work, an approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty and in improving long-term outcomes for families and children.

Getting people both into work and progressing in work is key to levelling up for the whole of the UK, and DWP is playing a central role in this. To help people into work, including parents, our Plan for Jobs is providing broad ranging support for all Jobseekers with our Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP), Job Entry Targeted Support and Restart scheme. We are also extending the support Jobcentres provide to people in work and on low incomes. Through a staged roll-out, which started in April 2022, around 2.1 million low-paid benefit claimants will be eligible for support to progress into higher-paid work.

The government is also increasing the National Living Wage by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour from April 2023, representing an increase of over £1,600 to the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the National living wage, benefitting over 2 million low paid workers.

Private Rented Housing

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the demand and supply problem in the private rented sector; and if they have not

conducted such an assessment, what plans they have to do so. [HL3824]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The English Housing Survey provides information on households and housing stock. The proportion of Private Rented Sector (PRS) households has remained relatively stable for nearly a decade. The PRS was 19% of households in 2013-14 and continues to be at 19% according to the latest data for 2022, collected during the pandemic.

The Department continues to monitor private rent levels using the Office for National Statistics' Index of Private Rents as an indicator of demand. This data shows that Private rental prices paid by tenants in the UK increased by 4.0% in the 12 months to November 2022.

Privy Council

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reasons for the increase in the size of the Privy Council in recent years. [HL4253]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Appointments to the Privy Council are made by His Majesty The King on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Appointment to the Privy Council is for life. Those appointed comprise Ministers, other parliamentarians and members of the judiciary. Only serving Government ministers have a role in advising on Privy Council matters. Therefore the majority of Counsellors play no part in the Privy Council's day-to-day business.

Pupils: Females

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to providing guidance to teachers to ensure that girls are treated sensitively and appropriately during their menstrual cycle. [HL4080]

Baroness Barran: From September 2020, as part of statutory health education, primary and secondary pupils should be taught about menstrual wellbeing, including key facts about the menstrual cycle and implications for health. The statutory guidance can be accessed via the following link:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805781/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf.

The department is funding access to free period products in state-funded primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England. Our guidance states that teachers should work with their pupils on determining which products to order and how these should be distributed. Guidance for period products can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme>

[for-schools-and-colleges-in-england#overview%20Period%20product%20scheme%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges%20in%20England%20-%20GOV.UK%20\(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/overviews/immigration-and-asylum/for-schools-and-colleges-in-england#overview%20Period%20product%20scheme%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges%20in%20England%20-%20GOV.UK%20(www.gov.uk)).

Refugees: Afghanistan

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people have been accepted and evacuated from Afghanistan under their Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, which opened on 6 January. [HL4030]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will see up to 20,000 people from Afghanistan and the region resettled to the UK over the coming years.

As of 4 November 2022, 22,833 people have arrived in the UK from Afghanistan, and we have granted Indefinite Leave to Remain to 12,296 individuals across both the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and ACRS, since they opened in April 2021 and January 2022, respectively.

Work is underway to assure information on caseworking systems relating to all the individuals resettled under the ACRS and relocated under ARAP. Once this work concludes, statistics on both schemes - including the number of people resettled under each - will be included in the published Immigration Statistics.

More information on the number of grants of Indefinite Leave to Remain issued to Afghans resettling under the ARAP or ACRS can be viewed at gov.uk

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government how many refugees have been admitted under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme; and what assessment they have made of the year long delay in admitting refugees to the UK under Pathway 2 of that scheme. [HL4034]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The recent update to the published 'Afghan Resettlement: Operational Data', shows that, at 4th November 2022:

- 22,833 individuals from Afghanistan have been brought to safety in the UK (since the end of June 2021).
- We have granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) to 6,314 people under ACRS Pathway 1.

We are pleased to have welcomed the first families under ACRS Pathway 2. On 24th November the latest Immigration Statistics publication included data on Pathway 2 arrivals and this can be found at: Immigration statistics data tables, year ending September 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

We are working at pace with Local Authorities and other partners to make sure those we resettle are fully supported in accessing the accommodation, health,

education, and employment needed to fully integrate into life in the UK.

Refugees: Albania

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to reports that 39 unaccompanied Albanian refugee children have been reported as missing by Kent County Council, what steps they are taking to locate those children. [HL4029]

Baroness Barran: The government takes the matter of any child going missing very seriously. Statutory guidance is in place, which details the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners, to prevent children going missing and to gather and share information and intelligence to reduce this risk. The guidance applies to all children going missing, whether this is from the family home or from care and includes unaccompanied refugee children.

Regional Planning and Development

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the the report by the North East Child Poverty Commission report Getting the building blocks wrong: Early childhood poverty in the North East, published on 12 October, what assessment they have made of the merits of undertaking levelling up impact assessments of all major government policy and spending decisions, including those taken by the Department for Work and Pensions. [HL4052]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: No assessment has been made.

However, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has set 12 ambitious levelling up 'missions' to anchor ambition and provide clarity over the objectives of public policy for the next decade. These include missions on skills and living standards.

Missions will deliver real change to peoples' lives by improving living standards by spreading opportunities and enhancing economic growth, restoring local pride, spreading opportunity and empowering local leaders across the country.

Missions will also serve as an anchor for the private sector and civil society. This policy stability and consistency will unleash innovation, investment and collaboration.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the missions are specific and measurable, and are supported by a set of metrics.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will report on progress towards delivering the missions through an annual report laid before Parliament. The obligation to publish the annual report will be established in statute, creating a regular point for

Parliament and the public to debate and scrutinise progress towards levelling up.

Regional Planning and Development: Public Appointments

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask His Majesty's Government what duties they expect regional Levelling Up Directors, when appointed, to fulfil. [HL3989]

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask His Majesty's Government what role, if any, regional Levelling Up Directors will have in awarding funding; and to whom will they be accountable for this function. [HL3990]

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask His Majesty's Government which stakeholder groups regional Levelling Up Directors will be expected to work with in each region. [HL3991]

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether regional Levelling Up Directors will be (1) budget holders, (2) responsible for the work of junior staff, and (3) line managers to junior staff. [HL3992]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government is committed to delivering levelling up outcomes in the best way possible. Further announcements will be made in due course.

Repatriation

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 8 November (HL3121), when they expect data to be available on (1) the number of staff supporting the Voluntary Returns Service, (2) the cost of the service, and (3) the number of complaints received by the service. [HL4033]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office does not publish the information sought at the level of granularity required.

The Home Office does routinely publish information on the total cost and breakdown of Asylum costs and productivity, and this can be found at table Asy_04 of the Immigration and Protection data.

These include the costs of managing asylum operations claims including costs associated with deciding a case, managing any related appeal, asylum operations support, potential detention and enforcement including escorting and voluntary returns. Also included are the costs of department staff and buildings and the proportionate costs of the Home Office building and managerial costs.

Schools

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the difference between a grammar school and a foundation or voluntary school, funded by the local authority, which also selects their pupils by academic ability. [HL4120]

Baroness Barran: Grammar schools are the only state-funded schools permitted to select all their children by high general academic ability. There are 163 grammar schools, all of which were maintained schools in 1998 and designated as grammar schools by the Education (Grammar School Designation) Order 1998 (as amended in 1999).

143 of these schools have subsequently become academy schools and are permitted to continue to select by academic ability through provisions within the Academies Act 2010 and their funding agreements.

Of the 20 maintained grammar schools, 7 are community schools, 6 are voluntary aided schools, 6 are foundation schools and 1 is a voluntary controlled school.

In addition, a number of state-funded schools were permitted to retain partial selection by academic ability or aptitude by provisions within the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. 40 of these schools remain partially selective.

32 of them are academies and are permitted to continue to select through the aforementioned legal and funding agreement mechanisms. 8 are maintained schools, and of these 4 are foundation schools, 3 are voluntary aided schools and 1 is a community school. 31 of these partially selective schools select a proportion of their intakes by general academic ability, 2 select by ability in maths, 1 by ability in technology, and 1 by ability in maths. The remaining 5 select a proportion of their intakes by aptitude[1].

[1] Either a form of aptitude that would not otherwise be permitted or more than 10% by aptitude.

Schools: Attendance

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of school children that have not returned to full-time schooling following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL4076]

Baroness Barran: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave on 6 December 2022 to Question [HL3775](#).

Serbia: Sexual Offences

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia in the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Conference; and the

impact of the Minister's attendance on the wellbeing of victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence attending the conference. [HL3928]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK invited Foreign Ministers from nearly 100 countries to the PSVI Conference. To address conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), we need to involve a range of states, to share experiences and we put survivor voices front and centre. All survivors were provided with full support, including wellbeing and psychological support, which was available throughout the conference. I also met personally with all survivors, and also directly with FM Gërvalla-Schwarz from Kosovo. They recognised the important role the UK was playing in providing a bridge for survivors to directly address issues with countries with whom they had endured serious conflict in the past.

Social Media: Age

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce a requirement for age blocks for social media sites. [HL4042]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The strongest protections in the Online Safety Bill are for children.

We expect companies operating sites likely to be accessed by children to use age verification technologies and measures such as age assurance to ensure that only children who are old enough are able to access an age-restricted service. The Government also recently announced that it will make changes to the Bill to require services with age restrictions to explain, in their terms of service, the measures they use to enforce these, such as the use of age assurance or age verification technologies, and apply these terms consistently. This means that social media sites and other platforms are held to account for what they say in their terms of service, but will not mandate sites to have a minimum age restriction. Such a requirement could have a negative impact on the ability of children to access appropriate online services and to derive benefit from them.

Syria: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the key components of their Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) assessment on northern Syria; and what steps they are taking to address the situation. [HL3979]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Syria Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) highlights security and stability issues in north east Syria, although overall the UK ensures interventions take a 'whole of Syria approach'. The UK is focused on reducing risks of instability, securing the long-term defeat of Daesh and providing life-saving and life-sustaining assistance to improve resilience of the local populations. The UK

remains committed to supporting the Global Coalition Against Daesh to prevent Daesh resurgence, including in north east Syria.

Syria: Turkey

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of an increase in (1) Turkish airstrikes, and (2) threats of a ground invasion, on northern regions of Syria; and what discussions they have had with the government of Turkey regarding this situation. [HL3978]

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 and the Prime Minister spoke to President Erdoğan on 2 December.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of Turkish shelling of the Yazidi village of Otlja on the Yazidi community; and what steps they are taking to support this community in northern Syria. [HL3980]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We do not hold sufficient evidence to comment on the reported shelling of Otlja. The UK is monitoring developments across northern Syria and working with partners to maintain stability and security in the region and to minimise risks to civilians.

UK Visas and Immigration

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to implement recommendations from the report by the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration An Inspection of UK Visas and Immigration Front End Services (August 2020 – June 2021), published on 25 November 2021. [HL4006]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: All the recommendations from this report have been actioned and are either closed or proposed for closure.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of individuals who have died crossing the English Channel to get to the UK in the back of lorries and other vehicles in each month since January 2010. [HL4032]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: These dangerous concealments are facilitated by vile people smugglers, who place profits above the lives of vulnerable people. The Government is determined to prevent further loss of life by breaking the business model.

The Home Office has invested significant amounts since 2014 to secure feeder ports, including increasing the use of body detection dogs and strengthening the vehicle screening regimes with the latest technology. The department is currently in the process of significantly strengthening the clandestine entrant civil penalty regime in order further drive improvements in vehicle security.

Unfortunately, there have been fatalities, including the Purfleet incident in 2019 when 39 Vietnamese nationals sadly lost their lives, and all such incidents are a reminder that attempts to clandestinely cross the border are inherently dangerous.

Warships: Procurement

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the announcement that the equipment plan to fund the Type 32 Frigate and Multirole Support Ships programme has been withdrawn, what is the status of that programme. [HL4043]

Baroness Goldie: There are no current plans to withdraw either the Type 32 Frigate or Multi Role Support Ships programme. Both remain in the concept phase, and the programme and procurement strategies will be decided following phase completion. We continue to assess plans and are still working to the intended in-service dates.

Water: Pollution

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Benyon on 7 November

(HL2422), what were the names of the 63 recipients of enforcement undertaking payments from water and sewerage companies, totalling £11.5 million, paid out between 2017 and 2021. [HL3279]

Lord Benyon: Attached is a list of all charities, groups and organisations that received payments from water companies through use of Enforcement Undertakings (EUs) for the period 2017–2021 inclusive. Please note that some EUs included payment to more than one recipient, which is why the number of recipients is greater than the number of EUs accepted.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Water company EU recipients [PQ HL3279 - Water Company EU Recipients 2017-2021.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-11-08/HL3279>

Xing Hongwei

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the detention of Xing Hongwei in China. [HL4039]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of reports that author Xing Hongwei has been detained. The FCDO has previously highlighted the detention of Early Rain Covenant Church members and we continue to closely monitor the severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in China. More broadly, we regularly raise the human rights situation in China directly with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary did so in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart on 20 September.

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