

Session 2023-24
No. 52



Thursday
22 February 2024

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Statements1

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/>

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

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

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

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Lord True	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Bellamy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Lord Benyon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the 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
Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton	Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Viscount Camrose	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Davies of Gower	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Lord Douglas-Miller	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Evans of Rainow	Whip
Lord Gascoigne	Whip
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, Ministry of Defence
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 Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Lord Roborough	Whip
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 Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Chief Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2024

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

Written Statements

Thursday, 22 February 2024

Baby Loss Certificates

[HLWS273]

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

I wish to inform the House that the new Baby Loss Certificate Service has launched today.

As you will be aware, the Government published [The Independent Pregnancy Loss Review](#) in July 2023, alongside our [response](#). The Review examined the impact on families of not being able to formally register a baby or pregnancy loss before 24 weeks gestation.

In an interim report provided to me in 2022, the Review recommended that the government introduce a voluntary scheme to enable parents who have experienced a pre-24 weeks baby or pregnancy loss to record and receive a certificate to provide recognition of their loss. The recording and issuing of a certificate to bereaved parents who want one will provide comfort and support by validating their loss. I subsequently committed to introduce a Certificate of Baby Loss in the [Women's Health Strategy for England](#) (July 2022).

Either parent is entitled to a Certificate of Baby Loss if they have experienced a loss under 24 weeks gestation, are at least 16 years of age, and at least one parent was living in England at the time of the loss.

I am pleased that we are able to offer this on a retrospective basis to those who have already experienced a baby loss. Initially, this will be available to those who have experienced a loss since 1 September 2018. This will be continually assessed, and we will extend eligibility as soon as we can.

Delivering this important service highlights our continued commitment to delivering on the Women's Health Strategy and is an important step forward in supporting parents to provide recognition of a life lost.

Energy Charter Treaty: UK Withdrawal

[HLWS275]

Lord Callanan: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Graham Stuart) made the following Statement today:

The Government has today announced that the UK is withdrawing from the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT).

The statement follows the Government's announcement on 1 September 2023 that the UK was reviewing its Treaty membership in the event that the modernised Treaty was not adopted by November 2023. The modernised Treaty was not adopted, and the review has now concluded. It has carefully considered the views of

stakeholders in business, civil society and Parliament following extensive engagement.

The Energy Charter Treaty was signed in 1994 to promote international cooperation in the energy sector in Eastern Europe and Central Asia following the break-up of the Soviet Union, primarily to facilitate investment in fossil fuels. However, the failure of the modernisation process means the Treaty is no longer fit for purpose. The Treaty means British taxpayers could bear unfair financial risk as the Government implements the necessary policies to secure the UK's energy supplies and decarbonise.

The UK has been a strong advocate for modernising the Treaty to better align it with modern energy priorities, international treaty practice and commitments on climate change. However, over a year after Contracting Parties reached an agreement in principle on modernisation, following two years of negotiations, there is still no clear route for adopting the modernised Treaty. I am clear that the UK cannot remain in an unmodernised Treaty that does not align with our unwavering commitment to energy security and net zero.

I am proud of the UK's strong and stable investment climate. £23 billion was invested in UK low-carbon sectors in 2022 alone, and the review into the UK's ECT membership particularly considered investor and business interests. Business groups supported withdrawal over remaining in the unmodernised treaty, and the UK will now join Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Luxembourg, Spain, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Denmark, and Portugal in leaving the Treaty. Alternative protections for investment and trade in the energy sector will remain with all but four out of 48 of the Treaty's existing signatories. Following withdrawal, the UK will remain an attractive destination for investment in the energy sector due to its favourable environment and strong rule of law.

The UK will now initiate the process to withdraw from the Energy Charter Treaty. The UK is required to give a one-year notification of withdrawal, removing Treaty protections for new investments made after this period.

Intelligence and Security Committee International Partnerships Report: Government Response

[HLWS280]

Lord True: My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister had made the following statement:

On 5 December 2023, the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament published their report entitled 'International Partnerships'.

The UK's international intelligence alliances are fundamental to the work of the Government and we are grateful to the Committee for devoting time and attention to this subject. Today, the Government is publishing its response to this report.

Copies of the Government response have been laid before both Houses.

Local Government Stewardship Update

[HLWS276]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My Honourable friend the Minister for Local Government (Simon Hoare MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

All Honourable Members will recognise the critical role local councils play in providing essential statutory services to their residents and being accountable to the communities they serve. Where councils do not meet the high standards that we set for local government, it is right that government intervenes in order to protect the interests of residents. Today I am informing the House of a Best Value Inspection of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, confirming the final decision to appoint Commissioners to Nottingham City Council and providing an update on the existing statutory interventions in Slough Borough Council and Birmingham City Council.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

It is a matter of public record that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets was subject to statutory intervention under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 (“the 1999 Act”) between December 2014 and September 2018. This followed an inspection by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, and an inspection report published in November 2014, which identified best value failure, particularly in relation to grant making, property disposal and publicity spending. As the then Secretary of State (now, my noble Friend Lord Pickles) noted when initiating that intervention on 4 November 2014: “The abuse of taxpayers’ money and the culture of cronyism reflects a partisan community politics that seeks to trade favours and spread division on the rates. Such behaviour is to the detriment of integration and community cohesion in Tower Hamlets and in our capital city” (Official Report, 4 November 2014: Column 666).

It is also a matter of public record that Mayor Rahman and his agent (who was also the Cabinet Member for Resources) were found to have been guilty of election offences by an election court in 2015 and were banned from standing for elected office for five years; and that the conduct of making grants amounted to the corrupt practice of bribery under section 113 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Commissioners were withdrawn and functions returned in March 2017 on the condition that the Council continued to achieve against its best value plans and report regularly to the Secretary of State on its on-going compliance with the Best Value Duty. In June 2018 a Local Government Association (LGA) corporate peer review concluded the Authority was now “on a positive trajectory” but that to continue to improve, it must “be forward looking and learn the lessons of the past”. Following that peer review and recognising the role of the then Mayor and Chief Executive in providing leadership to drive change, Ministers took the decision to end the intervention in September 2018.

It is clear to me that the Council has made significant progress in the past years to improve governance and assurance processes. A recent corporate peer challenge by the LGA highlighted a range of areas that the Council does very well. These include strong relationships with statutory partners and that the Council knows its places well. However, some recent changes have the potential to undermine the improvements that allowed the previous intervention to end. These changes include significant churn at the senior management level, which has resulted in a number of interims in the senior management of the Council; the use of policy advisors and expansion of the Mayoral office, which has reportedly resulted in the creation of a “two council culture”; the review of the constitution; changes to the grant regime, given the Election Court Judgment of 23 April 2015 and the improvements put in place by Commissioners previously; weaknesses in the scrutiny function; the decision to bring some services in house and the need to realise substantive savings in the short-term. While the Mayor has a clear democratic mandate, and changes to the way the Council is organised to deliver priorities is not itself a cause for concern, given the history of the Council, changes made to arrangements that were necessary to ensure compliance with the Best Value Duty could mean that compliance is now at risk.

To support the Council to continue to make arrangements to secure improvement in its governance arrangements and other areas linked to the past intervention, I am clear that the Government requires direct independent assurance that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets is compliant with its Best Value Duty. Therefore, I am today informing the House that the Secretary of State has exercised the powers granted to him by Parliament under section 10 of the 1999 Act, to appoint Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL as Lead Inspector and Suki Binjal, Sir John Jenkins and Philip Simpkins as Assistant Inspectors to carry out an inspection of the Council’s compliance with its Best Value Duty.

The inspection will occur in relation to specified functions where we have concerns. This includes the Council’s functions under part 1 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the strength of associated audit and scrutiny arrangements, with particular attention to potential changes to constitutional arrangements, budgetary proposals and medium term financial planning, the appointment of senior management posts, the use of policy advisers, the expansion of the Mayoral office, the policy and practice of grant making, functions that relate to the appointment and removal of an Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, the funding of electoral registration and local elections work, the use of resources for elections and the maintenance of the independence of the Returning Officer, and the arrangements to bring services in house, such as Tower Hamlets Homes and leisure services. Given our concerns also relate to wider decision-making functions, and whether expectations for effective and convenient local

government are being met, the inspection will also consider decision-making in relation to those functions, encompassing leadership, governance, organisational culture, use of resources and impact on service delivery.

The Lead Inspector has been asked to report findings by 31 May 2024, or such later date as may be agreed.

Once the inspection is complete, we will carefully consider the inspection report. If it shows that the Council is in breach of its Best Value Duty, we will then consider whether or not to exercise powers under section 15 of the 1999 Act.

This action is not undertaken lightly, and my department is committed to providing the Council with whatever support it may need to support compliance with its Best Value Duty. I will update the House in due course.

Nottingham City Council

On 13 December 2023, I announced to the House that the Secretary of State was 'minded to' appoint Commissioners to take over certain functions at Nottingham City Council. Commissioners would replace the existing Improvement and Assurance Board, chaired by Sir Tony Redmond, with immediate effect. I also announced that the Commissioner team, if appointed, would consist of three appointments: a Lead Commissioner; a Commissioner for finance; and a Commissioner for transformation.

These proposals followed the evidence provided in the Nottingham City Council Improvement and Assurance Board's latest reports, also published on 13 December, which included the Board's assessment that the Council is still not acting at the required pace to make the necessary improvements; and the Council issuing, on 29 November 2023, a Section 114 notice due to an inability to balance the budget for 2023/24. The Secretary of State concluded that the Council is continuing to fail to comply with its Best Value Duty. He was minded to escalate the current intervention arrangements in order to secure compliance with that duty and to ensure that the necessary improvements are made at pace for the benefit of the local community.

I invited representations by 2 January 2024 on the intervention package proposed in December from the Council, and any other interested parties, especially the residents of Nottingham. The Secretary of State and I have now received the representations on his proposals, which we have considered carefully.

We received a total of 70 representations, including from the Authority, the Nottingham Labour Group, 16 Labour Councillors, local MPs, 35 from members of the public, four local businesses, two community leaders, UNISON and eight partner organisations.

The representations presented a mixture of support and opposition for the proposals to appoint Commissioners. The representation from the Council made clear their preference for retaining the Improvement and Assurance Board, but that they will cooperate with Commissioners if appointed and noted the proposed Commissioner team.

They requested that any decision to appoint Commissioners is taken expeditiously and that a smooth transition is ensured.

Having considered carefully all of the representations received, and all other developments since the 'minded to' decision, the Secretary of State and I are satisfied that no further issues have been raised which were not known at the time we made the 'minded to' decision and so do not warrant a change to the position outlined in that minded to decision. The Secretary of State is satisfied that Nottingham City Council is continuing to fail to comply with its Best Value Duty, and that the necessary improvements are still not being made quickly enough. I am today confirming that Commissioners have been appointed to Nottingham City Council and new Directions have been issued.

The Secretary of State, as proposed in December, has decided to appoint three Commissioners: a Lead Commissioner; a Commissioner for Finance; and a Commissioner for Transformation. This team structure reflects the most pressing priorities at the Council as highlighted in the Improvement and Assurance Board's latest reports, namely weaknesses in finance, transformation, along with an underlying culture of poor governance. The Secretary of State is today appointing individuals to the roles of Lead Commissioner and Commissioner for Finance. The chosen Commissioners have a proven record of leadership, finance, transformation and strong governance, together with the specific expertise relevant to their functions. We will appoint a Commissioner for Transformation in due course.

- Tony McArdle OBE (Lead Commissioner) – has extensive experience in local government and is the former Chief Executive of Lincolnshire County Council, and Wellingborough Council. Tony has experience in multiple interventions and best value roles, including as current Chair of the London Borough of Croydon Improvement and Assurance Panel, former Lead Commissioner at Northamptonshire County Council, and Best Value Inspector at Thurrock Council.
- Margaret Lee (Commissioner for Finance) – previously worked at Essex County Council where she held the posts of Section 151 Officer and Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services for 13 years. Margaret also has experience of interventions and best value roles, including as former Finance Commissioner at Slough Borough Council, Finance lead on the London Borough of Croydon Improvement and Assurance Panel, and Best Value Inspector at Thurrock Council.

The Commissioners have been appointed for two years, or such earlier or later time as the Secretary of State determines. The Secretary of State is clear that the Directions should operate for as long, and only as long, and only in the form, as necessary.

The Secretary of State and I wish to again place on record the instrumental role the Improvement and Assurance Board, under Sir Tony Redmond's leadership,

has played in Nottingham City Council's improvement journey to date. Indeed, the current situation would be even more challenging without their dedication and sustained efforts over the past few years. Commissioners are today replacing the Board with immediate effect. The Secretary of State and I are clear that we expect a managed transition from the Improvement and Assurance Board to the Commissioners and that momentum is not lost, particularly over the critical budget setting period for 2024/25. We are supportive of the Commissioners drawing on reasonable support to facilitate this transition, including from the former Board members, if they wish and in the terms they deem reasonable.

The Commissioners will be asked to provide their first report within the next six months. Further reports will be provided every six months, or as agreed with the Commissioners.

As with other interventions led by my department, the Council will be directed to meet the costs of the Commissioners, along with such reasonable amenities and services and administrative support as the Commissioners may reasonably require. The fees paid to individuals are published in appointment letters which are available separately on gov.uk. I am assured this provides value for money given the expertise that is being brought, and the scale of the challenge in councils requiring statutory intervention.

Slough Borough Council

Slough Borough Council has been in intervention, with Commissioners appointed, since 1 December 2021, after an external assurance review found the Council had failed to meet its Best Value Duty. Following the Commissioner's first report on 9 June 2022 the intervention was expanded on 1 September 2022. The intervention is due to end on 30 November 2024, though we have always been clear that the Secretary of State may decide to extend Directions beyond this date, or it may be appropriate to return functions before this time.

When I last updated the House on 14 September 2023 on the Commissioners' third report, it was clear that while progress was being made and there was cautious optimism that the Council was moving in the right direction, there were still significant challenges. It was vital that the Council accelerated the pace of improvement to make substantial changes in the months ahead.

I am sorry to report that whilst the fourth report submitted to the Secretary of State on 17 January 2024 does record continued progress in some areas, including the political leadership, Children's Social Care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), procurement and contract management, the pace of improvement has been insufficient and inconsistent given the stage of the intervention, and there is still a lot to do before the Council will meet its Best Value Duty.

It is of concern that the Council has not accelerated the pace of improvement, especially on tackling organisational transformation, developing a future operating model and that continued financial instability

remains a concern. Commissioners are now of the opinion the Government needs to consider the nature of the intervention beyond the current timelines. I have today written to Commissioners to request a further assessment of progress in April 2024 to allow the Secretary of State and I to decide whether further intervention is required beyond November 2024. That report will need to cover:

- An assessment of continued Best Value failure including progress against each of the directions and against the best value themes published for consultation by DLUHC last summer;
- A view on timeframes needed for the Authority to deliver its Best Value Duty; and
- Whether the current directions are sufficient and necessary for the Authority to meet their Best Value Duty.

In the immediate term, it is essential the Council demonstrates fresh resolve in implementing the changes required to deliver a sustainable council that the residents of Slough deserve.

I will update the House on further progress with the intervention and next steps at that time.

Birmingham City Council

The government intervened in Birmingham City Council in October 2023, and in January the Commissioners wrote to the Secretary of State to set out their initial findings and progress of the intervention. I am today publishing that letter. The financial challenges facing the Council are acute and, whilst it is encouraging that Commissioners have made early progress, the situation is worse than they had initially expected. It is vital that the Council continues to listen to, and work with, Commissioners to ensure their savings plans are delivered to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25 and beyond. The financial implications of the failed implementation of the Oracle system and the potential Equal Pay liability also remain a significant challenge. Commissioners have my full support in taking whatever steps are necessary to drive the required improvements. I expect to see demonstrable progress from the Council in the Commissioners first full report which is due in the spring and I will update the House on further progress with the intervention and next steps at that time.

Conclusion

I want to acknowledge the work of the dedicated staff who deliver the important services of councils in today's announcement on which local residents depend. I also want to thank the Commissioners for all they do. I will deposit in the House library copies of the appointment letters for the Tower Hamlets Inspectors, the appointment letters for the Nottingham City Council Commissioners together with the Directions and accompanying Explanatory Memorandum, and the report and letter I have referred to, which are also being published on gov.uk today.

Post Office: Proposed Legislation and Financial Redress

[HLWS278]

Lord Offord of Garvel: My Hon Friend the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business (Kevin Hollinrake MP) has today made the following statement:

On 10 January, the Prime Minister and I announced a major step forward in response to the Horizon scandal. The Prime Minister confirmed that the Government will introduce new primary legislation to make sure that those convicted as a result of the Horizon scandal, which began in the 1990s, are swiftly exonerated and compensated. Our announcement attracted widespread support in both Houses of Parliament and beyond.

With a number of the cases over 20 years old, some of the victims have sadly passed away, and many others are in declining health or have lost faith in the system and do not wish to engage further with it.

The Government recognises the constitutional sensitivity and unprecedented nature of this legislation. The Government is clear that this legislation does not set a precedent for the future relationship between the executive, Parliament and the judiciary. The judiciary and the courts have dealt swiftly with the cases before them, but the scale and circumstances of this prosecutorial misconduct demands an exceptional response. We are keen to ensure that the legislation achieves its goal of bringing prompt justice to all of those who were wrongfully convicted as a result of the scandal, followed by rapid financial redress.

Progress to date

Over the last 6 weeks, the Department for Business and Trade and Ministry of Justice have been working at pace to determine the most effective approach to this unprecedented intervention, which will deliver long overdue justice to postmasters, respectful of the separation of powers and constitutional balance. This has included consultative engagement with relevant stakeholders across interested groups as well as Parliamentarians, including the chairs of the relevant Select Committees. In addition, detailed work has been undertaken to collect and analyse the available data from the Post Office, the criminal justice system and others to establish suitable criteria and understand the impacts of this intervention.

Scope of legislation

The legislation, which will be brought forward shortly, will quash all convictions which are identified as being in scope. That scope will be defined by a set of clear and objective criteria which will be set out in the legislation and will not require any element of discretion or subjective analysis in order to be applied. The legislation will prescribe criteria, each of which will need to have been met, to determine the convictions to be quashed.

The criteria will include:

Prosecutor(s): The legislation will specify who the prosecutor was in the relevant case. The Horizon inquiry has heard evidence of the egregious behaviour of the Post Office's investigatory practices. It is therefore proportionate that the Government legislates to quash these prosecutions where the prosecutor is, in effect, discredited. In addition, two cases have been quashed by the Court of Appeal which were prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) but based on evidence provided by the Post Office. It is therefore reasonable to include CPS cases within the Bill's scope. However, we will not include any convictions from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). No convictions prosecuted by DWP have been quashed. Due to the nature of these cases, most DWP convictions relied on physical evidence; and when Horizon data was used it was not relied on, this evidence was corroborative of, rather than essential to, the case. The existing and established Court of Appeal processes remain available to those cases.

Offence dates: A set timeframe will ensure convictions are only quashed where the offence took place during the period that the Horizon system (and its pilots) was in operation (with exact dates confirmed in due course).

Offence types: The legislation will specify which offences are in scope, ensuring these align with the offences known to have been prosecuted by the Post Office. This means that only relevant offences such as theft and false accounting will be in scope. Non-related offences such as offences against the person will be excluded.

The contractual or other relationship of the convicted individual to Post Office Ltd: Only sub-postmasters or their employees / officers or family members, or direct employees of the Post Office will be within the defined class of convictions to be quashed.

Use of the Horizon system at the date of the offence: The convicted person will need to have been working (including working in a voluntary capacity) in a Post Office that was using the Horizon system software (including any relevant pilot schemes) at the time the behaviour constituting the offence occurred.

It is intended that the convictions in scope of this legislation will be quashed at the point of commencement.

Territorial Extent

At the time of the original announcement, it was stated that the Bill would legislate on an England and Wales only basis. Since then, we have been working closely with other jurisdictions on this important matter and wish to see equitable outcomes for postmasters delivered across the whole of the UK.

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, prosecutions in this matter were undertaken by the relevant authorities in those legal jurisdictions. The Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly have the responsibility of holding those systems to account. We believe victims in those jurisdictions are best served by local decisions tailored to the judicial systems in Scotland and Northern

Ireland, as such the UK parliamentary legislation will proceed on an England and Wales basis.

While it is for the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive to decide on, and progress, their own approaches to the quashing of convictions, we will work with them to ensure those are compatible with the UK compensation scheme - so that compensation can be paid to victims across the whole of the UK.

Financial Redress

As noted in my statement on 10 January, the legislation is likely to exonerate a number of people who were, in fact, guilty of a crime. The Government accepts that this is a price worth paying in order to ensure that many innocent people are exonerated. The Government will seek to mitigate the risk that such people will receive financial redress when they have not been wronged. That mitigation will require, as a condition of access to financial redress, that the individual signs a statement to the effect that they did not commit the crime for which they were originally convicted. This and any other aspects of the process will be in line with best practice principles on fraud prevention. This statement will be part of their wider application for redress. Any person found to have signed such a statement falsely in order to gain compensation may be guilty of fraud. Along with other aspects of the financial redress arrangements, this will not need to be part of the legislation.

Outside the legislation, we shall provide a route to full, fair and rapid financial redress for quashed convictions. This will be paid on the same basis across the UK, regardless of where or how the conviction was quashed. Claimants receive an interim payment of £163,000 within 28 days of applying. They can then choose between an up-front settlement offer topping up their redress to £600,000, or having their financial redress considered on an individual basis. Their reasonable legal costs will be met.

The Government will continue to engage closely with relevant stakeholders as it continues to prepare the legislation for introduction to Parliament - with the aim of achieving Royal Assent as soon as possible before Summer Recess. As the quashing of convictions are processed, the resultant financial redress will be delivered as swiftly as possible.

Serious Fraud Office: Contingencies Fund Advance

[HLWS274]

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Rt Hon. Friend the Attorney General (Victoria Prentis KC MP) has made the following Written Statement:

I would like to inform the House that a cash advance from the Contingencies Fund has been sought for the Serious Fraud Office (SFO).

The advance is required to cover costs relating to the investigation and prosecution of very large cases pending Parliamentary approval of the 2023-24 Supplementary

Estimate. Part of the SFO's Supplementary Estimate will seek an increase in both its Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) and net cash requirement in relation to these cases.

This reflects funding arrangements agreed with HM Treasury, whereby through the Supplementary Estimates process the SFO can access the HM Treasury Reserve for the additional costs of cases that are individually over 4% of the SFO's non-ringfenced Resource DEL.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £22,253,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the SFO. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £22,253,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The advance will be repaid upon Royal Assent of the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Bill.

UK Sanctions Strategy

[HLWS279]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Indo-Pacific (Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP), has today made the following statement:

Today, HM Government is publishing its first sanctions strategy.

The world is more complex and more dangerous. It is marked by hostile states, terrorist organisations, cyber threats, criminal gangs, and a whole range of challenges to our interests and values.

Sanctions are an important tool we have to respond. In recent years, the UK has built formidable sanctions capability and transformed its use of sanctions as an instrument of foreign and security policy. Working alongside our partners and allies, our carefully deployed sanctions are tackling malign activity and making a difference – from disrupting Russia's war machine to confronting human rights abuses and violations in Iran.

Our new sanctions strategy sets out our approach and priorities since the passage of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. It covers our objectives; the responsible design and targeting of sanctions; and how we collaborate across Government and with international partners and the private sector to maximise impact. It emphasises our renewed push to bear down on efforts to get around our sanctions and the further investment made in strengthening sanctions implementation and enforcement. It underlines that the UK remains fully committed to working with allies to pursue all lawful routes through which Russian assets can be used to support Ukraine.

Sanctions remain a mainstay of our response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. We are publishing the strategy as we prepare to mark two years on from that terrible and illegal step and as we demonstrate further the UK's unwavering support for Ukraine. This includes today's announcement of a package of over 50 designations targeting the Russian military-industrial

complex and Russia's major revenue-generating industries, including energy and metals.

And following the tragic news of Alexei Navalny's death, the House will have seen our announcement of the targeted designation of six individuals heading up the penal colony where Alexei Navalny suffered such brutal mistreatment by the Russian authorities.

Sadly our sanctions remain all too necessary in other parts of the world. We have used sanctions in support of regional stability in the Middle East and Red Sea by targeting Hamas leaders and financiers, key Houthi figures involved in attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and extremist settlers in the West Bank. We have also used our sanctions this year to target malign cyber actors, entities propping up the brutal Myanmar military regime three years after the coup, and those undermining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We will also be publishing a Post-Legislative Scrutiny Memorandum for the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 in early March. The Memorandum provides a summary and a preliminary assessment of the provisions and implementation of the Act – including the legislative amendments that have come before this House to strengthen our approach.

I thank the House for the continued support and engagement to ensure our sanctions are as effective as possible in advancing global peace and security and protecting the UK.

A copy of the strategy will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Ukraine War: Trade and Business Support

[HLWS277]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: My Hon Friend the Minister of State for Business and Trade (Nusrat Ghani MP) has today made the following statement:

This week marks the two-year anniversary of Russia's unprovoked and illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The UK and its allies stand united with Ukraine in condemning the Russian government's reprehensible actions, which are an egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter.

Daily, Ukrainians continue to defend themselves against Russian aggression, whilst also working to emerge from it as a strong, sovereign and free country.

Following the outbreak of the full-scale war, the UK has now wholly or partially sanctioned over 96% (£20bn) of the goods traded with Russia. This includes every item Russia has been found using on the battlefield to date. We will continue to maintain pressure on the Russian regime to secure peace.

The UK will continue to support Ukraine to defend its sovereign territory through the training of its soldiers and the provision of military aid, but we are also laying the foundations for a private sector-led economic recovery with UK businesses at the forefront of reconstruction efforts.

The Government has enabled UK and Ukrainian companies to trade more easily.

Last year, we signed Ukraine's first Digital Trade Agreement, which supports Ukraine's transition to a digitally-led post-conflict economy. To help unlock necessary private capital at scale to aid economic recovery, and as part of the UK's commitment as hosts of the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2023, we spearheaded development of the London Framework for War Risk Insurance and donated £20m to the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency's Ukraine trust fund, which supports trade finance and considers war-risk insurance for select real-sector projects.

Earlier this month, we put in place a world-leading extended tariff liberalisation for an additional five years on almost all goods, with eggs and poultry to be extended for two years, continuing to provide much needed economic support to Ukraine and its businesses.

We are connecting UK businesses with their Ukrainian counterparts to unlock new innovations and shared expertise.

The UK-Ukraine Business Bridge offers a platform through which UK businesses can connect with partners across the global private sector to engage with Ukraine's repair, reconstruction and recovery opportunities. This includes supporting businesses to attend international conferences and events such as Rebuild Ukraine, providing a platform to champion and promote UK private sector expertise. The UK-Ukraine TechBridge, formally launched last month, will nurture tech talent and promote skills development in a priority sector for both our nations.

The Government is advocating for the interests of UK businesses.

The UK-Ukraine Infrastructure Taskforce, co-chaired with the Government of Ukraine, offers a strategic dialogue to agree where and how UK companies can best support critical infrastructure projects.

Ukraine must be able to defend itself and to support this we are deepening our defence-industrial relationship, using commercial and strategic partnerships between UK and Ukrainian companies to support the recovery of Ukraine's industrial base.

As the Prime Minister made clear in his most recent visit to Ukraine, the United Kingdom will continue to do everything in its power to support Ukraine's fight against this brutal invasion, for as long as is needed. A more prosperous Ukraine is one that can best safeguard its own citizens. And a more secure Ukraine supports wider UK and global security.

UK-Related Domain Name Registries Consultation Policy Response

[HLWS272]

Viscount Camrose: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other

House by my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy; Saqib Bhatti MP.

In July 2023, the Government launched a consultation in relation to internet domain name registries and domain name abuse. This consultation asked for views on the government's proposals for regulations defining prescribed practices and requirements, which are to be introduced following sections 19-21 of the Digital Economy Act 2010 (DEA 2010) coming into force. Specifically, the consultation asked for views from the relevant parties on the draft list of misuses and unfair uses of domain names in scope, and proposed principles which will underpin the prescribed dispute resolution procedure.

It is important we undertake this work to ensure that the UK will continue to meet international best practice on governance of country code top-level domains in line with our key global trading partners and our future global trading commitments.

As outlined in a previous statement of 20 July 2023, the DEA 2010 sets out the DSIT Secretary of State's powers of intervention in the event when any UK-related domain

name registry fails to address serious, relevant abuses of their domain names, posing significant risk to the UK electronic communications networks and its users.

We received 39 responses to the consultation, which closed in August 2023. In November 2023, the government published a summary of the responses received and has since been analysing the responses, consulting with technical and industry experts to develop our policy response.

We have today published the government policy response to the consultation. A copy of both this document and the summary of responses will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on GOV.UK.

We will now set out in secondary legislation the list of misuses and unfair uses of domain names that registries in scope must take action to mitigate and deal with, alongside the registry's arrangements for dealing with complaints in connection with the domain names in scope. This will provide additional certainty for UK users that appropriate procedures will continue to be in place to help address abuse of UK-related domain names.

Written Answers

Thursday, 22 February 2024

Air Pollution: Health

Asked by *Lord Woolley of Woodford*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the evidence of links between (1) air pollution, and (2) dementia and brain ill-health, highlighted in the study on 'Ambient air pollution and the dynamic transitions of stroke and dementia', published in The Lancet in January. [HL2456]

Lord Markham: The Government is dedicated to supporting research into dementia and has committed to doubling the funding for dementia research to £160 million per year, by the end of 2024/25.

The Department, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), is supporting research in exploring the link between dementia and air pollution. An NIHR funded study identified that exposure to air pollution is associated with increased use of psychiatric services in people with dementia. The NIHR are undertaking a project to address how air pollution mitigation measures impact on neurological endpoints.

Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023

Asked by *Baroness Hayman of Ullock*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to (1) consult on, and (2) lay activity regulations under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023. [HL2384]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023 provides a framework for the introduction of future bans on the advertising and offering for sale, in England and Northern Ireland, of low-welfare animal activities abroad.

Future decisions on which specific animal activities will fall in scope of the advertising ban will be evidence based and subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Sufficient, compelling evidence will be required to demonstrate why any specific advertising ban is needed.

This Government continues to make animal welfare a priority and we are currently exploring a number of options to ensure progress as soon as is practicable.

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their timetable for the (1) introduction, and (2) implementation, of activity regulations under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023. [HL2387]

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to progress the implementation of the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023. [HL2388]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023 provides a framework for the introduction of future bans on the advertising and offering for sale, in England and Northern Ireland, of low-welfare animal activities abroad.

Future decisions on which specific animal activities will fall in scope of the advertising ban will be evidence based and subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Sufficient, compelling evidence will be required to demonstrate why any specific advertising ban is needed.

This Government continues to make animal welfare a priority and we are currently exploring a number of options to ensure progress as soon as is practicable.

Artificial Intelligence

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce binding requirements for artificial intelligence. [HL2352]

Viscount Camrose: Regulators are already using their existing remits to implement the AI principles. In parallel, we are reviewing their powers and remits to ensure they are fully equipped to address AI risks and opportunities in their domains.

However, in our WP response we lay out a pro-innovation case for considering targeted binding requirements on organisations developing highly capable general-purpose AI systems, to ensure they are accountable for making these technologies sufficiently safe.

Legislation should only be introduced when understanding of risks has matured, and there is clear evidence these risks cannot be effectively mitigated using voluntary measures or existing legal powers.

Côte d'Ivoire: Human Rights

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the human rights situation in Cote d'Ivoire. [HL2336]

Lord Benyon: We lobby for the protection of human rights directly with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and work closely with local civil society and human rights defenders, particularly on good governance issues, including media and civil society freedom, encouraging political reconciliation and stability, as well as the rights of women and girls. Côte d'Ivoire held municipal elections in September 2023 that were generally considered free and fair. The Ivorian Government's

National Development Plan has ambitious plans to tackle gender inequalities and gender-based violence. Maternal mortality rates have significantly reduced. The recent Africa Cup of Nations included campaigns against corruption and harassment.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government what funding they have made available in the past 12 months to (1) motorists, and (2) local authorities, for cross pavement charging solutions for electric vehicles. [HL2450]

Lord Davies of Gower: The Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant (EVCG) scheme provides support for those who own and live in a flat, or rent any residential property, to install a chargepoint at their property. In October 2023, as part of the Plan for Drivers, the Government announced plans to widen eligibility of the EVCG scheme to include cross-pavement solutions, to make EV ownership a more practical option for those without off-street parking.

The Government is working closely with local authorities to support the transition to electric vehicles and facilitate easier, accessible charging. The £381 million Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) supports local authorities in England to work with industry and transform the availability of charging for drivers without off-street parking. As part of this, the Government will fund gullies and in-pavement channels where these form part of local plans.

The LEVI Pilot, launched in August 2022, and expanded further into February 2023, awarded almost £62 million public and industry funding to 25 local authorities across England. This portfolio will deliver close to 3,400 public chargepoints and 1,000 gullies.

Freeports: Standards

Asked by Lord Houchen of High Leven

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the performance of each of the operational Freeports in the United Kingdom, particularly their overall performance in relation to (1) domestic investment, (2) foreign direct investment, and (3) jobs. [HL2330]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: As set out at last year's Global Investment Summit, Freeports have already attracted a remarkable nearly £2.9 billion of investment, which will create over 6,000 jobs.

The table below provides the breakdown for both domestic and foreign direct investment in each Freeport between December 2021 to November 2023, in the public domain.

Sum of Capital expenditure (millions)	Type of investment		
	Domestic	International	Grand Total
Row Labels			
East	200	150	350
East Midlands		175	175
Humber		516	516
Inverness and Cromarty Firth		200	200
Liverpool City Region		22	22
Solent		15	15
Teesside	500	602	1102
Thames		475	475
Grand Total	700	2155	2855

The following table details Jobs created by investments listed in figure 1, where information is in the public domain.

Freeport	Sum of Jobs – public
Freeport East	1650
Humber Freeport	770
Inverness and Cromarty Firth Freeport	150
Plymouth and South Devon Freeport	20
Teesside Freeport	2150
Thames Freeport	1000
Grand Total	5740

The provided figures are based on publicly available investment data, excluding projects without precise investment values disclosed. Consequently, the sum of investment for a given Freeport may be lower than the actual total, considering ongoing efforts to secure additional investments that may not be reflected in the table because of commercial sensitivities. In instances where job figures are not publicly disclosed, they have not been included in the count; therefore, three Freeports in England have not been included as there is currently no publicly available data. Consequently, there may also be variations in job figures for individual investments where specific data is unavailable.

Gastrointestinal Cancer

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their timescale for when the NHS England Urgent Suspected Referral pathway for lower gastrointestinal cancer will meet the 'Faster Diagnosis' standard of 75 per cent of referred cases having a cancer diagnosis delivered or ruled out within 28 days. [HL2478]

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their timescale for when the NHS England lower gastrointestinal cancer screening referral pathway will meet the 'Faster Diagnosis' standard of 75 per cent of referred cases having a cancer diagnosis delivered or ruled out within 28 days. [HL2479]

Lord Markham: The Elective Recovery Plan sets out the ambition to see 75% of patients who have been urgently referred by their general practice for suspected cancer be diagnosed, or have cancer ruled out, within 28 days by March 2024, and the National Health Service remains on course to meet this. This is an aggregate measure which covers all cancer types combined, and there are not separate targets for individual cancer types or referral methods.

Hamas: UNRWA*Asked by Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of UNRWA staff who supported Hamas either by participating in the 7 October attacks or by spreading Hamas propaganda in UNRWA schools and medical facilities. [HL2318]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is appalled by allegations that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel, a heinous act of terrorism that the UK Government has repeatedly condemned. We are aware that the UN has terminated the contracts of ten individuals identified in the allegations.

We are pausing any future funding of UNRWA whilst we review these concerning allegations. We are looking to our partners in the UN to carry out a robust and comprehensive investigation.

Health Services: Transgender People*Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Royal College of General Practice with regard to its cancellation of a clinical conference organised by the Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender on "Do No Harm" on reducing harm and promoting safe, evidence-based care for gender questioning children and young people. [HL2385]

Lord Markham: No discussions have been had with the Royal College of General Practitioners about the cancellation of a clinical conference organised by the Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender.

Horizon IT System*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, further to reports by the forensic accounting company Second Sight, any Minister, civil servant, or director appointed by the Government advised the Post Office to make provision for contingent liabilities in its annual financial statements; and if so, on what dates such recommendations were made. [HL2052]

Lord Offord of Garvel: In the timeframe available to us, we have not been able to identify any Minister, civil servant, or director appointed by the Government advising the Post Office to make provision for contingent liabilities in its annual financial statements. The Post Office Board is collectively responsible for approving what is in the Accounts.

Horizon IT System: Compensation*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce legislation to ensure that where there have been miscarriages of criminal and other civil justice caused by the Post Office in the Horizon scandal that victims are able to seek compensation for non-monetary losses such as stress, lost career opportunities, losses due sale of properties, losses caused by bankruptcy, loss of reputation and wasted time spent fighting for justice. [HL2369]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The compensation schemes for Horizon Shortfalls (the Horizon Shortfall Scheme) and the GLO (Group Litigation Order), for postmasters who were not convicted, already include provisions for non-monetary losses.

Postmasters with overturned convictions are already eligible for compensation which includes non-monetary losses. The Prime Minister announced on 10 January that the Government intends to bring forward legislation to overturn the convictions of those convicted in England or Wales on the basis of Post Office evidence during the Horizon scandal. Subject to appropriate anti-fraud measures, these people will be eligible for similar compensation. Such compensation does not require legislation.

Horizon IT System: Disclosure of Information*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Offord of Garvel on 8 February (HL1877) stating that the "Post Office would not block any Non-Disclosure Agreements being broken for postmasters", whether they are planning to give that commitment a statutory footing. [HL2368]

Lord Offord of Garvel: As the Post Office CEO, Nick Read confirmed to the Business and Trade Select Committee on 16 January, Post Office would not block any Non-Disclosure Agreements being broken for postmasters who were convicted. A statutory footing is not necessary.

Horizon IT System: Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the most recent date on which the Post Office or any government agency prosecuted sub-postmasters for alleged shortfalls arising from operation of the Horizon IT system. [HL2144]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The last private prosecution carried out by Post Office relating to Horizon as stated on their website was in 2015. Post Office no longer carries out any private prosecutions.

The Department for Work and Pensions stopped prosecuting all cases in 2012. Following correspondence from Hon Mr Justice Fraser in January 2020, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) alerted prosecutors to the issues with the Horizon System to ensure appropriate checks on its cases were made. The CPS will carefully consider any cases referred to it by the police which rely upon horizon evidence.

Housing: Construction

Asked by The Earl of Lytton

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) low-rise purpose-built flats in blocks of below 6 storeys, (2) high-rise purpose-built flats in blocks of 6 or more storeys, (3) houses, and (4) bungalows, were built in England between 1992 and 2022. [HL2364]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The English Housing Survey is the Department's key source of information on households and housing in England. While it is a sample survey and does not have a record of all dwellings built, it does contain data on the dwelling type and build date of English Homes. The 2022 survey shows that, of those homes built between 1992 and 2022 1) approximately 1.3 million are low-rise purpose-built flats; 2) approximately 300,000 are high-rise purpose-built flats; 3) approximately 3.6 million are houses; and 4) approximately 200,000 are bungalows. This list of dwelling types is not exhaustive and will exclude a small number of converted flats built during this period.

Import Controls: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have plans to repeal the Official Controls (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023. [HL2237]

Lord Douglas-Miller: No. As set out in the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper, the internal

market system will ensure the smooth flow of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland for internal UK trade. In line with the Government's commitments since 2021, these arrangements establish individual schemes that can be used only by UK internal market traders, to preserve those benefits for UK traders and to maintain the smooth flow of that trade.

Checks on Internal UK movements under the scheme will be removed except those conducted by UK authorities and required as part of a risk-based or intelligence-led approach to tackle criminality, abuse of the scheme, smuggling and disease risks.

Goods moving on to the EU will continue to face necessary checks and controls.

Leasehold: Scotland

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 11 January (HL Deb col 100), what assessment they have made of the success of abolition leasehold in Scotland following the passing of the Abolition of Feudal Tenure (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004. [HL2337]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Property law and housing policy are devolved matters for the Scottish Government.

The circumstances in Scotland are different to England and Wales, where historically there were many fewer leasehold properties.

The UK Government agrees that the benefits of freehold ownership should be extended to more homeowners.

Through the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill we will make it easier for existing leaseholders in England and Wales to buy their freeholds or to take on the management of their buildings through exercising the Right to Manage. Through the passage of the Bill we will introduce measures to ban the use of leasehold for new houses.

Medical Equipment: Regulation

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Markham on 24 January (HL1576), when they intend to publish the fully developed strategy on the Innovative Devices Access Pathway, currently undergoing a pilot phase. [HL2440]

Lord Markham: The Department, in collaboration with our national partners including Health Technology Wales, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, NHS England, and the Scottish Health Technology Group, announced the eight technologies that will partake in the Innovative Devices Access Pathway (IDAP) pilot on 14 February 2024.

The pilot includes devices that could destroy liver cancer tumours, detect Alzheimer's, and quickly spot those at risk of stroke. These potentially transformative devices have successfully entered the pilot pathway and will shortly receive tailored advice to support and accelerate their access to the market, and benefit patients.

The pilot was significantly oversubscribed at the point of application, reflecting the excitement around the programme which builds on the Government's Life Sciences Vision and Medical Technology Strategy. The insights gained during the pilot phase will be crucial in shaping the future direction of the new IDAP. The aim of the pilot is to test the main elements of the pathway and to provide informative learning and feedback that helps to build the future IDAP. Details of the final, formal, IDAP will be shared in due course.

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address any constraint caused by the selection of eight technologies in the Innovative Devices Access Pathway; and whether they have any plans to increase the number of technologies that have the potential to meet clinical needs in the NHS. [HL2477]

Lord Markham: The Innovative Devices Access Pathway (IDAP) is currently in the pilot stage and has been restricted to eight technologies to ensure the selected products derive the maximum benefit from their inclusion. A core aspect of the pilot is to develop the tools provided by the partner organisations, which will then in turn benefit other technologies going forward. The pilot will provide comprehensive insights and knowledge to inform the development of a future IDAP. Further details of this will be shared in due course, including opportunities to apply, and the requirements for doing so.

The expert panel applied a portfolio approach to select the pilot technologies. This was to ensure the various tools provided through the pilot are trialled and tested to inform insights for the development of a future IDAP programme.

Further to this, creating a pathway for the development and adoption of innovative technology into the National Health Service is a priority set out in the *Medical Technology Strategy*, published in February 2023. The learning gained from the IDAP pilot, and the experience of other initiatives in related areas such as the Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway for medicines, will inform development of a pathway to be established for the longer term.

Motorway Service Areas: Charging Points

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government how many motorway service stations do not have chargepoints for electric vehicles. [HL2317]

Lord Davies of Gower: Out of 114 motorway service areas in England, only three do not have any open-access

(can be used with any vehicle) chargepoints. These are Leicester Forest East Southbound, Leicester Forest East Northbound and Tebay Southbound. However, Tebay Southbound does have Tesla only chargepoints.

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Davies of Gower on 7 February (HL1914), what assessment they have made of recent findings by the RAC that only 39 per cent of motorway services in England have at least six rapid or ultra-rapid chargers for electric vehicles; and what assessment they have made of why their target for 100 per cent of motorway services in England to have at least six rapid or ultra-rapid chargers by the end of 2023 has not been met. [HL2356]

Lord Davies of Gower: There are now 800 open-access (can be used with any electric vehicle) rapid (50kW) and ultra-rapid (150Kw+) chargepoints at motorway service areas (MSAs) in England. More than 565 of these chargepoints are ultra-rapid. This is a substantial increase of over 300 ultra-rapid chargers at MSAs in the last year and 97% of MSAs now have open-access charging.

56 of the 114 MSA (49%) sites now have at least six ultra-rapid open access chargepoints.

A major challenge is securing the electrical capacity required at sites which can be remote. A £70m pilot for the Rapid Charging Fund opened for applications, specifically targeting MSAs in England.

As well as securing power to a site, other barriers include land configuration, consents issues, and planning and wayleave blockers.

Government is working closely with the distribution network operators, MSA operators, chargepoint operators and other key stakeholders in industry on wider challenges to chargepoint rollout and overcoming barriers at those sites that still need to reach their baseline provision.

Myanmar: Sanctions

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to joining the US in sanctioning (1) Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank, and (2) Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank. [HL2315]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what considerations they have given to joining the EU and the US in sanctioning Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise. [HL2316]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has imposed sanctions to reduce the Myanmar regime's access to finance, arms and equipment. In February 2024, the UK sanctioned two state-owned enterprises, Mining Enterprise 1 and Mining Enterprise 2, for providing

economic resources to the Myanmar security forces. We keep all evidence and potential designations under close review. However, it would be inappropriate to speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact.

Nick Read

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what employment the current Post Office Chief Executive Nick Read had between 30 September 2017 when he ceased to be a director of NISA Retail Limited and his appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the Post Office on 16 September 2019. [HL2371]

Lord Offord of Garvel: As set out on Post Office's website, Nick joined Post Office as Chief Executive Officer in September 2019. Nick was previously Group CEO at Extra Energy and prior to that CEO at Nisa Retail Limited.

Plants: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication of the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper (CP 1021) on 31 January, how many species or genera of plants remain banned for entry into Northern Ireland; and which species or genera remain banned. [HL2357]

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government which species or genera of plants are the subject of dossiers sent to the EU requesting the lifting of the ban on their entry into Northern Ireland. [HL2359]

Lord Douglas-Miller: Through the Windsor Framework we have already lifted the ban on the most urgent 11 priority species, these being European beech, English oak, sessile oak, Norway maple, Japanese maple, sycamore maple, field maple, crab apple, common apple, hawthorn and two types of privet (wax leaf and delavey).

The ban on common hazel will be lifted soon, which will be followed by another seven species that industry have prioritised. We will continue to work with industry to identify further species as needed.

The latest information on the plants' dossiers, including those where the bans have been lifted, can be found at gov.uk.

Slavery: Victims

Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 10 May 2023 (HL Deb col 1923) that they are "committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery and supporting

victims", what steps they are taking to protect the rights of genuine victims of slavery. [HL2326]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Government is committed to ensuring that genuine victims of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) are identified promptly and provided with the support necessary to assist them in rebuilding their lives.

The rights of victims of MSHT in the UK are governed by both our domestic and international obligations, such as those protected under the Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT), Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA), Illegal Migration Act 2023 (IMA) and Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NABA). Section 45 of the MSA 2015 introduced a statutory defence for victims of modern slavery to protect them from prosecution for crimes they have been compelled or forced to commit as a result of their exploitation.

The Home Office funds the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), valued at £379m over its lifespan, to provide temporary needs-based support to enable adult victims to escape modern slavery, connect with long-term support, and reintegrate into the community.

In addition to the statutory support provided to children by the local authorities, the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship service, which provides advice and support for potentially trafficked children, irrespective of nationality, covers two-thirds of the local authorities across England and Wales.

South Sudan: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the human rights situation in South Sudan. [HL2335]

Lord Benyon: South Sudan is an FCDO human rights priority country. Media freedom and civic space remains limited, with journalists and human rights activists threatened, harassed, illegally arrested, and arbitrarily detained. Sub-national conflict continues to result in human rights abuses against civilians. At the UN Human Rights Council on 9 October 2023, the UK called on the South Sudanese Government to end impunity for human rights violations and abuses, and to establish the necessary justice and accountability mechanisms.

Sponsorship: Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prosecutions related to the sale or other unlawful issuing of Certificates of Sponsorship for health and care workers have taken place in each of the past three years. [HL2294]

Lord Bellamy: The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of prosecutions, convictions, and sentences across various offences in the Outcomes by Offence data tool, including a range of immigration and fraud offences. This can be found via the following link: [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: June 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2023).

However, information on specific instances of fraud related to the illicit sale or issuance of Certificates of Sponsorship for health and care workers is not held, and to produce such estimates would require examining individual court records, incurring disproportionate costs. It is not an offence to pass on the costs of assigning a certificate of sponsorship. However, where disproportionate fees for a Certificate of Sponsorship and other immigration costs are levied on workers, either charged upfront, or sought in recovery after the fact, the Home Office will investigate the sponsor and take action, up to and including revocation of their licence, where there has been a breach in sponsorship duties. If potential offences under the relevant offence codes, such as immigration offences or offences under the Modern Slavery Act, as presented through the above link are identified, those sponsors and others involved will be referred for criminal investigation and prosecution.

Stem Cells: Transplant Surgery

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government how many patients in England are currently waiting to receive stem cell treatment. [[HL2340](#)]

Lord Markham: The Department's stem cell programme is providing £2.4 million of funding for the period 2022-25. The programme is being delivered by NHS Blood and Transplant and Anthony Nolan. It aims to enhance the resilience of the UK's stem cell supply by strategically recruiting donors, particularly those most likely to donate, and to address health disparities through targeted campaigns, with a focus on ethnic minority communities. By increasing the pool of potential donors, the programme seeks to improve the availability of matches in the UK, ultimately reducing waiting times for patients in need of stem cell treatment.

The Department does not hold data on the current number of patients in England awaiting stem cell treatment. However, it is important to highlight that the need for a close match influences the wait time for patients in need.

Taiwan Strait: Air Routes

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking in response to the changes by China to the M503, W122 and W123 air traffic routes in the Taiwan Strait;

and what plans they have to raise this in the International Civil Aviation Organization. [[HL2319](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has regular discussions within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regarding the importance of communication and coordination in the protection of air safety, especially when it comes to changes to airspace such as this.

We do not support any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and have underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait alongside partners in previous G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' and Leaders' communiques.

The UK's longstanding policy on Taiwan has not changed. We consider the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue, without the threat or use of force or coercion.

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of China concerning its decision to change the M503, W122 and W123 flight routes near the Taiwan Strait meridian line. [[HL2345](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has regular discussions within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regarding the importance of communication and coordination in the protection of air safety, especially when it comes to changes to airspace such as this.

We do not support any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and have underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait alongside partners in previous G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' and Leaders' communiques.

The UK's longstanding policy on Taiwan has not changed. We consider the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue, without the threat or use of force or coercion.

Windsor Framework

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, following publication of their Command Paper Safeguarding the Union (CP 1021), whether they have any plans to repeal or change the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme) Regulations 2023. [[HL2272](#)]

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, following publication of their Command Paper Safeguarding the Union (CP 1021), whether they have any plans to plans to repeal or change the Windsor Framework (Enforcement etc.) Regulations 2023. [[HL2273](#)]

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, following publication of their Command Paper Safeguarding the Union (CP 1021), whether they have any plans to amend or change the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Public Health, Marketing and Organic Product Standards and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2023. [HL2274]

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, following publication of their Command Paper Safeguarding the Union (CP 1021), whether they have any plans to

amend or change the Windsor Framework (Plant Health) Regulations 2023. [HL2275]

Lord Douglas-Miller: As has been the UK Government's position since 2021, the systems for internal UK trade should be for UK traders, to preserve those benefits for UK traders and to maintain the smooth flow of that trade. We will continue to ensure effective legal underpinnings for those protections for internal UK trade, including as we transition to the new internal market system set out in the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper. We will provide further information on the transition to these new arrangements shortly.

Index to Statements and Answers

Written Statements.....1	
Baby Loss Certificates.....1	
Energy Charter Treaty: UK Withdrawal1	
Intelligence and Security Committee International Partnerships Report: Government Response1	
Local Government Stewardship Update.....2	
Post Office: Proposed Legislation and Financial Redress5	
Serious Fraud Office: Contingencies Fund Advance.....6	
UK Sanctions Strategy6	
Ukraine War: Trade and Business Support7	
UK-Related Domain Name Registries Consultation Policy Response7	
Written Answers.....9	
Air Pollution: Health9	
Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 20239	
Artificial Intelligence.....9	
Côte d'Ivoire: Human Rights9	
Electric Vehicles: Charging Points.....10	
Freeports: Standards10	
Gastrointestinal Cancer10	
Hamas: UNRWA.....11	
Health Services: Transgender People11	
Horizon IT System11	
Horizon IT System: Compensation11	
Horizon IT System: Disclosure of Information..11	
Horizon IT System: Prosecutions.....12	
Housing: Construction.....12	
Import Controls: Northern Ireland.....12	
Leasehold: Scotland.....12	
Medical Equipment: Regulation.....12	
Motorway Service Areas: Charging Points13	
Myanmar: Sanctions13	
Nick Read14	
Plants: Northern Ireland14	
	Slavery: Victims 14
	South Sudan: Human Rights..... 14
	Sponsorship: Prosecutions 14
	Stem Cells: Transplant Surgery 15
	Taiwan Strait: Air Routes 15
	Windsor Framework 15