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

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
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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, Whip
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Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
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Lord Harlech	Whip
Lord Johnson of Lainston	Minister of State, Department for Business and 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 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 Dirleton	Advocate-General for Scotland
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Chief Whip
Viscount Camrose	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Fraud Landscape Report 2020-21

[HLWS644]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office and HM Paymaster General, Jeremy Quin MP, has today made the following statement:

Today the Government is publishing the 2020-21 Fraud Landscape Report. This follows the establishment of the new Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) in August last year to raise the government's ambition across the public sector in understanding risks and reducing fraud.

The report continues to push the government's transparency agenda by publishing data on the level of detected and estimated fraud and error in the public sector. This report estimates fraud and error losses for central government (excluding those relating to tax and welfare, which are published separately by HMRC and DWP).

In 2020-2021, fraud detection figures grew by 7% on the previous year with departments and public bodies detecting £243 million of fraud, in line with government's objective to continue to focus on the identification and reduction in fraud. These figures include fraud related to schemes in support of the pandemic.

The report shows how the government adjusted the Counter Fraud Function to focus on fraud around the COVID-19 schemes. This was achieved by establishing a COVID-19 intelligence hotline, utilising data analytics and assessing the levels of fraud in all COVID-19 schemes, so that the Centre of Expertise were able to coordinate a unified approach to countering fraud.

The government has continued to develop its capability to take action on fraud. There are now 7,011 individuals, from 35 organisations, who are members of the world's first Counter Fraud Profession meeting our target.

In 2020/21, an additional 99 counter fraud colleagues from across government were trained in the new discipline of fraud risk assessment. This has helped us to better understand fraud at the commencement of government initiatives, a particularly helpful skill in the wake of the pandemic.

This government attaches importance to transparency and the improvements it can bring in fraud detection and prevention right across the public sector. While efforts to support departments and public bodies during the pandemic delayed work on this report, the PSFA intends to publish a bulletin with the data from 2021-2022 in the first half of 2023.

Clinical Trials Consultation Response

[HLWS646]

Lord Markham: My Hon Friend the Minister of State (Minister for Health and Secondary Care) (Will Quince) has made the following written statement:

The government has announced plans to overhaul the legislation that governs clinical trials, to introduce a series of measures to make it faster and easier to run clinical trials in the UK. These changes will help speed up clinical trials, without compromising on safety, and encourage the development of new and better medicines for patients. They come after the government announced an extra £10 million of additional funding for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to accelerate the delivery of cutting-edge treatments, including cancer vaccines.

Leaving the European Union has provided a unique opportunity for the United Kingdom to improve regulatory regimes for healthcare products and exercise our new powers as a sovereign regulator. The Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021 allows us to update the current legislation for clinical trials, creating a world-leading regime that prioritises patient safety while enabling and encouraging innovation within the clinical research environment.

To deliver this ambition and gather views of patients, industry and academia, we published a consultation on the future of UK regulations for clinical trials ([Consultation on proposals for legislative changes for clinical trials - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) on 17 January 2022.

We received 2138 responses and I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to respond to the consultation.

Officials at the MHRA, in collaboration with the Health Research Authority (HRA), have analysed the consultation responses and have worked with officials within my Department and the Office of Life Sciences to develop the Government response. The response outlines changes that will support innovation within the UK's life sciences sector and patient access to potentially life-saving medicines, for example through enhancing the transparency of clinical trials; enabling greater proportionality and streamlining the approvals process.

We are removing granular and duplicative regulatory requirements, moving away from 'one size fits all' regulation and embedding principles of proportionality. Ensuring that the regulatory requirements expected are more flexible to match the risk that a trial presents, will result in a regulatory framework that is responsive to all kinds of trials and adaptable to innovative research.

The changes also formalise the Combined Review process in legislation, ensuring research teams receive a single decision from both regulatory and ethical reviews, done in parallel between the MHRA and HRA. This

reflects the UK Government's intention to embrace innovation in clinical trials and accelerate the evaluation and implementation of advances in medical interventions to the benefit of UK patients everywhere.

The legislative changes outlined in the consultation response provide firm foundation for and align with the review of clinical trials led by Lord O'Shaughnessy and work undertaken by Sir Patrick Vallance, to ensure a pro-innovation regulatory environment. Through this collective work we will cement our status as a science superpower by making the UK the best place in the world to conduct fast, efficient and cutting-edge clinical research.

The government's response to the consultation will be published on GOV.UK today.

Great British Railways Headquarters

[HLWS642]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Mark Harper), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

Today, I am pleased to provide an update on this Government's plans to reform our railways. I am announcing the location chosen to be the national headquarters of Great British Railways (GBR), providing further detail on GBR's regionalised approach including how GBR will benefit the whole of Great Britain, as well as offering more detail on the role of GBR.

From a shortlist of six locations announced last summer, Derby has been chosen as the city to be the future headquarters of GBR.

Among an exceptional list of shortlisted applicants, Derby scored highest in the Expression of Interest stage of the competition, which analysed its suitability against six published criteria: levelling up, connectivity, opportunities for GBR, value for money, heritage and public support. It also scored highest in the six-week public vote, attracting 45,600 votes, more than 5,000 ahead of the second placed location in a total vote of 205,000.

Derby will become the heart of Great Britain's rail industry, bringing together track and train, as well as revenue and cost. This means we will finally treat the railway as the whole system it should be rather than a web of disparate interests that it's become. Passengers will no longer face the excuse-making and blame-shifting of years past. Instead, GBR will be wholeheartedly customer-focussed, serving as the single point of accountability for the performance of the railway. The rail campus, led by GBR HQ, will help position the industry to achieve this.

GBR will put customers at the heart of its reforms. It will reinvigorate the role of the private sector to help drive innovation with an unrelenting focus on quality, customer service and experience. Under GBR, rail journeys, buying tickets and ticket prices will be easier, simpler and fairer.

Whilst GBR's headquarters will be in Derby, other towns and cities will also benefit from hosting empowered regional GBR hubs equipped with decision making and investment powers aimed at benefiting their local communities. GBR will support jobs spanning across Great Britain including the North, Southeast, Southwest and London. The GBR HQ will share learning, partnerships, connections and opportunities across these centres of excellence.

GBR's Transition Team will now work with Derby to identify the site for the HQ within the city, which will represent value for money for the taxpayer. The Midlands is already a transport supercluster for Britain: with DfT and HS2 based in Birmingham, bringing GBR HQ to Derby represents a further boost to the region's transport sector and demonstrates our commitment to levelling up the country.

Procurement Exclusion Update: Bain & Company

[HLWS645]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office and HM Paymaster General, Jeremy Quin MP, has today made the following statement:

In August 2022, Bain & Company and its global affiliates were excluded from bidding for UK Government business. Following the decision, Bain & Company have cooperated with our investigations, and have provided considerable additional information on their self-cleansing actions. They have also agreed to a period of rigorous monitoring for a minimum of two years, during which their continued compliance will be assessed. Given the progress made since the exclusion, we can confirm that while Bain & Company South Africa, Inc. will remain excluded from UK Government business, Bain & Company, Inc. and its affiliates outside of South Africa are no longer excluded from bidding for government work.

Following robust and intensive dialogue with Bain & Company since the exclusion decision was made in August, which has received the full cooperation from the company, we have concluded that Bain & Company, Inc. and its affiliates outside of South Africa, including both Bain & Company, Inc. United Kingdom and BuyingTeam Limited (trading as Proxima), can bid for UK Government work.

Since the exclusion decision in August 2022, Bain & Company have responded by producing detailed evidence of the measures they have taken internally (including related to the way Bain & Company handles bids for UK Government work), which was not available to the Cabinet Office previously.

This decision is subject to a regular and thorough period of close monitoring, for a minimum of two years, so we can be satisfied that the company continues to uphold the measures they have now put in place.

During the monitoring period, Bain & Company has agreed that it will engage further with the Cabinet Office to provide evidence that their governance, organisation and internal processes are now working and will continue to work as they should do to prevent anything similar happening again.

Bain & Company South Africa, Inc. remains excluded from bidding for UK Government procurements until 4 January 2025, given the findings of the Zondo Commission on its prior involvement with the South African Revenue Service. Bain & Company South Africa has acknowledged it did not fully clarify the facts and circumstances regarding its work for the South African Revenue Service in a comprehensive manner.

Bain & Company has previously apologised for the fact that Bain & Company South Africa's work in South Africa contributed to damaging a critical public institution and acknowledged that its cooperation with investigating authorities fell short.

We will review any new information that comes to light, including as a result of any potential reconsideration by the South African Government of their decision to ban Bain & Company South Africa.

Bain & Company has welcomed this robust external challenge, to help ensure that going forward their governance is of a consistently high standard, that the self-cleansing actions put in place are operational and that any new issues arising are being managed and communicated transparently.

We strongly condemn corporate malpractice and will not hesitate to exclude suppliers should they be found to not be upholding the highest standards.

Tourism Recovery Plan Update Report

[HLWS643]

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

I am pleased to publish today an Update Report on progress made against the objectives set out in the government's Tourism Recovery Plan.

Tourism is a significant economic, cultural and social asset to the UK. The sector is a powerful engine for economic growth and job creation in every part of the UK. Pre-pandemic it directly employed 1.7 million people, supported 230,000 SMEs and contributed £74 billion in Gross Value Added – 4% of the UK's total. As an industry with long-term growth prospects (forecast at 3% a year globally to 2030), international reach, and a

presence in every constituency, tourism has a major role to play in the Government's wider Union, levelling up, and Global Britain agendas.

The Tourism Recovery Plan was published in 2021 in recognition of the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UK's visitor economy. The Plan set out a framework for joint Government and sector development. In the short to medium term, it set out the ambition to recover pre-pandemic levels of domestic and international visitor volume and spending. In the medium to long term, the remaining objectives focused on supporting the growth of a productive, innovative, resilient, sustainable, and accessible visitor economy that benefits every nation and region of the UK.

We are now three years on from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first national lockdown and the start of Government support for businesses affected by closures and social distancing measures.

This Update Report sets out the progress made against the Plan's six objectives, highlights ongoing work, and sets out the future actions the Government will take to continue supporting the sector as it not only recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic but also faces the economic challenges that have arisen since the publication of the Plan in 2021.

The Report sets out the mixed picture of recovery in the sector. In total, over £37 billion in support through grants, tax relief and loans was provided to the hospitality, leisure and tourism sectors to help them survive through the long periods of uncertainty and adversity. The sector is, however, still facing economic challenges. Domestic tourism is recovering well, but international tourism is lagging behind the targets set in the Plan. Behind this mixed picture of recovery, there is huge long-term potential for economic growth, which is why the Government re-commits in this Report to support the sector through the framework of the Tourism Recovery Plan – to help it grow, thrive and, in turn, boost the UK economy. More broadly, the Prime Minister has promised to halve inflation this year and grow the economy, both of which will support the sector.

Overall, the Report indicates that good progress has been made against the objectives of the Tourism Recovery Plan. It acknowledges that there is further to go to support the full recovery of the visitor economy in the short term and to work with industry to deliver on the medium- to long-term ambition to build a more resilient, innovative, sustainable and inclusive sector that benefits every corner of the UK.

A copy of the Update Report on the Tourism Recovery Plan will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Access to Work Programme

Asked by *Lord Blunkett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Viscount Younger of Leckie on 3 March (HL5641), what is the average wait time for new claims for a new job where the claimant received Access to Work support in their previous employment. [HL6234]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Applications with job starts in the next four weeks are prioritised; however, the specific information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

However, the Access to Work statistics includes how many applications result in provision being approved from 2007/08 to 2021/22.

The latest Access to Work statistics can be found here: [Access to Work statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

Ales Bialiatski

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Belarus concerning the case of Ales Bialaitski, founder of the Viasna human rights centre and the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize winner; and whether those representations include requesting his release from prison. [HL6362]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is appalled by the brutal and ongoing repression that the Lukashenko regime conducts against its own people. We have strongly condemned the politically motivated sentencing and imprisonment of Ales Bialiatski. There are nearly 1500 political prisoners in Belarus and we continue to urge the Belarusian regime to release them all, immediately and unconditionally.

Animal Welfare: Slaughterhouses

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to use the next stages of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway to ensure that the highest standards of animal welfare are applied in all abattoirs. [HL6406]

Lord Benyon: The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway maps out how farmers and the Government will work together to continually improve the health and welfare of our farmed animals, supported by the best science and evidence. It involves three mutually reinforcing pillars in making this change: financial incentives to help farmers deliver on-farm improvements; stimulating market demand through labelling and

mandatory public disclosure to improve the accessibility, availability and affordability of higher welfare products; and, where needed, strengthening regulation to ensure the changes made endure. Following the post-implementation review of our welfare at killing legislation, and as part of our Action Plan for Animal Welfare, we are looking at a wide range of welfare at slaughter improvements that could be made to strengthen the regulatory baseline in slaughterhouses. Welfare at slaughter is a devolved matter, and the Government remains committed to working closely with the devolved administrations on our shared aims for animal welfare.

Art Works

Asked by *Lord Crathorne*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will provide an update on the steps being taken to allow a UK gallery or institution to acquire the Portrait of Omai by Sir Joshua Reynolds. [HL6105]

Asked by *Lord Crathorne*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will extend the temporary export bar placed on the Portrait of Omai by Sir Joshua Reynolds to allow additional time for a UK gallery or institution to acquire the painting. [HL6106]

Asked by *Lord Field of Birkenhead*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to secure Joshua Reynold's portrait of Omai for the nation. [HL6308]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: We are in regular contact with the National Portrait Gallery and fully support their efforts to purchase this exceptional painting. In view of the strong support we have seen so far, the Government has extended the export deferral period to 10 June 2023 to provide every opportunity to save the Portrait of Omai so that the widest possible audience can see, enjoy, and learn from it for generations to come.

Asylum: Afghanistan and Syria

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to arrange preliminary interviews for Afghan and Syrian refugees seeking asylum in Britain in (1) France, and (2) Belgium. [HL6198]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: There is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge. Whilst the Home Office sympathises with individuals in many difficult situations around the world, it is not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

Our resettlement schemes already provide safe and legal routes for tens of thousands of people to start new lives in the UK. The UK welcomes people at risk through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Mandate Resettlement Scheme, Community Sponsorship and the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme.

British National (Overseas)

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government how much funding they allocated for destitution support for British National (Overseas) visa holders in (1) 2021/22, and (2) so far in 2022/23; and how much of this was accessed by BNO visa holders in each of those years. [HL5794]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The UK-wide Hong Kong Welcome Programme was launched in April 2021, providing a comprehensive support package with an easily accessible universal offer as its foundation, progressing to targeted support for those most in need.

£30.7 million was provisionally allocated in 2021/22 as funding for local authorities in England that provided British National (Overseas) visa holders with support to improve their English language or because they were destitute or at risk of destitution. The funding is demand-led with claims being made by local authorities on a retrospective basis after the support has been provided. No local authorities submitted claims in 2021/22 for support to BN(O)s who were destitute or at risk of destitution.

Funding for 2022/23 has continued to be available on a demand-led basis for local authorities that provide BN(O) visa holders on the same basis as 2021/22. The amount of funding accessed to date in 2022/23 to support Hong Kong BN(O)s who were destitute or at risk of destitution is so small that disclosing this information could lead to individuals being identified.

Business Premises: Rents

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the cost of commercial rents upon the viability of independent shops in town centres. [HL6279]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful. In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government introduced legislation to prevent evictions and the seizure of goods for businesses who were unable to pay their rent, alongside publishing a Code of Practice to help landlords and tenants work together to resolve this rent debt. To resolve any remaining rent debt, on 24 March 2022, Government passed (attached) the [Commercial Rent \(Coronavirus\) Act 2022](#) and established a new statutory arbitration process.

Government has also provided an unprecedented package of support to businesses over the past few years, including recent fuel duty and VAT cuts, changes to business rates worth £13.6 billion over the next five years in lower bills, government backed loans worth around £400 billion and the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, which includes support for 101 Town Deals and 72 Future High Streets Fund projects.

This is in addition to the Energy Bills Relief Scheme, which discounts businesses' energy bills until 31 March 2023; the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme; the increased Employment Allowance of £5,000, which takes the smallest 40% of businesses out of paying any National Insurance at all; and setting the Annual Investment Allowance at £1 million permanently. This is a comprehensive package of support which will help protect independent retailers.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Act 2022 [HL6279 - New law to resolve remaining COVID-19 commercial rent debts now in place - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-03-08/HL6279>

Community Orders

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve the (1) range, and (2) design, of community sentences in order to (a) decrease custody, (b) reduce recidivism, and (c) improve the reintegration of offenders into society. [HL6301]

Lord Bellamy: Community sentences, in certain circumstances, are more effective in reducing reoffending than short custodial sentences and, when considering a community sentence, courts have a comprehensive range of requirements which they can impose. There are fourteen requirements available, including electronic monitoring and Community Payback, which the courts can choose from based on the circumstances of the case with the intention of punishing the offender, providing reparation to the community, and addressing any rehabilitative needs of the offender to improve the reintegration of offenders into society. Recently, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 strengthened community sentences by introducing the option for tougher and more flexible use of electronically monitored curfews, and powers to pilot problem-solving courts for specific cohorts of offenders that aim to address underlying needs through intensive community sentences overseen by a lead judge and multi-disciplinary team.

Following the unification of Probation services last year, we are putting additional investment into the delivery of community sentences. This includes up to a further £93 million in Community Payback to enable Probation to deliver up to 8 million hours per year. This ensures that offenders give back to the communities they

have harmed, but also learn new vocational and work-ready skills.

The courts can also sentence a person to complete an Accredited Programme, designed to address the attitudes, thinking and behaviour that led to the offending. They are developed in line with the best available evidence of what works to reduce reoffending and are accredited by a panel of international experts. Evidence shows that when delivered well, offending behaviour programmes are effective at reducing recidivism. A variety of other support and interventions are available for those where delivering an Accredited Programme is not appropriate or an offender is not eligible, including Structured Interventions and Toolkits.

We have also refocused Integrated Offender Management (IOM) on our most persistent and problematic neighbourhood crime offenders and are investing further to commission services specifically for this group and introduce new roles to strengthen enforcement. IOM aligns the Probation Service more closely with the police, and builds greater links with public and voluntary services, to better incentivise offenders to overcome the complex issues that can fuel or exacerbate their criminal behaviour, such as substance misuse, poor mental health, and issues with housing or employment, in turn reducing recidivism and improving the reintegration of offenders into society.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will be nominating a candidate to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the 2024 elections. [[HL6567](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government recognises the important role played by CEDAW in holding state parties to account in implementing the convention.

As with all UN bodies, the Government considers a range of factors in deciding whether to nominate a UK candidate for election to the Committee and will continue to consider future vacancies as they arise.

The UK continues to ensure that we put women at the heart of our domestic and international policies, as shown on International Women's Day when the government published the UK's new international women and girls strategy.

Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government what mechanism has been proposed to select backbench peers for attendance at the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III on 6 May. [[HL5639](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: A number of tickets have been made available for members of the House of Lords to attend the Coronation of His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort. These have been split between the different parties and groups in the House of Lords, with this split agreed by all parties and groups who will distribute the tickets to peers.

There will be other opportunities for peers to be involved with the Coronation, outside of attending the Coronation service, both on the day itself and in the preceding weeks. These opportunities will be allocated on the same basis with tickets split across all parties and groups.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Strathcarron

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Markham on 8 February (HL4994), whether they are aware that the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's Blue Guide, published in November 2020, defines advertisements as "any activity which is intended to encourage prescription or supply by healthcare professionals and use of medicines by the general public"; and therefore why the word "safe" has been used by the NHS to promote COVID-19 vaccines over the past two years, such as in a tweet from the NHS on 9 December 2022. [[HL5868](#)]

Lord Markham: Chapter 6 of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's Blue Guide, in which the statement in question is made around the use of the word 'safe' in relation to advertising medicines, is about advertising to healthcare professionals, not the general public. The chapter is introduced as guidance on advertising of medicinal products, both prescription only and over-the-counter medicines, targeting healthcare professionals who are "persons qualified to prescribe or supply" medicines as defined in the regulations. Since National Health Service communications on COVID-19 vaccines such as the tweet in question are intended to raise awareness and to answer common questions among the general public rather than promoting any individual product, they lie beyond the scope of this guidance.

Crime: Rural Areas

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost to the UK economy of rural crime. [[HL6352](#)]

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent estimate they have made of the amount of organised plant theft in England; and what steps they are taking in response. [[HL6353](#)]

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent estimate they have made of the loss to the UK economy from heritage crime. [HL6354]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: This Government is committed to driving down rural crime. We are on target to recruit 20,000 additional officers by March 2023. This is unprecedented and reflects the biggest recruitment drive in decades, and will help ensure the public is better protected, including in rural communities.

To help prevent the theft of agricultural machinery the Government is supporting the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Bill which will require immobilisers and forensic marking to be fitted as standard to all new All-Terrain Vehicles and quad bikes. We are intending to consult on extending the legislation to other agricultural machinery.

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of theft offences recorded by the police in England and Wales. However, information on what is stolen is not routinely collected by the Home Office. All data collections are reviewed each year by the Policing Data Requirement Group (PDRG) to ensure that data requested from the police is proportionate to the need for the data and that forces have the technical capabilities to provide the data requested.

The Home Office has not made an estimate of the of the loss to the UK economy from rural crime or heritage crime. However, the National Farmers' Union (NFU) estimates that in 2021 rural theft cost the UK £40.5m, based on their insurance claim statistics.

Economic Growth*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, whether they will list the individual regions within the UK they use to determine their strategies for (1) trade and investment, and (2) freight and logistics, sectors; and what is their rationale for selecting those regions. [HL5962]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: All English Regions and Devolved Nations geographies are included when determining strategies for Trade and Investment. Officials work with businesses and local stakeholders to ensure a place focus, as reflected by the organisational structure. English Regions is divided into three Super Regions - the Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine and the South (including London), with regional teams operating within these. As well as our second HQ at Darlington's Economic Campus, we have established Trade and Investment hubs in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast to help bring the Department for Business and Trade's support closer to businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Freight and logistics policy is a matter for the Department for Transport.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the current level of charging points for electric vehicles in rural areas as opposed to urban areas; and what plans they have to roll out more charging points across the country. [HL6472]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Chargepoints are being added to the public network at a growing rate, with larger increases in 2021 and 2022 than in any year seen previously. To date, the Government and industry have supported the installation of over 38,700 publicly available charging devices in the UK including more than 7,400 rapid devices.

However, the majority (around 75%) of electric car charging happens at home, as it is often cheaper and more convenient for drivers. The Government expects home charging will remain central to the future charging behaviour of drivers.

The below table provides an estimate of the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging devices in England, as of 1 January 2023, situated in local authorities that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has classified as either urban or rural respectively as a whole. This includes both public charging devices and private charging devices or sockets funded through the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) supported grant schemes.

<i>Local Authority Classification</i>	<i>Public Charging Devices</i>	<i>Workplace Charging Sockets</i>	<i>Home Charging Devices</i>
Rural	5,336	8,442	88,456
Urban	26,130	26,395	236,914
Total	31,466	34,837	325,370

Note: Home Charging Devices are a sum of charging devices funded through EV Homecharging Scheme and Domestic Recharging Scheme. A further 1,515 charging sockets have been funded separately through EV Chargepoint Grants.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the deployment of EV charging infrastructure happens across all areas of the country. Already, over the last 7 months, through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) pilot, the Government has awarded just over £31 million of public funding to 25 local authorities across England. This portfolio of projects looks to deliver over 3,000 chargepoints.

One aim of the LEVI Fund is to address regional charging inequality and ensure no part of the country is left behind. The Government has developed a data-led allocation model to award the funding, which considers factors such as the level of rurality and the number of vehicles without off-street parking within the local authority.

Equality: Ethnic Groups

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Inclusive Equal Rights UK 3.0 A Snapshot View of Racial Disparity in the City of York, published on 28 February; and what steps they are taking to address reports of inequalities experienced by ethnic minority communities. [HL6544]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Inclusive Equal Rights report provides some interesting insights into racial disparities in York, although this is just a snapshot, as the report acknowledges, and does not analyse the causes of these disparities.

The government is taking steps to address negative ethnic disparities through the ground-breaking Inclusive Britain action plan. Published in March 2022 in response to the report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, Inclusive Britain sets out 74 actions designed to tackle disparities, promote unity and build a fairer Britain for all.

The Minister for Women and Equalities has committed to reporting back to Parliament on progress with the action plan after 12 months, and will do so shortly.

EU Law: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government which EU laws will remain in force in Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework, which would otherwise be subject to removal under the provisions of the Retained EU Law Bill. [HL6296]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is committed to taking the necessary steps to uphold the UK's international obligations, including the Withdrawal Agreement and the Windsor Framework.

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government which provisions of (1) Articles 5–10, and (2) Annex 2, of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland will be removed as a result of the Windsor Framework. [HL6299]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Windsor Framework legal texts set out how it operates to disapply swathes of EU rules for internal UK trade, to ensure that UK food and drink safety rules apply for internal UK agrifood retail trade; to remove burdensome customs bureaucracy; to ensure it is UK authorities who licence drugs for the whole UK; to enable VAT and excise changes to be made UK-wide; and to give effect to the Stormont Brake which provides a key new democratic safeguard.

Food: Shortages

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recent shortages of certain foodstuffs; and what steps they will take to ensure fairness in the contractual relationship between UK fruit and vegetable growers and their supermarket outlets. [HL6412]

Lord Benyon: The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. UK consumers have access through international trade to food products that cannot be produced here, or at least not on a year-round basis. This supplements domestic production and also ensures that any disruption from risks such as adverse weather or disease does not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

In recent weeks some supermarkets applied item limits to a small number of fruit and vegetables due to poor weather affecting the harvest in Spain and North Africa, where a high proportion of produce consumed in UK at this time of year is grown. Defra is closely monitoring markets and supply chains to explore the factors that have contributed to ongoing supply chain pressures and is considering how the Government and industry can work together to mitigate them, in the short and longer term. In the meantime Defra has requested weekly data from supermarkets on supplies of the foods affected to ensure we have the latest available data.

We continue to keep the market situation under review through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments. Defra has requested weekly data from supermarkets on supplies of the foods to ensure we have the latest available data. Defra's view is that the most effective response to food supply disruption is industry-led, with appropriate support and enablement from HM Government.

It is not for HM Government to set retail food prices nor to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions by companies. The supply of food is dependent on a combination of factors and supermarkets have worked with their suppliers to ensure availability.

Free School Meals

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children are currently eligible for free school meals but have not yet made a claim. [HL6189]

Baroness Barran: The latest published statistics show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming free school meals (FSM). This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, over one third of pupils receive a free meal in school.

The department does not routinely collect information on the proportion of pupils that may be entitled to FSM, but do not make a claim. The most recent estimate is that take-up is around 89% of those who are entitled.

The department wants to make sure as many eligible pupils as possible are claiming their FSM, and to make it as simple as possible for schools and local authorities to determine eligibility. To support this, we provide an Eligibility Checking System to make the checking process as quick and straightforward as possible for schools and local authorities. The department has also developed a model registration form to help schools encourage parents to sign up for FSM and provide guidance to Jobcentre Plus advisers so that they can make Universal Credit recipients aware that they may also be entitled to wider benefits, including FSM.

Fruit: Trees

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Exeter***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of global warming on diseases affecting fruit trees in Britain. [HL6403]

Lord Benyon: There is a systematic, proactive screening of potential new and emerging plant health risks. This includes consideration of changes which have the potential to affect the risk posed by non-native plant pests and pathogens to UK plants, both cultivated and in the wider environment. Pests and pathogens which are considered to pose a risk are prioritised for action in the UK Plant Health Risk Register. Risks are reviewed monthly by an expert group and Ministers, and prioritised for actions such as contingency plans in the event of an outbreak, pest risk analyses which can look in detail at potential risks associated with climatic factors, surveillance, enhanced inspection, regulation, national measures, import controls, research and awareness raising. Actions and decisions are kept under review and would be reconsidered in light of new information concerning the pest or other factor which would change the risk to GB.

Gambling: Rehabilitation

*Asked by **Lord Smith of Hindhead***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many new specialist gambling treatment clinics have opened since the announcement of these new centres in 2019. [HL6480]

Lord Markham: The National Problem Gambling Clinic in London was already open prior to 2019. Since then, an additional seven new services have opened including an additional Children and Young People Provision in London, the Northern Gambling Service in Leeds, with satellite clinics in Manchester and Sunderland, the West Midlands Gambling Harm Clinics in Stoke-on-Trent and Telford and the Southern Gambling Service in Southampton. NHS England remain on track to open all 15 clinics by the end of 2023/24, ensuring representation across every region of England.

Haiti: Gangs

*Asked by **Lord Hylton***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the situation in Haiti, following the assassination of the President in 2021 and the reported increase in lawless violence; whether they are consulting on this issue with the Organization of American States; and what information they have about the safety of Father Antoine Macaire Christian Noah who was kidnapped for ransom from his parish on 7 February. [HL6199]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK is following closely the deteriorating security situation in Haiti and the impact this is having on the Haitian people and attempts to return to political stability following the assassination of President Moïse. We encourage all actors to work in cooperation with the international community to tackle these serious challenges. UK officials are in regular consultation with the Organisation of American States on this issue, and intervened at the meeting of the Permanent Council in February to discuss the situation in Haiti. We welcome recent news reports that Father Antoine Macaire is no longer captive.

Health Professions: Migrant Workers

*Asked by **Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accuracy of the Professional and Linguistics Assessment Board examination (PLAB) as a test of competence for International Medical Graduates, given the conclusion of the British Medical Journal (BMJ) published on 17 April 2014 that the pass mark of PLAB would need to be increased by 30 per cent to reach equivalence with UK graduates. [HL6194]

Lord Markham: No specific assessment has been made. The General Medical Council (GMC) is the independent regulator of all medical doctors practising in the United Kingdom. It sets and enforces the standards to which all doctors must adhere. The GMC is responsible for operational matters, including those relating to Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board tests, which it revised in 2016 following a review.

Heating: Housing

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to make the installation of heating systems, such as heat pumps, more accessible to people with less technical literacy. [HL6228]

Lord Callanan: The Government has launched a new service to aid consumers in understanding whether a heat pump could be suitable for them. The service, '*Check if a heat pump could be suitable for your home*', is available on GOV.UK. It provides advice and links to case studies written in plain English and designed for a non-technical audience.

Historic Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by *Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with heritage bodies about the backlog of works to buildings of national importance both in the public and private sectors. [HL6225]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport regularly engages with heritage public bodies, including Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, regarding buildings of national importance. The Government, along with national agencies, local authorities, and the wider heritage sector, works to champion England's heritage, including by providing financial support for heritage assets. This includes:

- the £82 million Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), providing funding to undertake vital infrastructure and urgent maintenance backlogs for non-national accredited museums in England (a round of projects awarded funding through this was announced on Monday 20 March);
- various grants delivered through Historic England for the repair and conservation of listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and registered parks and gardens, including approximately £11 million per annum in repair grants for heritage at risk; and
- the £360 million Public Bodies Infrastructure Fund 2021–22, which addressed maintenance and infrastructure upgrades at DCMS-sponsored cultural bodies including the fifteen sponsored museums, the British Library, and the British Film.

Hospital Wards: Transgender People

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by Lord Bellamy on 11 October 2022 (HLWS305) regarding their policy not to allow transgender women with male genitalia to be held in mainstream women's prisons, whether they plan to adopt a similar policy on the placement of transgender

women in female wards in hospitals, by way of guidance to all Primary Care Trusts. [HL6135]

Lord Markham: NHS England is currently reviewing its guidance '*Delivering Same Sex Accommodation*'.

Hymenoscyphus Fraxineus: Disease Control

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to limit the spread of *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* causing ash dieback in England. [HL6421]

Lord Benyon: *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, the fungus responsible for ash dieback disease, is spread via spores in the air/wind. The spores are produced in the leaf litter and can spread for considerable distances before infecting another ash tree. It is not possible to limit the spread of the disease at a national level, and it is now present in all counties.

The severity and impact of the disease at a local level varies by tree age and condition, climate, the presence of secondary pathogens and other environmental factors. Removal of leaf litter may be an effective way to reduce the level of inoculum in certain conditions, for example around high value trees in urban environments. Government grants are available for private landowners, to help with costs associated with ecological surveys and felling roadside ash, and also to restock with alternative species. Local authorities can also apply for funds to restore landscapes ecologically degraded by ash dieback.

The Government has invested more than £8 million to advance our scientific understanding of this disease since it was first detected, including into the development of resistant ash trees. We have conducted the world's largest screening trials for tolerant trees and have planted over 3000 trees of 1000 genotypes in the first UK archive of tolerant ash. They have been drawn from a wide geographic spread to maximise the genetic diversity in the collection and facilitate the possibility of a future breeding programme of resilient ash.

Industrial Disputes: Public Sector

Asked by *Baroness O'Grady of Upper Holloway*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Prime Minister's comments on the 11 January (HC Deb col 553) that minimum service levels during strike action "should not be controversial" as they are present in France, Italy and Spain, what assessment they have made of those countries' provision of powers to remove protection from unfair dismissal for public sector workers on strike. [HL6056]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill outlines appropriate enforcement mechanisms to maximise the assurance that Minimum Service Levels (MSLs) will be achieved on strike days where they are applied, whilst also ensuring that these mechanisms are consistent with existing trade union legislation.

Internet: Safety

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that age verification measures will be implemented within six months of the enactment of the Online Safety Bill. [HL6418]

Viscount Camrose: Our intention is to have the regime operational as soon as possible after Royal Assent, whilst ensuring the necessary preparations are completed effectively and service providers understand what is expected. We are working closely with Ofcom, who will be responsible for implementing the regime.

It is important that the timeframe for implementation leaves sufficient time and flexibility for Ofcom to produce, consult on, and publish codes of practice and guidance on protections for children which are fit for purpose. It is also critical that the relevant statutory consultees, including persons who represent the interests of children, have adequate time to provide their views.

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the need to introduce provisions within the Online Safety Bill to enable the improvement of media literacy skills of the UK through strengthening the duties of Ofcom, such as requiring (1) local authorities, or (2) media platforms and services, to play a role in education for parents. [HL6419]

Viscount Camrose: Ofcom has a statutory duty to promote media literacy under Section 11 of the Communications Act (2003). This covers services regulated under the Online Safety Bill. In December 2021, Ofcom published its 'Approach to Media Literacy' document, setting out its refreshed work programme to discharge its duty. This includes working with industry to publish best practice principles for platform-based media literacy interventions, and funding projects supporting children and their parents online.

The Online Safety Bill will strengthen Ofcom's ability to discharge its existing duty, giving it new information-gathering and transparency-reporting powers to provide it with better visibility of industry efforts. It will also force regulated services to consider media literacy in their illegal content and children's risk assessments.

Further, the government is delivering an expansive, non-legislative media literacy work programme through our Online Media Literacy Strategy. This includes providing £1 million in grant funding this year alone for new media literacy projects, including initiatives working with Local Authorities, and offering support to parents.

Iran: Journalism

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made representations, together with international partners, over arrests and intimidation of journalists in

Iran reporting on alleged schoolgirl poisonings in that country; and whether they have called for the immediate release of the journalist Ali Portatababaei following his arrest on 5 March. [HL6365]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of reports of mass poisonings of school girls across Iran since November and continue to monitor developments closely. On 3 March, I [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon] called on the Iranian authorities to investigate these incidents urgently and with transparency. I underlined it is essential that all girls can exercise their human right to education without fear.

The UK is a fierce champion of media freedom and proud member of the Media Freedom Coalition. We condemn the Iranian authorities' crackdown on journalists and internet freedom and continue to raise the issue of the Iranian peoples' right to access independent media with the Iranian government, as well as in multilateral fora.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to proscribing the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation. [HL6292]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Whilst we keep the list of proscribed organisations under review, it is Government policy not to comment on whether a group is under consideration for proscription.

To proscribe an organisation, the Home Secretary must have a reasonable belief that it is concerned in terrorism. This means the organisation participates or commits; prepares for; promotes, encourages or unlawfully glorifies; or is in some way otherwise concerned in terrorism. As well as considering whether the statutory test for proscription has been satisfied, the Home Secretary's decision to proscribe must be necessary and proportionate, having taken into account all relevant factors.

The UK Government has long been clear about its concerns over the continued destabilising activity of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The UK is committed to working with the international community to ensure Iran is held to account.

The UK has close to 300 sanctions in place against Iran, including on the IRGC in its entirety. We will continue to use all tools at our disposal to protect the UK and our interests from any Iran-linked threats.

Litter: Wildlife

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Exeter*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of litter on wildlife. [HL6401]

Lord Benyon: The Department has not made an assessment of the impact of litter on wildlife.

We are aware of the general adverse impact litter can have on wildlife and we are tackling this through our Litter Strategy for England. The strategy sets out our aim to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering within a generation by focusing on education and awareness, improving enforcement and better cleaning and access to bins.

Local Government: Elections

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what data will be recorded by polling stations on the impact of the new Voter ID legislation on access to voting; how that data will be recorded; and what plans they have to report that data to parliament after the local elections in May. [HL6470]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: With regards to the Noble Baroness' query on data recorded at polling stations, I refer her to the response given to question UIN 162192 (attached) on 14 March 2023.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UIN 162192 [162192.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-03-14/HL6470>

Meat: Labelling

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce mandatory labelling for (1) domestic, and (2) imported, meat, indicating (a) the method of production, and (b) when stunning of animals has not occurred prior to slaughter. [HL6457]

Lord Benyon: In 2021, Defra ran a call for evidence to gather data on the potential impacts of different types of labelling reform for animal welfare, including considerations around imports, production systems and method of slaughter. We received over 1,600 responses and a summary of these responses is available on GOV.UK.

Based on the evidence provided, Defra committed in the Government's Food Strategy to consult on improving and expanding mandatory animal welfare labelling, covering both domestic and imported products, in 2023.

Meat: Prices

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Exeter*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increasing cost of animal feed on meat prices. [HL6402]

Lord Benyon: Animal feed is one of a range of inputs that contribute to the price of meat and meat products. Input costs are dictated by the market and can fluctuate at different times of the year or in response to specific events, as we have seen over the last year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. No single input cost, including on-farm feed costs, would be expected to dictate the price of a particular commodity.

We continue to closely monitor agricultural markets including animal feed prices including through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group (UKAMMG), which was set up by Defra and the Devolved Administrations to monitor the UK market situation across all key agricultural commodities. We have also recently increased our engagement with industry to supplement our analysis with real-time intelligence.

Medical Equipment: Disadvantaged

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) plans to consult stakeholders on its plans for Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment in technology appraisals of medicines and medical technology products. [HL6213]

Lord Markham: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE's) methods and processes of health technology evaluation include key considerations of equality and established flexibilities to consider health inequalities where relevant. NICE's methods are well established and have been extensively consulted on, most recently ahead of the updated publication in January 2022.

NICE's improved approach to considering and addressing health inequalities are built on an extensive programme of work, including broad engagement across the stakeholder community and with the public. As part of this work, NICE is making operational improvements, to ensure considerations of health inequalities are efficiently implemented in practice and clearly documented. Expansion of the existing Equalities Impact Assessment to include Health Inequalities is one such operational improvement and does not require formal consultation.

Merchant Shipping

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether (1) Masters of UK flagged ships, and (2) Masters of UK owned but not UK flagged ships, are required to hold the latest Naval Control of Shipping documents. [HL6377]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There is no requirement for a Master of a UK flagged ship or UK owned, but not UK flagged ship, to hold the latest "Naval Control of Shipping documents".

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government what powers they have to requisition UK-owned but not UK-flagged merchant ships. [HL6379]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There is a prerogative power to requisition in times of war or acute national emergency any merchant ship within United Kingdom jurisdiction. The powers apply only to British ships whether or not they are within the United Kingdom jurisdiction. The powers do not apply to British owned ships not registered on the British flag.

Merchant Shipping: Medals

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there has been any change to the inclusion of the Merchant Navy Meritorious Service medal with the ambulance service, fire service and police meritorious service medals in order of wear; if so, why this change was made; and whether the Princess Royal was informed of this change. [HL6375]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Government has not made any changes to the status of the Order of Wear since it was instituted as a State Award in 2015. Any changes to the Order of Wear, which is set in the Royal Warrant, would have to be agreed and implemented by the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood.

NHS: Staff

Asked by Baroness Merron

To ask His Majesty's Government when the NHS Workforce Plan will be published. [HL6206]

Lord Markham: We are committed to growing the National Health Service workforce, which is why we commissioned NHS England to publish a long-term workforce plan to help recruit and retain more staff. This plan is in development, and we have committed to publishing it shortly.

Asked by Lord Rose of Monewden

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will publish the NHS workforce plan; whether it will include specific numbers for the (1) recruitment, and (2) training, of additional (a) doctors, (b) nurses, and (c) allied medical staff, needed. [HL6317]

Lord Markham: To support the overall workforce, we have commissioned NHS England to develop a Long-Term Workforce Plan for the National Health Service workforce to help recruit and retain more staff and will include independently verified projections for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals that will be needed in five, 10 and 15 years' time. This plan is in development and we have committed to publishing it shortly.

Northern Ireland Protocol: Legal Costs

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the litigation in (1) James Hugh Allister and Clifford Peeples v the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and others, and (2) the earlier decisions of the Court of Appeal and High Court in Northern Ireland in the same case, how much they spent in total in defending their position on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. [HL6310]

Lord Caine: The Government has spent £196,567 on fees associated with the legal challenges of Clifford Peeples and Jim Allister and others.

Orthopaedics: Surgery

Asked by Baroness Merron

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the NHS Workforce Plan on reducing the waiting lists for elective orthopaedic procedures. [HL6207]

Lord Markham: The Government has commissioned NHS England to deliver a National Health Service Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP). This will include independently verified projections for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals that will be needed in five, 10 and 15 years' time.

The LTWP looks across the whole of the NHS workforce to provide an assessment of future need over the next 15 years and will not provide assessments on the impact of reducing waiting lists for speciality specific procedures.

Asked by Baroness Merron

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of numbers of orthopaedic trauma surgeons, given (1) the increasing ageing population, and (2) the need to train the next generation of surgeons. [HL6208]

Lord Markham: The Government has committed to publishing a long-term workforce plan shortly which will include independently verified forecasts for the number of healthcare professionals required in future years, taking account of improvements in retention and productivity. The workforce plan is for the whole of the National Health Service workforce.

As of November 2022, there were 3,590 full time equivalent (FTE) doctors in training in the Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery specialty in the NHS in England. This is an increase of 650 (22.1%) since November 2010. As of November 2022, there were 2,699 FTE consultants in the Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery speciality in the NHS in England. This is an increase of 712 (35.9%) since November 2010.

Asked by **Baroness Merron**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve the retention of (1) trauma, and (2) orthopaedic, surgeons. [HL6209]

Lord Markham: The National Health Service People Plan and People Promise have set out a comprehensive range of actions to improve staff retention. They provide a strong focus on creating a more modern, compassionate and inclusive NHS culture by strengthening health and wellbeing, equality and diversity, culture and leadership and flexible working.

The NHS, via its *2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance*, has asked systems to refresh their 2022/23 whole system workforce plans to improve staff retention through a systematic focus on all elements of the NHS People Promise. Staff wellbeing should be strategically aligned with elective recovery plans, including workforce demand and capacity planning.

In addition, the NHS Retention Programme continuously seeks to understand why staff leave the NHS, resulting in targeted interventions to support staff to stay whilst keeping them well. A staff retention guide has been updated and includes information on supporting staff in their late and early career with specific focus on induction, reward and recognition and menopause support.

These initiatives apply across staff groups including trauma and orthopaedic surgeons.

Paramedical Staff: Mental Health

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the mental wellbeing of paramedics. [HL6326]

Lord Markham: It is our priority to support the mental health and wellbeing of all National Health Service staff, including paramedics. NHS England have developed a comprehensive emotional and psychological health and wellbeing support package for all NHS staff.

For paramedics, NHS England are continuing to work closely with Ambulance Trusts to ensure there is a longer-term health and wellbeing offer that has a focus on prevention. For 2022/23 NHS England are also working in collaboration with Ambulance Trusts to develop rehabilitation pathways for staff who have been on long term sickness and improve the mental health of call centre staff in particular. Further, NHS England have funded an ambulance sector specific Suicide Prevention pathway to provide immediate support 24 hours a day, seven days a week for staff experiencing suicidal ideation.

Parking: Databases

Asked by **Lord Pickles**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to expand the National Parking Platform, given

the dismantling of many car parking payment machines and their replacement with mobile apps. [HL6415]

Asked by **Lord Pickles**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the devolved governments about the possibility of expanding the National Parking Platform to the whole of the UK, so that motorists can use a parking app of preference and are no longer faced with up to 30 separate parking apps. [HL6416]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Department recognises the importance of the National Parking Platform which is why we have provided £800,000 to fund the pilot in Manchester. We are considering the governance and funding requirements for a nationwide roll out of the platform in England. There have been no discussions to date on this topic with the devolved administrations.

Paul Muniya

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to make representations to the government of India regarding fair treatment and due process for Bishop Paul Muniya of the Shalom Church in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, following his arrest on 23 February. [HL6197]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the arrest of Bishop Paul Muniya and our network in India will continue to monitor developments, including legislation, related to religious conversions. However, we recognise that this is a matter for India and the Indian legal system.

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief for all and to the promotion of respect and tolerance between communities. Our High Commissioner regularly meets religious representatives, including Christian communities.

In general, where we have any issues, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at Ministerial level.

Phytophthora Ramorum: Disease Control

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to limit the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* in trees in England. [HL6420]

Lord Benyon: *Phytophthora ramorum* is primarily distributed across the western regions of GB affecting larch plantations. For over twelve years we have had a robust management programme in place, including aerial and ground-based surveillance and risk-based inspections at nurseries and retail sites. Scotland and Wales have their own management programmes.

Where it is found, given the economic impact of the disease to the forestry industry, Statutory Plant Health Notices are served requiring the destruction of infected trees and those nearby. Specific measures are taken related to the handling, movement and processing of larch infected with *P. ramorum*, to prevent the spread through the trade in timber and related products.

Government guidance and grants are available through Countryside Stewardship for restocking woodland post *P. ramorum* infection, and for the removal of immature larch and rhododendron. Further financial support is available through the tree health pilot, which aims to test further support for land managers, including farmers, so they can act against tree pests and diseases which attack our trees, woods, and forests.

Potatoes: Production

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the value to the UK economy of potato production. [HL6462]

Lord Benyon: Whilst no assessment has been made of the value to the UK economy of potato production, provisional data suggests that UK produced potatoes had a farmgate value of around £703 million in 2021.

Prescription Drugs: Addictions

Asked by *The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the £421 million they announced for drug and alcohol addiction treatment and recovery services on 16 February, how much will be allocated to support patients (1) dependent on, or (2) withdrawing from, prescribed drug dependencies. [HL6321]

Lord Markham: Building a drug and alcohol treatment and recovery system is the key aim of the Government's long-term drug strategy. On 16 February 2023, the Government announced that 151 local authorities across England are receiving £421 million funding through to 2025 to combat drug and alcohol misuse, with areas with the highest need prioritised.

Local authorities are responsible for assessing local need for alcohol and drug prevention and treatment in their area, and commissioning services to meet these needs. Local authorities therefore determine the level of funding that they may choose to allocate to support patients dependent on, or withdrawing from, prescribed drug dependencies.

Prisoners

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have plans to increase the number of prisoners accommodated in prisons across England and Wales;

and what consideration they have given to trends in sentencing. [HL6312]

Lord Bellamy: This government has been decisive in our tough approach to crime, including legislating to introduce tougher sentences for the most serious crimes. We have long anticipated the prison population rising as a result of these measures, and sentencing trends are modelled into our published prison population projections.

This is why we are delivering the largest prison build programme since the Victorian era, creating 20,000 additional, modern prison places. We have already delivered over 3,100 of these additional places to date including through the brand-new prison, HMP Five Wells, which opened last year. HMP Fosse Way will open this year, and construction has started on our newest prison next to HMP Full Sutton - bringing over 3,000 new prison places between them.

We are continuing to invest in prison maintenance so that existing places remain in use and are safe, secure and decent for prisoners and staff.

Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Asked by *The Earl of Dundee*

To ask His Majesty's Government which pilot schemes they plan to encourage in prisons in order (1) to reduce recidivism, and (2) to increase future employment opportunities for prisoners. [HL6303]

Lord Bellamy: As set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, we are driving down reoffending through investing in getting offenders into skills training, work and stable accommodation.

We know that employment reduces the chance of reoffending significantly, by up to nine percentage points. Earlier this month we launched the Employability Innovation Fund to enable prison governors to work with more employers and training providers to repurpose workshops, deliver sector specific skills training to meet the changing needs of the economy and smooth the path from prison to employment.

The Future Skills Programme and HMP Academies strands of the Fund will pilot innovative approaches to upskilling prisoners, invite employers into prisons to run training academies and create pathways into employment on release. This will cut crime by reducing reoffending while helping businesses to fill labour shortages and grow.

Prisons: Horses

Asked by *The Earl of Dundee*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to adopting the 'Horses of Hope' pilot scheme in prisons in England and Wales, following its use in other countries including the Republic of Ireland. [HL6304]

Lord Bellamy: My noble friend is right to point to the importance of schemes like Horses of Hope, which help prison leavers gain skills and find employment on release. We know that employment reduces the chance of reoffending significantly and so improving employment outcomes is a key pillar of our plans to cut crime by reducing reoffending.

Similar provision through RMF Group in partnership with Milton Harris Racing is currently running in two prisons in England and Wales with a further prison due to start shortly. The courses delivered are linked to the British Horseracing Association and the Royal Stud, providing level 1 and 2 qualifications, as well as employment and accommodation opportunities on release.

Renewable Energy: Planning Permission

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage local planning authorities to expedite determination of planning applications for renewable energy projects seeking to connect to local Distribution Network Operators. [HL6254]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Our National Planning Policy Framework is clear that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. In addition, powers in our Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will enable us to create a more consistent, streamlined and digitally enabled approach to planning applications. When utilised with existing powers, this will enable us to create an end to end system which is faster and more accessible to communities.

Research and Development Tax Credit

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on (1) small businesses, and (2) innovation and growth, if the current Research and Development (R&D) tax relief scheme, including the available rebate of R&D costs, is withdrawn. [HL6212]

Baroness Penn: As part of the ongoing Research and Development (R&D) tax reliefs review, the Government announced at Autumn Statement 2022 that we are reforming the R&D tax reliefs to ensure taxpayer's money is spent as effectively as possible, whilst leaving the level of R&D related business investment in the economy unchanged.

The permanent increase from 13 per cent to 20 per cent for the R&D Expenditure Credit rate announced at Autumn Statement 2022 also means the UK now has the joint highest uncapped headline rate of tax relief in the G7 for large companies.

The Government recognises the value of R&D intensive SMEs to the UK's wider innovation ecosystem, and at Autumn Statement 2022 committed to working with industry ahead of Budget to understand whether further support is necessary for R&D intensive SMEs. Following this, the Chancellor has announced further support targeted at those R&D intensive companies most affected by the previous changes.

The Government will introduce an higher rate of tax relief for R&D intensive SMEs. Loss-making companies claiming the existing SME tax relief will be eligible for a higher payable credit rate of 14.5 per cent if they meet the definition for R&D intensity, instead of the 10 per cent credit rate for non-intensive companies.

Alongside this, from April the Government will extend the scope of qualifying expenditures the reliefs to include data and cloud computing costs.

Shipping: EU Countries

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any contingency plans to divert shipping to alternative ports should major ports in Europe be made unusable for whatever reason. [HL6380]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The ports and shipping sector is a flexible, dynamic and commercial sector that will take operational decisions on diversion and re-routeing of vessels in the event of disruption. Such decisions will be made with regard to the capability and capacity of vessels and of alternative ports, and to other factors such as delay, cost or convenience for the users of their services. This flexibility has been demonstrated repeatedly over the last few years throughout the pandemic and other occurrences, for example regular diversion of vessels, or changed service plans, to avoid container freight congestion at European ports, delays from industrial action, or weather conditions.

Some shipping routes, potentially with bespoke infrastructure and vessels, are less flexible in nature, but the competitive UK ports and shipping sector offers a varied choice of routes for freight and passengers. On this basis, the Government does not ordinarily plan to intervene in the operational and commercial decision-making of shippers, port, or ship-operators.

Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the (1) minimum, and (2) maximum, benefit sanctions issued in the latest period for which data are available; and what was the average duration of benefit stoppage in that period. [HL6190]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Turnips: Production

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) turnip production in England, and (2) its value to the economy. [HL6351]

Lord Benyon: Whilst no assessment has been made of English turnip production and its value to the economy, provisional production data suggests that in 2021 the UK produced 92,000 tonnes of turnips and swedes, with a value of around £32 million.

Undocumented Migrants

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the introduction of the Illegal Migration Bill, what plans they have (1) to ban migrants who arrive in the UK via irregular transit routes from re-entering the UK in future, and (2) to prevent them from applying for British citizenship for life; and what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of any such plans, given that lifetime bans could be reversed by future governments. [HL6218]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Illegal Migration Bill makes it clear to migrants thinking of coming to the UK illegally – be that by a small boat, in the back of a lorry or other unlawful means – that illegal entry has real, long-term and significant impacts on their future.

Migrants who enter the UK illegally will be banned from returning at a future date and will not be able to obtain settlement or citizenship.

The very limited power to waive the re-entry ban is included for use in specific exceptional circumstances. The overall approach is clear: if someone wants to come to the UK, they must do so lawfully.

The re-entry, settlement and citizenship bans will be rooted in primary legislation as part of the Illegal Migration Bill and will be subject to the usual parliamentary processes

Universal Credit

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Durham**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *An Essentials Guarantee: Reforming Universal Credit* to ensure we can all afford the essentials in hard times, published on 27 February, which found that "95 per cent of people on Universal Credit facing debt deductions are going without essentials", what steps they are taking to prevent debt from being (1) generated, and (2) sustained, in the social security system. [HL6188]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The DWP takes significant steps to ensure the accuracy of all benefit payments, and figures released in May 2022 showed the overwhelming majority of benefit, nearly 95%, was paid

correctly. There are a number of measures in place to minimise the risk of debt, such as a quality checking regime and the use of HMRC's Real Time Information.

Where errors do occur with UC payments, the DWP takes steps to detect them at the earliest opportunity. Where debt does arise, and a person feels they cannot afford the proposed rate of recovery, they are encouraged to contact the DWP. When they do, we work with them to review their financial circumstances and, in most instances, agree a temporary reduction in their rate of repayment.

We remain committed to His Majesty's Treasury's Breathing Space policy, which provides those with problem debt (where applicable) the right to legal protections from creditor action for a period of 60 days.

Asked by **Lord Field of Birkenhead**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Universal Credit claimants received (1) £10–19 per week, (2) £20–£29 per week, (3) £30–39 per week, (4) £40–£49 per week, (5) £50–£59 per week, (6) £60–£69 per week, (7) £70–£79 per week, (8) £80–£89 per week, (9) £90–£99 per week, (10) £100–£109 per week, (11) £110–£119 per week, (12) £120–£129 per week, (13) £130–£139 per week, (14) £140–£149 per week, and (15) £150 and above per week, in the latest period for which figures are available. [HL6192]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Universal Credit is paid to households monthly and the official statistics, including the amounts paid per month, are published every three months on Stat-Xplore. The latest statistics are in the following table.

Table 1: Number of Households in receipt of Universal Credit, by monthly payment amount, in November 2022.

<i>Payment Amount</i>	<i>Number of Households</i>
Less than £40	72,857
£40 - £79.99	53,878
£80 - £119.99	63,360
£120 - £159.99	73,342
£160 - £199.99	77,612
£200 - £239.99	100,586
£240 - £279.99	224,528
£280 - £319.99	136,853
£320 - £359.99	203,224
£360 - £399.99	67,924
£400 - £439.99	74,063
£440 - £479.99	85,036
£480 - £519.99	111,719
£520 - £559.99	103,904
£560 - £599.99	130,586
£600 or more	2,747,768
Total	4,327,245

Source: [Stat-Xplore](#) – Households on Universal Credit Notes:

- i) Statistical disclosure control has been applied to these figures to avoid the release of confidential data. Totals may not sum due to the disclosure control applied.
- ii) These figures do not include households with a nil award. Households may not be in payment if, for example, earnings for the period are sufficiently high that the taper rate reduces their entitlement to £0.
- iii) These figures are provisional and will be subject to revision. It is expected that overall provisional figures will be within two per cent of their revised figure in future releases.
- iv) Monthly award amounts include any awards due to entitlement such as the standard allowance or housing entitlement plus any advance payments. Advance payments will normally be recovered during subsequent assessment periods.

Urine Drainage Bags: Import Duties

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to permanently removing the six per cent import duty on urine drainage bags by re-classifying them as medical devices under the UK Global Tariff regime. [[HL6114](#)]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: In 2021 the Government implemented temporary tariff suspensions on a set of goods, including urine drainage bags, to support the healthcare response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has extended the majority of these suspensions until 31 December 2023.

HM Revenue and Customs has reviewed the classification of urine drainage bags and although these are used in conjunction with medical products (e.g. catheters), they are not considered to be medical devices. As such they are classified as articles of plastic (tariff heading 3926). This is in line with classification decisions previously issued by the World Custom Organization, which member countries are expected to follow. Businesses can direct queries on classification to classification.enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk or through this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-international-trade-and-excise-enquiries>.

The Government have recently received stakeholder feedback on tariffs on urine drainage bags. We are considering the evidence provided alongside wider UK Government analysis.

USA: Visas

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of the United States of America regarding the impact on UK

musicians touring in that country of any plans to increase visa costs. [[HL6340](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Minister for Media, Tourism and the Creative Industries raised this with the US Embassy on 16 March to make clear the concerns that the UK music industry has about the increase in US visa costs. We will continue to engage the US authorities on this.

US immigration policy is ultimately a matter for the US authorities, so any decision taken on their visa fees will be for them alone. The UK Government cannot interfere in another country's processes and must respect their systems, just as we expect them to respect the UK's processes.

USA: Visits Abroad

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many official UK government representatives will be attending the St Patrick's Day festivities in the United States of America. [[HL6251](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Office Minister Lord Caine, accompanied by departmental officials and members from the British Embassy in Washington D.C., will be travelling to the United States to attend St Patrick's Day festivities.

Windsor Framework: Statutory Instruments

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what statutory instruments will be required to implement the Windsor Framework. [[HL6298](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The specific instruments taken forward to give effect to the Windsor Framework domestically will be set out in due course.

Women: Employment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to improve the wellbeing of women in the workplace. [[HL6325](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: We are committed to removing the barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential. To achieve this, we are supporting legislation that will change the culture of the workplace, and subsequently improve the wellbeing of working women. This includes changes that will: enable more people to request flexible working, extend redundancy protection for those on maternity leave, introduce carer's leave, and strengthen the protections against harassment in the workplace.

In addition, the Women's Health Strategy set out the ambition that health conditions and disabilities should not

be a barrier to women's participation in the workplace. In response to this, the Department for Work and Pensions has recently appointed a Menopause Employment Champion. Part of their role will include driving

workplace change to realise the full potential of women, businesses, and the economy; by assisting women at any age and career stage to be supported to remain, and thrive, in work.

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