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**Wednesday
20 September 2023**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

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

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Written Answers

Wednesday, 20 September 2023

A47: East of England

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the dualling of the A47 from Peterborough to Kings Lynn. [HL10147]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government recognises the need to improve the A47 in the East of England. That is why we are already delivering a number of schemes to improve it as part of RIS2. We are also considering the case for further improvements as part of future strategies, informed principally by National Highways evidence-led Route Strategies process.

Artificial Intelligence: Finance

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage investment in artificial intelligence to improve productivity. [HL9916]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: The Government refreshed its National AI strategy in December 2022 setting out its ten-year plan to make Britain a global AI superpower. This builds on investment of over £2.3 billion into AI since 2014 in a range of initiatives supporting the UK's transition to an AI-enabled economy. This is encouraging innovation, and investment across sectors, from financial services to advanced manufacturing.

For example, Made Smarter is an industrial digitalisation programme funded by the Government in five English regions, which supports SMEs to adopt technologies including AI. Working in partnership with industry Made Smarter helps boost manufacturing sector growth and competitiveness.

Artificial Intelligence: Training

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Thomson Reuters Future of Professionals Report: How AI is the Catalyst for Transforming Every Aspect of Work, published in August; and in particular the finding that "just under 90 per cent of professionals expect basic mandatory AI training for all professionals over the next five years". [HL10056]

Viscount Camrose: [Thompson Reuter's Report](#) shares findings for why AI will create new opportunities in the professional sector, and how government, industry and individuals will need to continue to adapt as technology advances. Government is already working to address the

skills gap by educating and enabling individuals and businesses to proactively upskill.

We have invested £290M in a broad package of AI skills initiatives to address the skills gap, support citizens and businesses to take advantage of AI technologies, and drive economic growth. Our £30M AI and Data Science Conversion Course programme was established to address the lack of diversity and supply of talent in the UK AI labour market, by funding universities to develop masters level AI or data science courses suitable for non-STEM students. The programme provides up to 3000 scholarships for students from backgrounds currently underrepresented in the tech industry.

We recognise that as the uses of AI develop, so will people's need to understand and apply AI in their jobs. We are working with experts from the AI and skills ecosystem to develop guidance that will enable businesses to recognise relevant AI skills and invest in training their employees. We expect a first draft of the guidance to be published this autumn.

Overall, this government has an ambitious skills agenda to ensure skills training is employer focused - backed by £3.8 billion of investment over this parliament. However, public and industry collaboration will be key to unlocking AI's full potential for the UK economy. Employers can support our efforts by investing more in training and making use of government skills programmes that provide high quality training to current and future employees.

Bangladesh: Human Rights

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights implications of the current political situation in Bangladesh; and what representations they have made to the government of Bangladesh over the number of court cases being brought against supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party ahead of the upcoming elections. [HL9942]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: A UK priority in Bangladesh is to support free, fair, peaceful and participatory elections in January 2024. Bangladesh remains an FCDO Human Rights Priority Country, and in July 2023 we published our latest assessment of human rights in the country. The UK regularly raises with the Government of Bangladesh, both in public and private, the importance of free and fair elections so that the people of Bangladesh can exercise their fundamental democratic rights. We also encourage the Government to end harassment and intimidation of civil society, the media and political opposition partners, including the Bangladesh National Party. On 11-12 September, the FCDO Permanent Under Secretary visited Bangladesh for the UK/Bangladesh Strategic Dialogue, where he will underline the need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Bicycles and Electric Scooters: Pedestrian Areas

Asked by *Lord Whitty*

To ask His Majesty's Government what current laws or regulations govern the (1) use, and (2) parking, of electric, and non-electric, bicycles and scooters on pedestrian pavements; and what proposals they are considering for strengthening such laws and regulations, in particular in respect of leaving undocked hire bicycles and scooters on the pavement. [HL10009]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is an offence to use a carriage (which would include a bicycle or e-bicycle) on a footway under s.72 of the Highways Act 1835. "Carriage" may also include an e-scooter, but it is also an offence under s.34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to drive a mechanically propelled vehicle (which would include an e-scooter, though not an e-bicycle) on the footpath. Footway and footpath are defined differently, but generally refer to what is called the pavement.

In London, it is an offence to park a vehicle on a footpath under s.15 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1974 unless authorised through an administrative resolution. For the purposes of this section "vehicle" means a mechanically propelled vehicle. Outside London, parking on pavements is permitted unless specifically prohibited by a local authority making a Traffic Regulation Order to that effect. The Department for Transport is currently considering consultation responses on proposals to tackle pavement parking outside London.

It is an offence under s.22 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to leave a vehicle (including bicycles, e-bicycles and e-scooters) on a road (including a pavement) in a position that carries a danger of injury to others and under s.137 of the Highways Act 1980 wilfully to obstruct passage.

Enforcement of these regulations is a matter for the police. All road users have a duty to behave in a safe, responsible manner and to follow the rules in The Highway Code.

When parliamentary time allows, the Department intends to create a new licensing framework for shared mobility operations, including bicycles, e-bicycles and e-scooters, giving local transport authorities the additional powers they need to shape and manage cycle, e-cycle and e-scooter rental schemes. This would include the ability to set rules about the management of rental cycles, e-cycles and e-scooters on the pavement.

Children: Reading

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the National Literacy Trust report *Children and Young People's Reading in 2023*, published on 4 September, what steps they are taking to encourage reading in children and young people, particularly those aged 8 to 11, including investing in libraries. [HL9943]

Baroness Barran: The National Curriculum requires teachers to encourage pupils to develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information. It also emphasises the importance of listening to, discussing, and reading for themselves a wide range of stories, poems, plays and non-fiction books.

The department believes that all pupils deserve to be taught a knowledge-rich curriculum that promotes the extensive reading of books and other kinds of texts, both in and out of school. School libraries complement public libraries in allowing pupils to do this.

It is for individual schools to decide how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils, including whether to employ a qualified librarian. Many headteachers recognise the important role school libraries play in improving literacy and encouraging pupils to read for pleasure and ensure that suitable library facilities are provided.

The 2022 Autumn Statement announced additional investment of £2 billion in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25, over and above totals announced at the 2021 Spending Review.

This means funding for mainstream schools and high needs is £3.5 billion higher in 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. That is on top of the £4 billion, year-on-year increase provided in 2022/23, which is an increase of £7.5 billion, or over 15%, in just two years.

The department published an expanded reading framework in July 2023, which builds on the original framework and also covers the teaching of reading in key stages 2 and 3, including guidance on how to help pupils who need more support to learn to read proficiently. The updated version has been expanded to help schools improve reading for all pupils so they leave primary school able to engage confidently with reading in all subjects at secondary school. It also offers guidance on developing a reading for pleasure culture in school, recognising the importance of reading widely and often for both academic success and wellbeing.

In 2018, the department launched the English Hubs programme which is dedicated to improving the teaching of reading, with a focus on supporting children making the slowest progress in reading, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. We have so far invested over £67 million in this school-to-school improvement programme, which focuses on systematic synthetic phonics, early language, and reading for pleasure. The department has committed a further £40 million up to the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

China: Foreign Investment in UK

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the purchase of UK businesses by funds owned by the state of China; and what safeguards exist to protect national security in this situation. [HL9949]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: As an open economy, the government welcomes foreign trade and investment, including from China, where it supports growth and jobs in the UK, meets our stringent legal and regulatory requirements, and does not compromise our national security.

The government has powers under the National Security and Investment Act 2021 (NSIA) to scrutinise and, where necessary, intervene in acquisitions of control over entities and assets in or linked to the UK that may pose national security risks. These powers apply to all acquirers regardless of nationality. The government will not hesitate to use our powers to protect national security where we identify concerns.

Further detail on investment screening activity is available in the NSIA Annual Report, which was published on 11 July 2023 and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-and-investment-act-2021-annual-report-2023>.

Collections: British Museum

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) whether the items held by the British Museum looted from Britain's former colonial possessions in West Africa, or during Britain's historic military expeditions on that continent, have been catalogued; and (2) the extent of knowledge of the contents of such collections. [HL9874]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The British Museum has 8 million objects in its collection, with 4.5 million currently on the Museum's public database. The Museum is undertaking an ongoing digitisation project which will ensure that all the objects in its care will be catalogued and available to its global audience on its public database.

The Museum's collections from Africa are well-catalogued, to the benefit of the public and researchers from across the world. The Museum undertakes extensive research into its collections, including in partnership with African institutions. This is available online at: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/projects>.

The British Museum also has strong links with a variety of African partners. Since 2005, through the Africa Programme, the Museum has worked collaboratively with partner institutions to deliver training and workshops in museum practice in a number of African countries. Colleagues from across Africa also travel to the UK for project-based work placements at the Museum and in its partner museums across the UK. The world-leading annual International Training Programme run by the Museum also offers opportunities for African colleagues to meet peers from global heritage institutions.

Cycling: Audio Equipment

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have commissioned any recent studies on the safety

implications of wearing of headphones while cycling. [HL9940]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: No recent studies have been carried out on the safety implications of wearing of headphones while cycling.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Post Office

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government why DVLA forms can no longer be accessed and processed through Post Offices; and what plans they have to change this. [HL10077]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Most Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) forms are currently available from Post Offices that offer DVLA services.

Post Office Ltd currently provides a limited range of DVLA services and an extension to the current contract has been agreed, ensuring that DVLA services will be available at post offices until the end of March 2024.

The DVLA wants its customers to be able to access its services as quickly and as easily as possible and the role of front office counter services will form part of the considerations of future service offerings, utilising government agreements if necessary.

Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what service the NHS provides for people with fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva. [HL10199]

Lord Markham: While there is no specific prescribed service for fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva (FOP), children with the condition are cared for by National Health Service paediatric rheumatologists and/or geneticists with input from other clinicians as required. For patients with rare diseases such as FOP, expert centres provide clinical guidance, support and advice to patients, their families, and carers.

Gabon: Human Rights

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights implications of the current political and security situation in Gabon, following the military coup there on 30 August; and what information they have on the whereabouts of President Ali Bongo. [HL9938]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK echoes the African Union's condemnation of the unconstitutional military takeover of power in Gabon and calls for the restoration of constitutional government, in line with the Commonwealth Charter.

Minister Mitchell has held discussions with African counterparts on recent political events in Gabon during his recent visits to Rwanda and Kenya. He has also spoken with the Commonwealth Secretary-General about the situation. The political and security situation in Gabon appears stable. We understand that President Ali Bongo is in Libreville, and has been released from house arrest under health grounds.

Health: Research

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the breakdown of spend by government departments going to bodies or projects aimed at translating health research into practical innovations. [HL10059]

Lord Markham: The Department of Health and Social Care funds and enables research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). In 2022/23, the NIHR budget was approximately £1.25 billion and enabling translation of research into practice is embedded across multiple workstreams in the NIHR portfolio. Its close working with the NHS England Accelerated Access Collaborative also promotes the adoption and diffusion of proven innovations and the decommissioning of ineffective or superseded interventions. The Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway, launched in 2021, also aims to accelerate the time to market by streamlining the regulatory and access processes, particularly for innovative and promising medicines, ensuring that they reach patients more efficiently and rapidly.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), funded by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, funds health research that translates into practical innovations across its councils and portfolio of investments, actively working to support researchers as they transition discoveries through translation, towards patient benefits. Through Innovate UK alone, UKRI has invested approximately £930 million in translational health programmes.

Home Office: Appeals

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what High Court and Court of Appeal cases have been lost by the Home Office in 2022–23; and what the total cost to the taxpayer of such cases has been. [HL9939]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office does not keep a central record of all judgments handed down where it was a party to legal proceedings before the High Court or Court of Appeal of England and Wales. Accordingly, it does not have a central record of all the cases that the Home Office won or lost during 2022–23. This also means that it does not have a central record of the costs which have arisen in each of those cases. This would require a review of each case to collate the

information sought. Accordingly, the Department considers the disproportionate cost threshold applies for the collection of this information.

House of Lords Chamber: Visits

Asked by Lord Forsyth of Drumlean

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker how many people had their visits to the House of Lords Chamber cancelled as a result of the early sittings on Wednesday 6 and Wednesday 13 September to allow for extended scrutiny of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill; and what arrangements have been made to those people to offer redress. [HL10143]

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: The Senior Deputy Speaker has asked me, as Chair of the Services Committee, to respond on his behalf. No tours run by Visitors Services were cancelled because of early sittings on Wednesday 6 and Wednesday 13 September. When the Chambers sit, visitors have a reduced tour, confined to public areas. 650 people had a reduced tour as a result of early sittings. Visitors are warned at the time of booking that their tour may be changed due to Parliamentary business.

Import Controls

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they are having with Irish exporters concerning new UK import controls. [HL10167]

Lord Offord of Garvel: Engagement with Irish traders and business representative bodies has been ongoing since the publication of the draft Border Target Operating model in April 2023. Following the publication of the final model on 29th August 2023, additional communications has occurred including a specific webinar for Irish companies taking place on 21st September led by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Intercity Express Programme: Rolling Stock

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government, in relation to contracts to supply railway rolling stock as part of the Intercity Express Programme, whether Hitachi is required to provide sufficient serviceable trains to meet the timetable commitments of train operators; and if so, whether Hitachi is required to pay compensation to train operators when it fails to do so, whether this applies for every affected journey, and whether this includes liquidated damages to compensate for loss to the train operator's business, including loss incurred by refunding passengers for poor service. [HL10070]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Intercity Express Programme contracts requires the daily provision of train sets sufficient to operate the planned timetable.

As there has been full transfer of delivery risk passed to the train supplier, when a train is not provided there is no charge.

The effect of this is that Hitachi will suffer the financial impact of these circumstances arising from the loss of income.

Logistics: Employment

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there has been any increase in the number of young people entering the logistics industry following their involvement in the Generation Logistics campaign. [HL10119]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Since launching in August 2022, we have assessed the Generation Logistics campaign is successfully raising awareness and improving perceptions of the logistics sector, which is why we are pleased to provide a further £300,000 of government funding for its second year.

The campaign has exceeded the original objectives set, with social media communications targeted at young people and other underrepresented groups having reached an audience of over 340 million people and visits to the campaign's online hub totalling over 500,000. Alongside print advertisements, educational materials, and an Ambassadors Network of hundreds of professionals, these communications are ensuring young people better understand the importance of the logistics sector.

The campaign will continue to engage young people and will begin to support educators of 13-to-18-year-olds, laying the groundwork for the next generation of talent to enter the sector in the coming years.

Logistics: Vacancies

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what analysis they have conducted, if any, of shortage occupations in the logistics sector, ahead of the Christmas peak period. [HL10115]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department recently established a People and Skills Delivery Group to deliver on priority commitments within our published 'Future of Freight: A Long-Term Plan'.

To support the work of this group, the Department has conducted an assessment of the freight and logistics sector workforce, to get a baseline on the health of the sector that the group will monitor over time. This forum will enable Government and industry to collectively identify any shortage occupations for the sector and collaborate on activity to ensure we have sufficient labour and skills pipeline year-round, examining factors such as training provision, awareness and perception, and terms and conditions.

M6 Toll

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the efficacy of the Midlands Expressway toll road. [HL10148]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department for Transport (DfT) has a concession agreement with Midland Expressway Limited (MEL) to operate the M6 Toll. Under the terms of the contract, MEL owns and operates the M6 Toll at its own risk with limited contractual oversight from DfT.

Metropolitan Police: ICT

Asked by Earl Russell

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect police officers following a security breach of an IT supplier to the Metropolitan Police. [HL9995]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Digital ID, an IT supplier to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) advised them on 26 August 2023 that they had been subject to a ransomware attack, potentially putting at risk data for officers and staff.

The MPS immediately put in place appropriate security measures following the incident and reported the incident to the National Crime Agency and the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Home Office, along with the National Crime Agency and National Cyber Security Centre is engaged with both the MPS and Digital ID to investigate and provide support.

Pakistan: Blasphemy

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent representations they have made to the government of Pakistan on the effect of blasphemy laws on the Christian community in that country. [HL9936]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Protecting minority communities remains central to the UK Government's human rights engagement in Pakistan. We continue to raise the issue of blasphemy laws privately at the highest levels. On 27 June, I raised the abuse of blasphemy laws to target marginalised religious communities with Pakistan's then-Minister for Human Rights, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. I also discussed blasphemy laws and the importance of promoting respect for all religions and communities during my meeting with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on 14 December 2022 and more recently on 13 September with the caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani.

Parliamentary Estate: Disability

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that disabled people have unimpeded access to (1) disabled parking bays, and (2) paths and pavements around Westminster and Parliament Square, during protests in the vicinity of Parliament. [HL9951]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what steps are being taken to ensure disabled people have unimpeded access to the House of Lords areas of the Parliamentary estate during protests in and around Parliament Square. [HL9952]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The management of public protests and access to roads and pavements around Parliament are matters for the Metropolitan Police Service, Westminster City Council, and the Greater London Authority, who are all independent of the Government.

Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Government expanded the list of prohibited activities in the controlled area of Parliament Square to include the obstruction of vehicular access to the Parliamentary Estate. It is a criminal offence to ignore a constable's direction to cease such an activity.

In addition, Parliament has approved a Statutory Instrument providing the police with greater flexibility and clarity over when to intervene to stop disruptive protest tactics such as blocking roads and slow walking. We have done this to support the police in striking the right balance between the rights of the public and the rights of protesters, and to ensure public order legislation is clear, consistent and current.

Parliamentary Estate: Electric Vehicles and Pedestrian Areas

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to ensure that concerns about (1) anti-social behaviour, (2) illegal driving, and (3) crime, around Westminster Bridge raised in the Policy Exchange paper *A Culture of Impunity: The ongoing erosion of disabled people's access to Parliament and Westminster*, published on 8 June, are addressed. [HL9953]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Westminster Council about the (1) misuse, and (2) inappropriate parking, of e-bikes and e-scooters within a one-mile radius of the parliamentary estate. [HL9954]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect disabled people from people riding bicycles, e-bikes, and e-scooters illegally on the pavement. [HL9955]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The police have the powers they need within road traffic and anti-social behaviour legislation to enforce the law, including in relation to illegal e-scooter use and illegal driving. Decisions on when to use these powers are an operational matter for individual Chief Officers of police who will decide how to deploy available resources, taking into account any specific local problems and demands.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour (ASB). This includes Civil Injunctions and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs).

It is for local authorities, forces and agencies to decide how best to use these powers depending on the specific circumstances as they are best placed to understand what is causing the behaviour in question, the impact that it is having, and to determine the most appropriate response.

The police have powers under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Police Reform Act 2002 to seize vehicles being driven illegally without a valid driving licence or insurance or in an anti-social manner. It is for the officer dealing with an incident to collect and consider in each case the evidence available and decide whether there might have been an offence and if so what action to take.

We expect the police to work collaboratively with local authorities to deal with these matters.

Police

Asked by Baroness Harris of Richmond

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the total number of serving police officers in each year since 2019. [HL9982]

Asked by Baroness Harris of Richmond

To ask His Majesty's Government how many police officers left the police force in each year since 2019. [HL9983]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office collects and publishes information on the size and composition of the police workforce, including officer numbers and leavers, in England and Wales, broken down by Police Force Area (PFA), annually in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>

Data on the number of police officers in the police service, as at 31 March in each year from 2007 to 2023, can be found in the 'Police Workforce Open Data Table' here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1172892/open-data-table-police-workforce-260723.ods.

This data is available on both a full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount basis and includes officers seconded into forces as well as officers on career breaks or parental leave.

Table 1 below shows the number of police officers employed in the England in Wales, by year, in both headcount and full-time equivalent (FTE) terms.

Table 1: Police officer numbers, by year, England and Wales

<i>As at 31 March</i>	<i>Number of officers (headcount)</i>	<i>Number of officers (FTE)</i>
2019	125,811	123,189
2020	131,576	129,110
2021	137,690	135,301
2022	142,505	140,228
2023	149,566	147,430

Data on the number of police officers leaving the police service, in the years ending 31 March 2007 to 2023, can be found in the 'Leavers Open Data Table' here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1172932/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-260723.ods The table 2 below shows the number of police officers leavers (excluding transfers between forces) in the England in Wales, by year, in FTE terms.

Table 2: Police officer leavers (excluding transfers) by year, England and Wales

<i>Year ending 31 March</i>	<i>Police officer leavers (FTE)</i>
2019	7,387
2020	7,141
2021	6,018
2022	8,117
2023	9,192

Postage Stamps: Prices

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Royal Mail concerning increases to the price of postage stamps; and whether the matter of delivery target failures was raised during those discussions. [HL9974]

The Earl of Minto: As a private business, Royal Mail's management sets the prices for its services and in doing so must work within the regulatory framework set by Ofcom, the independent regulator. The Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's day-to-day commercial decisions.

It is for Ofcom to set and monitor Royal Mail's service standards. Ofcom has powers to investigate and take enforcement action should Royal Mail fail to achieve its obligations without good justification.

Ofcom is currently undertaking an investigation into Royal Mail's failure to meet its quality of service performance targets for 2022-23.

Railways: Ticket Offices

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the amount that needs to be paid to railway ticketing staff for redundancy payments as a result of railway ticket office closures; and what estimate they have made of annual payments that will be required to be paid as compensation benefits. [HL10008]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Whilst it is our expectation that no currently staffed station should be unstaffed as a result of industry changes, it is for train operators to decide on their staffing arrangements at each of the stations from which they operate services, so they can best meet the needs of passengers. As part of this train operators will discuss employment matters with trade unions as part of their own collective bargaining processes.

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect a decision to be announced regarding the closure of railway ticket offices. [HL9972]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The consultation on ticket offices closed on 1 September. We are now in a period where the independent passenger bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) are engaging with train operators on the basis of the consultation responses they have received and the criteria they have set out. We expect train operators to work collaboratively with the passenger bodies in the coming weeks, to listen to the concerns raised and to refine their proposals accordingly.

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what reassurances regarding employment they are providing to railway station staff in advance of a decision about the closure of railway ticket offices. [HL9973]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Whilst it is our expectation that no currently staffed station should be unstaffed as a result of industry changes, it is for train operators to decide on their staffing arrangements at each of the stations from which they operate services, so they can best meet the needs of passengers. As part of this train operators will discuss employment matters with trade unions as part of their own collective bargaining processes.

Roads: Microplastics

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what in situ monitoring is currently carried out on the microplastic emissions from roads. [HL9927]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: National Highways is conducting a research study to understand the level of microplastic pollution in road run-off from the strategic road network. In 2021, a Phase 1 literature review was completed and published on National Highway's website. The Phase 1 study was used to inform a Microplastics Phase 2 field monitoring programme (2022-2023), which was commissioned and carried out in partnership with the Environment Agency. National Highways will shortly be publishing the findings from Phase 2. National Highways also plans to do more expansive monitoring of microplastics to build upon the Phase 2 work in 2024-2025.

Schools: Buildings

Asked by **Baroness Taylor of Bolton**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to deposit in the Library of the House all tender documents for modular classrooms since July 2023 under the Offsite Constructions Agreement (Framework Agreement RM6184). [HL9956]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: It is not our intention to deposit the tender documentation into the Library of the House. It is the responsibility of individual customer authorities to publish contracting information on Contracts Finder and/or other transparency platforms.

Schools: Uniforms

Asked by **Lord Weir of Ballyholme**

To ask His Majesty's Government what support is available for families to meet the costs of school uniforms; and what information they collect on the cost and uptake of such support. [HL9960]

Baroness Barran: Rather than subsidising expensive uniform policies with financial assistance, the department published statutory guidance on the cost of school uniform to ensure uniform is affordable for all families. The guidance came into force in September 2022 and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms/cost-of-school-uniforms>.

Schools must have regard to this guidance when designing and implementing their uniform policy. The guidance requires schools to ensure that their uniform is affordable and secures best value for money for parents.

There is no specific funding for schools to support families to meet the costs of school uniform, but schools may offer additional support in cases of financial hardship where they choose to do so.

The department does not collect information on the cost and uptake of support for families to meet the costs of school uniform.

Shipping: Isles of Scilly

Asked by **Lord Berkeley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what factors they will take into account in accepting a recommendation from the Council of the Isles of Scilly to accept a bid for new vessels paid for by the Levelling Up Fund, in the absence of a competitive tendering process. [HL9964]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Council for the Isles of Scilly are required to obtain an approved Full Business Case to secure a levelling up fund grant in line with their bid to purchase vessels and harbour works that complies with the Treasury Green Book and the levelling up criteria.

State Retirement Pensions

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what the value of the full Basic State Pension weekly payment in 2023–24 would be if the pension had been tied only to average earnings since 2010, rather than the triple lock. [HL10017]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The full weekly amount of Basic State Pension would have been worth £138.05 in 2023-24 if it had been uprated by earnings, rather than the Triple Lock.

State Retirement Pensions: National Insurance

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the savings to the Exchequer in total cost of paying UK State Pensions in 2023–24 if full state pensions for all newly retired individuals required a National Insurance record of 45 years instead of 35 years, assuming no purchase of additional voluntary years. [HL10018]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: We have not made any estimate of the savings to the Exchequer of paying UK State Pensions in 2023–24 if a full state pension for all newly retired individuals required a National Insurance record of 45 years instead of 35 years. There are currently no plans to review the qualifying criteria for the new State Pension.

Vorasiidenib

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

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

(HL9841), whether they have any plans to discuss Vorasidenib with Servier Laboratories. [HL10071]

Lord Markham: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has not granted a marketing authorisation for Vorasidenib, however should an application be received from Servier Laboratories, the MHRA has licensing pathways available, with the aim of ensuring the products can be made available for patients in the United Kingdom in the shortest time possible and to support and protect public health. While the MHRA will assess any submitted applications and is willing to facilitate the appropriate regulatory processes, the agency cannot actively seek these applications and as such there are currently no plans to discuss Vorasidenib with Servier Laboratories.

White Ribbon Day

Asked by Baroness Gale

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November. [HL9933]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: We are considering our activity to mark the day. Last year, there was a programme of cross-Governmental activity around the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the 16 days of activism

that followed. This included Ministers across Government conducting visits, attending events, making speeches, debating these important issues in Parliament and a series of announcement on action to tackle VAWG.

Tackling VAWG is a Government priority. We have made significant progress since we published the Tackling VAWG Strategy in July 2021 and the complementary Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan in March 2022.

In July, we launched the fifth round of the Safer Streets Fund which provides an additional £43 million in funding to projects focused on protecting women in their communities across England and Wales. We also announced the launch of a new national operating model for the investigation and prosecution of rape, which all forces and CPS Areas in England and Wales are implementing to ensure investigations of rape are suspect-focused and considerate to the needs of victims.

To improve the police response to tackling these crimes, we have supported the introduction of a new full-time National Policing Lead for VAWG, DCC Maggie Blyth, and have added VAWG to the Strategic Policing Requirement, meaning it is now set out as a national threat for forces to respond to alongside other threats such as terrorism, serious and organised crime and child sexual abuse.

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