

Session 2022-23
No. 92



Tuesday
10 January 2023

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Statements1

Written Answers.....4

[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/>

Members who want a printed copy of Written Answers and Written Statements should notify the Printed Paper Office.

This printed edition is a reproduction of the original text of Answers and Statements, which can be found on the internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>.

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

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

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2023

This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence, which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/

Written Statements

Tuesday, 10 January 2023

English Freeports Update

[HLWS480]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My Honourable friend the Minister for Levelling Up (Dehenna Davison MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am announcing another major milestone for the flagship UK Freeports programme, with two further English Freeports – Freeport East and Liverpool City Region Freeport – now fully up and running after receiving final government approval. Both of these Freeports will now receive £25 million of seed funding and potentially hundreds of millions in locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. This is alongside a generous package of trade and innovation support for businesses locating there.

This significant milestone is an important step on the Freeports journey and sends a clear message: the UK Government is backing these places as a key part of its economic strategy.

Freeports are at the heart of the Government's Levelling Up agenda. They will unlock much-needed investment into port communities and their hinterlands. This in turn will help these areas overcome the barriers holding them back and bring jobs and opportunity to some of the UK's historically overlooked communities.

Freeports catalyse investment through a combination of tax reliefs on new economic activity, a special streamlined customs procedure, an ambitious programme of public investment, and wide-ranging support from the UK Government to help businesses trade, invest, and innovate.

Excellent progress has been made with delivery: investors can now take advantage of tax reliefs in all eight English Freeports and are starting to do so, and we expect the remaining three English Freeports to join Plymouth, Solent, Teesside, Liverpool City Region, and Freeport East in receiving final approvals shortly.

This Government also remains committed to ensuring that all four corners of the UK can reap the benefits of our Freeports programme. We have recently concluded competitions for two Green Freeports in Scotland and a Freeport in Wales, and we will announce the winning locations in due course. We also continue discussions with stakeholders in Northern Ireland about how best to deliver the benefits associated with Freeports there.

Energy Bills Discount Scheme

[HLWS481]

Baroness Penn: My honourable friend the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Cartlidge) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Following a review of the Energy Bills Relief Scheme (EBRS), the Government today announces a new energy support scheme for businesses, charities, and the public sector. The new Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) will provide all eligible UK businesses and other non-domestic energy users with a discount on high energy bills until 31 March 2024, following the end of the EBRS in March 2023.

This will help businesses locked into contracts signed before recent substantial falls in the wholesale price manage their costs and provide others with reassurance against the risk of prices rising again.

This further support follows the government's unprecedented package for non-domestic users through this winter through the EBRS, worth £18 billion per the figures certified by the OBR at the Autumn Statement.

At Autumn Statement, we were clear that such levels of support, unprecedented in its nature and scale, were time-limited and intended as a bridge to allow businesses to adapt. Wholesale energy prices are falling and have now gone back to levels just before Putin's invasion of Ukraine. But to avoid a cliff-edge for businesses and provide reassurance against the risk of prices rising again we are launching the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme, giving them the certainty they need to plan ahead.

The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets, with a cap set at £5.5 billion based on estimated volumes.

Through the scheme, from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, eligible non-domestic customers who have a contract with a licensed energy supplier will see a unit discount of up to £6.97/MWh automatically applied to their gas bill and a unit discount of up to £19.61/MWh applied to their electricity bill, except for those benefitting from lower energy prices. The relative discount will be applied if wholesale prices are above a price threshold of £302/MWh for electricity and £107/MWh for gas.

A substantially higher level of support will be provided to businesses in sectors identified as being the most energy and trade intensive – predominately manufacturing industries. A long-standing category associated with higher energy usage, these firms are often less able to pass through cost to their customers due to international competition. Businesses in scope will receive a gas and electricity bill discount based on a price threshold, which will be capped by a maximum unit discount of £40.0/MWh for gas and £89.1/MWh for electricity. This discount will only apply to 70% of energy volumes and will apply above a price threshold of £185/MWh for electricity and £99/MWh for gas.

This government is committed to supporting UK business and the voluntary sector, and through this package we aim to give organisations the certainty they need to plan through next winter.

Reform of Post-16 Qualifications

[HLWS478]

Baroness Barran: My Right Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon), has made the following statement:

Today, I am notifying Parliament of the next stage in the government's review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England – the publication of new criteria for alternative academic and technical qualifications funded from 2025.

In July 2021, we published the government response to the second stage consultation of the review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below. Here, we made clear our intentions to streamline the qualifications landscape, simplify choices for students and only fund qualifications that are high quality and lead to good progression outcomes. It is vitally important for social mobility to ensure that everyone, no matter their background, is able to access the education and skills opportunities which lead to good jobs.

The reforms are taking place in 3 stages.

In July 2022, we completed the first phase of streamlining the qualifications landscape by removing funding approval from around 5,500 qualifications at level 3 and below in England, which had very low numbers or no new students enrolled on them

By August 2025, we will also have removed funding approval from qualifications which overlap with our new, highly rigorous T Levels, so that T Levels have the space they need to flourish as the main technical route for 16-19 year olds. In October 2022, we published details of the first 106 qualifications that will have funding approval removed from 1 August 2024 because they overlap with a T Level in Education and Childcare, Digital, or Construction and the Built Environment. Funding approval will also be removed from qualifications which overlap with the Health and Science T Levels and we will publish this list once the review of the outline content of those T Levels has concluded. Funding approval will be removed in August 2025 for qualifications which overlap with T Levels in waves 3 and 4 (Legal, Finance and Accounting; Engineering and Manufacturing; Business and Administration; Hair and Beauty; Catering and Hospitality; Creative and Design; and Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care). A provisional list of these qualifications will be published in spring 2023.

From August 2025, all alternative academic and technical qualifications in scope of the review will be required to demonstrate that they serve a clear and distinct purpose and meet new quality and funding criteria, irrespective of the T Level overlap assessment process. Details of the new approval process, which all qualifications at level 3 in scope of the review must go through in order to be publicly funded from 2025, are being published today. This includes full details of the types of qualifications and subjects that we will fund, and

the criteria that awarding organisations must meet to secure funding approval.

For academic qualifications this includes progression to higher education, evidence of demand and a clear statement of why the qualification is needed. Technical qualifications will be required to meet new occupational relevance and employer demand tests developed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). This will ensure that technical qualifications deliver the content that truly matter to employers, and that the skills system is simpler for learners, training providers and employers to navigate. All qualifications must also meet regulatory requirements set by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

Our reforms do not constitute a binary choice between T Levels and A levels. We have listened to feedback and recognise the need for additional qualifications, including alternative qualifications such as some BTECs designed to be taken as part of a mixed study programme including A levels. These alternative qualifications are an important part of how we will support diverse student needs and deliver skills that employers need for a productive future economy, in areas that A levels and T Levels do not cover. In addition, the T Level Transition Programme provides a high-quality route onto T Levels, for students who would benefit from the additional study time and preparation that it will give them before they start their T Level.

The government also recognises that there are still too many people who are being held back by poor maths. The Prime Minister has set out his intention that all students in England should study some form of maths to age 18, to ensure they are better equipped for the jobs of the future. Further detail on this measure will be set out at a later date.

Today's announcement marks the start of the final stage of the reforms to post-16 qualifications and will give the education sector clarity on the shape of the future post-16 qualifications landscape.

I look forward to engaging with parliamentarians and colleagues in awarding bodies and further education as we implement these important reforms.

Spaceport Cornwall: First Launch of Satellites

[HLWS479]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has today made the following statement:

Last night, Virgin Orbit attempted the first orbital launch from Spaceport Cornwall. Unfortunately, the launch was unsuccessful. We will work closely with Virgin Orbit as they investigate what caused the failure in the coming days and weeks. While a failed launch is disappointing, launching a spacecraft always carries significant risks. Despite this, the project has succeeded in creating a horizontal launch capability at Spaceport Cornwall, and we remain committed to becoming the

leading provider of commercial small satellite launch in Europe by 2030, with vertical launches planned from Scotland in the next year.

**Statutory Deadline for Planning Decision:
Alternative Use Boston Projects Ltd**

[HLWS477]

Lord Callanan: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has today made the following statement:

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Alternative Use Boston Projects Limited for the construction and operation of an energy from waste facility at Boston in Lincolnshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application

within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The current statutory deadline for the decision on the Boston Alternative Energy Facility application is 10 January 2023.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 6 July 2023 for deciding this application. This is to enable my Department to seek further information from the Applicant and to ensure there is sufficient time to allow for consideration of this information by other interested parties.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 10 January 2023

Arab States: BBC World Service

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the strategic importance of the BBC World Service during the Arab Spring protests. [HL4505]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO strongly values the BBC World Service's role in bringing high quality and impartial broadcasting to global audiences, particularly where free speech is limited. The Integrated Review stated that the BBC's foreign language services are part of what makes the UK a soft power superpower.

During the Arab Spring, news and information was fiercely contested. Disruptions to the internet, misinformation and a breakdown of trust in some national broadcast media gave greater significance to the BBC World Service for its objective and impartial reporting on events across the region.

The Government remains committed to the World Service, and its important role in delivering trusted, accurate and independent broadcasting worldwide.

Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the analysis published by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on 20 December suggesting that, despite the peace deal in Ethiopia, civilians are still at heightened risk of atrocities; and what steps they are taking to address these risks, including in accordance with their Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability assessment. [HL4472]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: During his visit to Ethiopia on 8 December, the Foreign Secretary welcomed the peace agreement between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front and told Prime Minister Abiy that Ethiopia could rely on the UK's full support on its path to recovery and reconciliation. As the US Holocaust Memorial Museum blog points out the presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray and the increasing violence in Oromia is likely to lead to more atrocities against civilians. We urge the Eritrean Government to withdraw its troops in support of this peace agreement. We support the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) and urge all parties to work with the Commission to allow it to fulfil its mandate to support the process of accountability for those responsible, and welcome the commitment in the peace agreement to create a comprehensive national transitional justice policy.

Iran: BBC Persian Service

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the BBC concerning Persian Radio transmissions to Iran; and what was the outcome of those discussions. [HL4470]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO strongly values the BBC World Service's role in bringing high quality and impartial broadcasting to audiences around the globe, particularly where free speech is limited.

Under BBC proposals announced on 29 September, while radio broadcasts for BBC Persian will cease, TV broadcasting will continue and investment in digital services will increase, reflecting audience viewing trends. In Iran, only 1% of the BBC's total weekly audience of 13.8 million access BBC news solely via radio. The BBC has provided assurance that it will continue to serve audiences in need, ensuring continued access to vital news services.

We regularly raise the issue of the Iranian peoples' right to access independent media, including BBC Persian, with the Iranian government and in multilateral fora.

Jimmy Lai

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure the health of the British citizen, Jimmy Lai, since he was incarcerated in Stanley Prison in Hong Kong. [HL4416]

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Jimmy Lai's access to health care services in Stanley Prison in Hong Kong. [HL4417]

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps, if any, they have taken to ensure Jimmy Lai receives proper diabetes treatment while being held in Stanley Prison in Hong Kong. [HL4418]

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assistance, if any, the British Consulate in Hong Kong has provided Jimmy Lai to maintain his health while he is imprisoned. [HL4419]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned about the targeting of pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong, and are following these cases carefully. For data protection reasons I cannot share information about an individual without their permission.

Accredited diplomats at our Consulate-General in Hong Kong will continue to attend Mr Lai's court proceedings.

We continue to make clear to mainland Chinese and Hong Kong authorities our strong opposition to the

National Security Law, which is being used to curtail freedoms, punish dissent and shrink the space for opposition, free press and civil society.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the refusal of the authorities in Hong Kong to allow imprisoned British citizen Jimmy Lai to meet with his legal representative Timothy Owen KC. [HL4471]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned about the targeting of pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong and are following these cases carefully. For data protection reasons I cannot share information about an individual without their permission.

Accredited diplomats at our Consulate-General in Hong Kong will continue to attend Mr Lai's court proceedings.

We are analysing the recent interpretation of the Hong Kong National Security Law by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. As we have said, the National Security Law is being used to curtail freedoms, punish dissent and shrink the space for opposition, and we consider it to represent a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Asked by Baroness Worthington

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Autumn Statement announcement on vehicle excise duty (VED) changes, whether they intend to levy annual VED of £165 from 2025 on electric vehicles; whether pre-2017 petrol and diesel vehicles rated at less than 110 gCO₂/km will continue to pay £20; and whether those rated 110–120gCO₂/km will continue to pay £30; if so, what are their reasons for charging lower road tax on more polluting vehicles; and if not, what steps they will take to ensure that electric vehicles are not charged higher VED than more polluting vehicles. [HL4518]

Baroness Penn: In his Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced that electric cars, vans and motorcycles will begin to pay Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) in the same way as petrol and diesel vehicles from April 2025. With the EV transition accelerating, it's right that all drivers start to make a fair tax contribution through changes to VED.

The details requested are included in the Autumn Statement document and in the tax information and impact notes.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have undertaken a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability assessment of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh; and if

so, what steps, if any, they have taken as a result. [HL4402]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: A Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) for the South Caucasus region, including the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, was completed in early 2022. It recommended that the UK Government act, where it can, to address regional drivers of conflict in the South Caucasus and exploit opportunities for greater regional dialogue and cooperation. In line with this recommendation, the UK is spending £1 million on conflict-related programming in Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2022–23 through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. I [Lord Ahmad] spoke to Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan on 15 December where I reinforced UK support for international efforts, including regional dialogue, to secure peace and stability in the region.

Nurses: Strikes

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to involve the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to resolve the nurses' strike. [HL4462]

Lord Markham: The Government is not looking currently to involve the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service in discussions about industrial action by nurses, but will keep our options open as we seek to find a solution.

Poverty: Older People

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government how many older people they estimate are currently living in (1) relative, and (2) absolute, poverty. [HL4509]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: National Statistics on the number of pensioners with low income are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication and the latest available estimates are for 2020/21.

The overall trend in the number of pensioners living in low income shows a fall over recent decades.

(1) In 2020/21, there were 1.9 million pensioners in relative low income, before housing costs. This is a fall of 200 thousand since 2009/10. In 2020/21, there were 1.7 million pensioners in relative low income, after housing costs. This is a fall of 100 thousand since 2009/10.

(2) In 2020/21, there were 1.5 million pensioners in absolute low income, before housing costs. This is a fall of 400 thousand since 2009/10. In 2020/21, there were 1.2 million pensioners in absolute low income, after housing costs. This is a fall of 400 thousand since 2009/10.

The Government is committed to action that helps to alleviate levels of pensioner poverty.

In 2022/23, we will spend £134 billion on benefits for pensioners in GB, 5.4% of GDP. This includes £110 billion spending on the State Pension in 2022/23. Subject to Parliamentary approval in April 2023 the State Pension and the Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee will increase by 10.1%.

In addition, to reduce the risk of poverty for future pensioners, automatic enrolment into workplace pensions has transformed pension participation for millions of workers. To date, over 10.8 million people have been automatically enrolled into a workplace pension, with over 2.1 million employers complying with their duties.

Public Expenditure

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions the Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office (Minister for Constitution) has had with other ministers regarding the post-Brexit funding arrangements. [HL4270]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Ministers and officials regularly meet other Ministerial and departmental colleagues to discuss a range of issues, including those relating to the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

Taking into account the financial settlement with the EU, an additional £14.6 billion of spending by 2024-25 has been allocated to the United Kingdom's domestic priorities, rather than being sent in contributions to the EU. This spending was incorporated into the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-and-spending-review-2021-documents>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Hard copy of hyperlinked document [Budget_AB2021_Print.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-13/HL4270>

Index to Statements and Answers

Written Statements.....	1
English Freeports Update	1
Energy Bills Discount Scheme	1
Reform of Post-16 Qualifications.....	2
Spaceport Cornwall: First Launch of Satellites	2
Statutory Deadline for Planning Decision: Alternative Use Boston Projects Ltd	3
Written Answers.....	4
Arab States: BBC World Service	4
Ethiopia: Armed Conflict	4
Iran: BBC Persian Service.....	4
Jimmy Lai.....	4
Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties	5
Nagorno-Karabakh	5
Nurses: Strikes.....	5
Poverty: Older People.....	5
Public Expenditure	6