

**Session 2022-23  
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**Tuesday  
19 September 2023**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

**Written Statements .....1**

**Written Answers.....9**

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

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
<b>Lord True</b>	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
<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
<b>Earl of Courtown</b>	Deputy Chief Whip
<b>Lord Davies of Gower</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Evans of Rainow</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<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
<b>Lord Mott</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Murray of Blidworth</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Borders, Home Office
<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

Tuesday, 19 September 2023

## Additional Jobcentre Support Pilot: Phase 2 Rollout

[HLWS1024]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** My honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Employment (Guy Opperman MP) has made the following Written Statement:

I wish to update the House on the Written Statement tabled on 27 February 2023.

Earlier this month the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) started testing a second phase of the Additional Jobcentre Support pilot. The first phase went live on 27/02/23, following a proof of concept. It tested how enhanced daily work-focused support, across two weeks, can further help eligible Universal Credit claimants in the Intensive Work Search regime into employment.

Evidence shows that the longer a person is out of work the harder it is for them to return. A claimant's likelihood of securing employment declines after 13 weeks, so we are focussing this support on those who remain unemployed or with low earnings after 13 and 26-weeks of claiming Universal Credit.

The second phase will provide an additional week of daily support after the claimant's first assessment period. This new earlier intervention will test the impact of a week of skills and employability focused support.

This builds on the first phase of the pilot which, in addition to this extra week of support, continues to test how enhanced daily work-focused support, across a two-week period, can further support eligible Universal Credit claimants into employment.

As with phase one, phase two of the pilot continues to provide additional one to one work search conversations with work coaches and work search support sessions to help claimants. The Claimant Commitment, which sets out each claimant's agreed work-related activities, will be regularly reviewed and activity will be focused on specific steps to support people to move into work.

Claimants will receive prior notice of the requirements they will be expected to fulfil. Eligibility remains unchanged and those with reduced requirements remain out of scope, including those:

- Awaiting a Work Capability Assessment;
- Required to undertake less than 20 hours a week of work search activity;
- Who are Gainfully Self-Employed;
- Who have no work related requirements;
- With an easement in place; and
- On a full-time provision offer.

The second phase will be tested in the existing 60 pilot sites across Central Scotland, Surrey & Sussex, West Yorkshire, Leicestershire, and Northamptonshire. Over the coming months, the pilot will expand further into more jobcentres.

DWP remains committed to providing tailored work-focused support to help move claimants into appropriate and sustainable work, where they can then experience the many benefits of employment.

## Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

[HLWS1025]

**Lord Callanan:** This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Sunnica Energy Farm for the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic energy generation farm, situated across West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The current statutory deadline for the decision on the Sunnica Energy Farm application is 28 September 2023.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 7 December 2023 for deciding this application.

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

## Hong Kong Six-monthly Report

[HLWS1030]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The latest Six-monthly Report on the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong was published today, and is attached. It covers the period from 1 July – 31 December 2022. The report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. A copy is also available on the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/six-monthly-reports-on-hong-kong>. I commend the report to the House.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong [Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong 1 January to 30 June 2023.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2023-09-19/HLWS1030/>

## Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan: Revised Terms of Reference

[HLWS1034]

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

Further to the statement by the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP dated 5 July 2023, I can confirm that the Terms of Reference of the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan have been amended by agreement with the Chair the Rt Hon Lord Justice Haddon-Cave.

I have placed a copy of the revised Terms of Reference in the Library of the House.

The amendments reflect the Written Ministerial Statement, which avowed the involvement of Special Forces in alleged unlawful activity in Afghanistan in the period mid-2010 to mid-2013.

In my new capacity as Secretary of State for Defence, I would like to reiterate my strong support for this Inquiry commissioned by the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Afghanistan TORs [2023090\_TORs\_Update.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2023-09-19/HLWS1034/>

## Inquiry into Brook House Immigration Removal Centre: Publication of Report

[HLWS1033]

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

Today the independent Inquiry into the mistreatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) between 1 April 2017 and 31 August 2017, as shown in the BBC Panorama programme “Under-Cover: Britain’s Immigration Secrets” has published its report.

The report can be found on the Brook House Inquiry website from noon today.

The Report sets out failings in both oversight and governance to protect the welfare of detained individuals within Brook House IRC during this period.

The Government takes the welfare and safety of those we detain very seriously and has made significant improvements to immigration detention since the dates covered by the Inquiry.

I would like to thank Kate Eves and the Inquiry Team for their work to establish the facts of what happened at Brook House IRC, to identify learning and to make recommendations that will help to prevent a recurrence of such events.

We will carefully consider the findings of this Inquiry in its detailed report, including the recommendations in relation to the management of the immigration detention estate and the welfare of detained individuals.

I have today laid the Inquiry’s report before the House, and it will also be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Minimum Service Levels: Hospital Settings

[HLWS1027]

**Lord Markham:** My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay) has made the following written statement:

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 allows the Secretary of State to make regulations to establish minimum service levels for relevant services in the event of strike action. They must consult with such persons as they consider appropriate before making regulations. Minimum service levels aim to limit the impacts of strike action on the lives and livelihoods of the public and to strike a balance between the right of unions and their members to strike with the need for the wider public to be able to access key services during strikes.

A key priority for this Government is to ensure that our health services can continue to deliver vital services to treat and support patients at their time of need, particularly during challenging times. On Tuesday the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched a consultation seeking views to inform decisions on the introduction of regulations on minimum service levels in England, Scotland and Wales, to protect patient safety in key hospital-based services during strike action.

Our proposal is that most essential and time-critical hospital services should be covered by minimum service levels regulations. This consultation will help to inform decisions on whether hospital services should be covered and, if so, which services, and the appropriate minimum service levels required. The consultation will also seek views on whether any health services outside ambulance services and hospital services should be included in minimum service levels.

The consultation will run for eight weeks and will close on 14 November 2023.

Copies of the consultation will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

## Ministry of Defence: New Accommodation Offer

[HLWS1035]

**Baroness Goldie:** My Rt. Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Dr Andrew Murrison MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am pleased to announce the Ministry of Defence’s New Accommodation Offer which, from 11 March 2024, will deliver greater access to subsidised accommodation for our Service personnel.

As the Defence Command Paper Refresh made clear, our people are our greatest strength, and the provision of Service accommodation is essential to their operational effectiveness. To support this our New Accommodation Offer recognises the different ways our people and their families live, modernises the way we use our estate, and provides an enhanced offer based on each Service person's needs. We recognised the importance of improving fairness and inclusivity for all our people in the 2022 Defence Accommodation Strategy, and through the New Accommodation Offer, we will deliver this for our people. Defence will also invest a further four hundred million pounds over the next two years to ensure that we provide the modern accommodation that our Service personnel, their families and partners deserve.

The New Accommodation Offer widens entitlement to family accommodation subsidised by the MOD. This will be delivered through Service Family Accommodation, or a subsidy provided to Service personnel to rent from the Private Rental Sector.

From March, Service personnel who want to live with their partner but are not married or in a civil partnership, and parents with children who stay with them for 80 nights or more per year, will be entitled to subsidised family accommodation for the first time.

Widening entitlement to subsidised accommodation is the right thing to do. Inevitably, this will lead to increased demand across the Defence estate for accommodation. To ensure availability of subsidised accommodation for those entitled to it, we will make greater use of the Private Rental Sector. Service personnel allocated to live in the Private Rental Sector will receive a monthly rental subsidy to support them in renting a property that is suitable for their needs, within a daily commute of their assigned location.

Defence will no longer take rank into account when allocating accommodation as using our estate this way increases cost and is inequitable. Through the New Accommodation Offer, accommodation entitlements will be simplified. Service personnel of all ranks will receive an entitlement to accommodation based on their need, which for most will be linked to family size. We will, however, give Service personnel more flexibility to choose the size, type, and location of their accommodation where availability allows.

Many of those who currently receive an entitlement based on rank will continue to be able to occupy a property with the same number of bedrooms under the New Accommodation Offer. However, where personnel do experience a reduction in their entitlement, they will be entitled to Transitional Protection until three years after the launch of the new offer.

As well as widening entitlement to family accommodation, the New Accommodation Offer will address the current disparity between how Single Living Accommodation is charged to Service personnel when it is not their main home. All personnel who cannot commute daily from their home will be supported irrespective of their marital status.

Home ownership will be made more achievable by giving first time buyers the opportunity to have up to £1,500 of their legal expenses refunded alongside the support of Forces Help to Buy.

As of 11 March 2024, Service personnel who are newly entitled will have the opportunity to apply for accommodation under the New Accommodation Offer. For those who already have entitlement, they will have the opportunity to move to the New Accommodation Offer on their next assignment. After three years, any Service personnel who have not yet transitioned to the new offer will do so in a programmed manner.

The New Accommodation Offer demonstrates our commitment to improving the offer for our Service personnel, delivering the vision set out in the Defence Accommodation Strategy, and working towards improving our accommodation noting the recommendations of the Haythornthwaite Review. We will go as far as we can to improve the offer under existing policy by widening entitlement to Service Family Accommodation for Service personnel in long-term relationships at eight sites covering approximately 10,000 people. This will apply to Service personnel assigned to these sites from 31 October 2023.

Further guidance is being published today, with a final Joint Service Publication expected later this year.

As well as ensuring our Service People have the choice in homes they deserve, they must remain affordable. We are committed to protecting our Service personnel from cost-of-living challenges. We have done this by freezing daily food charges, ensuring the Council Tax Rebate reaches those in military accommodation, increasing the availability of free wrap-around Childcare and, this year, delivering a freeze in Service Family Accommodation rents funded principally through the penalties applied to maintenance contractors for their poor performance over the winter months.

Our strategic advantage is derived foremost from our first-class people – our real battle-winning capability. Today's announcement builds on accommodation rent freezes, and an additional £400 million injection over the next two years to ensure that we provide the modern accommodation that our Service families deserve.

## **National Rail Contracts: Avanti and Cross Country**

[HLWS1037]

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

I am updating the House that the Department for Transport has negotiated a National Rail Contract for the West Coast Partnership rail operator.

In March 2023, the Department extended the contract with First Trenitalia to operate passenger rail services on the West Coast Partnership. Under this contract, which ends on 15 October 2023, First Trenitalia – as Avanti

West Coast – operates express services on the West Coast Main Line.

Today we have awarded a National Rail Contract to First Trenitalia to continue operating the West Coast Partnership, providing West Coast train services as Avanti West Coast. This contract, starting on 15 October 2023, will have a core term of three years and a maximum possible term of nine years. After three years, the contract can be terminated at any point with three months' notice at my discretion.

Previously, I stated that the decision to award a contract to First Trenitalia was contingent on the operator continuing to win back the confidence of passengers, with a particular focus on more reliable weekend services, continued reductions in cancellations, and improvements in passenger information during planned and unplanned disruption. The Department has worked closely with Avanti to restore reliability and punctuality to levels that passengers expect.

Avanti's performance has improved significantly, with Avanti caused cancellations consistently below 3% since March 2023, and as low as 1.1% in July 2023, down from 13% in January 2023. Over 90% of trains now arrive within 15 minutes of their scheduled time, improved from 75% in December 2022. Over 100 additional drivers have been trained and brought on since April 2022, and improvements to passenger facilities on trains include better seats, lighting, and charging points.

The NRC will support the introduction of a brand new fleet of electric and bi-mode Hitachi trains later this year to replace its current diesel fleet which forms a key part of Avanti's goal to run more sustainably and will result in a 61% cut in carbon emissions, as well as offering more space and a quieter journey for passengers. The new trains support DfT's strategic aims of reducing environmental impact and improving transport for the user.

The transformation of Avanti's performance over the past year demonstrates how, through working closely with Government, setting out clear set goals and being incentivised to succeed, the private sector can deliver on our railways. My Department will stay in close contact with the operator and local stakeholders to monitor Avanti's performance as it continues its progress to a sustained recovery and increase services over time.

I am also updating the House that the Department for Transport has negotiated a National Rail Contract for the Cross Country rail operator.

In October 2020 at the height of the pandemic, the Department entered into a unique Operating Cost Franchise Agreement with Arriva UK Trains Ltd to operate passenger rail services on Cross Country. The core term of this contract ends on 15 October 2023.

Today we have awarded a National Rail Contract to Arriva UK Trains Ltd to continue operating the Cross Country rail services. This contract, starting on 15 October 2023, will have a core term of four years and a maximum possible term of eight years. After four years,

the contract can be terminated at any point with three months' notice at my discretion.

The National Rail Contract with Arriva UK Trains Ltd includes the addition of capacity to replace the remaining High Speed Trains which are being retired, the refurbishment of both the existing Cross Country train fleets and the introduction from December 2024 of direct daily services between Cardiff and Yorkshire, the North East and Edinburgh.

## NATO Parliamentary Assembly

[HLWS1029]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Honourable friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Europe (Leo Docherty MP) has made the following Statement:

The Rt. Hon. Lord Dodds of Duncairn has replaced the Rt. Hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey Donaldson) as a Member of the United Kingdom delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

## Public Service Pension Schemes: Quadrennial Valuations

[HLWS1032]

**Baroness Penn:** My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

There are currently more than 6 million active members of the public service pensions schemes, which cover the NHS, teachers, the armed forces, the police, firefighters, local government workers, the judiciary and civil servants. Valuations of the public service pension schemes are undertaken every four years. The valuations are important as they ensure that the full costs of each scheme are understood and fully recognised by government, and that there is a fair balance of risk between members and taxpayers with regard to the cost of providing the schemes.

This valuation is the first time that a reformed cost control mechanism will be used. Following a review by the Government Actuary and a public consultation, the cost control mechanism has been reformed to address concerns around it not meeting its original objectives. The objectives are to protect the Exchequer, and by extension taxpayers, from unforeseen costs; to maintain the value of public service pension schemes to members; and to provide stability and certainty on member benefit and contribution levels. The reforms mean that the mechanism now only assesses costs associated with the post-2015 reformed schemes, increases the margin by which costs need to vary from the target in order for benefit, or member contribution, changes to be required from 2% to 3% of pensionable pay, and includes an 'economic check' such that changes will only happen if the costs would still be outside the same margin had the impact of changes in long-term economic assumptions been included. The Public Service Pension Act 2013, when taken together with regulations made under it and the Public Service

Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022, provides for the introduction of these reforms.

On 31 August 2023, HM Treasury published a document that sets out how the valuations are to be conducted for this valuation cycle<sup>[1]</sup>. The document sets a range of assumptions that departments and the Scottish and Welsh governments must use in finalising their valuations of public service pension schemes. The document allows public service employers, departments and scheme administrators to complete their valuations and prepare for the implementation of new employer contribution rates and take any necessary steps with respect to cost control mechanism results. The publication of this document follows a statutory consultation with the Government Actuary, which concluded in August 2023. Copies of this document, the 2023 Directions, have been placed in the Houses of Parliament libraries.

A key factor which influences the valuation results of all unfunded schemes is a reduction in the SCAPE (superannuation contributions adjusted for past experience) discount rate which is used to express schemes' future pension payments as a present-day cost, based on the Office for Budget Responsibility's forecast of long-term GDP growth. The updated SCAPE discount rate was announced in March 2023 and is expected to cause increases to employer contribution rates. This is because pension payments paid in the future will be discounted at a lower rate and therefore have a higher value in today's terms. HM Treasury has committed to provide funding, for all centrally funded employers, for increases in employer contribution rates resulting from the 2020 valuations as a consequence of changes to the SCAPE discount rate.

The outcome of the valuations are expected to be confirmed later this year via the publication of each scheme's valuation report. Changes to employer contribution rates will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2024, and any changes to benefits required to bring a scheme back to target cost would apply retrospectively from 1 April 2023. An additional process operates in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (England and Wales) run by the LGPS England and Wales Scheme Advisory Board.

[1]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-service-pensions-2020-valuations>

## RAAC in Education Settings

[HLWS1026]

**Baroness Barran:** My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan MP), has made the following statement:

This update follows from my oral statement to the House on 4 September.

On 6 September we published the list of 147 education settings known to be affected by RAAC. Thanks to the hard work of school and college leaders, all of these settings are offering face-to-face education, with 126

settings offering full time face-to-face education for all pupils.

An updated list of schools and colleges with confirmed cases of RAAC has been published today. As of 14 September, a further 27 settings have confirmed RAAC in some of their buildings. Of the 174 confirmed cases, 148 settings are providing full time face-to-face education for all pupils.

Last year, we issued a questionnaire to responsible bodies for all 22,000 schools and colleges in England to ask them to identify whether they suspected they had RAAC. Since 4 September we have been working with responsible bodies to confirm the remaining responses to this questionnaire. Responsible bodies have, as of today, submitted responses to the questionnaire for 98.6% of schools with blocks built in the target era. We are now working through all of these responses, and I continue to encourage all responsible bodies with outstanding responses to send these to the department as soon as possible.

In my 4 September statement I also committed to complete outstanding surveys among schools within a matter of weeks. Due in part to additional surveying capacity we have procured, I can confirm that every school that was awaiting a survey on 4 September has now been visited or will be visited this week.

Every school or college with confirmed RAAC is assigned dedicated support from our team of 80 caseworkers who work with them to assess what support is needed and implement mitigation plans that are right for them. Mitigation plans could include other spaces on the school site, or in nearby schools or elsewhere in the local area, until structural works are carried out or temporary buildings are installed. A bespoke plan is put in place to ensure that each school and college receives the support that suits their circumstances.

Project delivery teams are on site to support schools and colleges, whether that is finding short-term accommodation options or designing and putting in place structural solutions for affected spaces.

The government will fund the emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall, this should be discussed with their caseworker and we expect all reasonable requests will be approved.

The government will fund longer-term refurbishment or rebuilding projects to rectify the RAAC issue. Schools and colleges will either be offered capital grants to fund refurbishment work to permanently remove RAAC, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, including through the School Rebuilding Programme. We will set out further details in due course. We will work closely with responsible bodies to understand and assess what the right solution is for each case.

I want to reassure pupils, parents and staff that this government will do whatever it takes to support our

schools and colleges in responding to RAAC and minimise disruption to education.

### Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme Update

[HLWS1038]

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

I am making a statement to correct the record in relation to the Supplementary Estimate for UK Export Finance.

The final paragraph of the statement I made on 13 September 2023 should have read as follows:

“Parliamentary approval for additional resource of £51,000 for this new service will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for UK Export Finance. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £51,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.”

### UK Artificial Intelligence Policy Update

[HLWS1036]

**Viscount Camrose:** I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology; Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP.

I am pleased to be providing the House with an update on developments in the UK’s Government’s Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy in recent months.

AI promises to revolutionise our economy, society and everyday lives, bringing with it enormous opportunities but also significant new risks. Led by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), the UK has established itself as a world-leader in driving responsible, safe AI innovation and has committed to host the first major international summit of its kind on the safe use of AI, to be held at Bletchley Park on 1 and 2 November 2023.

#### *AI Safety Summit*

The AI Safety Summit will bring together key countries, as well as leading technology organisations, academia and civil society to inform rapid national and international action at the frontier of AI development. The Summit will focus on risks created or significantly exacerbated by the most powerful AI systems. For example, the proliferation of access to information which could undermine biosecurity. In turn, the Summit will also consider how safe frontier AI can be used for public good and to improve people’s lives – from lifesaving medical technology to safer transport. It will build on important initiatives already being taken forward in other international fora, including at the UN, OECD, G7 and G20, by agreeing practical next steps to address risks from frontier AI.

On 4 September, the Government launched the start of formal pre-Summit engagement with countries and a number of frontier AI organisations. As part of an iterative and consultative process, the Government published the five objectives that will be progressed. These build upon initial stakeholder consultation and evidence-gathering and will frame the discussion up to and at the Summit:

- i. a shared understanding of the risks posed by frontier AI and the need for action;
- ii. a forward process for international collaboration on frontier AI safety, including how best to support national and international frameworks;
- iii. appropriate measures which individual organisations should take to increase frontier AI safety;
- iv. areas for potential collaboration on AI safety research, including evaluating model capabilities and the development of new standards to support governance; and
- v. showcase how ensuring the safe development of AI will enable AI to be used for good globally.

I look forward to keeping Parliament updated as plans for the Summit progress.

#### *Frontier AI Taskforce*

Frontier AI models hold enormous potential to power economic growth, drive scientific progress and wider public benefits, while also posing potential safety risks if not developed responsibly. Earlier this year, the Government announced £100m to set up an expert taskforce to help the UK adopt the next generation of safe AI – the first of its kind.

On 7 September, we renamed the Taskforce – formerly the Foundation Model Taskforce – to the [Frontier AI Taskforce](#), explicitly acknowledging its role in evaluating risk at the frontier of AI, and systems which could pose significant risks to public safety and global security.

Since the Taskforce Chair, Ian Hogarth was appointed 12 weeks ago, the Taskforce has made rapid progress, recruiting its External Advisory Board, research teams and developing partnerships with leading frontier AI organisations, to help develop innovative approaches to addressing the risks of AI and harnessing its benefits. I am pleased to be welcoming seven leading advisors to guide and shape the Taskforce’s work through its External Advisory Board. This includes: Turing Prize Laureate Yoshua Bengio; GCHQ Director Anne Keast-Butler; the Deputy National Security Adviser Matt Collins; Chief Scientific Adviser for National Security Alex Van Someren; former Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard; Alignment Research Centre researcher Paul Christiano; and the Prime Minister’s Representative for the AI Safety Summit, Matt Clifford, who will join as Vice-Chair to unite the Taskforce’s work with preparations for the Summit - all of whom will turbo charge the Taskforce’s work by offering expert insight.

We are also drawing on experts to build a world-leading research team. Oxford researcher Yarin Gal has been



confirmed as the first Taskforce Research Director. Cambridge researcher David Kreuger will also be working with the Taskforce as it scopes its research programme in the run up the Summit. The research team will sit alongside a dedicated team of civil servants (overseen by a Senior Responsible Officer in my Department, reporting into the DSIT Permanent Secretary as Accounting Officer). Together these teams will work to develop sophisticated safety research capabilities for the UK, strengthen UK AI capability and deliver public sector use cases in Frontier AI models.

Industry collaboration, including internationally, forms the backbone of UK's approach to shared AI safety and the work of the Taskforce will be no different. The Taskforce is harnessing established industry expertise through partnerships with leading AI companies and non-profits, a number of which were outlined in our recent announcement. These partnerships will unlock advice on the national security implications of frontier AI, as well as broader support in assessing the major societal risks posed by AI systems.

#### *AI Regulation*

We are moving quickly to establish the right guardrails for AI to drive responsible, safe innovation. In March, we published the [AI Regulation White Paper](#) which set out our first steps towards establishing a regulatory framework for AI. We proposed five principles to govern AI, and committed to establishing mechanisms to monitor AI risk, and coordinate, evaluate and adapt the regulatory framework as this technology evolves. We received responses from over 400 individuals and organisations across regulators, industry, academia, and civil society. We will be publishing our response to the consultation later this year, to ensure we can take into account the outcomes of the AI Safety Summit in November.

Since publishing the White Paper, we have taken rapid steps to implement our regulatory approach. I'm pleased to confirm that my Department has now established a central AI risk function which will identify, measure and monitor existing and emerging AI risks using expertise from across government, industry, and academia, including the Taskforce. It will allow us to monitor risks holistically as well as to identify any potential gaps in our approach.

We committed to an iterative approach that will evolve as new risks or regulatory gaps emerge. We note the growing concern around the risks to safety posed by our increasing use of AI, particularly the advanced capabilities of frontier AI and foundation models. Our work through the Taskforce offers vital insights into the issue and we will be convening nations to examine these particular risks at the international level. We will be providing a wider update on our regulatory approach through our response to the AI Regulation White Paper later this year.

Alongside this, we are working closely with regulators. Many have started to proactively and independently take action in line with our proposed AI framework, including the Competition and Markets Authority, which yesterday

published a [report on their initial review of AI Foundation Models](#); the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, which has published a [roadmap for software and AI as a medical device](#) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation which is piloting an [independent sandbox for the use of AI in the nuclear sector](#), with support from the Regulators' Pioneer Fund. This demonstrates how our expert UK regulators are taking innovative, world-leading approaches to ensuring AI safety and effectiveness.

We are also examining ways to improve coordination and clarity across the regulatory landscape. This includes our work with the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DCRF) to pilot a multi-regulator advisory service for AI and digital innovators, which will be known as the DRCF AI and Digital Hub. This will provide tailored support to innovators to navigate the AI and wider digital regulatory landscape and capture important insights to support the design and delivery of our AI regulatory framework.

### **UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: Membership**

[HLWS1028]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Honourable friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Europe (Leo Docherty MP) has today made the following statement:

The Rt. Hon. Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle MP) has been appointed as a full representative and Vice-Chair of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Rt Hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn MP).

The Hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones MP).

### **War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment: Tax Treatment**

[HLWS1031]

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

The Government announced in May that payments of £87,500 will be made to those who forfeited their entitlement to a pension for a service attributable death prior to 2015 and have not had this pension restored through divorce or subsequent bereavement. This payment is not intended to put a value on the widow(er)'s loss, but instead be an amount that clearly recognises that remarriage or cohabiting with a new partner does not erase the bereavement, as the Government is deeply conscious of the sacrifice these bereaved people have made.

The Government is today announcing that these payments will be exempt from income tax and National

Insurance contributions. This will ease the administrative burden on recipients who are a specially designated group who benefit from a key principle of the Armed Forces Covenant, which recognises that special consideration should be made by the nation to those, such as the

bereaved, who have given most in the service of our country.

We reiterate our sincere condolences and gratitude to the widows and widowers who lost beloved partners in service.

# Written Answers

Tuesday, 19 September 2023

## Actors' Benevolent Fund

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conduct of the Charity Commission in relation to its enquiries about the Actors' Benevolent Fund. [HL9929]

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the chair and trustees of the Charity Commission about the appointment of trustees to the Actors' Benevolent Fund, and the application of section 80 of the Charities Act 2011. [HL9930]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** As an independent regulator, the Charity Commission for England & Wales carries out its functions independently of ministerial direction or Government control. His Majesty's Government has, therefore, not discussed this case with the Charity Commission.

## Airports: Safety

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the announcement on 7 September that the UK will re-join the EU's Horizon and Copernicus programmes, whether they will include the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) to facilitate early improvements in the reliability and air safety of small airports. [HL9965]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) is separate to the Horizon and Copernicus Programmes. The DfT is working with other departments to understand the case for a UK Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS). As well as replacing the functionality of EGNOS, this system could offer benefits across transport and multiple Critical National Infrastructure sectors. To support this, the DfT is assessing the requirements following loss of access to EGNOS. The DfT is funding a UK SBAS testbed project to demonstrate the capabilities of such a system. This will inform the DfT's consideration on next steps for this work.

## Asylum and Visas: China

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) asylum, or (2) humanitarian protection, visas were granted to people from China in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021, and (d) 2022. [HL9903]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the 'Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on initial decisions made on asylum applications, including grants of refugee permission and humanitarian protection by nationality, can be found in table Asy\_D02 of the 'asylum and resettlement detailed datasets'.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest data relate to the year ending June 2023.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

table Asy\_D02 [asylum-applications-datasets-jun-2023.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-05/HL9903>

## Batteries and Electric Vehicles: Safety

Asked by *Earl Russell*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to control the import of faulty or dangerous products containing large batteries, such as e-bikes, and (2) to educate the public on safety guidance for such products; and what plans they have to require third-party approval or certification of such products prior to sale; and if they have any such plans, what is their timetable for implementing them. [HL9838]

**The Earl of Minto:** The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is prioritising work to understand and tackle the risks presented by e-bikes and e-scooters and has commissioned research into the safety of lithium-ion batteries.

OPSS and Local Authority Trading Standards Services have powers to remove unsafe products from sale and are using data and intelligence to target unsafe products at the border, including those containing large batteries.

In terms of safety awareness, in addition to the required information supplied with the products, the Home Office has published new guidance for consumers on safe battery charging practices in the home.

The Government launched its Product Safety Review consultation on 2 August which explores the future of the UK's product safety framework including consideration of third party conformity assessment requirements.

## British Museum: Theft

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact upon the reputation of the British Museum caused by recent concerns over the security of its collections; and whether they have any plans to review the museum's governance. [HL9875]

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are confident that the full extent of losses sustained through

the recent spate of thefts from the British Museum is known. [HL9877]

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they were first informed of concerns about security at the British Museum; and what action the museum's trustees were asked to undertake to address those concerns. [HL9878]

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have asked the trustees of the British Museum for a complete list of items lost, stolen or damaged while in its custody over each of the past 10 years, and when an inventory of such items will be published. [HL9879]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** My department is closely monitoring the situation at the British Museum, and engaging directly with the Museum on this concerning issue.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has spoken with the Chairman of the British Museum about this issue on a number of occasions and has sought assurances on the immediate measures that have been put in place to increase security at the Museum. She has also sought assurances on the details of the scope and timetable for the independent review of security which the Museum has instigated, led by a former trustee, Nigel Boardman, and the Chief Constable of British Transport Police, Lucy D'Orsi.

The matter is also currently under investigation by the Economic Crime Command of the Metropolitan Police. The British Museum is working with the police to support their investigations.

My department and I will continue to work closely with the British Museum – and the wider museums sector – to ensure that lessons are learned from this incident once the independent review is complete.

Further details on this matter have been set out in the Written Statements which the Secretary of State and I made to Parliament on 4 September 2023 (HCWS994 and HLWS979).

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the recovery of stolen artefacts from the British Museum; and what measures they are taking to increase security in this area. [HL9997]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** My department is closely monitoring the situation at the British Museum, and engaging directly with the Museum on this concerning issue.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has spoken with the Chairman of the British Museum about this issue on a number of occasions and has sought assurances on the immediate measures that have been put in place to increase security at the Museum. She has also sought assurances on the details of the scope and timetable for the independent review of security which the

Museum has instigated, led by a former trustee, Nigel Boardman, and the Chief Constable of British Transport Police, Lucy D'Orsi. The review will also support efforts to recover all missing collection items.

The matter is also currently under investigation by the Economic Crime Command of the Metropolitan Police. The British Museum is working with the police to support their investigations.

My department and I will continue to work closely with the British Museum – and the wider museums sector – to ensure that lessons are learned from this incident once the independent review is complete.

Further details on this matter have been set out in the Written Statements which the Secretary of State and I made to Parliament on 4 September 2023 (HCWS994 and HLWS979).

## Broadband: Digital Technology

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to evaluate the impact of full fibre roll-out on digital poverty levels. [HL9958]

**Viscount Camrose:** The Government has been clear in its commitment to bring fast, reliable, resilient infrastructure to as many people as possible as quickly as possible. In our [Digital Strategy](#) we set out our vision to enable everyone, from every industry and across the UK, to benefit from all that digital innovation can offer.

Ofcom's September 2023 Connected Nations report shows that full-fibre or gigabit-capable connections are available to 75% of all homes in the UK, with 98.7% of premises having access to infrastructure able to provide speeds of 10Mbps or more.

However, tackling digital poverty requires overcoming a range of barriers aside from the ability to access digital infrastructure (such as full fibre), including an individual's digital skills, the affordability of connectivity services and devices as well as ensuring they have sufficient motivation and confidence to go - and stay - online.

## Business: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many businesses relocated from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in the last four years. [HL9862]

**The Earl of Minto:** 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.

### **Business: Pay**

*Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many businesses and organisations had a wage bill of between £2 and £3 million in (1) 2021–22, and (2) 2022–23. [HL9919]

**Baroness Penn:** We estimate there were 11,100 and 12,200 employers with wage bills between £2m and £3m, in the 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023 tax-years respectively.

### **Carbon Emissions: Manufacturing Industries**

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the amount of electrical power that will be required to decarbonise UK industry, and (2) where that power will be required in the UK. [HL10116]

**Lord Callanan:** Analysis carried out for the Electricity Networks Strategic Framework found that industrial electricity demand in 2050 could range between 85 and 115 Terawatt hours depending on resource and energy efficiency, and fuel switching choices between electricity and hydrogen. This range builds on the two scenarios presented in the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, Annex 4.

This analysis will evolve over time and continues to be used to inform networks policy, including future regional industrial demand for electricity.

### **Certification Quality Marks**

*Asked by Lord Hain*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they made before announcing the decision to continue recognition of the EU's CE mark for many UK companies, replacing plans for the mandatory introduction of the UK Conformity Assessment in 2024. [HL9778]

**Lord Offord of Garvel:** The Government's engagement with businesses and organisations in the UK and internationally informed the decision to continue CE recognition of goods on the UK market for regulations owned by the Department for Business and Trade.

The government continues to engage with industry, both domestically and internationally. Businesses and trade associations repeatedly expressed significant concerns with the duplicative costs for placing goods on EU and UK markets, and the lack of business-readiness

for compliance with mandatory UK Conformity Assessment, which potentially may have resulted in product shortages in GB or increased costs to GB consumers. Extending CE recognition will help in mitigating these challenges.

*Asked by Lord Hain*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether post-Brexit arrangements include recognition by the EU of UK testing facilities for conformity assessment of products; and why some UK firms now need to seek approval from the EU for goods destined only for the UK market. [HL9781]

**Lord Offord of Garvel:** For most products being placed on the market in Great Britain (GB), products can comply with either GB or EU product regulations. UK Conformity Assessment Bodies can continue to certify goods for the UK market.

The EU does not recognise UK testing facilities for conformity assessment of products. Nevertheless, the UK is committed to exploring available avenues that could facilitate acceptance of EU-UK conformity assessment results and support British businesses.

### **China: Sanctions**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many officials of the government of China are currently under UK Government sanctions. [HL9904]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has sanctioned four Chinese officials and one Government entity under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime. These individuals/entity were designated in March 2021 in coordination with international partners. They were designated for enforcing repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang which amount to violations of the right not to be subject to torture or cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. These measures were taken alongside the US, Canada and the EU, sending a clear message to the Chinese Government that the international community will not turn a blind eye to such serious and systematic violations of basic human rights.

### **Collections: British Museum**

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have received representations from foreign governments or other interested parties regarding items in the British Museum's collections looted from former British colonial possessions in West Africa or Ethiopia in the light of recent concerns over the security of the museum's collections. [HL9876]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** His Majesty's Government has not received any such representations.

## Community Health Services: Children

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce backlogs in community child health services. [HL9989]

**Lord Markham:** We are committed to reducing community health care waiting lists for children and young people. That is why the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets commitments to grow the community workforce, with increases in training places for district nurses, health visitors, school nurses and allied health professionals, and a renewed focus on retaining existing staff.

## Coroners

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to review the guidance for coroners in Prevention of Future Deaths Reports. [HL10072]

**Lord Bellamy:** The Chief Coroner has issued Guidance for coroners on Reports to Prevent Future Deaths which can be found at: [Revised Chief Coroner's Guidance No.5 Reports to Prevent Future Deaths\[i\] - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#).

Any review of the Guidance is a matter for the Chief Coroner in his independent judicial capacity.

## Crops: Climate Change

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what, if any, support is available to domestic food producers whose crops are damaged or lost as a result of climate change-related extreme weather events. [HL9741]

**Lord Benyon:** We are aware of the concerns on variable weather conditions. The full impact will become more apparent as the harvest progresses – results will vary by region, area, crop, soil type, and fertiliser applications amongst other factors. The reality of the UK climate means that fluctuations in yield are expected and managed year on year by farmers.

We are keeping the situation under close review, including through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group (UKAMMG), which was set up by Defra and the Devolved Administrations to monitor the UK market situation across all key agricultural commodities. We also continue to regularly engage with industry to supplement our analysis with real-time intelligence.

## Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Administration

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

To ask His Majesty's Government how many applications for (1) licences, (2) grants, (3) subsidies,

and (4) certificates, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs carried out (a) on paper, and (b) digitally, in the last year for which records are held. [HL9744]

**Lord Benyon:** The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

Defra Group is developing a digital transformation strategy which will express our collective ambition to provide joined-up digital services for citizens and businesses and to deliver environmental outcomes in a more efficient and effective way, through harnessing opportunities presented by digital data and technology.

Areas of focus for our citizen and business facing services include:

Reducing the number of paper forms people are required to complete.

Making our services joined-up, consistent, user-friendly and accessible.

Reducing manual processing to provide faster outcomes.

As part of the strategy, we will explore our common types of services i.e. licences and grants, to identify opportunities to improve and consolidate our service and technology estate.

## Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff

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

To ask His Majesty's Government how many digital, data and technology staff (including contractors) are currently employed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; and what assessment they have made of the adequacy of that number. [HL9739]

**Lord Benyon:** As of 31 July 2023 the number of permanent digital, data and technology staff in Defra was 940, and the number of contingent workers was 201. This is the number of staff in our Digital, Data and Technology Services Directorate only, there will be some additional staff working on digital, data and technology activity elsewhere across the rest of Defra group. Our HR systems do not currently allow us to identify staff in this category.

Defra continually keeps its resourcing under review. For digital, data and technology (DDaT) roles, there are particular challenges when it comes to recruiting and retaining civil servant staff – as acknowledged by the recent National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports into Defra's technology, and by the Central Digital and Data Office's own analysis and roadmap for DDaT in Government more generally. Defra therefore uses a blended model of civil servants, contingent labour and suppliers to deliver DDaT work, and has the resourcing needed to deliver the work required. As market conditions change, Defra regularly

reviews the most efficient and effective blend of resourcing to deliver its work.

### **Disability: Parliamentary Estate**

*Asked by Lord Shinkwin*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 3 July (HL Deb col 991), when they will publish a response to the Policy Exchange paper *A Culture of Impunity: The ongoing erosion of disabled people's access to Parliament and Westminster*, published on 8 June. [HL9950]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government agrees that disabled people should be able to go about their everyday business without being affected by the unlawful and inconsiderate actions of others. It agrees that the issues highlighted in the Policy Exchange paper, including the disruptive actions of protestors and the inconsiderate behaviour of some cyclists and e-scooter riders, can have a disproportionately negative impact on the journeys of disabled people in and around the Westminster area.

However, the Government does not agree that there is a culture of impunity in relation to these issues. Cycling or riding an e-scooter on the pavement is already an offence, and enforcement of this is a matter for the police, who also have powers to deal with protestors who are blocking the pavement or highway. Like all highway authorities, Westminster City Council has the power to remove items including abandoned rental cycles or scooters from the pavement or highway if they are causing an obstruction. Operational decisions on these and other issues are a matter for the police and Westminster City Council.

### **Energy: Carbon Emissions**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support energy firms to meet emissions reduction plans. [HL10087]

**Lord Callanan:** The Department is leading the delivery of the target to decarbonise the electricity sector fully by 2035, subject to security of supply. A priority area of energy production for reducing emissions is North Sea oil and gas extraction.

Through the North Sea Transition Deal, the sector committed to reducing emissions by 50% from 2018 to 2030, through measures including ending routine flaring and venting and delivering platform electrification. The North Sea Transition Authority estimates that UK upstream greenhouse gas emissions fell by 3% year-on-year in 2022, representing an overall reduction of 23% from 2018.

### **Food: Public Sector**

*Asked by Lord Rogan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of food purchased by UK public sector bodies in each of the last three years has been sourced from UK producers. [HL10158]

**Lord Benyon:** The Government does not collect data on the quantity of UK produced food sourced by public sector bodies. Defra consulted on proposed changes to the public sector Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services last year and expect to publish revised standards in due course. Proposed changes to data reporting in the public sector supply chain formed part of this consultation.

### **Food: Waste**

*Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act 1996 in the United States; what plans they have, if any, to introduce similar legislation to reduce food waste and allow for "apparently wholesome food" to be donated to charities; and whether they have received any representations from charities about the case for such legislation. [HL10047]

**Lord Benyon:** There are no plans to introduce legislation in this area. The absence of such legislation has not been seen as a key barrier to redistributors when it comes to increasing the availability of surplus food. Legal protection for suppliers of food, including the charities and organisations distributing surplus food, already exists in the form of the Food Safety Act 1990's 'due diligence' provision. This is designed to balance the protection of the consumer from defective food with the right of suppliers of food not to be convicted of an offence they have taken all reasonable care to avoid committing.

### **Foreign Companies: Property**

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, further to the factsheet published on 4 March 2022 which stated that the Register of Overseas Entities "will require anonymous foreign owners of UK property to reveal their real identities to ensure criminals cannot hide behind secretive chains of shell companies, setting a global standard for transparency", and the implementation of the register on 1 August 2022, they will publish a table showing how many property owners have so far failed to reveal their real identities and the penalties levied upon them for failure to comply with the register's requirements. [HL9910]

**The Earl of Minto:** As of 7 September 2023, over 29,000 overseas entities have registered with Companies House. So far, over 1,200 warning notices have been issued to unregistered overseas entities. Warning notices are a pre-cursor to the imposition of a financial penalty. Financial penalties to the value of around £660,000 have so far been issued. The Government currently has no plans to publish a list of unregistered entities, or the penalties imposed on them. This would distract from the important compliance work currently being undertaken.

### Freedom of Information: Special Advisers

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they allow special advisers in government to review and delay responses to freedom of information requests. [HL9872]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** All Freedom of Information requests are processed according to the provisions of the Act. In 2022, government departments and other monitored bodies responded to 86% of requests within the permitted time limits. FOI statistics are published regularly and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics>

It is in line with the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers to give assistance and advice on any aspect of department business, including on requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act, and to convey a minister's views to officials. This has been the case under successive Administrations. The Cabinet Office has circulated a guidance note to cross-government practitioners which sets out the roles of special advisers in the process of responding to requests for information and which is available on Parliament's website at:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmpublicadm/576/report.html#heading-1>.

### Funerals: Standards

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of delays in funerals being caused by (1) the existing system for registering a death, (2) the number of available pathologists, (3) delays in completion of Medical Certificate Cause of Death forms and access to local GPs, (4) the availability of mortuary storage at local hospitals and public mortuaries, and (5) any delays by medical examiners. [HL9990]

**Lord Bellamy:** Whilst the Government does not have operational responsibility for the provision of funeral services, we are aware of funeral delays in some areas and acknowledge that these are often exacerbated by pressures from within the wider death management system.

Government departments are taking a collaborative approach to reforming the death registration system as

part of the roll out of the statutory medical examiner scheme which will come into force in April 2024. The doctor who attended the deceased during their last illness has a legal responsibility to complete a Medical Certificate Cause of Death (MCCD) as soon as possible to enable the registration of the death to take place. Guidance for doctors on completing an MCCD, available on Gov.uk, emphasises this point. As part of the work on the statutory medical examiner scheme, the Department of Health and Social Care is looking at expanding the pool of doctors who can sign the MCCD forms. When the demand on civil registration services is high, death registration appointments will always take priority over other registration appointments.

The Government continues to look at wider improvements to the death management system's capacity and resilience, including mortuary capacity. The shortage of pathologists is a long-standing and cross-cutting issue. The Government is determined to make progress as soon as practicable. To that end, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State is engaging with Ministerial colleagues to implement effective solutions through a cross-government action plan.

### High Speed 2 Line: Concrete

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government in which locations on the HS2 route reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete has been (1) specified, or (2) used, in building (a) already completed, or (b) under way. [HL9870]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Survey work is underway. The Government is bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

### Incontinence: Health Services

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of continence care specialists in the NHS workforce; and what plans they have to further support continence care specialists following the publication of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan in June. [HL10032]

**Lord Markham:** No specific assessment has been made of the number of continence care specialists within the National Health Service workforce. NHS England publishes Hospital and Community Health Service workforce statistics for England, including by NHS trust. The published data is not though able to identify staff specialising in continence care.

The modelling and staff training plans presented in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan look at the NHS as a whole at a high level to inform Government decisions on the workforce the NHS will need to meet the changing



needs of the population over the next 15 years. This is designed to identify the right supply of staff across all clinical pathways and specialisms rather than workforce plans for specific services.

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that current guidance on quality continence care has been transitioned into Integrated Care Systems since April 2022. [HL10033]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to conduct a new National Audit of Continence Care. [HL10034]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress has been made on the development of care pathways by the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project since it recommenced following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL10035]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will provide (1) an update on the timeframe for the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project, and (2) details of which stakeholders have been consulted in respect of that project, since it recommenced following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL10036]

**Lord Markham:** NHS England's Excellence in Continence Care guidance published in July 2018 brings together evidence-based resources and research for guidance for integrated care boards (ICBs), National Health Service providers, health and social care staff. It indicates that personalised care including personal health budgets can be arranged locally by ICBs to help people manage and pay for their continence care needs. A copy of the guidance is attached.

There are no plans at this stage to conduct a new National Audit of Continence Care.

NHS England will report on the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project setting out progress of development of Incontinence care pathways to its Excellence in Continence Care Board in October 2023. This will be published shortly afterwards setting out next steps for improving incontinence care pathways and will be shared with stakeholders for their consideration and input.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Excellence in Continence Care [excellence-in-continence-care.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-09-11/HL10033>

## Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish a table showing the UK steel production, steel imports, steel exports, and the investment needed to make the UK self-sufficient in the production of steel. [HL9912]

### Lord Offord of Garvel:

Measure	Estimate (2022; millions of tonnes)	Source
Total UK Crude Steel Production	6.0	World Steel Association ( <a href="#">here</a> )
Total UK Imports of Semi-Finished and Finished Steel Products (Defined by Harmonised System codes 7206 – 7307)	5.5	HMRC Trade Info ( <a href="#">here</a> )
Total UK Exports of Semi-Finished and Finished Steel Products (Defined by Harmonised System codes 7206 – 7307)	3.4	HMRC Trade Info ( <a href="#">here</a> )

We have not made an estimate on the investment needed to make the UK self-sufficient in the production of steel, nor are we aware of any such estimates from external sources.

## Languages: Education

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the uptake of the learning of foreign languages in schools. [HL9881]

**Baroness Barran:** The government remains committed to increasing the proportion of pupils who choose to study a language up to GCSE and beyond, as well as to improving the quality of language teaching at both primary and secondary schools.

In March 2023, the department announced a new £14.9 million Language Hubs programme, including a distinct German Promotion Project. The programme will be comprised of up to 25 lead hub schools, all of which will work with partner schools to improve standards of language teaching across the country, in line with recommendations of the Teaching Schools Council's 2016 modern foreign languages pedagogy review.

Since 2016, the department has funded the £20 million Mandarin Excellence Programme, which supports schools and teachers to deliver intensive Mandarin study to increase the quality of Mandarin lessons and to increase uptake in the subject. The programme provides professional development and teaching resources for teachers in participating schools across England.

From September 2024, teaching of the revised subject content for French, German, and Spanish GCSEs will begin. The new content is intended to encourage more students to take up these important subjects, making them more accessible to all pupils.

To ensure high standards of modern foreign language teaching, language curriculum materials and associated resources will be developed by Oak National Academy, as part of its second tranche of procurement. The first materials will be available from autumn 2024, and full curriculum packages by autumn 2025. This will ensure that high quality, optional lessons are available nationwide, benefitting both teachers and pupils.

### Low Emission Zones: Greater London

*Asked by Lord Strathcarron*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to use all or any of sections 141(1), 142(2) or 143 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to reverse the expansion of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone. [HL9914]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** It was the Mayor's decision to expand the ULEZ to the Greater London boundary. There was no legal requirement for the Mayor to consult Government on his decision. The only powers for Government sit under Section 143 of the GLA Act which are focused on correcting inconsistencies between national transport policy and the Mayor's Transport Strategy. Therefore, these powers cannot be exercised.

### Manufacturing Industries: Government Assistance

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the findings in the S&P Global/CIPS UK Manufacturing PMI survey, published on 1 September, which found that manufacturing industry has experienced "slower market conditions" and "declining new order intakes", what steps they are taking to provide support to that industry. [HL10005]

**The Earl of Minto:** The Government is ensuring the UK remains the best place to establish and grow a manufacturing business. The UK has the 8th largest global manufacturing economy and we are and will continue to be a major manufacturing nation.[1]

We are investing in the sectors future through the Advanced Propulsion Centre, the Aerospace Technology Initiative, and Made Smarter, the manufacturing digitalisation programme. This month we announced a further £50 million for automotive research projects.

We remain one of the World's manufacturing nations, with Jaguar Land Rover, building the UK's first gigafactory, and Stellantis, Nissan, Boeing and most recently BMW announcing significant commitments to UK based manufacturing.

Our plan for Advanced Manufacturing will continue to target and augment our support.

[1] <https://unctad.org/statistics>

### Medical Records: Data Protection

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the differences in (1) the remit, and (2) the membership, of NHS England's Advisory Group on Data and the Department of Health and Social Care's National Data Advisory Group. [HL10083]

**Lord Markham:** The Advisory Group for Data (AGD) is convened by NHS England and builds on the previous work by the Independent Group Advising on the Release of Data (IGARD). Currently operating in interim form, it includes the members of IGARD, alongside a representative of the Caldicott Guardian of NHS England, the Data Protection Officer, and senior staff supporting on Data and Analytics.

It provides NHS England with access to expert advice and assurance on internal and external access to data in relation to the exercise of NHS England's functions transferred to it from NHS Digital, including on specific requests for the dissemination of information in accordance with the statutory guidance issued by my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Its minutes are published on the NHS England website.

The National Data Advisory Group (NDAG) is convened by the Department to provide strategic policy advice on data and data sharing, including the implementation of Data Saves Lives, the data strategy. It does not advise on specific data sharing requests and has a different membership to the ADG. NDAG includes, among others, the National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care, the Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Chief Executive of the Patient's Association.

### National Grid

*Asked by Lord Whitty*

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional capacity they forecast is needed on the National Grid to accommodate the level of demand from the anticipated increase in the number of electric vehicles by 2030; and what additional capital costs are required by such increase in capacity for transmission and distribution per annum up to 2030. [HL10010]

**Lord Callanan:** The Electricity Networks Strategic Framework sets out the Government's approach to readying the network for the increase in peak electricity demand anticipated as we electrify transport and other sectors. We expect peak electricity demand to increase to approximately 80 GW in 2030 of which electric vehicle demand makes up approximately 10%, before any demand side response. Due to existing spare distribution

network capacity, we do not expect this to lead to any significant rise in distribution network capital costs before 2030. We expect £30 billion of transmission network investment between 2023 and 2030.

### National Policing Board

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the appointment of independent members to the National Policing Board and the current compliance of that process with the law. [HL9894]

**Lord Sharpe of Epsom:** The standing membership of the National Policing Board comprises senior policing leaders along with the relevant ministers and government officials.

On an annual basis, policing leaders in Northern Ireland and Scotland are also invited. The Board's Terms of Reference provide a full list of members and are published on gov.uk.

These also provide the flexibility to invite additional representatives and specialists where the agreed programme of work requires it. Minutes of the National Policing Board are published on gov.uk and list all the members and special invitees in attendance.

### North Korea

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks faced by North Korean refugees who are sent back to North Korea. [HL9868]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Despite claims by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that forcibly repatriated refugees are well treated and reintegrated into DPRK society, it is clear from UN and NGO reports that they are often mistreated by the authorities. The UN Human Rights Council resolution on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, which the UK cosponsored in April 2023, urges the DPRK to ensure their citizens who are expelled or repatriated to the country are able to return in safety, dignity and are treated humanely.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to raise the refusal by the government of China to provide assistance or protection to North Korean refugees in the UN Human Rights Council. [HL9869]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK regularly co-sponsors the UN Human Rights Council resolution on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, most recently adopted on 4 April 2023, which strongly urges all States to respect the fundamental principle of non-refoulement. The UK actively promotes the implementation of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and we regularly call on all countries to abide by the principle of non-refoulement and

not forcibly return people to countries where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.

### Pakistan: Christianity

*Asked by Lord Harries of Pentregarth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Pakistan in connection with recent attacks on Christians, including the burning of eight churches in the Jaranwala area of Faisalabad. [HL9888]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK strongly condemns violence against Christians in Pakistan. Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), including for minority communities, remains central to the UK Government's human rights engagement in Pakistan. On 21 August I wrote to Pakistan's caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, urging the government to ensure the safety of the Christian community following the attacks in Jaranwala. This was a point I also raised directly with Mr Jilani during our meeting in London on 13th September. I also welcome the recent public statements in Pakistan by political and religious leaders that perpetrators of these shocking attacks against Pakistan's religious minorities must be held to account and the need for all places of worship to be protected. Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani publicly called for those responsible to be brought to justice and reiterated the UK's commitment to freedom of religion or belief for all.

### Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

*Asked by Lord Hayward*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answers on 30 January (HL4799) and 13 February (HL5334), what review of the roles of traffic marshals on the parliamentary estate has been undertaken, and when. [HL9889]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** The role of traffic marshals has been reviewed regularly since their implementation. Over the summer, a thorough review of the current traffic management system, including traffic marshals, was carried out. The review recommended the one-way traffic system remain in place, but also recognised that users of the Estate have become used to the traffic system and that it is now part of "business as usual." This means that while the risk assessment still recommends traffic mitigations, including traffic marshals, the number of marshals can be reduced. The number will be revised to five operating traffic marshals, plus one supervisor and two relief marshals, down from a previous 11 marshals.

Aside from the review mentioned above, the traffic management system is reviewed whenever there is a change or incident related to logistics and traffic on the Estate.

*Asked by Lord Hayward*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answers on 30 January (HL4799) and 13 February (HL5334), what comparable sites were considered, when identifying best practice, which have multiple police on duty at exits onto the public highway. [HL9891]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Direct comparisons were not made to other sites which have multiple police on duty at exits on to the public highway. The traffic control measures that have been put in place were based on risk assessments, traffic modelling carried out prior to the operation of the one-way system, stakeholder engagement, and construction industry best practice. On construction sites pedestrians and traffic are almost always segregated, but where this is not possible, such as on the Parliamentary Estate, additional mitigations are required.

*Asked by Lord Hayward*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answers on 30 January (HL4799) and 13 February (HL5334), what is the reduction in the number of (1) traffic levels, and (2) pedestrian usage, on the parliamentary estate during recess periods. [HL9892]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** For vehicles, the Palace of Westminster typically shows a 30% reduction in vehicle movements during recess periods. During sitting periods, a typical week will have circa 3,500 vehicle movements compared to 2,500 vehicle movements during recess periods.

Pedestrian usage remains remarkably consistent during recess periods. This is because staff remain working on the Palace of Westminster and visitor numbers increase, particularly during the summer recess periods.

*Asked by Lord Hayward*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answers on 30 January (HL4799) and 13 February (HL5334), which stakeholders requested traffic marshals prior to their introduction and to whom those requests were communicated. [HL9890]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** A wide range of stakeholders were engaged before the implementation of the one-way traffic management system by Strategic Estates Construction Management Team. The key stakeholder groups were Parliamentary Safety Assurance Board (PSAB) and the Logistics Steering Group, a sub-group of PSAB. Concerns for stakeholders were the management of interface between pedestrians and traffic, the need to accommodate quick changes to traffic management due to events or incidents, and that Police are there for security and not to direct traffic. As such, traffic marshals were identified as best practice to meet the needs of the Estate. The traffic management solution, including use of traffic marshals, was approved by PSAB and the Logistics Steering Group prior to implementation.

*Asked by Lord Hayward*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answers on 30 January (HL4799) and 13 February (HL5334), why the risk assessment undertaken made no reference to (1) existing control measures, or (2) the high level of driver certification of most drivers using the parliamentary estate. [HL9893]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** The risk assessment did take into consideration existing control measures.

There are users with differing levels of driver certification on the estate and this is taken into consideration when implementing traffic control measures. Moreover, a large proportion of drivers with a high level of driver certification using the Estate does not lessen Parliament's legal responsibilities, or commitment to industry best practice, to provide safe access and egress for pedestrians through segregation or management of areas where vehicles and pedestrians share the same space.

## **Pesticides: Risk Assessment**

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to reform the procedures for risk assessments of biopesticides prior to their approval for release onto the commercial market. [HL10193]

**Lord Benyon:** The term "biopesticide" covers a diverse group of substances with very different modes of action. They often, but not always, have a lower risk profile than conventional pesticides and we recognise that they can play an important role as part of an integrated pest management approach. We plan to review regulatory processes and data requirements to identify where approvals and permissions for biopesticides can be made simpler and speedier. This should reduce regulatory burdens on applicants and lead to quicker approval timelines, without compromising environmental and human health standards.

## **Schools: Buildings**

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with their counterparts in the devolved governments regarding the threat of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete to the safety of school buildings throughout the UK. [HL9918]

**Baroness Barran:** This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. We have acted decisively and proactively to tackle this issue.

The Department regularly engages with the Devolved Administrations at both an official and Ministerial level. The Department offered Ministerial meetings with counterparts in the Scottish and Welsh administrations, and with officials in the Northern Irish administration on

31<sup>st</sup> August. The meeting was accepted by the Scottish Minister for Education, and by officials in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Since then, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has offered meetings with all Devolved Administrations to offer support and further discussions should they wish to introduce a similar approach to tackling RAAC in their school estates, such as a programme similar to the Department's questionnaire and survey programme which has been running since 2022.

All the relevant case information has been shared with the Devolved Administrations. Most recently the Department held a meeting at official level on 13 September 2023.

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential risks of schools in England that have been built using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete. [HL9957]

*Asked by Earl Russell*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many schools have not returned a reinforced autoclave aerated concrete survey; and what actions they are taking to ensure the safety of teachers and pupils in schools where the safety of buildings is not yet known. [HL9996]

**Baroness Barran:** Nothing is more important than the safety of children and staff. It has always been the case that where we are made aware of a building that may pose an immediate risk, the Department takes immediate action.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary-aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day-to-day basis, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools and to alert us if there is a concern with a building.

The Department has acted decisively and proactively to tackle this issue. This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. The Department issued comprehensive guidance in 2018, and subsequent years, to all responsible bodies highlighting the potential risks associated with RAAC and supporting them to identify this within their buildings, as well as to take appropriate steps in meeting their obligations to keep buildings safe. The most recent guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-estates-guidance>.

There are over 22,000 schools and colleges in England, and the vast majority are unaffected. A significant proportion of the estate was built outside the period where RAAC was used, with around one third of the estate built since 2001, therefore, the Department has focused efforts on buildings built in the post-war decades.

The Department issued a questionnaire in March 2022, asking responsible bodies to inform the Department of

any suspected RAAC identified in their estates. Responsible bodies have submitted questionnaires for over 98% of schools with blocks built in the target era, of which there are 14,900. We are pressing all remaining schools to get checks completed, to determine which schools require surveys.

The Department is contacting responsible bodies to help them respond to this request and to advise on what needs to be done, so that they can establish whether they believe they have RAAC. This work will continue until we have a response for all target era schools.

Schools and colleges where RAAC is suspected are being fast tracked for surveying, which is used to confirm whether RAAC is actually present. All schools and colleges that have already told us they suspect they might have RAAC will be surveyed within a matter of weeks, in many cases in a matter of days.

All schools where RAAC is confirmed are provided with a dedicated caseworker to support them and help implement a mitigation plan and minimise the disruption to children's learning.

Across Government, Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed 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 Department for Education published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September, and committed to providing further updates.

Schools will contact parents where RAAC is identified and inform them of any impacts on their child. The vast majority of schools are unaffected. Any parents that are unsure if their child's school is affected should contact their school directly.

While some short-term disruption is inevitable, all available measures will be taken to minimise disruption to pupil learning and ensure that pupils continue to receive face-to-face teaching. Where there is any disturbance to face-to-face education, schools will prioritise attendance for vulnerable children and young people and children of key workers. The guidance published by the Department in August also includes guidance on provision for pupils with SEND and sets out expectations that schools continue to provide free school meals to eligible pupils.

The Department will fund emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall or office, the department will provide that support for all reasonable requests. The Department will also fund longer term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term.

All previously confirmed School Rebuilding Programme projects announced in 2021 and 2022 will continue to go ahead. A full list of confirmed projects can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

Further information on RAAC in education settings is available on the Education Hub:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/06/new-guidance-on-raac-in-education-settings/>.

### Schools: Curriculum

*Asked by Lord Hampton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the letter from the Secretary of State for Education to all members of the House of Lords on 24 August where she stated that "we've also seen some really encouraging trends in the subjects that pupils are choosing to study, with more students opting to take core academic subjects this year", how they define core "academic subjects"; and why they are so encouraged by the uptake of those subjects. [HL9887]

**Baroness Barran:** Core academic subjects are defined as those that are included within the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The EBacc is made up of English language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, including computer science, either history or geography, and a modern or ancient language.

The department is encouraged by the increased uptake in these core academic subjects because they are essential for many degrees, and they provide a sound basis for a variety of careers beyond the age of 16. In particular, they can enable pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to follow a curriculum which will give them similar post-16 options as their non-disadvantaged peers, fostering greater social mobility.

The EBacc's core academic subjects provide a strong foundation for all pupils regardless of whether that want to take an academic, technical, or vocational route post-16.

### Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to help small and medium sized enterprises reduce their carbon footprint. [HL9959]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government has relaunched the UK Business Climate Hub, which provides free, detailed advice on how SMEs can reduce their emissions and signposts funding opportunities.

The Hub will soon be complemented by a new Energy Advice Service, providing SMEs with trusted advice on energy efficiency.

Alongside local support schemes, businesses can access the Government's Boiler Upgrade Scheme, Workplace Charging Scheme and Cycle to Work scheme.

The Net Zero Council has established a working group to champion the needs of SMEs.

### Solar Events

*Asked by Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 6 June (HL7991), what assessment they have made of (1) the size and power of the coronal mass ejection (CME) of 12 March in comparison to that of the "Carrington Event" of 1859, and (2) the impact this CME would have had if it had travelled towards, rather than away from, the Earth. [HL9922]

**Lord Callanan:** The Met Office is responsible for advising the Government of the likelihood and impact of Severe Space Weather, such as coronal mass ejections. An event like that of 12 March travelling towards Earth would have global impacts on key sectors including energy, telecommunications and transport. The Met Office Severe Space Weather Scales set out further information on the potential impacts.

### Tobacco: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultations they carried out with departments in Northern Ireland regarding the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023. [HL10100]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultations they have carried out as to whether the rules and laws which will now be applied in Northern Ireland as a result of EU law applied under the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023 should also apply in the rest of the UK. [HL10102]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what further assessment they have given to regulatory divergence with the rest of the UK as a result of the application of the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023 to Northern Ireland. [HL10104]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how the different standards between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK as a result of the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023 will be enforced; what paperwork will be required; and what checks will be carried out. [HL10105]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultations they have carried out with District Councils in Northern Ireland about the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023; and

what estimate they have made of the cost to councils of enforcing these regulations. [[HL10106](#)]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to appoint the independent advisory panel required under the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023; what consultations have taken place about the membership; and who has so far been appointed to the panel. [[HL10107](#)]

**Lord Markham:** Departmental officials consulted with officials from the Department of Health in Northern Ireland about the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023.

No consultations have taken place as to whether regulatory changes in Northern Ireland should apply to heated tobacco products in Great Britain. Heated tobacco use remains low in Great Britain, but we will keep this under review, working with our counterparts in the devolved administrations.

The assessment given to regulatory divergence with the rest of the United Kingdom on the introduction of the regulation is that heated tobacco use throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland is low. From 23 October 2023, there may be heated tobacco products that are permitted on the Great Britain market but that are not on the Northern Ireland market. It continues to be policy of the Department in England to discourage people from taking up tobacco, and to help people quit the use of it.

It will be an offence for anyone to sell heated tobacco products prohibited in the regulations in Northern Ireland. Each district council in Northern Ireland will enforce the new requirements under existing funding. These new requirements are not expected to be a significant burden on each district council, given the low use of heated tobacco products in Northern Ireland.

To assist with regulatory compliance for businesses selling heated tobacco, the Department has sent communications information on the regulations to the Northern Ireland Retail body and the Federation of Small Businesses, along with the suppliers of heated tobacco products on the Northern Ireland market. Information was also shared through the Northern Ireland Business Information website. The changes were also communicated to Northern Ireland councils through the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

No new regulation has been created in the Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023 regarding creating an independent advisory panel. Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/786 continues to apply in Northern Ireland and lays down the procedure for the establishment and operation of an independent advisory panel to assist in this determination.

## Trade Agreements: USA

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with business groups in the United States of America with regard to any potential digital deal with the Office of the United States Trade Representative. [[HL9852](#)]

**Lord Offord of Garvel:** The U.S. is our largest trading partner, with trade reaching over £290 billion this year, and our most important national trading partner in data-enabled exports. The UK exported over £75 billion worth of digitally delivered services to the U.S. in 2023.

Ministers and officials regularly engage with a wide range of stakeholders including business groups, civil society and SMEs in both the UK and the U.S. on a range of digital trade and wider trade matters.

## Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

*Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy on the storage, disposal or re-use of any serviceable inflatable craft or similar craft used by cross-Channel migrants. [[HL9895](#)]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** I refer the Noble Lord to the answer provided to PQ HL7826 on 23/05/23.

## Universal Credit: Deductions

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether individuals moving from legacy benefits to Universal Credit with tax credit debt will have deductions taken from their Universal Credit award commencing on the first Assessment Period. [[HL10050](#)]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** Once transferred to DWP for recovery, Tax Credit debt is recovered in the same way as overpaid DWP benefits. Where the customer is in receipt of Universal Credit, deductions are taken from the next available assessment period. Customers are advised of the rate of deduction through a notification posted in their journal.

DWP has a well-established process for working with individuals to support them to manage their debt. We remain committed to working with anyone who is struggling with their repayment terms and encourage anyone who cannot afford the proposed rate of repayment to contact us.

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what prior warning individuals moving from legacy benefits to Universal Credit are given about deductions from their first Universal Credit payment about tax credit debt. [[HL10051](#)]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** HMRC notifies the customer of the amount of debt being transferred and explains that DWP will recover by deduction from Universal Credit. Once transferred to DWP for recovery, any Tax Credit debt is recovered in the same way as overpaid DWP benefits. Where the customer is in receipt of Universal Credit, deductions are taken from the next available assessment period. Customers are advised of the rate of deduction through a notification posted in their journal.

DWP has a well-established process for working with individuals to support them to manage their debt. We remain committed to working with anyone who is struggling with their repayment terms and encourage anyone who cannot afford the proposed rate of repayment to contact us.

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what information individuals moving from legacy benefits to Universal Credit are given about their right to request write-off and waivers of outstanding debt. [HL10052]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** Whilst customers are not automatically informed of their option to seek a waiver, we remain committed to working with anyone who is struggling with their repayment terms and encourage anyone who cannot afford the proposed rate of repayment, or that does not consider recovery appropriate given their particular circumstances, to contact the Department.

## Visas: Graduates

*Asked by **Baroness Wolf of Dulwich***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many individuals were granted an entry visa to the UK in the 2022–23 financial year under the High Potential Individual (HPI) route; and of those, (1) how many had (a) a PhD or equivalent qualification, or (b) other postgraduate qualification, (2) how many had studied a STEM subject for their highest achieved qualification, and (3) how many of those studied in each of the universities which provide eligibility for this route. [HL9920]

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** Using the data from the published migration statistics for the year ending June 2023, the number of individuals granted an entry visa to the UK in the 2022–23 financial year under the High Potential Individual route is 1851.

We are unable to provide the information requested regarding the number of individuals holding a PhD or equivalent qualification or other postgraduate qualifications, how many individuals had studied a STEM subject for their highest achieved qualification or how many individuals studied in each of the universities which provide eligibility for the High Potential Individual route as the data is not readily available and would require a review of each individual case.



## Index to Statements and Answers

<b>Written Statements.....1</b>	Coroners..... 12
Additional Jobcentre Support Pilot: Phase 2 Rollout .....1	Crops: Climate Change..... 12
Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects.....1	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Administration..... 12
Hong Kong Six-monthly Report .....1	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff ..... 12
Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan: Revised Terms of Reference .....2	Disability: Parliamentary Estate ..... 13
Inquiry into Brook House Immigration Removal Centre: Publication of Report.....2	Energy: Carbon Emissions ..... 13
Minimum Service Levels: Hospital Settings .....2	Food: Public Sector ..... 13
Ministry of Defence: New Accommodation Offer .....2	Food: Waste..... 13
National Rail Contracts: Avanti and Cross Country .....3	Foreign Companies: Property ..... 13
NATO Parliamentary Assembly.....4	Freedom of Information: Special Advisers..... 14
Public Service Pension Schemes: Quadrennial Valuations.....4	Funerals: Standards..... 14
RAAC in Education Settings.....5	High Speed 2 Line: Concrete..... 14
Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme Update ...6	Incontinence: Health Services ..... 14
UK Artificial Intelligence Policy Update .....6	Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries ..... 15
UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: Membership.....7	Languages: Education..... 15
War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment: Tax Treatment.....7	Low Emission Zones: Greater London..... 16
<b>Written Answers.....9</b>	Manufacturing Industries: Government Assistance ..... 16
Actors' Benevolent Fund.....9	Medical Records: Data Protection ..... 16
Airports: Safety .....9	National Grid ..... 16
Asylum and Visas: China .....9	National Policing Board ..... 17
Batteries and Electric Vehicles: Safety .....9	North Korea ..... 17
British Museum: Theft .....9	Pakistan: Christianity..... 17
Broadband: Digital Technology .....10	Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance ..... 17
Business: Northern Ireland.....10	Pesticides: Risk Assessment..... 18
Business: Pay.....11	Schools: Buildings..... 18
Carbon Emissions: Manufacturing Industries ....11	Schools: Curriculum..... 20
Certification Quality Marks.....11	Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions ..... 20
China: Sanctions.....11	Solar Events..... 20
Collections: British Museum.....11	Tobacco: Northern Ireland..... 20
Community Health Services: Children.....12	Trade Agreements: USA..... 21
	Undocumented Migrants: English Channel..... 21
	Universal Credit: Deductions ..... 21
	Visas: Graduates ..... 22

## Index to Statements and Answers