

**Session 2022-23  
No. 205**



**Monday  
18 September 2023**

**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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<b>Earl Howe</b>	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Baroness Barran</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
<b>Lord Bellamy</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
<b>Lord Benyon</b>	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Lord Caine</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office, Whip
<b>Lord Callanan</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
<b>Viscount Camrose</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
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<b>Lord Harlech</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Johnson of Lainston</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade
<b>Lord Markham</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Earl of Minto</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade
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<b>Baroness Neville-Rolfe</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Lord Offord of Garvel</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade and Scotland Office
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
<b>Baroness Penn</b>	Parliamentary Secretary, HM Treasury
<b>Baroness Scott of Bybrook</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
<b>Lord Sharpe of Epsom</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
<b>Lord Stewart of Dirleton</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Baroness Swinburne</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions

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# Written Statements

Monday, 18 September 2023

## Clinical Negligence Claims

[HLWS1020]

**Lord Markham:** My Hon friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) (Maria Caulfield) has made the following Written Statement:

On 15 September, the Government response to the consultation on fixed recoverable costs in lower damages clinical negligence claims was published on GOV.UK.

The rising costs of clinical negligence claims are of great concern to the Government. Costs have more than quadrupled in the last 16 years, with legal costs comprising a notable proportion of this rise. Claimant legal costs have risen sharply in lower damages claims (claims valued up to and including £25,000) and are often disproportionate to the value of those claims. These costs are funded from the core NHS budget and use resources that could otherwise have been spent on patient care.

The length of the legal process can also be disproportionate given the relative straightforwardness of many claims at this level, meaning that people who have been harmed are waiting longer to receive compensation.

The consultation response sets out a way forward for these lower damages claims: a set of fixed legal costs and a new streamlined process. Our aim is to facilitate faster resolution for claimants and defendants at a lower, more proportionate cost than under the current system for these claims. The scheme would only affect the amount of legal costs that claimant lawyers can recover from defendants following a successful claim, not the compensation that a claimant could receive.

We also believe that these reforms will achieve significant cost savings and make an important contribution towards addressing the overall rise in clinical negligence costs. The Department's modelling indicates that introducing these reforms could realise cashflow savings to the NHS in England of c. £500 million over a decade. These reforms would apply to care provided by NHS, non-profit and private healthcare providers in England and Wales, but would not apply in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

The responses to our 2022 consultation on introducing fixed costs in 'lower value' clinical negligence claims have been vital in helping us shape these reforms and informed some changes to the original proposals, in particular around strengthening the safeguards we have in place to protect claimants' access to justice.

Alongside the response, I have launched a further consultation focusing on the specific issue of disbursements under the fixed recoverable costs scheme, inviting views on a proposed way forward on disbursements for all claims in the scheme. That further consultation will run for 6 weeks, ending on 27 October

2023. I welcome views from all interested parties on those proposals.

We will work with the Civil Procedure Rule Committee to ensure the smooth delivery of these reforms. Subject to agreement, the Government expects that legislation will be in place to implement the reforms by April 2024.

## Covid Commemoration

[HLWS1014]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** I am today publishing the final report of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration. The Commission was established in July 2022 to secure a broad consensus across our whole United Kingdom on how we mark and commemorate this very distinctive period in our history.

The Chair of the Commission, the Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes, submitted the report to the Prime Minister following a series of meetings with stakeholders across the UK and a UK-wide public consultation.

Communities across the UK have already started to find ways of commemorating our country's experience of the pandemic and the Government is keen to support their efforts. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport will work with the devolved administrations to consider carefully the Commission's wide-ranging recommendations and will respond in due course. I would like to thank all those who have engaged with the Commission, particularly the bereaved family members who took the time to share their difficult experiences.

I would also like to thank the Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes and the ten members of the Commission for their work.

I have requested that a copy of the Commission's report be deposited in the libraries of the Houses of Parliament. A copy will also be published on GOV.UK.

## Dangerous Dogs

[HLWS1022]

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

The Government is taking urgent action to bring forward a ban on XL Bully dog types following a concerning rise in attacks and fatalities, which appear to be driven by this type of dog.

Under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, a definition of the 'American XL Bully' breed type needs to be specified in order to impose a ban. The Environment Secretary and the Home Secretary will convene experts to define the 'American XL bully' breed type. This group will include police, canine and veterinary experts, and animal welfare stakeholders. This is a vital first step towards adding it to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act. We will engage with the relevant devolved administrations about adopting a UK-wide approach.

The Government will then legislate to add it to the list of dogs banned under the Act. I intend to have the legislation in place to deliver this ban by the end of the year. This will make it an offence to own an unregistered XL bully, or to breed, gift or sell one. We need to safely manage the existing population of these dogs, therefore there will be a transition period. Further details on how this period will work will be provided ahead of the tabling of the legislation later this year. Dog owners do not need to take any action at this stage.

We have been working hard with the police, local authorities and animal welfare groups to help prevent attacks by encouraging responsible dog ownership, to ensure dog control issues are addressed before they escalate and to make sure the full force of the law is applied. Owners whose dogs are dangerously out of control are already breaking the law, and we already have a full range of powers to apply penalties to them. Under the Dangerous Dogs Act, any dog that is dangerously out of control can be euthanised and their owners put in prison for up to 14 years and be banned from ever owning a dog.

While the courts have the power to allow people to keep banned breeds with certain conditions, like being muzzled and neutered, the number of so-called exempted dogs is higher than a decade ago. That was not the intention of the legislation passed over 30 years ago. Therefore, we will also review our guidance to enforcers of the law.

## National Disability Strategy

[HLWS1021]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** My honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Tom Pursglove MP) has made the following Written Statement:

In my [written statement](#) of 12 July, I informed the House of the judgment handed down by the Court of Appeal on 11 July 2023 regarding the National Disability Strategy Judicial Review. In that ministerial statement I was pleased to inform the House that the Court of Appeal found in favour of the Government. This meant that both the UK Disability Survey and the National Disability Strategy have now been found to be lawful by the Court of Appeal, and we are able to continue with the important work of implementing this long-term strategy to transform disabled people's everyday lives for the better.

I further committed to providing the House with an update in September on how this Government will take forward work on the strategy now that it has been found to be lawful.

The Government's intention has always been to create more opportunities for disabled people to participate and thrive; to protect and promote the rights of disabled people; and to tackle the barriers that prevent disabled people from fully benefiting from, and contributing fully to, every aspect of our society.

The vast majority of departmental commitments outlined in the National Disability Strategy 2021 were not impacted by the High Court's initial judgment. The Government has progressed well on delivering these and other commitments, as can be seen by all the Government's achievements as set out in my [letter](#) placed in the House Library in July.

I will place a note in the House Library which provides an update:

- on how the Government now proposes to take this the 14 commitments that were paused to comply with the High Court's declaration; and
- on all departmental commitments in the National Disability Strategy. This includes details as to whether the individual commitments have been delivered or are in progress. There are 47 commitments which have been 'completed', 54 commitments 'in progress', 1 which is currently 'paused' and 2 which are no longer being taken forward.

In parallel with taking forward the commitments in the National Disability Strategy, the Government is also pressing ahead with our Disability Action Plan, focused on concrete actions to improve disabled people's lives in 2023 and 2024.

I am pleased to confirm that on 18 July 2023 we published the Disability Action Plan Consultation. The Disability Action Plan consultation is open for 12 weeks and responses can be submitted until 6 October. The consultation document sets out a number of proposals and consultation questions - informed by the experiences of disabled people, research and the current policy landscape - as an initial step to make sure policy development direction is correct. The findings of this consultation will inform the final published Disability Action Plan.

Taken together, the National Disability Strategy and the Disability Action Plan set out a complementary, ambitious programme of work across government to improve disabled people's lives in the short, medium and long term. I will continue to work with my Ministerial Disability Champion colleagues across government to drive progress against these commitments and to make the greatest possible positive impact for disabled people.

## Nuclear Energy: Sizewell C

[HLWS1019]

**Lord Callanan:** My hon. friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Andrew Bowie) has today made the following statement:

Britain needs a nuclear renaissance to help deliver a low cost, clean and secure electricity system. New nuclear will result in reliable, abundant energy, whilst driving down consumers' bills and boosting economic growth.

Sizewell C is a crucial project for delivering against these objectives. As a near replica of the Hinkley Point C project under construction in Somerset, Sizewell C is our country's next most mature new nuclear project under development, which can benefit from the design certainty

and construction learnings that have been developed at Hinkley Point C.

Sizewell C would generate reliable, low-carbon power for 6 million homes – equivalent to 7 per cent of the UK’s electricity – for 6 decades or more. Beyond keeping the lights on, in each year of operations it could avoid 9 million tonnes of CO2 emissions, moving the UK forward on our path to Net Zero.

It would also act as a vehicle for levelling up nationwide, through the huge opportunities for jobs and skills provided by nuclear projects. Sizewell C Limited (“the Company”) has plans for 70% of the construction value to go to UK businesses, and to bring £4.4 billion of investment to the East of England economy during construction. As well as creating and supporting thousands of jobs in Suffolk and nationwide, the Company also plans to create 1,500 apprenticeships, helping to build Britain’s nuclear workforce of the future.

In short, Sizewell C represents the next step in meeting our longer-term ambition to provide up to a quarter of the UK’s electricity from homegrown nuclear energy by 2050.

That is why this Government made a historic investment of c.£700m in Sizewell C (Holding) Limited (“SZC HoldCo”) last November, joining EDF – our valued partner as the operator of the UK’s existing nuclear fleet, and the lead developer of Hinkley Point C – as a co-shareholder.

Since then, the Government has worked with EDF and the Company to continue the project’s development, and to establish the best conditions for successful delivery. As a shareholder in SZC HoldCo, this summer we have made available £511m of further funding, supporting site preparation and investing in the local community.

We are now seeking to progress to the next stage.

As highlighted in my predecessor’s Written Ministerial Statement in November 2022, we intend to use the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model to enable a private equity raise, with the aim of bringing new expertise and experience into the Company. In our assessment, this approach has true potential to result in a good value for money outcome for consumers and taxpayers, with the RAB structure incentivising the Company and private investors to drive efficient construction on schedule, and, in due course, ensure efficiency in operations.

This summer, the Government and the Company undertook a market testing process, with a cross-section of potential investors in order to understand their views on the project, financing approach and how they could assist in project delivery.

Having received positive feedback from this market testing process, and following agreement with our co-shareholder EDF, the Government and the Company are commencing pre-qualification for potential investors, as the first stage of an equity raise process.

To ensure that investment benefits the Company, consumers and taxpayers, the intention is to secure

investment from qualified organisations able to take a meaningful ownership stake, such that new investors’ incentives are aligned with other shareholders and, importantly, they are able to substantively and positively influence Company governance and delivery over the construction period.

Investment is being sought from those with significant experience in the delivery of major infrastructure projects, especially in large-scale nuclear or other complex energy or infrastructure projects. Drawing from this experience would ensure Sizewell C benefits from expertise in areas such as project risk management, cost control, and instilling projects with a culture of commercial focus.

In taking this stake, at the time of a positive Final Investment Decision, investors would be expected to make a commitment to their share of the Company’s equity requirement. This would provide confidence to the Government, EDF and the Company that new investors would fulfil their shareholder obligations as Sizewell C moves into the full construction phase.

Any prospective investor interested in participating in the equity raise process will need to complete a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire. My officials, together with SZC GenCo’s management, will assess investors’ suitability against pre-determined criteria and confirm investors’ eligibility for inclusion in the equity raise process. Details of how to access the questionnaire will be available and signposted on GOV.UK.

I wish to assure the House that the interests of consumers and taxpayers are central as we progress the project. The Government will only accept private investment if it is likely to result in value for money. We will continue to assess and consider our approach over the coming months and will take the time needed to reach a deal which satisfies this objective. As committed to during the passage of the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Act 2022, the Government will publish a full value for money assessment of the Company and the project at the point of any Final Investment Decision.

I also want to be clear that the equity sought at this stage does not represent the limit of potential private investment in the Company, and that following the outcome of this process there may be further opportunities for private investment during construction and operations.

Finally, as well as value for money, I want to assure the House – as well as British consumers and taxpayers – that should any investments reach the relevant statutory thresholds, investors will be required to pass through the process set out in the National Security and Investments Act 2021, allowing scrutiny of any risks posed with respect to this legislation. The Government will also hold a special share in the Company, enabling us to require investors to take certain actions in respect of their shareholdings should future risks appear, including on national security or public policy grounds.

I will continue to update the House on Sizewell C more broadly over the coming months.

## Police Integrity

[HLWS1016]

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

The vast majority of officers are brave and hard-working individuals but serious concerns persist regarding standards and culture in policing, particularly in light of recent cases and the concerning findings of Baroness Casey's review into culture and standards in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The government is committed to ensuring the police discipline system is fair and effective at removing those officers who fall seriously below the high standards we rightly expect of them.

It is for this reason that we launched a review into the police dismissals process in January of this year. The review considered evidence from stakeholders, as well as the results of a national data collection. The core recommendations from this review were announced on 31 August and today (18 September 2023) we are publishing the report of the review, setting out the evidence collected and full list of proposals we intend to take forward. These proposals include:-

- Creating a presumption for dismissal where gross misconduct is proven. This change will ensure that – unless exceptional circumstances apply – officers found guilty of gross misconduct can expect to be dismissed.
- Ensuring officers who fail vetting can be dismissed. We intend to make it a statutory requirement for officers to hold vetting – and supporting a legislative routeway to dismiss those who are unable to do so.
- Specifying that certain criminal offences automatically amount to gross misconduct. We intend to introduce a list of barred offences, meaning that conviction of certain criminal offences – including sexual offences – automatically constitute gross misconduct.
- Returning responsibility for chairing misconduct hearings to senior officers. To ensure chief constables are afforded a stronger role in the system – whilst retaining necessary independence – the responsibility for chairing hearings will now sit with senior officers. A Legally Qualified Person (LQP) and Independent Panel Member (IPM) will sit alongside the senior officer.
- Streamlining of the unsatisfactory performance procedures (UPP). We intend to streamline the current statutory performance system for police officers to make it easier to use - identifying under-performing officers and, where there is no improvement in their performance, effectively dismissing them.

A number of other changes is expected to improve the efficiency of the system and ensure greater transparency.

The Government is committed to delivering these important reforms, the majority of which require changes

to secondary legislation, and will work with stakeholders to deliver these as soon as practicable.

The review report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.UK.

## Tata Steel: Port Talbot

[HLWS1023]

**Lord Johnson of Lainston:** My Hon Friend the Minister for Industry and Economic Security (Nusrat Ghani MP) has today made the following statement:

Government has agreed on a proposed joint investment package to provide £500m to Tata Steel as part of their proposed £1.25bn project to move to low carbon steel making in Port Talbot, subject to the necessary information and consultation processes that will be led by the company.

Through investment in a state-of-the-art Electric Arc Furnace at Port Talbot, this deal will support the UK's efforts to meet increasing demand over the next decade and enable industry to take a significant step towards decarbonisation. It will strengthen our supply chain resilience, as well as protect thousands of skilled jobs across South Wales and the UK for the long term.

The Conservative Government has been supporting the UK steel industry for many years. The industry has been acutely impacted by recent wider geopolitical and macro-economic developments that have made traditional, blast-furnace steelmaking financially unviable. The global steel market has become saturated with heavily subsidised, carbon-intensive steel, whilst Putin's invasion of Ukraine has dramatically increased energy costs. This Conservative Government will continue to stand by our steel industry, and this deal is part of our long-term plan for UK steel.

This ambitious transformation is the culmination of several years of negotiations between the Government and Tata Steel, and is one which has been backed by a majority investment by the company.

This transition will

- i) Secure continued production of steel at Port Talbot;
- ii) Enable the industry to take a significant step towards decarbonising; and
- iii) Provide a clear pathway towards a long-term financially and environmentally sustainable business model, removing the repeated need for Government intervention.

Government is also enabling this major transformation and modernisation of the steel sector through key policy changes, including delivering the British Industry Supercharger to make electricity prices competitive for energy intensive industries.

Steel is a strategically significant industry which plays a vital role in the UK economy. The sector supports tens of thousands of UK jobs and remains a key driver for local economic growth in regions with proud steelmaking histories. It is also an industry in urgent need of

modernisation. Decarbonising industry is a global challenge to meet the temperature goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

By replacing Port Talbot's existing coal-powered blast furnaces, and assets nearing the end of their effective life, with an Electric Arc Furnace, this proposed project is expected to reduce the UK's entire business and industry carbon emissions by 7 per cent, Wales's overall emissions by 22 per cent and the Port Talbot site's emissions by 85 per cent.

This agreement with Tata represents the best offer and result for the UK and the people of South Wales. This package represents one of the largest support offers in recent history and will secure long term jobs, not just in Port Talbot, but across all of Tata Steel's sites in England and Wales. It is a deal that not only safeguards jobs, but one that will help build greater resilience in the UK economy and will help create new opportunities in our construction, automotive and energy sectors.

During this transition, the UK Government will also ensure a broad range of support for staff who are affected by the transition, working with the Welsh Government and Tata Steel to provide up to £100 million of funding (in addition to the transformation investment) for a dedicated taskforce to support both employees and the local economy.

As part of the proposal Tata Steel will also release land in Port Talbot for redevelopment and use for new industrial businesses. Alongside the UK Government's proposal for the Celtic Freeport and the land at Port Talbot which Tata expects to release for transfer or sale following the transition from blast furnaces, the investment could help unlock thousands of new jobs in both the South Wales and wider UK economy.

The funding proposal is subject to extensive scrutiny of detailed business plans, vigorous due diligence and subsidy control assessments. It will include strong conditions around financial probity, governance and delivery.

The landmark proposal builds on other major investments in UK green technology by Tata Group, including the July announcement of a £4 billion battery gigafactory creating 4,000 direct jobs, and represents a major vote of confidence in the UK.

## Tissue and Cell Donation

[HLWS1018]

**Lord Markham:** My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Primary Care and Public Health) (Neil O'Brien) has made the following written statement:

The findings of the Government commissioned review into donor selection policies, that was carried out by the 'For Assessment of Individualised Risk' (FAIR) Steering Group, led to the implementation of changes in summer 2021 to address inequalities in blood donation. These changes mean that anyone who attends a blood donation

centre regardless of sex or sexuality will be assessed for eligibility according to individual risk.

It is almost two years since the implementation of the changes for blood donation and I am pleased to announce today the publication of recommendations in the FAIR III report for tissue and cell donation. The report highlights an individualised risk-based approach for living tissue and cell donation (surgical bone, amnion, stem cells and cord blood) and deceased tissue donation. The Government has now reviewed the evidence presented by the FAIR III Steering Group, together with the advice of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs, and has accepted this recommendation.

This change will provide equity in access to donation for men who have sex with men across the UK, aligning with changes to blood donor selection related to sexual behaviours and the Government's commitment to address health inequalities, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper and the NHS Long Term Plan.

The Government wishes to pay tribute to the tissue and organ donation experts and the patient and donor family representatives on the Steering Group, as well as health and academic colleagues whose valuable engagement led to the development of this important evidence-based report.

The Government is also grateful to the work the Joint United Kingdom Blood Transfusion and Tissue Transplantation Services Professional Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs and NHS Blood and Transplant in developing recommendations that are based on robust evidence from epidemiology, behaviour and psychosocial data and engaging with service users and providers.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with NHS Blood and Transplant and the Devolved Governments to implement this change. We will have monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of donors and patients, including continued monitoring of infections. The changes will be reviewed in twelve months.

## Unexplained Wealth Orders: 2022-23 Report

[HLWS1015]

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

Today I lay before Parliament the Unexplained Wealth Order (UWO) report for the period 2022-2023. The UWO report details the number of UWOs made by the High Court in England and Wales during that period, and the number of applications made to that Court by enforcement authorities for such an order during that period.

In total, one UWO was applied for during the reporting period. This was obtained in June 2023. One other UWO

was applied for since Royal Assent of the Economic Crime Transparency and Enforcement Act 2022 but before the reporting period began. This case has been adjourned to a date outside of this reporting period.

The number of UWOs applied for and obtained for the period is low but this must be understood within the wider context of the UK's asset recovery system. Enforcement authorities have a number of powers available to them to investigate, search for and seize assets. Even a single UWO may have a high impact. A UWO used in one investigation resulted in civil recovery proceedings that led to the recovery of almost £10 million.

While law enforcement agencies remain committed to using UWOs where they will add value to an investigation, they are operationally independent from Government and cannot be tasked to use UWOs. We will continue to keep the UWO regime under review.

Copies of the report will be available in the Vote Office.

## Water Resources Infrastructure

[HLWS1017]

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

Following the approval of the House, I am pleased to inform the House that I am today (18 September 2023) designating the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Water Resources Infrastructure under section 5(1) of the [Planning Act 2008](#), and have arranged for publication as required by section 5(9)(a) of that Act.

The National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure provides a clear framework for those making development consent applications for water resources infrastructure, in particular by setting out the need for infrastructure providing assessment principles against which an application should be examined and determined. The NPS gives water companies clarity regarding the government's planning expectations, and added certainty about the areas Planning Inspectors might consider at a planning inquiry. This also supports the implementation of the Government's Plan for Water and securing our water supplies by enhancing the resilience of water infrastructure.

The next step is for applicants to develop their plans, and then carry out further public consultation as required under the Act. Any application for development consent will of course be considered carefully and with an open mind based on the evidence provided, including through a public examination by the independent Planning Inspectorate, before a final decision is made.



# Written Answers

Monday, 18 September 2023

## Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support farmers experiencing seasonal worker shortages. [[HL10086](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** Defra continues to speak regularly with the sector and other government departments to understand labour supply and demand, including both permanent and seasonal workforce requirements, and to make sure that these requirements are understood across government.

The Government recognises the importance of a reliable source of seasonal labour for crop production, and that it is a key part of bringing in the harvest for the horticultural sector. A key source of seasonal labour is the Seasonal Worker visa route, which allows a pre-defined number of overseas workers to come to the United Kingdom for up to six months to support horticulture growers during peak production periods, whilst maintaining robust immigration control.

To reduce the risk of seasonal labour shortages in horticulture, in December 2022, the Government announced that an allocation of 45,000 Seasonal Worker visas will be made available in 2023. This is an uplift of 15,000 visas compared to the allocation at the start of 2022. The Government confirmed at the Food Summit on 16 May that the number of Seasonal Workers visas available in 2024 for horticulture will again be 45,000. A further 2,000 visas are available for seasonal poultry workers to help manage pre-Christmas demand.

A further 10,000 visas are potentially available for horticulture should there be demand and contingent on sponsors and growers continuing to improve worker welfare standards. There are visas available in this year's allocation and businesses should contact one of the scheme operators if they need seasonal workers.

There are currently six scheme operators for horticulture and two for poultry as follows:

[Agri-HR](#) (horticulture)

[Concordia](#) (horticulture)

[Ethero](#) (horticulture)

[Fruitful Jobs](#) (horticulture)

[HOPS](#) (horticulture)

[Pro-Force Ltd](#) (horticulture and poultry)

[RE Recruitment](#) (poultry)

To inform future decisions on labour across the sector, Defra also commissioned John Shropshire to carry out an Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain throughout 2022 and 2023, considering how automation, domestic labour and migrant labour

could contribute to tackling labour shortages in our sectors, including horticulture.

This report was published on 30 June 2023 and the government response – which will also be informed by the Review of Automation in Horticulture – is expected to be published in autumn 2023. At the same time as the response, the Government will set out how it will support the sector to access the labour it needs alongside actions to reduce the sector's reliance on migrant labour, including via our work on automation and promoting domestic labour procurement and training.

## Alexei Navalny

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with government of Russia about its treatment of Alexei Navalny; what was the outcome of those discussions; whether they have protested against the treatment of Mr Navalny; if not, whether they will now do so; and if not, why. [[HL9817](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Alexei Navalny's politically motivated detention demonstrates Russia's increasing clampdown on freedom of expression and democratic rights. The UK will continue to make clear to Russia that it should release Mr Navalny immediately, as required by the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. HMG officials are in regular contact with Mr Navalny's team, and where possible, attend his court hearings. Following Mr Navalny's latest politically motivated sentence in August, the Foreign Secretary and Minister Docherty issued statements reiterating the call for his release. We will continue to seek opportunities for further statements in support of Mr Navalny.

## Armenia and Azerbaijan

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the prospect of a negotiated peace settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan that provides for the wellbeing and protection of the Karabakh Armenian population. [[HL9766](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government is clear that there is no military solution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. We continue to raise the urgent need to resolve the conflict through negotiations in direct talks with the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides, as well as at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations Security Council. We urge both sides to redouble their efforts to make progress in internationally mediated negotiations, including by making provisions to protect the rights and security of the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh.

## Asylum: Boats

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that asylum seekers housed on a waterborne barge are able to access necessary help in any emergency, including a medical emergency or fire. [HL9831]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** In the Netherlands and Belgium, the authorities have delivered accommodation for asylum seekers on vessels in a safe and secure manner. The Scottish Government have successfully done so for Ukrainian refugees.

The welfare of those in our care is of the utmost priority. The Bibby Stockholm successfully completed all fire and safety checks ahead the first individuals boarding. The vessel completed a statutory inspection and refurbishment before undergoing final preparations to accommodate asylum seekers.

We have been in liaison with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service to ensure that the safety of the vessel and its occupants are being appropriately managed in line with relevant legislation. Tactical plans, including arrangements for evacuation of residents to assembly areas away from the quayside and outside the gated area, have been developed.

The fire safety standards on the Bibby Stockholm are the same as any other berthed vessel and meets the industry standard.

In the case of the Bibby Stockholm, there is a log of who is on and off the vessel. During an emergency, our supplier would know who was/was not aboard and would contact any affected individuals. Our supplier would stay in constant touch with local law enforcement. In the event of a prolonged incident, and if there was a requirement to provide emergency accommodation, the supplier would find a room and direct the person to the accommodation, arranging local taxi transport if required.

Facilities onboard the vessel will be designed to provide for the essential needs of those accommodated in order to minimise the impact on local communities and local services. This includes the provision of primary healthcare, catering facilities and 24/7 security. The vessel's 24/7 security team have established procedures for working with local police and emergency services.

The medical facility on the barge will be staffed 5 days a week to provide an onsite primary healthcare service with which the asylum seekers will register; this means individuals will not need to register with a local GP practice. The medical team has previous experience of working with asylum seekers.

This team will provide care to the asylum seekers either on the vessel itself between the hours of 9am-5pm, or remotely (including outside of these hours).

Medical provision will include:

- a qualified senior health professional, such as an advanced nurse practitioner or a paramedic on site 5 days per week - 9am-5pm.
- a GP onsite (one day per week) 9am-5pm.
- remote access to GP consultations when onsite care is unavailable or needs additional support.
- access to translation services is in place and this has been shared with local services.
- any prescribed medicines will be transported to the vessel for the asylum seekers.

Home Office is providing funding to the NHS to support on-site primary health service, to help reduce the impact on NHS services.

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that families of asylum seekers housed on a waterborne barge will be kept together. [HL9833]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Bibby Stockholm will provide non-detained accommodation for single adult male asylum seekers aged 18 to 65 who would otherwise be destitute. No families will be housed aboard.

The cohort of single adult males has been agreed with local authorities and health partners to mitigate the burden on local public services, for example local schools and health services.

## Asylum: Children

Asked by **Lord Scriven**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it is their current policy to place unaccompanied children seeking asylum, who are waiting for placement with a local authority, in hotels; and, if so, how many are placed in hotels. [HL9905]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** Hotel accommodation is a temporary means to accommodate the increased number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) arriving and is only ever a contingency option, not a long-term solution.

The high number of UASC arrivals, particularly as a result of small boat crossings, has placed unprecedented pressure on the National Transfer Scheme. Out of necessity we accommodated UASC on an emergency and temporary basis in hotels while placements with local authorities have been vigorously pursued. The High Court recently ruled that the routine and systematic use of hotels to accommodate UASC is unlawful, and we are working at pace with Kent County Council, other government departments and local authorities across the UK to ensure suitable local authority placements are provided for unaccompanied children urgently and sustainably.

We provided local authorities with children's services £15,000 for every eligible young person taken into their care from a Home Office-run hotel dedicated to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or the Kent Reception and Safe Care Service by the end of February

2023. As a result of incentivised funding, we were able to temporarily reduce the number of unaccompanied children accommodated in hotels to zero. This was the second funding pilot run by the Home Office in 2022/23 to help local authorities invest in longer term infrastructure for accommodating and supporting unaccompanied children. Ending the use of hotels for UASC is an absolute priority and we will continue to work around the clock with councils to increase the number of care placements available.

The data requested cannot be provided as it comes from live operational databases that have not been quality assured.

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 20 July (HL9141), why they do not hold records that would enable them to answer parliamentary questions on the age of the youngest unaccompanied child seeking asylum that has been placed in a hotel. [HL9906]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** We take the safety and welfare of those in our care, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, extremely seriously. We have robust safeguarding procedures in place to ensure all young people in hotels are safe and supported as we seek urgent placements with a local authority.

No individuals, apart from the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, are residing at any of the hotels ring-fenced for children.

Children are supported by team leaders and support workers who are on site 24 hours a day. Further care is provided in hotels by teams of social workers and nurses. All contingency sites have security staff on site 24/7 and providers liaise closely with local police to ensure the welfare and safety of vulnerable residents.

All individuals working directly with the young people accommodated at the hotels have Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks, and all those working and operating on the hotel sites have DBS clearance. The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) found that the young people accommodated at the hotels unanimously reported feeling happy and safe.

We do hold records however, the data requested cannot be provided as it comes from live operational databases that have not been quality assured.

### **Asylum: Finance**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what arrangements they will put in place to ensure Aspen card holding asylum seekers can exchange a payment from their cards for any goods they require. [HL9832]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** Arrangements are already in place to ensure destitute asylum seekers can buy goods that they require to meet their essential living needs.

Asylum seekers who are assessed as destitute under Section 95 are provided with a weekly allowance which is loaded on to a debit card (ASPEN card). ASPEN cards can be used to pay for retail transactions at most shops displaying the Mastercard logo, up to the value of the available balance. They can also be used to check available balances at cash machines, to withdraw cash from cash machines and to get cash back when purchasing items at Mastercard participating shops. ASPEN cards cannot be used to make contactless, telephone or internet payments and the card cannot be used overseas.

Failed Asylum Seekers who are assessed as destitute under Section 4 will not be able use their card to withdraw cash from a machine or get cashback from shops.

As part of normal service, anyone experiencing issues in relation to their ASPEN payment card can report them to our Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) provider, Migrant Help, 24 hours a day on the freephone number.

### **Asylum: Rwanda**

*Asked by Earl Russell*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the total cost payable to the government of Rwanda under the agreement with that country in the event that no migrants are sent there from the UK. [HL9835]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The UK has provided Rwanda with an initial investment of £120m into its economic development and growth as part of the Economic Transformation and Integration Fund (ETIF). Investment has been focused in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, and job creation. A separate advance payment of £20m was also paid last year to support initial set up costs for the relocation of individuals.

Funding will also be provided to support the delivery of asylum operations, accommodation, and integration in Rwanda. Costs and payments will depend on the number of individuals relocated, the timing of when this happens, and the outcomes of individual cases. We will not enter into speculation as to what the final costs of the partnership may be nor provide a running commentary.

Legal proceedings are ongoing, and we have been granted permission to appeal to the Supreme Court with a hearing scheduled to take place in October. We always knew that our policy was ambitious and novel, and that it would be tested in the courts, but we have also been clear we are committed to this partnership and will continue to robustly defend this policy so we can make it a reality.

### **Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what arrangements they will make for delegations of parliamentarians to

visit the Bibby Stockholm and any other new accommodation for migrants. [HL9830]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** If parliamentarians wish to visit a facility they should make a request through the normal Home Office channels.

Vessels have been used in Germany, Belgium and Scotland.

### **Azerbaijan: Religious Freedom**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of freedom of religion or belief in Azerbaijan. [HL9765]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The British Embassy in Baku is able to have open discussions about religious freedom with Government representatives and has been in contact with Grand Mufti, the spiritual leader for both the Sunni and Shia communities in Azerbaijan, who occasionally meets with the Leader of the Armenian Church.

### **Bank of England: Forecasts**

*Asked by Lord Strathcarron*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Bank of England's financial forecasting record; and what steps, if any, they plan to take to improve the Bank's forecasting. [HL9850]

**Baroness Penn:** The Bank of England has statutory responsibilities for monetary policy and financial stability, and operational independence from the Government to carry out those responsibilities. The Government remains fully committed to the Bank's independence.

The Court of the Bank of England has commissioned the Bank's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) to review the Bank's forecasting, and related processes. It will be led by Dr Ben Bernanke. The review began this summer and is expected to publish its findings in spring 2024.

### **Bank Services: Closures**

*Asked by Lord Hacking*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Penn on 19 July (HL Deb col 2319), whether their "plans for enhanced requirements applying to the termination of payment accounts" will include a requirement for banks to give customers sufficient reasons about the termination of an account whatever may be its terms and conditions. [HL9777]

**Baroness Penn:** The Government published its policy statement on 21 July, setting out its plans to strengthen requirements relating to payment account contract terminations. These changes will increase the minimum notice period in cases of contract termination to 90 days –

giving customers more time to challenge a decision through the Financial Ombudsman Service, or find a replacement bank.

Banks will also be required to spell out to the affected customer why they are terminating their account – increasing transparency and aiding customers' ability to appeal decisions. This requirement will be subject to limited exceptions where firms need to comply with existing legal obligations, for example, under financial crime law.

The Treasury is working closely with industry, law enforcement and regulatory partners to ensure that expectations regarding these new requirements are clear.

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what provisions are in place to support customers in the event of a rural bank closure with no bank branch available within three miles. [HL9799]

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take, if any, to set up a rural banking hub to avoid a lack of banking provision within ten miles. [HL9800]

**Baroness Penn:** Decisions on opening and closing branches are taken by the management team of each bank on a commercial basis, which it would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in.

Guidance from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) sets out its expectation of firms when closing a branch; they must carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is done in a way that treats customers fairly.

An alternative for those who prefer to conduct their everyday banking face-to-face is the Post Office, which enables customers to carry this out at 11,500 post offices across the UK. The Post Office is required by the Department for Business and Trade to ensure that 95% of the total rural population across the UK to be within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office outlet.

New shared Banking Hubs are also being introduced providing cash and basic banking services, and dedicated space where community bankers from major banks can meet customers of that bank. Banking Hubs are a commercial initiative provided by participating retail banks and building societies in partnership with the Post Office. Decisions regarding the operation and location of Banking Hubs are taken by the parties involved.

Regarding access to cash, the government legislated to protect access to cash services through the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023. Following this, the government recently published a policy statement. This included setting the government's current understanding that the vast majority of people in predominately rural

areas have access to cash within 3 miles of where they live, while the vast majority of people in predominately urban areas have access to cash within 1 mile of where they live. This is based on FCA analysis and concerns access to cash services in general rather than bank branches. The policy statement sets out that the FCA, as responsible regulator, should seek to maintain this distribution of cash access services, while recognising that cash needs may differ by location and change over time. The government's policy statement is available on gov.uk.

### Bees and Honey

*Asked by Lord Moynihan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the impact of Asian hornets on (1) honey production in the UK, and (2) the decline in pollinators. [HL9946]

**Lord Benyon:** It is estimated that less than 20% of the honey sold in the UK is produced domestically. To date contingency action has been taken against incursions of Asian hornet into the UK since the first occurrence in 2016. From detailed analysis of all the Asian hornet nests found in the UK between 2016 and 2022 there is no evidence to suggest that Asian hornets are established in the UK. Therefore, the impact on UK honey production is thought to be minimal.

Nevertheless, we recognise that if Asian hornet were to become established in the UK, it is likely that there would be significant impacts on honey bees and wild pollinators. This is why we continue to take contingency action against all credible sightings of Asian hornet.

Pollinators are a priority for this government, and we are taking action alongside many partners to implement the National Pollinator Strategy's provisions. The National Pollinator Strategy Action Plan was published in May 2022 and sets out more specifically how we will continue to act to fulfil the vision, aims and objectives of the Strategy over the period 2021-2024, including in relation to tackling the threats from non-native invasive species like the Asian hornet.

### Carbon Emissions

*Asked by Lord Redesdale*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to align their carbon emission reduction plans with the UK's proportionate share of the remaining global carbon budget for limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. [HL9818]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government's Carbon Budget Delivery Plan is a dynamic long-term plan, setting a course to reach net zero by 2050. The Plan demonstrates the UK's commitment to play a leading role in tackling climate change, with a domestic target and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) both consistent with the Paris Agreement temperature goal to limit global

warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts towards 1.5°C. The UK over-achieved against the first and second carbon budgets, and latest projections show that the UK is on track to meet the third.

*Asked by Lord Redesdale*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations of the report by Zero Hour, Net Zero: The Ambition Gap, published on 10 August 2022. [HL9822]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government welcomes independent recommendations to help limit global warming to 1.5C and to reach net zero. The Government has set ambitious targets to reach net zero by 2050, has overachieved on Carbon Budgets one and two, and is on track to deliver Carbon Budget three. The Climate Change Committee has stated that their confidence in the UK meeting Carbon Budget four has increased in the last year.

### Carbon Emissions: Housing

*Asked by Lord Whitty*

To ask His Majesty's Government, in relation to their targets for decarbonisation by (1) 2030, and (2) 2035, what approximate proportion of homes they estimate are likely to be powered by (a) hydrogen-based gas, (b) air or ground source heat pumps, and (c) by other forms of electrification. [HL10012]

**Lord Callanan:** A range of technologies will be required to decarbonise the way we heat our homes. The precise mix of technologies in 2035 is unclear, in part because strategic decisions on the role for hydrogen heating are still to be taken. Heat Pumps and Heat Networks will have an important role to play in all future scenarios with at least 7.1 million homes using heat pumps in 2035.

### Certification Quality Marks

*Asked by Lord Hain*

To ask His Majesty's Government why the use of both the UK Conformity Assessment mark and the EU's CE mark will be allowed indefinitely for UK companies in the electronic, industrial, consumer and other sectors, but not for construction products produced in the UK. [HL9780]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** As my Rt. Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities set out in his statement of 20 April 2023, the Government is developing proposals for reform of the UK's construction product regime to ensure it is effective in promoting safety and inspires public and market confidence.

Our reforms, which we will set out in due course, will set out the future approach to product marking for construction products. In the meantime, recognition of CE marking will continue until the end of June 2025.

## Charity Commission: Public Appointments

*Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government how long is the term of office of the chair of the Charity Commission. [HL9931]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The Chairman of the Charity Commission for England & Wales, Orlando Fraser KC, was appointed for a three-year term commencing on 25 April 2022 and ending on 24 April 2025. Ministers have the authority to reappoint the Chairman for a second term in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

## Childcare: VAT Zero Rating

*Asked by Lord Browne of Ladyton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the average expenditure on VAT by private, voluntary and independent childcare providers, and (2) the cost to the Treasury of zero-rating those childcare providers. [HL9976]

**Baroness Penn:** VAT has been designed as a broad-based tax on consumption, and the twenty per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. Exceptions to the standard rate have always been strictly limited by both legal and fiscal considerations.

Ofsted-registered nurseries and childcare providers are exempt from VAT. This means they do not have to charge VAT to their customers, but it also means they cannot recover the VAT they incur on the things they buy.

We do not hold data on irrecoverable VAT expenditure as businesses are not required to report this information to HMRC in their VAT returns.

While we keep all taxes under review there are no plans to make changes to the VAT exemption which nurseries currently enjoy. Representations on changes to the VAT system will be considered through the normal fiscal event process.

## Child Maintenance Service: Fees and Charges

*Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to review the four per cent fees charged to receiving parents in the Child Maintenance Service. [HL9913]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** There are no plans to abolish the four per cent collection charge for receiving parents. This charge only applies to the collect and pay service and is intended to provide a parent with an incentive to use the direct pay service which has no ongoing fees.

The collection charge for the receiving parent is deducted only when maintenance is paid, with no money

owed to the Child Maintenance Service if maintenance is not paid. These charges contribute to the cost of running an expensive service, which remains subsidised by the taxpayer.

## Companies: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government which Northern Ireland based companies relocated from Great Britain in the last four years. [HL9863]

**Lord Caine:** The requested statistics are unavailable as there is no register of UK "businesses."

There is no mechanism to relocate a UK limited company between jurisdictions. A company must maintain a registered office in the part of the UK in which it was originally incorporated. It is in this jurisdiction that the company remains legally domiciled regardless of where in the UK it might carry out its business activities. To relocate a limited company a new entity would need to be formed and the previous entity closed. No connection between the two would be recorded on the Register of Companies.

## Cyprus: Military Bases

*Asked by Lord Sharkey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what difficulties have been reported in honouring the pension entitlements of Turkish Cypriot former employees of the Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus, or the widows of those employees, now living in Northern Cyprus. [HL9845]

**Baroness Goldie:** There are currently no outstanding issues reported in honouring the occupational pension entitlements of Turkish Cypriot former employees of the Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus, or the widows of those employees, now living in the north of Cyprus.

## Cyprus: Roads

*Asked by Lord Sharkey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions on the intervention by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus in the construction of the road from Pile/Pyla to Yigitler/Arsos in Northern Cyprus they have had with (1) the United Nations, (2) the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, (3) the government of the Republic of Cyprus, (4) the government of Türkiye, and (5) the Turkish Cypriot authorities in Northern Cyprus; and what assessment they have made of this intervention. [HL9844]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has engaged with all parties referenced about recent events in the UN Buffer Zone to encourage de-escalation and support a diplomatic resolution. This included Ministerial-level engagement with counterparts in the Republic of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. On 21 August, the UN Security

Council issued a Press Statement that condemned the assaults on UN Peacekeepers, expressed concern at the unauthorised construction of the road and reiterated Council support for the United Nations' Peacekeeping mandate. The UK, US and French Embassies in Nicosia issued a similar statement. We have welcomed the subsequent de-escalation, but note that the injuries sustained by three British UN peacekeepers undermines the UN's ability to fulfil its peacekeeping mandate. It is also a reminder that our armed forces regularly put themselves in harm's way to support peace and stability across the globe.

### **Defence and National Security: Climate Change**

*Asked by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent*

To ask His Majesty's Government what, if any, mitigating actions they are taking to protect key (1) defence, and (2) national security, sites across the UK from the effects of climate change. [HL9743]

**Baroness Goldie:** A key objective of the Strategy for Defence Infrastructure, published in Jan 2022, is to ensure the estate is resilient to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change. The Department has an established site level bespoke Climate Impact Risk Assessment Methodology to identify and assess vulnerabilities, and to drive local mitigation and adaptation. To date, over 200 military bases have been assessed including all of Defence's Critical National Infrastructure sites.

The Department will publish its strategic Estate Climate Resilience Plan (ECRP) in 2024, which will further build on the programme of these assessments.

### **Dementia: Diagnosis**

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support research into the development of new, scalable diagnostic tests for dementia; and what assessment they have of the current proportion of patients receiving an accurate dementia diagnosis that includes a specialist diagnosis of the sub-type of dementia. [HL9824]

**Lord Markham:** Government responsibility for delivering dementia research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The NIHR and has invested nearly £11 million to develop new digital approaches for the early detection and diagnosis of dementia. The NIHR-funded SABRE study aims to translate the diagnostic capability of spatial tests into routine clinical practice for use in ageing populations to diagnose Alzheimer's Disease.

Through the UKRI-funded UK Dementia Research Institute, scientists are undertaking research on the biological mechanisms of dementia, driving early-stage development of diagnostics and treatments, and developing innovative technologies for assisted living.

From April 2023, NHS England started collecting data on dementia sub types from GP systems under the following categories: Alzheimer's, Vascular, Mixed and Other. This was included in the monthly publication of Primary Care Dementia Data from 20 July 2023.

### **Drax Group: Publications**

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the annual 'limited assurance' report commissioned by Drax provides an adequate and appropriate level of assurance with respect to the accuracy of its sustainability data. [HL9758]

**Lord Callanan:** Government has made no such assessment. Generating stations, including Drax, must provide an annual independent sustainability audit report to Ofgem, not to Government, to verify the information it reports each month. Ofgem may conduct a compliance investigation to establish whether a generator is in breach of its sustainability reporting requirements relating to the Renewables Obligations scheme if there is reason to suspect non-compliance.

### **Drax Power Station**

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 27 July (HL9538), in what ways was the Panorama on Drax (1) accurate, and (2) inaccurate, in its representation of practices by the forestry and biomass sector. [HL9759]

**Lord Callanan:** After speaking to Canadian experts and reviewing various sources of information about forestry and harvesting in Canada and British Columbia, officials advised that the Panorama programme presented a useful overview of forestry and biomass practices. They advise that the narrative would have benefited from a fuller picture about how harvesting decisions are made in practice, more detail on the operation of the harvest licensing regime, more clarity on how the grading system is used for wood products and biomass materials, and clearer evidence supporting claims about the use of wood pellets in the UK.

### **Electric Vehicles: Parking**

*Asked by Lord Naseby*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made to ensure the safety of multi-storey car parks given the increasing number of heavy electric vehicles. [HL9809]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** Responsibility for the safety of a building and its occupants rests with building owners and is covered by Occupiers Liability and Health and Safety legislation. A building designed to carry vehicles on multiple levels will have an engineered load bearing capacity; it is the responsibility of the building owner to ensure that operational weight limits take into account the type or structural condition of the building and its capacity to support vehicles. The standards used for the structural design of buildings (Eurocodes) and referred to in the statutory guidance to the Building Regulations with regards to structural safety (Approved Document A) are currently under review by a panel of international experts. We expect the review of these standards to include considerations associated with electrical vehicles.

### Energy Bills Rebate

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to reintroduce a £400 energy bill rebate to help households cope with rising energy costs and the increased cost of living. [[HL9853](#)]

**Lord Callanan:** The Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) delivered a £400 non-repayable government discount on electricity bills to help 28 million households across the UK in winter 2022/23. Since then, the government welcomes recent reductions to household energy bills but is continuing to closely monitor energy prices and keeping energy support schemes under review.

To protect the most vulnerable, the government is providing a cost-of-living payment of £900 paid across three instalments through 2023/24 with an additional £300 for pensioner households and £150 for those on an eligible disability benefit. This is an increase from the £650 cost-of-living payment the government provided in 2022-23.

### Erasmus+ Programme

*Asked by Lord Kilclooney*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much funding was received by Northern Ireland under the EU Erasmus programme in (1) 2014, (2) 2015, and (3) 2016. [[HL9791](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** Funding data has been published for the 2014-20 Erasmus+ programme by the British Council and Ecorys, who were acting as the UK National Agency. This data indicates that the amount of funding received by institutions in Northern Ireland for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 was €6,336,885, €6,108,410 and €7,414,597 respectively.

### Farming Investment Fund

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Benyon on 24 July (HL9373), how much has been paid out as part of the Farming Investment Fund. [[HL10160](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** The Farming Investment Fund (FIF) provides grants to farmers, foresters and growers (including contractors) to invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their businesses grow, whilst increasing farm productivity and environmental sustainability. We have paid out over £46 million to date. This includes smaller value grants towards a specified list of items proven to be effective in raising farm productivity alongside environmental sustainability and animal health and welfare outcomes. It also includes larger grants run on a more flexible model where applicants are making higher-value investments for more significant infrastructure and equipment that is transformative to their farm businesses such as on-farm reservoirs, slurry storage and automation and robotics.

### Ferries: Isles of Scilly

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by Harland and Wolff that they intend to submit a bid to the Council of the Isles of Scilly to compete with the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company for the conditional offer of £48 million from the Levelling Up Fund to the Council for the purchase and operation of new vessels, whether they plan to instruct the Council, if it wishes to proceed with the funding offer, to seek expressions of interest followed by tenders from these companies and other reputable operators. [[HL9753](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Levelling Up Fund grant to the Council of the Isles of Scilly is dependent upon obtaining an approved compliant full business case for replacement vessels and harbour works. The council, is considering its options, including an open procurement process through the publication of a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to seek other interested parties. It would be inappropriate for the DfT to comment on the council's approach at this stage.

### Food Banks: Allergies

*Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect on the volume of food donated to food banks arising from "Natasha's Law" regarding food labelling, which requires allergen labelling on pre-packaged direct sale food. [[HL10046](#)]



**Lord Benyon:** The UK maintains high standards on the information that is provided on food labels so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy.

This was strengthened, for food that is sold prepacked for direct sale, with the introduction of Natasha's Law in 2021.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) recently conducted an evaluation of the impact of the law. During the evaluation, the FSA spoke to stakeholders including food businesses.

While the evaluation did not focus specifically on food redistribution, it did offer stakeholders the opportunity to discuss their experiences implementing the new law broadly. There was no significant evidence provided in respect of impact on food donations. However, we are clear that, irrespective of how food is distributed, whether for sale or provided free, consumer safety must remain the priority.

Defra and the FSA have worked with WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme) to produce comprehensive guidance on surplus food redistribution to help businesses and charities safely and efficiently redistribute surplus and prevent good food going to waste.

The FSA continues to engage with stakeholders regarding the impact of Natasha's Law, to ensure any issues are identified and resolved.

### **Food: UK Trade with EU**

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any changes to labelling requirements for food products being exported from the UK to the EU are currently scheduled; and if so what they are. [HL9961]

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what labelling is currently required for food products travelling from the UK to the EU. [HL9962]

**Lord Benyon:** The labelling requirements for food placed on the markets of each EU Member State should be available from each of those countries' relevant competent authorities. Companies can also find information from the European Commission on food labelling rules in the EU on the European Commission's website.

### **Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Intelligence Services: Homosexuality**

*Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many staff within (1) the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and (2) the Security Services, were either (a) dismissed, or (b) forced to resign, as a result of bans on homosexuality among serving officers between 1967 and 2000. [HL9784]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office do not hold this information centrally and it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

### **Foundation Schools: Governing Bodies**

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government which foundation bodies have been established under section 21 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. [HL9858]

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government which foundation bodies established under section 21 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 have now closed. [HL9859]

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government which applications for foundation body status made under the Education (Foundation Body) (England) Regulations 2000 have not resulted in the establishment of a foundation body. [HL9860]

**Baroness Barran:** The Department is only aware of one foundation body established under Section 21 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Bourne Foundation was established as a body corporate in July 1999 under the Foundation Body Regulations 1999, which were in operation at the time. The Bourne Foundation was subsequently dissolved by Statutory Order, which came into force on 5 January 2017. There have been no applications for foundation body status made under the Education (Foundation Body) (England) Regulations 2000, which replaced the earlier 1999 regulations.

### **Ground Water**

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of ground water levels to meet current needs in England; and whether such water levels have (1) decreased, or (2) increased, since 2000. [HL9810]

**Lord Benyon:** The Environment Agency monitors groundwater levels across the country at thousands of locations and uses groundwater models designed to manage water resources, balancing the needs of both abstractors and the environment. Groundwater models provide current and future trends of water availability and are used to inform Abstraction Licencing Strategies used for local water resource management. Over the past 20 years, groundwater levels in some areas have declined and in other areas increased. Over relatively short periods of time groundwater levels can vary significantly in response to environmental factors (particularly rainfall both in terms of overall quantity and timing) and due to

changing abstraction pressures. It should be noted that groundwater levels in most locations were relatively high in the 2000s due to a period of high rainfall recharge which caused significant groundwater flooding in some areas and more recently have been relatively low due to prolonged dry weather. The Environment Agency's assessment shows that since 2017 the number of groundwater bodies with sustainable abstraction has increased from 72% to 73%.

### Health and Technology: Research

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to develop the skills in the UK to translate research outcomes into real-world applications, particularly in the fields of health and technology, (2) to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration in this area, and (3) to enhance the availability of specialized training and skill development programmes that cater to the needs of researchers and professionals engaged in translating research into commercial applications. [HL9826]

**Viscount Camrose:** The Government is committed to ensuring research is translated into real-world impact. For example, providing over £100 million over the next three years for Impact Acceleration Accounts and £37.5 million this year for translating medical research through the Medical Research Council's Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme. Government is providing £350 million for technology missions to translate research into transformative applications across four critical technologies and investing £65 million in an interdisciplinary research call. Through Research England's £280 million Higher Education Innovation Fund and its Connecting Capabilities Fund, Government is funding skills development, including entrepreneurship training, for researchers and commercialisation professionals.

### High Speed 2 Line: Compensation

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government on how many plots and over what area HS2 Phase One property owners have requested advanced payment of compensation. [HL9754]

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government on how many plots and over what area HS2 Phase One property owners have received the 90 per cent payment of the HS2 Ltd estimated value; and what is total cost of those 90 per cent payments. [HL9755]

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government on how many plots and over what area HS2 Phase One property owners

have received full and final settlement; and what is the total cost of those full and final settlements. [HL9756]

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government on how many plots and over what area HS2 Phase One property owners are in dispute with regard to the HS2 Ltd estimated value for severance and injurious affection; and what is the estimated liabilities to settle those disputes. [HL9757]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government does not hold the requested information. Collecting and providing this information would require HS2 Ltd to interrogate every plot of land and advance purchase payment across thousands of files, which could not be done within a reasonable cost and timeframe.

### Homelessness: Families

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the data on homelessness published on 25 July that showed that more than 131,000 children were living in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2023, what steps they are taking to reduce the number of children living in temporary accommodation. [HL9769]

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support families at risk of homelessness. [HL9770]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** Temporary accommodation ensures no family is without a roof over their head, however the Government is committed to reducing the need for temporary accommodation by preventing homelessness before it occurs.

That is why Government has provided local authorities in excess of £1 billion over the next 3 years through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. Local authorities can use the funding flexibly to work with landlords to prevent evictions and offer financial support for people to find a new home and move out of temporary accommodation.

This is on top of total government support of over £94 billion over 2022-23 and 2023-24 to help households and individuals with the rising cost of living. This includes Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable, meaning around 8 million households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to a further £900 in payments this year.

### Honours

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to reform the right of a Prime Minister who has served for a short period to submit a resignation honours list. [HL9829]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** It is a long-standing convention that outgoing Prime Ministers can draw up a 'Dissolution' or 'Resignation' List. This has been the case under past governments from across the political spectrum. This convention has been the case throughout the 20th Century, originating in the 19th Century.

## Horizon Europe

Asked by **Earl Russell**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the cause of the delay in agreeing a deal for the UK's return to the EU's Horizon science research programme; and when a resolution is expected. [HL9839]

**Viscount Camrose:** On 7th September, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would associate to Horizon Europe. The Government has negotiated a bespoke deal in the UK's national interest and UK scientists can participate confidently in Horizon Europe, the world's largest programme of research cooperation.

## Hornets

Asked by **Lord Swire**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent the spread of Asian hornets in England. [HL10053]

**Lord Benyon:** Defra and the Welsh Government developed the Asian hornet contingency plan (copy attached) in response to the spread of Asian hornet across Europe and the associated impacts reported on honey bees and pollinators. The Contingency Plan details what actions will be taken when incursions of Asian hornet occur with the aim of preventing this species establishing and spreading in the UK.

We have taken contingency action against all credible sightings of Asian hornet that have been reported in the UK since the first occurrence in 2016. Contingency action is delivered on the ground by the National Bee Unit (NBU) – part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency. As of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the NBU have located 43 Asian hornet nests this year.

Genetic analyses of hornet and nest samples are done to determine relatedness and assess whether Asian hornets are established in England. Evidence from previous years suggested that all 13 Asian hornet nests found in the UK between 2016 and 2022 were separate incursions and there is nothing to suggest that Asian hornets are established in the UK. We have not seen any evidence which demonstrates that Asian hornets discovered in England this year were produced by queens that overwintered. More detailed analysis will be done over winter to assess this.

Raising awareness is a key aspect of the response. We ask anyone who thinks they may have spotted an Asian hornet to report it through the Asian hornet app or online. By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early

as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asian hornet contingency plan [2023-01-03\_Aasian\_hornet\_contingency\_plan\_Public\_version\_English-AC(2).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-11/HL10053>

Asked by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the danger of Asian hornets becoming established in England; and what steps they are taking, if any, in response. [HL9880]

**Lord Benyon:** In 2011, the GB Non-Native Invasive Species Team conducted a pest risk assessment (copy attached) to assess the dangers of Asian hornets establishing in the UK, following the spread of Asian hornet across Europe and the associated impacts reported on pollinators. The risk of the pest entering the UK and establishing was assessed as very likely and it was suggested that the impacts on honey bees and wild pollinators could be significant.

Following this assessment Defra and the Welsh Government developed the Asian hornet contingency plan (copy attached) which outlines what actions will be taken when incursions occur. This Plan has been regularly updated with the most recent version published in January 2023.

We have taken contingency action against all credible sightings of Asian hornet that have been reported in the UK since the first occurrence in 2016. Contingency action is delivered on the ground by the National Bee Unit (NBU) – part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency. As of 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the NBU have located 37 Asian hornet nests which have been destroyed.

Genetic analyses of hornet and nest samples are done to determine relatedness and assess whether Asian hornets are established in England. Evidence from previous years suggested that all 13 Asian hornet nests found in the UK between 2016 and 2022 were separate incursions and there is nothing to suggest that Asian hornets are established in the UK. We have not seen any evidence which demonstrates that Asian hornets discovered in England this year were produced by queens that overwintered. More detailed analysis will be done over winter to assess this.

Raising awareness is a key aspect of the response. We ask anyone who thinks they may have spotted an Asian hornet to report it through the Asian hornet app or online. By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asian Hornet contingency plan [RA\_Vespa\_velutina\_Aasian\_Hornet.pdf]

pet risk assessment [2023-01-03\_Asian\_hornet\_contingency\_plan\_Public\_version\_English-AC.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-05/HL9880>

*Asked by Lord Moynihan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to contain the spread of the Asian hornet to the UK. [HL9945]

**Lord Benyon:** Defra and the Welsh Government developed the Asian hornet contingency plan (copy attached) in response to the spread of Asian hornet across Europe and the associated impacts reported on honey bees and pollinators. The Contingency Plan details what actions will be taken when incursions of Asian hornet occur and has been regularly updated with the most recent version published in January 2023.

We have taken contingency action against all credible sightings of Asian hornet that have been reported in the UK since the first occurrence in 2016. Contingency action is delivered on the ground by the National Bee Unit (NBU) – part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency. As of 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the NBU have located 37 Asian hornet nests which have been destroyed.

Genetic analyses of hornet and nest samples are done to determine relatedness and assess whether Asian hornets are established in England. Evidence from previous years suggested that all 13 Asian hornet nests found in the UK between 2016 and 2022 were separate incursions and there is nothing to suggest that Asian hornets are established in the UK. We have not seen any evidence which demonstrates that Asian hornets discovered in England this year were produced by queens that overwintered. More detailed analysis will be done over winter to assess this.

Raising awareness is a key aspect of the response. We ask anyone who thinks they may have spotted an Asian hornet to report it through the Asian hornet app or online. By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asian hornet contingency plan [2023-01-03\_Asian\_hornet\_contingency\_plan\_Public\_version\_English-AC(1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-06/HL9945>

## Housing: Construction

*Asked by Lord Redesdale*

To ask His Majesty's Government which planned housing developments, if any, are currently not

proceeding as result of low water levels across the UK. [HL9821]

**Lord Benyon:** Defra are aware of some developments, such as in Cambridge and North Sussex, which are seeing objections to planning concerning water availability and the impact on the environment. Defra is working closely with DLUHC to identify solutions to overcome these barriers to enable growth.

## Illegal Migration Act 2023

*Asked by Earl Russell*

To ask His Majesty's Government what powers contained in the Illegal Migration Act 2023 they have used to date. [HL9840]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Illegal Migration Act received Royal Assent on 20 July 2023.

The bans on re-entry, settlement or citizenship to people who come to the UK illegally came into force from Royal Assent.

As is standard practice for any legislation, commencement of wider measures in the Act will take place over the coming months.

## Islamic Human Rights Commission

*Asked by Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 11 July (HL8821) and Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay on 4 July (HL8822), what assessment has been made by (1) the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, and (2) the Home Office, of the suitability of the Islamic Human Rights Commission and IHRC Legal in light of the official warning of the Charity Commission in relation to the Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust. [HL9775]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Islamic Human Rights Commission Ltd is currently registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). The OISC keeps in close contact with the organisation and audits it regularly.

Organisations seeking regulation by the Commissioner are required to abide by the OISC's Guidance on Fitness (Owners). The criteria for assessing fitness include the likelihood of compliance with the OISC's Regulatory Scheme, a history of honesty and legal compliance, as well as a history of financial probity.

The OISC is a non-departmental arms' length body of the Home Office. The Home Office is satisfied that the OISC is undertaking appropriate assessments in relation to the Islamic Human Rights Commission.

## Life Imprisonment

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the average time those currently

servicing mandatory life sentences will spend in prison. [HL9812]

**Lord Bellamy:** Sentencing is entirely a matter for our independent judiciary. Release from mandatory life sentences is determined by the Parole Board, when the Board is satisfied that detaining the offender is no longer necessary for the protection of the public.

While we do not have an estimate of the average time those currently in prison on mandatory life sentences will serve, we do publish average time served, based on release data, on an annual basis. Table below.

<i>Mandatory life</i>	<i>Mean time served (years)</i>
2002	14
2003	15
2004	14
2005	14
2006	14
2007	16
2008	16
2009	17
2010	16
2011	16
2012	16
2013	17
2014	17
2015 <sup>(1)</sup>	17
2016	16
2017	17
2018	17
2019	18
2020	17
2021	17
2022	18

(1) Due to improvements in IT systems, the 2015 prison admissions data is now taken from a different source and, for statistical reporting purposes only, are produced using a different method. The 2015 figures from both the old and new systems have been presented to aid comparison.

### Lighting: Pollution

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the results of Star Count 2023 project published by CPRE, the countryside charity. [HL9948]

**Lord Benyon:** The Government has not made a formal assessment of the results of CPRE's Star Count 2023. We recognise that light pollution may have an impact on people and the environment and have put in place a range of measures to ensure that artificial light is managed effectively. These include controls in the planning system, the statutory nuisance regime, and improvements in street lighting.

### Mesothelioma: Death

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people died of mesothelioma in each of the five years up to December 2022. [HL9787]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

Please see the letter attached from the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority.

The Baroness Hodgson of Abinger CBE

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

08 September 2023

Dear Lady Hodgson,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how many people died of mesothelioma in each of the five years up to December 2022 (HL9787).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for publishing statistics on deaths registered in England and Wales [1]. Information for Scotland [2] and Northern Ireland [3] is available from National Records of Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency respectively.

Causes mentioned on the death certificate are converted to International Classification of Diseases 10th edition (ICD-10) codes, with the underlying cause of death defined as the disease or injury that initiated the events that directly lead to the death. The ICD-10 code for mesothelioma is C45, which comes under Chapter 2: Neoplasms [4].

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales in each year between 2017 and 2022 where the underlying cause of death was mesothelioma. Age-standardised mortality rates have been provided to allow comparisons between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

*Table 1: Number of deaths and age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) due to mesothelioma in England and Wales, registered 2017 to 2022 [5][6][7][8][9]*

Year	Number of deaths	ASMRs
2017	2,279	4.2
2018	2,143	3.8
2019	2,174	3.8
2020	2,231	3.9
2021	1,941	3.3
2022	1,926	3.2

Source: Office for National Statistics

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/>

[2] <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths>

[3] <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths>

[4]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/methodologies/userguide/tomortalitystatisticsjuly2017>

[5] Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each period.

[6] Figures include the deaths of usual residents of England and Wales as well as those of non-residents.

[7] Based on deaths where mesothelioma (ICD-10 code C45) was the underlying cause of death.

[8] Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 people, standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population.

[9] Number of deaths and age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) due to mesothelioma can be provided at a lower geographic area such as region upon request.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UK Statistics Authority [PQHL9787 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-04/HL9787>

### **Microplastics: Pollution Control**

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent microplastic fibre pollution. [HL9923]

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the costs of installation of microplastic fibre capture filters on domestic washing machines; and what engagement they have had with industry regarding the feasibility of installing such filters. [HL9924]

**Lord Benyon:** The UK Government has taken significant steps to tackle plastic pollution (eg. microplastics), including restricting the supply of several single-use plastics through introducing a plastic packaging tax from April 2022; restricting the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds; and preventing billions of plastic microbeads from entering the ocean each year by introducing a ban on microbeads in rinse off personal care products.

Defra have been working closely with industry to understand the costs of installing microfibre filters on washing machines with prices ranging from £30 to £122 per machine dependant on manufacturer and whether the filters are disposable or re-useable. Defra's Plan for Water includes a commitment for industry to develop low cost, effective microfibre filters on washing machines and encourage their effective use.

### **Migrant Workers: Hospitality Industry**

Asked by **Lord Baker of Dorking**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the five categories of hospitality workers identified in the Shortage Occupation List will be recognised with further dispensations in the immigration rules. [HL9746]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) considered 5 hospitality occupations in its spring review but did not recommend any be added to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) at that time. There are currently no hospitality jobs on the SOL.

Jobs on the SOL get some benefits, principally the ability to recruit with reduced salary and reduced fees for applicants. However, there are no plans to introduce further benefits for these or any other jobs simply by virtue of being on the SOL.

The MAC is considering evidence provided in its recent call for evidence and will produce a report advising which jobs should be on the SOL in the autumn.

### **Migrant Workers: Visas**

Asked by **Lord Knight of Weymouth**

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of shortage occupation skilled worker visa applicants have passed the English language test requirements in the last six months broken down by occupation type. [HL9792]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The requirement to speak English is a core principle of the points-based immigration system – including for occupations on the Shortage Occupation List. All successful applicants for the Skilled Worker visa will have demonstrated they can read, write, speak, and understand English to at least level B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale.

Further information on the English language requirement can be found on the .gov webpage overview of the Skilled Worker route, accessible here:

[www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa/knowledge-of-english](http://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa/knowledge-of-english)

## Nagorno-Karabakh: Humanitarian Situation

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh; and what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan that they should guarantee the security of (1) persons, (2) vehicles and (3) cargo, moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. [HL9767]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are increasingly alarmed by the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, exacerbated by the continued closure of the Lachin corridor. It is crucial that the ICJ order of February 2023 is respected to ensure unimpeded movement along the Lachin corridor in both directions. The UK Government has publicly highlighted the importance of re-opening the Lachin corridor and addressing related humanitarian issues, including at the United Nations Security Council in New York on 16 August 2023 and at the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in Vienna on 12 September 2023.

## National Income

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Sheffield*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Penn on 6 July (HL Deb col 1304) giving the relative gross domestic product (GDP) per head for Wales and the UK, what is the relative GDP per head for each region of England. [HL9846]

**Baroness Penn:** The latest data published by the Office for National Statistics shows that in 2021, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head, at current prices, was £25,665 for Wales, and £33,745 for the UK. The GDP per head for London (£59,855) and the South East (£36,174) was higher than the UK average. GDP per head in the North East (£24,575), the East Midlands (£27,505), the Yorkshire and the Humber (£27,692), the South West (£29,628), the North West (£29,681), and the East of England (£30,442), was lower than the UK average.

## National Maritime Information Centre

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the National Maritime Information Centre shares all intelligence data with the government departments and agencies involved. [HL9867]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The National Maritime Information Centre (NMIC) is an integral part of the Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) and not a separate entity. The JMSC is responsible for providing Maritime

Domain Awareness and Understanding to all of government and UK law enforcement: this is underpinned by the Royal Navy's Maritime Domain Awareness Programme which provides the essential data layer to JMSC.

## North Korea: Deportation

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the remarks by UN Special Rapporteur, Elizabeth Salmón, to the UN Human Rights Council in March that "forcibly repatriated individuals are at severe risk of being sent to North Korean political prison camps if they are returned to the North". [HL9735]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK supports UN Special Rapporteur, Elizabeth Salmón's remarks about the risks faced by forcibly repatriated North Koreans on return to the DPRK. Despite claims by the DPRK that forcibly repatriated refugees are well treated and reintegrated into DPRK society, it is clear from reports that they are often mistreated by the authorities. The UK actively promotes the implementation of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. We regularly call on all countries to abide by the principle of non-refoulement.

## North Korea: Refugees

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that China has engaged in the refoulement of North Korean refugees; and what representations they have made to the government of China about the repatriation of North Korean refugees. [HL9734]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of reports of North Korean escapees detained in China. The UK actively promotes the implementation of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. We emphasise directly to the Chinese authorities that they should not be detaining North Korean refugees with the intention of returning them to North Korea. At the 17 August UN Security Council meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK, the UK called on all states to abide by the principle of non-refoulement.

## Parks and Playgrounds

*Asked by Earl Russell*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to make longer-term and consistent funding available to local authorities for park and playground provision, particularly smaller play spaces in more deprived areas. [HL9836]

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 makes available up to £59.7 billion for local government in England, an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £5.1 billion or 9.4% in cash terms on 2022/23. This boost in funding demonstrates how Government stands behind councils up and down the country. The majority of the funding is un-ringfenced in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities. On top of this, the £9 million UK-wide Levelling Up Parks Fund has provided specific funding to deliver improved green spaces in communities with the lowest access and a further £30 million will be provided to overhaul 30 local parks in England with a focus on improving facilities for young families.

### Passports: Children

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Goss Moor*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 17 July (HL9008), how many times in 2022 the Passport Office asked (1) male, and (2) female, parents renewing their child's passport to provide documentation proving custody, or a written letter of authorisation from the other parent before issuing the passport. [HL9851]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** HM Passport Office is unable to provide the information requested as it is not held in a reportable format.

### Pesticides

*Asked by Lord Redesdale*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce the environmental risks of (1) pesticides, and (2) highly hazardous chemicals. [HL9820]

**Lord Benyon:** The UK, as party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), is committed to meeting a global target to reduce the overall risks from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half by 2030, as agreed at COP15 as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Individual countries will be starting from different baseline positions in making their contributions to the overall global target and the UK will need to update and submit its National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans by the 16th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biodiversity, in 2024.

The UK is also committed to publishing a National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP), which will outline how we will take action to minimise the risks and impacts of pesticides to human health and the environment, while ensuring pests and pesticide resistance can be managed effectively.

We are developing a cross-government Chemicals Strategy to frame the work we are doing across chemicals and put us on a path towards improved chemicals management. It will set out our priorities and principles

for taking regulatory action to protect human health and the environment. Internationally, the UK is participating in negotiations for a new global framework for the safe and effective management of chemicals, to replace the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

### Police Custody: Travellers

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether those who identify as (1) Gypsy, (2) Roma, or (3) Traveller, in custody have any special needs recognised. [HL9814]

**Lord Sharpe of Epsom:** Data on people detained in police custody was published for the first time in November 2022, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-other-pace-powers-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2022>.

For the year ending March 2023 the Home Office collected ethnicity data from forces using the 2021 Census categories, which includes the 'Gypsy and Irish traveller' and 'Roma' groups.

In addition, for the year ending March 2022 data, information was published on the ethnicity of people detained in custody and separately on whether a person was considered vulnerable and whether an appropriate adult was called. As this was the first year the data was collected the statistics were still in development and therefore an ethnic breakdown of vulnerable adults in custody was not published. Home Office analysts will assess the quality of the data collected for the year ending March 2023 and depending on the outcome will publish this breakdown as part of the 'Police Powers and Procedures: Other PACE bulletin', which is scheduled for release in November/December 2023, as pre-announced on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/police-powers-and-procedures-other-pace-powers-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2023), here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/police-powers-and-procedures-other-pace-powers-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2023>.

Police custody officers should carry out an assessment of the risk and vulnerability of everyone in custody, on an individual basis. This assessment should take into account the person's behaviour, any signs of illness or injury, their communication, including information from all available sources and the circumstances and environment in which they were found.

### Ports: Import Controls

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what physical checks and customs requirements currently take place for goods from the EU directly entering ports in Great Britain. [HL9864]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** Border Force is committed to enforcing customs controls on goods from



the EU and to detecting those who would attempt to evade controls.

Border Force deploys to risk using tested, but continually assessed, intelligence and targeting techniques. Border Force does not publish information relating to the number of physical checks carried out. Doing so would publicise operational practices which would be used to assist in the evasion of customs controls and compromise Border security.

### Ports: Infrastructure

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what physical infrastructure they plan to provide at ports in (1) England, (2) Scotland, and (3) Wales, to process goods entering from the EU. [HL9866]

**Lord Benyon:** The Government is providing the necessary infrastructure to service trade coming through the Short Strait in Kent. That infrastructure is being readied for the introduction of physical checks on goods imported through Port of Dover and Eurotunnel from April 2024.

Regarding Scotland and Wales, Border Control Post (BCP) infrastructure is a devolved matter. The Welsh Government is in the process of building an inland BCP at Holyhead (North Wales). Decisions on the need for further inland sites, including in Scotland, are yet to be taken. The UK Government will work closely with Devolved Government counterparts to ensure there is sufficient capacity to deliver the required checks, as set out in the Border Target Operating Model.

### Prison Advice and Care Trust

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the work conducted by the Prison Advice and Care Trust in England and Wales. [HL9813]

**Lord Bellamy:** H.M. Prison & Probation Service holds both contracts and grants with the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) for work they undertake in prisons in England and Wales. Whilst no formal assessment of the work completed by Pact has been undertaken, all contracts and grants are awarded following open and fair competition. Those tendering for contracts or applying for grants (including Pact) are thoroughly assessed against the published criteria including the completion of due diligence checks prior to the awarding of any contract or grant.

### Prisons: Buildings

*Asked by Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete within prison buildings in England and Wales. [HL9761]

*Asked by Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to audit all prison buildings constructed between 1950 to 1990 for the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete; and, if so, what is their timescale. [HL9762]

*Asked by Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what mitigating actions are in place for prison buildings when the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete is detected. [HL9763]

**Lord Bellamy:** Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out. The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates.

The potential mitigating actions for prison buildings will be to monitor them, prop them up or replace them, in line with Institute of Structural Engineers guidance.

### Public Bodies: Cybersecurity

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the data breach at the Electoral Commission, what plans they have to review the effectiveness of cyber defences of the Government's own technology platforms and those of other public bodies. [HL9760]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The Government Cyber Security Strategy published last year sets out our plans to significantly harden the Government's critical functions against cyber attack by 2025, with all organisations across the public sector being resilient to known vulnerabilities by 2030.

We have already made significant progress against the strategy. Earlier this year the Government launched GovAssure, the new cyber security assurance process for government organisations. Under GovAssure, government organisations will regularly review the effectiveness of their cyber defences against common cyber vulnerabilities and attack methods. GovAssure will enable government organisations to accurately assess their levels of cyber resilience across their critical services, highlight priority areas for improvement and provide the Government with a strategic view of cyber capability, risk and resilience across the sector.

The Electoral Commission is independent of Government and is accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission. However, we have supported the Commission via the National Cyber Security Centre, who have provided the Commission with expert advice and support to aid their recovery after the cyber incident was first identified.

## Pupils: Homelessness

*Asked by Lord Laming*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the 130,000 children of homeless families are receiving an education in school. [HL9793]

**Baroness Barran:** All children of compulsory school age, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. The department consulted and implemented changes to the statutory School Admissions Code in 2021 to improve the in-year school admissions process and fair access protocols. Fair access protocols are the safety net to secure school places in-year for vulnerable and unplaced children, where the in-year admissions process fails. In those changes, the department identified a list of categories of children who are eligible for placement in fair access, which included children who are homeless. The school admissions code can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2>.

The 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance expects schools, local authorities and partners to work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to school attendance by building strong and trusting relationships, and working together to put the right support in place. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>. In all cases, schools should be sensitive and should avoid stigmatising pupils and parents. They should talk to pupils and parents to understand what they think would help improve their attendance. This allows individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

All schools should be calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environments where pupils can thrive and reach their potential in safety and dignity. Teachers know their pupils best and are in the best position to identify their needs and to plan which approaches will meet them most effectively.

## Railway Stations: Tickets

*Asked by Baroness Grey-Thompson*

To ask His Majesty's Government which disability and accessibility groups they consulted before launching the consultation on proposed closures to rail ticket offices. [HL9776]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** In partnership with industry, the Rail Minister and department officials held roundtables with industry and accessibility stakeholders and passenger representative groups on 6 June and 18 July 2023 to discuss potential reforms. Over 20 different organisations were represented at the different roundtables.

Through the industry-led Ticketing and Settlement Agreement process train operating companies have put

forward proposals to change the opening hours or closure of station ticket offices and recently consulted on these. The consultation closed on 1 September and the independent passenger bodies, Transport Focus and London TravelWatch, are currently assessing the proposals and consultation responses.

We expect train operators to work collaboratively with the passenger bodies in the coming weeks, to listen to the concerns raised and to refine their proposals accordingly.

The Department continues to engage with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and other accessibility and transport groups.

## Refugees: Diplomatic Service

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of risk facing refugees who are resident in the UK who encounter difficulties abroad; and what plans they have to ensure they receive consular assistance at the same level as UK citizens. [HL9751]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Government provides consular assistance to British nationals travelling or living abroad.

We may also help Commonwealth nationals in non-Commonwealth countries where they do not have any diplomatic or consular representation. We cannot help other nationalities, even if they live in the UK or have close connections to the UK.

## Religious Freedom

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, as Chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, to ensure that the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance Ministerial Conference in Prague this November is (1) informed by the experiences of affected communities, and (2) includes freedom of religion or belief experts and representatives from relevant civil society and faith-based organisations. [HL9768]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and Chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA), Fiona Bruce, is working with Vice Chair of IRFBA, Ambassador Rehak of the Czech Republic, to ensure the Conference in Prague in November is inclusive, well informed by affected communities and includes FoRB experts, representatives from civil society and faith-based organisations. As outlined in our Written Ministerial Statement following the 2022 Conference [<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-07-15/hlws204>], we continue to build partnerships with

civil society focussed on key themes from the Conference, drawing on the convening power of the IRFBA to promote FoRB for all.

## Renewable Energy

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the estimated full unit cost of (1) energy produced from various carbon fuels utilising carbon capture and storage, and (2) energy produced by various renewable means. [HL9871]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government regularly publishes its view of the levelized cost of generating a unit of electricity from various technologies, including renewables and gas-fired power generation with CCUS, in the Electricity generation costs report which was updated in 2023.

## Rivers and Seas and Oceans: Microplastics

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve methods to measure the amount and types of microplastic and microfibrils in rivers, lakes, seas and their sediments. [HL9926]

**Lord Benyon:** Defra intends to publish a report that it commissioned on improving the sampling and analytical protocols to determine the quantities, loads and types of microplastics in surface waters and sediments, later this year. Following this, working with the Environment Agency, Defra will consider the approaches to sampling surface waters and sediments to develop provisional standard operating procedure guidelines that will be used to improve sampling, processing and analysing of microplastics in river waters and sediments.

## Russia: Ukraine

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications for security in Europe of the use by the Russian Federation of tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine. [HL9772]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The nuclear rhetoric and signalling we continue to see from Russia and President Putin is designed to distract and deter us from supporting Ukraine. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine continues to be a very serious situation but it is not, and should not become, a nuclear crisis. No other country is talking about nuclear use.

As the G7 has repeatedly made clear, any use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons in this conflict would be met with severe consequences. We continue to call on Russia to de-escalate, starting by ceasing its illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

## Slavery

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Manchester*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the impact of section 63 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 on the operation of the UK's modern slavery provisions (1) in prisons, and (2) across the wider population. [HL9808]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** "The Government assessed the Impact of Section 63 of the Nationality and Borders Bill (now Act) prior to Royal Assent and will continue to assess its impact going forward. The published Impact Assessments for the Nationality and Borders Bill, including the impact of Section 63, can be found here:

Equalities Impact Assessment: Nationality and Borders Bill: Equality Impact Assessment (publishing.service.gov.uk).

Economic Impact Assessment: Impact Assessment (parliament.uk)".

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Economic Impact Assessment  
[Illegal\_Migration\_Bill\_Economic\_Impact\_Assessment\_26.6.2023.pdf]

Nationality and Borders Bill: Equality Impact  
[Nationality\_and\_Borders\_Bill\_-\_EIA (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-04/HL9808>

## South Korea: Scouts and Guides

*Asked by Lord Rogan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they are having with Scouts UK in regards to providing financial support towards the £1 million cost of relocating the UK Contingent from the site of the 25th World Scout Jamboree in South Korea. [HL9834]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** His Majesty's Government is in regular contact with the Scout Association about the incidents that occurred during the World Scout Jamboree.

HM Government has provided significant support in recent years to uniformed youth organisations, including the Scouts. This includes over £16 million so that uniformed youth organisations can recruit more volunteers, tackle waiting lists, and increase the locations able to offer positive activities to young people.

This forms part of the Government's National Youth Guarantee: that by 2025 every young person will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home, and opportunities to volunteer. This is supported by a three-year investment of over £500 million in youth services, reflecting young people's priorities and addressing the inconsistencies in national youth spending with a firm focus on levelling up.

## Sudan: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any members of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative team of experts have been deployed to Sudan or neighbouring countries since the outbreak of conflict in April 2023. [HL9785]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in Sudan must end. While a visit by the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Team of Experts has not been deployed, the UK is taking a range of actions to address the situation. On 14 July, members of the PSVI International Alliance issued a joint statement condemning increasing reports of sexual violence and calling on all parties to stop the violence. The UK has consistently condemned these crimes in other public statements, at the UN Human Rights Council and Security Council, and in diplomatic lobbying. We continue to support the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN partners working with Sudan's Combating Violence Against Women Unit.

## Sudan: Arms Trade

Asked by *Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) improve the enforcement of and compliance with the UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur, and (2) extend the arms embargo to the whole of Sudan. [HL9786]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur was renewed in March 2023, and is due for review by September 2024. The United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) will brief the UN Security Council on 13 September ahead of mandate renewal negotiations for which the UK will hold the pen. There is a longstanding bilateral UK arms embargo in place for the whole of Sudan which prevents weapon flows and tackles individuals working against peace. UK sanctions under the Sudan Sanctions (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 provides another tool for holding those to account for violations against peace and stability in Sudan.

## Sustainable Farming Incentive

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on farmers of delays to Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) payments; and what plans they have to rectify the delay. [HL10044]

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to pause the phasing out of existing farm payments

until Sustainable Farming Incentive payments are in place. [HL10045]

**Lord Benyon:** The Government has no plans to pause the phasing out of Basic Payment Scheme payments.

Our priority is to roll out Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) in a way that ensures the service works as straightforwardly as possible for all our customers and aligns with the closing date for Countryside Stewardship.

The SFI 2023 scheme has been expanded and made more flexible in response to farmers' feedback. There are 23 actions on offer under the new and improved 2023 scheme, including on soil health, moorland, hedgerows, integrated pest management, farmland wildlife, buffer strips, and low input grassland.

The scheme will open for applications from 18 September. Before then farmers can contact the Rural Payments Agency to join the thousands of farm businesses that have already expressed their interest in applying.

Recently, we have run an extensive communications and engagement programme with farmers and farming organisations, including through webinars and our presence at agricultural shows. This has enabled us to promote the options available to farmers and feedback is of increased awareness and interest in what is on offer.

Information on the scheme is available in one handbook and on 10 August we published voluntary 'How to Guidance' which farmers can follow if helpful for them. We know that applicants to date have welcomed the simple, automated online application process which again will support uptake in the coming months.

We know the importance of getting agreements and payments out as quickly as possible, which is why we'll be working to get as many people as possible on board as quickly as possible after 18 September. What is more, in recognition of the challenges faced with inflation and rising input costs, the Government has confirmed farmers will receive a payment in the first month of their SFI 2023 agreement to help with cashflow.

We remain committed to our target of 70% of farms and farmland being in schemes by 2028.

## UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce additional legislation to protect (1) the UK internal market, and (2) Northern Ireland goods moving to Great Britain with unfettered access; and to outline the proposed timescale for such legislation. [HL9865]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** We have guaranteed unfettered access for qualifying Northern Ireland goods moving directly from Northern Ireland to Great Britain and will extend these protections to qualifying goods moved via Ireland. Additionally, we will introduce new arrangements for traders moving food and feed on these

routes, ensuring the benefits of unfettered access are more squarely focussed on Northern Ireland traders, while creating no new requirements. Details of these arrangements can be found in the Border Target Operating Model published on 29 August 2023. This reflects Northern Ireland's integral place in the United Kingdom's internal market.

*Asked by **Baroness Hoey***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Windsor Framework will continue to require the application of EU Regulation 2017/625; and if so, whether Northern Ireland for the purposes of that regulation will be treated as the entry point into the territory of the EU. [[HL9984](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** Goods moving via the 'red lane' will need to comply with EU Regulation 2017/625, including arriving into NI via an SPS Inspection Facility.

*Asked by **Baroness Hoey***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether people seeking to trade goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland under the Green Lane as set out in the Windsor Framework must be authorised to do so under the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme; and whether those who trade between two locations in Great Britain need to obtain any similar authorisation in order to do so. [[HL9985](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** Businesses wishing to move goods via the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme must be registered members of the scheme. Registration opened on 1 September, ahead of the scheme going live on 1 October.

## **UK Trade with EU: Veterinary Medicine**

*Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering***

To ask His Majesty's Government why a qualified veterinary surgeon must sign off each consignment of Quorn for export to the EU, given that that product contains no meat or dairy content. [[HL10110](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** Quorn products containing no animal component would not require an export health certificate (EHC) for import into the EU.

Quorn products that contain egg-based ingredients will require an EHC for entry into the EU. EU law (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692) requires imports of animal products including products containing egg or egg product to be accompanied by an EU EHC that must be signed by an official veterinarian of the competent authority of the exporting third country, guaranteeing that the conditions for entry into the EU have been met.

## **University of Cambridge: China**

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the University of Cambridge about its links with a Chinese state-owned military technology firm whose parent company produces missiles, weapons systems and drones. [[HL9736](#)]

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the partnership between the University of Cambridge and a subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned military technology company which has sold the CH-4 drone to the Myanmar military junta. [[HL9737](#)]

**Viscount Camrose:** The Government is clear that universities must operate within the law, and is committed to supporting UK research institutions to engage with Chinese companies in a way that reflects the UK's values and takes account of national security concerns. As part of our proactive engagement with academia, the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology provides the Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) to give advice to all universities, including the University of Cambridge, on national security risks in international collaborations. RCAT promotes greater understanding about the UK's security policies and regulations, and has provided tailored advice on many complex issues which have resulted in targeted mitigations of national security concerns.

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the export control criteria used by the UK Trade and Investment Office following reports that it approved a partnership between the University of Cambridge and a subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned military technology company that does an estimated 60 per cent of its business with the Chinese military, which reportedly involved the appointment of a former Chinese Communist Party politician to the university's partnership programme. [[HL9738](#)]

**Lord Offord of Garvel:** The Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) is responsible for licensing the export and transfer of controlled goods and technology, including where this occurs through academic collaboration. The ECJU has no record of having granted an export licence for the University of Cambridge with the Beijing Institute of Aerospace Control Devices.

HM Government is committed to maintaining a robust and transparent export control regime. The Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, introduced in 2021, continue to provide a thorough risk assessment framework for assessing all export licence applications, including those relating to academic collaboration.

If the ECJU were presented with credible evidence of a breach of export controls, we would take these allegations seriously. We will not support collaborations which compromise our national security.

### **Veterans: LGBTQ+ People**

*Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to accept the recommendation in the report by Lord Etherton LGBT Veterans Independent Review, published on 19 July 2023, to establish a scheme to compensate those who lost their jobs in the armed services between 1967 and 2000 as a result of the discrimination against LGBTQ+ people; and what plans they have to extend or replicate the scheme for former employees of (1) the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and (2) the Security Services, who similarly lost their jobs as a result of the ban on homosexuality for serving officers. [[HL9783](#)]

**Baroness Goldie:** Lord Etherton has concluded his independent review and submitted his report and recommendations to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs in the Cabinet Office. The Government will now consider the report and recommendations and decide which Departments are best placed to take action. Defence is committed to responding in full in due course after giving the report due consideration, as per the terms of reference. Defence has accepted the recommendation of a financial award, noting that such schemes take time to establish. Further detail on eligibility will be included in the full response. Any consideration of compensation, or decision to mirror any arrangements which Defence may put in place, for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Security Services staff dismissed due to their sexuality is a matter for the FCDO and Home Office to consider.

### **Veterinary Services: Drugs**

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the EU about veterinary medicines since the Windsor Framework was published. [[HL10063](#)]

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made on finding a long term solution with the EU on the issue of veterinary medicines for Northern Ireland since the publication of the Windsor Framework. [[HL10064](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** The Windsor Framework agreement has safeguarded the supplies of veterinary medicines from Great Britain to Northern Ireland to the end of 2025. During this extension to the grace period there will be no changes to the existing requirements on the supply of

veterinary medicines to Northern Ireland and businesses should continue operating as they have done to date.

The Government's position is clear, there needs to be a long-term and permanent solution which maintains the uninterrupted flow of veterinary medicines into Northern Ireland from Great Britain on which so many people and businesses rely. Industry engagement has been our core focus in recent months, where we are strengthening and collating further evidence on products at risk. We remain clear with the EU that any future arrangements must consider the overwhelming reliance of Northern Ireland on veterinary medicines from Great Britain.

### **Visas: Ministers of Religion**

*Asked by Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 20 July ([HL8823](#)), what steps, if any, they will take to inform parliamentarians of the conclusion of the review into UK visas being granted to such high risk individuals; and whether they will facilitate broader parliamentary scrutiny of this matter. [[HL9774](#)]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** As stated in my previous response, for national security reasons it would not be appropriate to disclose the criteria by which high risk individuals are identified or the basis of any review of these criteria.

### **Warrior Vehicles**

*Asked by Earl Attlee*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration has been given to remanufacturing the hulls of the Warrior armoured fighting vehicles in order to overcome the problem of cracking in highly stressed areas. [[HL9745](#)]

**Baroness Goldie:** There is no requirement for new hulls as the existing fleet of Warrior armoured fighting vehicles can be refurbished, as required, to a standard suitable for the needs of Defence. Procuring new hulls would also not present the optimum Value for Money solution when compared to maintaining the existing fleet.

### **Water Companies: Microplastics**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to work with water companies to explore the management of microplastics in sewage sludge. [[HL9925](#)]

**Lord Benyon:** The Government is committed to safeguarding the natural environment from harms. We have been collaborating with water companies on the investigation of microplastics in wastewater treatment through the National Chemical Investigations Programme.

The Environment Agency have published their strategy for safe and sustainable sludge use. This strategy explores options for modernising and harmonising the regulatory framework with the aim of ensuring the management and use of sludge supports healthy and productive land and soil. The Government is currently examining the strategy's impact on our environmental outcomes and water and farming industries.

## **World Expo**

*Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to bid for the UK to host future Expo events. [\[HL9805\]](#)

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** There are currently no plans for the UK to bid to host a future Expo.

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