

Session 2023-24
No. 53



Monday
26 February 2024

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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<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

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Written Statements

Monday, 26 February 2024

Children and Young People's Resettlement Fund

[HLWS287]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My Honourable friend the Minister for Housing and Homelessness (Felicity Buchan MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce eleven projects that have secured funding from the Children and Young People's Resettlement Fund. This £2.5 million fund facilitates projects in England until March 2025 that support young people, aged 21 and under, on the Ukraine, Afghan and Hong Kong BN(O) pathways.

The fund aims to have a positive effect on the lives of children and young people on these pathways by addressing their specific needs and vulnerabilities, including mental health and trauma. The projects will provide support to enable children and young people to recover from traumatic experiences, displacement or resettlement and to integrate into society whilst retaining a connection to their culture.

Projects will be delivered during 2023/24 and 2024/25 and will contribute to our understanding of effective interventions for these young people.

Bids for a share of the funding were open to councils and voluntary organisations by application launched on 27 September 2023. From the 167 applications received, the following eleven organisations will be funded a total of £2.191m:

Name	Amount
Barnardo's	£300,000
Beacon Family Services CIC	£45,191
Bradford Foundation Trust	£193,116
Catalyst Psychology Community Interest Company	£159,770
HealthProm	£199,700
Hong Kong Well UK	£226,748
International Rescue Committee UK	£234,522
PATH Yorkshire Ltd.,	£298,330
St. Mary's Ukrainian School Limited	£323,725
Stoke-on Trent and North Staffordshire Theatre Trust Limited (New Vic Theatre)	£162,369
Wiltshire Council	£47,602
Total	£2.191m

Close to £290,000 will remain to fund projects commencing next financial year.

Funding will be allocated to the devolved administrations according to the Barnett formula.

Israel and Gaza

[HLWS285]

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Development and Africa (Andrew Mitchell MP), has made the following written statement:

The Government supports Israel's right to self-defence, in compliance with International Humanitarian Law, against the horrific terror attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023.

We condemn the slaughter, abuse and gender-based violence perpetrated on 7th October 2023, Hamas' use of civilian areas, their continued failure to release hostages and their ongoing launching of attacks into Israel.

We are working to end the fighting in Gaza, to stop the further loss of civilian lives and create the conditions for a permanent peace.

The most effective way to end the fighting in Gaza is to agree an immediate humanitarian pause, which we have consistently called for. This would allow for the safe release of hostages and a significant increase in the aid going to Gaza.

Crucially, it would also provide a vital opportunity to establish the conditions for a genuinely long-term and sustainable ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

That is a position shared by our close partners, and what our diplomatic efforts are focused on.

We have set out the vital elements for a lasting peace, namely:

- the immediate release of all hostages;
- removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel;
- Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza;
- the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; and
- a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

We are increasingly concerned about the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and recognise the urgent need to significantly scale up the flow of aid getting in. All parties must take immediate steps to ensure unhindered humanitarian access, ease restrictions on humanitarian supplies and ensure the UN and aid agencies can reach civilians in need throughout Gaza.

The UK is stepping up support. We have tripled our aid commitment. In the last week, family tents provided by the UK and Qatar have arrived in Rafah, and on Wednesday, the UK and Jordan air-dropped life-saving aid to a hospital in northern Gaza, providing four tonnes of vital supplies including medicines and food for hospital patients and staff.

We remain deeply concerned at the number of civilian casualties to date, and at the prospect of an Israeli military offensive into Rafah. Over half of Gaza's population are sheltering in the area, and the Rafah crossing is vital to ensure aid can reach the people who so desperately need it. We continue to urge Israel to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming citizens.

Ultimately, a two-state solution is the best way to ensure safety and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. Our long-standing position remains that we will recognise a Palestinian State at a time that is most conducive to the peace process.

The Palestinian Authority has an important long-term role to play and will need continued support from us and our partners, but it must also take concrete steps on reform. We remain concerned about the situation in the West Bank and have taken action in response to extremist settler violence.

We are committed to finding a lasting resolution to this conflict that ensures Israelis and Palestinians can live in the future with dignity and security. It is the aim of the Government to see an end to the fighting as soon as possible and the creation of a permanent peace based on a new political horizon for the region.

Local Transport Fund

[HLWS284]

Lord Davies of Gower: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to inform the House that my Department has today published details of the new £4.7 billion Local Transport Fund dedicated to transport funding across the North and Midlands. The Local Transport Fund delivers on a commitment made in our Network North plan and is paid for by savings from HS2.

As the Prime Minister committed, every pound of the £36 billion that would have been spent on HS2 phase 2 will be invested into transport improvements that benefit far more people, in far more places, far more quickly. Every penny of the £19.8 billion committed to the Northern leg will go to the North and every penny of the £9.6 billion committed to the Midlands leg to the Midlands, with the £6.5 billion saved by our new approach to Euston benefitting the rest of the country.

We are sticking to our plan to level up communities with greater transport links right across the UK for a brighter future. Our plan will ensure millions of people in the North and the Midlands will benefit from better public transport, reduced congestion and upgraded local bus and train stations thanks to the new £4.7 billion Local Transport Fund. £2.5 billion will go to the North and £2.2 billion to the Midlands across the next seven years (2025-2032).

Larger combined authorities in the North and Midlands have already had confirmation of significant extra funding – with a further £8.5 billion increase to the City Region

Sustainable Transport Settlements paid for by HS2. We are extending this successful model to all local authorities in the North and Midlands through the Local Transport Fund, providing the first transport budget of its kind for our smaller cities, towns and rural areas.

This is an historic level of funding for these councils. The new funds can pay for the infrastructure that communities really want: from new roads to new mass transit systems, more EV charge-points or refurbished bus and train stations, to filling in potholes. It will be for locally elected representatives – Councils, working with local MPs, not Whitehall – to decide how to spend this money and they will be accountable to their voters for how they do. The local knowledge of Members of Parliament will be vital, so I am requiring councils to consult their local Members of Parliament before spending this new funding. The funding is available from next year – giving time for councils to develop plans for this unanticipated funding boost.

This announcement builds on our progress of delivering reallocated HS2 spending into new transport schemes across the country. We have extended the national £2 bus fare cap. We announced the first down payment of a £1 billion investment in buses, with £150 million being allocated over the next year across the North and Midlands. We set out details of our new £8.3 billion road resurfacing fund, with the first £150 million already reaching local authorities.

Details of the total funding each local transport authority will receive are published on GOV.UK. The Local Transport Fund is in addition to local transport funding from the last Spending Review and to what local transport authorities were expecting to receive in future. The Government will publish the annual allocations for this fund in due course. To ensure local authorities can make the most of this unprecedented funding, Government will publish advice for local authorities. We will ask local authorities to determine their local transport priorities and develop delivery plans, by Autumn 2024, for projects to be funded by the Local Transport Fund. The Local Transport Fund is predominantly capital. It will include a resource element to ensure local authorities can deliver their plans. We will support local authorities as they develop their plans so that they are ready to deliver improvements with the Local Transport Fund from April 2025.

Online Slots Consultation: Government Response

[HLWS283]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made on 23 February 2024 in the other place by my Right Honourable Friend, the Minister for Sport, Gambling and Civil Society, Stuart Andrew MP:

I wish to inform the House that His Majesty's Government has today published its response to the

‘Consultation on proposals for a maximum stake limit for online slots games’.

Online slots games can be associated with large losses, long sessions, and binge play, posing a higher risk of gambling harm. However, unlike land-based gaming machines which offer broadly similar games, they have no statutory stake limits. The [Gambling Act Review white paper](#), published last April, committed to addressing the risk posed to players by these theoretically limitless online slots stakes. This is in line with the Government's objectives of protecting people from gambling-related harm, levelling the regulatory playing field between offline and online gambling, and more broadly bringing our gambling regulation into the smartphone era.

The consultation ran from 26 July to 4 October and invited views on a stake limit for online slots games of £2, £5, £10 or £15 per spin. It also outlined options for additional protections for those aged 18 to 24 through a £2 limit, a £4 limit, or specific protections on a case-by-case basis.

Following consultation, the Government will introduce a statutory maximum stake limit of £5 per spin. We will also introduce a statutory maximum limit of £2 per spin for young adults aged 18-24 years old, who the evidence suggests can be particularly vulnerable to harms associated with high stakes play.

We believe these limits are proportionate and will achieve the Government's stated objectives of reducing the risk of gambling-related harm while minimising the risk of unintended consequences and disruption for the vast majority of gamblers who do not suffer harm. Importantly, these changes bring online slot games in line with existing restrictions on slot machines in casinos. These limits are also aligned with the recommendation made by the DCMS Select Committee's Second Report into Gambling Regulation, published in December 2023.

Our intention is that the imposed limits should serve as a maximum stake which customers can choose to stake up to, rather than as a new default which operators drive customers towards, or which is otherwise seen as objectively ‘safe’. We will continue to monitor the evidence base and there will be future opportunities to review and if necessary adjust the limits.

Stake limits will also build on existing protections and controls for those who gamble through online slots games and will work alongside other measures outlined in the gambling white paper, including frictionless financial risk checks, data sharing on high-risk customers, and making online games safer by design.

The limits will come into force in September this year, once we have laid the necessary legislation. The white paper package also contained proposals that will support the land-based gambling industry and the introduction of a statutory levy for research, prevention and treatment. The consultations for these measures have now closed and we will publish our response to them in the coming months.

I will deposit a copy of the Consultation in the libraries of both houses.

Pollack in Western Waters

[HLWS282]

Lord Douglas-Miller: My Right Honourable friend the Minister of State (Mark Spencer) has made the following Statement.

Background

The UK, as an independent coastal state, participates in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral fisheries negotiations. In these negotiations, the UK strives to improve the sustainable management of fisheries and support our fishing industry in line with the objectives of the Fisheries Act.

As a result of quota share uplifts agreed in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the UK has approximately 120,000 tonnes more quota from the 2024 negotiations than it would have received as an EU Member State. We have so far secured £970 million of fishing opportunities for 2024, an increase from £900m in 2023.

In June 2023, the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) provided advice that for pollack in western waters the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for 2024 should be set at zero for the first time. Defra negotiated a UK-EU bycatch TAC of 832 tonnes to avoid ‘choking’ other healthy fisheries in the southwest, where pollack is a bycatch. This would not, however, allow vessels to target pollack.

Throughout this process, we have engaged closely with industry representatives and have understood that, even with a bycatch TAC, this would pose difficulties for fishers who have predominantly targeted pollack. My department has been working to find ways to assist and support those most affected with the long-term sustainability of the fishery in mind.

We want to see the long-term recovery of this pollack fishery and believe the measures set out below will help support the sector through this time, securing a vibrant and prosperous seafood sector that supports thriving coastal communities.

Re-opening of the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme

I am pleased to announce that the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS), England's domestic grant scheme, is open again as of 23 February 2024. The scheme supports a variety of measures including support for setting up new practices or processes for new income streams, and training and skills development to support business diversification, and the creation of partnerships so local stakeholders can participate in co-design and management. It will provide up to £6 million in grant funding for the fishing industry this year. Applications from all fishers are encouraged but to assist those most impacted by the zero TAC for pollack, applications from those affected fishers will be expedited, bringing the application processing time down from 8 weeks to 4. This

will mean we will be able get support to those most affected more quickly.

Launch of a New Scientific Study and Long-term Sustainability of the Stock

ICES advice suggests that the issues facing pollack are highly likely to last multiple years. We are working nationally and with the EU in the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) to help improve the scientific assessment of pollack and the long-term sustainability of the stock.

For example, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) is leading a scientific study, based on collaborative research between fishers and scientists, following an approach used in the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership scheme. Fishers will be engaged in the project to collect genetic samples from around 3,000 pollack. These fishers will receive payment for their initial training, payment for catching the fish required for the study and would be able to sell the pollack they caught as part of the study. The study aims to understand more about the abundance and stock structure of pollack. Not only will this help us understand the stock better, it will also help us to improve the scientific assessment of pollack, as we are committed to doing with the EU through the SCF. Applications, along with detailed eligibility criteria, will be open as soon possible for the most affected pollack fishers to apply to the study.

Our work also involves improving our understanding of the recreational fishery, with a view to the introduction of limits where appropriate and where these are likely to be effective in reducing pressure on the stock.

We will continue to work together with industry on this and any potential future management options towards the recovery of the stock. We are also looking at the future management of this stock through our Fisheries Management Plans, specifically the Celtic Sea and Western Channel Demersal plans, to be published towards the end of 2025.

I will arrange for copies of this statement to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

UK Integrated Security Fund 2024-25

[HLWS286]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I wish to update the House on the launch of the UK Integrated Security Fund (ISF) announced in the Integrated Review Refresh (IRR) by the Prime Minister on 12 March 2023. The Integrated Security Fund (ISF) will succeed the existing Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) in April 2024.

The ISF is a cross-Government fund developed to tackle the highest-priority threats to UK national security at home and overseas. The ISF will use Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funding to enable the delivery of National Security Council priorities. It will take an integrated, agile, catalytic, and high-risk approach to find solutions to the most complex national security challenges outlined in the IRR 2023.

Through integrating domestic and overseas national security programming, it will aim to have real-world strategic impact, bring value for taxpayers' money, and demonstrate UK innovation.

The ISF will build on the important work supported by the CSSF. New areas of ISF programming will reflect the priorities set out in the IRR and will add additional priorities, including maritime security, economic sanctions and emerging and disruptive technology such as AI and quantum computing. The ISF has allocated almost £1bn for FY 24/25 bringing some existing economic deterrence and cyber programmes into the single fund. In FY 22/23, the CSSF invested £830m as set out in the CSSF Annual Report FY 22/23.

The report demonstrates how CSSF programmes have delivered clear results. In the Lake Chad Basin region in West Africa data collection, analysis and coordination between the military and police improved the response to the threat from Improvised Explosive Devices to local communities. Violent extremist groups operating globally pose a threat to the UK and to our allies. To counter the increase in the threat of Turkish manufactured converted blank-firing weapons on UK streets, CSSF programmes invested in capacity building and advice resulting in changes to firearms legislation in Turkey. This resulted in a drop in the sales of blank firearms in Turkey and a decrease in imports of blank firearms into the UK.

These examples highlight the Fund's tangible contribution to enhance UK national security through integrated programmes across 12 government departments and agencies, with a presence in over 90 countries and territories.

United Kingdom and Frontex: Working Arrangement

[HLWS281]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Countering Illegal Migration (Michael Tomlinson) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce that a landmark working arrangement between the UK and Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency) is being launched today.

The working arrangement is a non-legally binding arrangement that provides a long-term framework for mutually beneficial cooperation with Frontex across a range of operational areas to tackle illegal migration and cross-border crime. A working arrangement is the standard means for non-EU countries to cooperate with Frontex and various other third countries have similar arrangements, including the USA, Canada, Albania and Ukraine.

Our aim is to work with Frontex through this arrangement to enhance our respective and joint operational responses to illegal migration and cross-border crime, making the UK's and EU's borders safer and more secure. This is another step in our cooperation

with European partners to tackle illegal migration into and across Europe.

The working arrangement includes provision for cooperation on:

- information and intelligence exchange, situational awareness and risk analysis, including through the framework of EUROSUR (the European Border Surveillance System);
- training and capacity building;
- cooperation on research and innovation projects;
- technical and operational cooperation, including the deployment of UK and Frontex staff in observation, advisory, or coordination capacities;
- sharing best practice and expertise, including on border management; and
- exchange of Liaison Officers.

This follows the previous announcement regarding the opening of discussions on a working arrangement by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President

of the European Commission at the Council of Europe Summit in May 2023.

We intend to begin cooperation under this working arrangement as soon as possible, with an initial focus on sharing knowledge, expertise, and information on mutual priorities. Over the coming months, the Home Office will build on this by agreeing detailed cooperation and operational plans with Frontex to support further collaboration. We will announce more detail in due course.

Organised immigration crime and people smuggling are global challenges that require shared solutions and ambitions. Signing the working arrangement underscores our shared commitment to tackling illegal migration and organised immigration crime, be it in the Channel, along the EU's external border, or further upstream.

The working arrangement and an accompanying Explanatory Memorandum will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and both documents will also be published on GOV.UK.

Written Answers

Monday, 26 February 2024

Africa: Abortion

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Benyon on 9 February (HL1962), why they do not track and disaggregate discrete spend for abortion services, as part of the wider package of women's healthcare, in respect of development monies disbursed in Africa. [HL2360]

Lord Benyon: The UK has a strong portfolio of Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programming globally, which includes abortion services. We report our spend, according to the OECD Development and Assistance Committee (DAC) sector codes, in our annual Statistics on International Development publications:

[<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>].

Comprehensive SRHR spend spans across various OECD DAC codes and we do not record data for SRHR services separately. Some civil society partners have developed methodologies to provide an estimate of the UK's SRHR spend.

Individual FCDO programmes record deliverables and results on SRHR. This data along with individual programme finances can be found on the Devtracker website: [<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/>] SRHR results are likely to be reported as a comprehensive service against sector approved indicators and metrics, rather than for individual services such as abortion.

Alice Perkins

Asked by *Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government what were their reasons for nominating Alice Perkins, former Chair of the Post Office from 2011 to 2015, for a recommendation for honours. [HL2372]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Ms Perkins was awarded a Companion of the Order of the Bath in the Birthday Honours 2002 List when she was serving as Head of Civil Service Corporate Management and Reform within the Cabinet Office.

Honours nominations are made in confidence and there is an expectation that they remain confidential in order to protect the integrity and confidentiality of the honours system.

Artificial Intelligence: Copyright

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to balance the interests of artificial intelligence

(AI) companies with the rights holders in the development of policies and regulations related to AI and copyright laws. [HL2412]

Viscount Camrose: The Government is engaging with the AI and rights holder sectors to develop an approach on AI and copyright that allows both sectors to grow together. We want to work closely with right holders and AI developers to deliver this. Any approach will need to be underpinned by trust and transparency between parties, with greater transparency from AI developers about use of copyrighted material to train AI models and the attribution of outputs having an important role to play. The Government will soon set out further proposals on the way forward.

Ash Dieback Disease

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of ash trees infected with the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* in the year 2023. [HL2574]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Government does not collect data on the number of individual ash trees that have become infected with ash dieback, but the disease is now present in all counties and is predicted to kill over 100 million trees in the UK. *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* is spread via spores which can spread for considerable distances in the wind before infecting another ash tree. This means it is not possible to limit the spread of the disease. Some local authorities conduct annual surveys of ash trees to track local spread and decline and inform their management strategies.

In most areas, a majority of ash trees are now expected to be infected, but the response of individual ash trees to infection is highly variable. The most susceptible trees often die within a few years and the most resistant trees may show little damage and sometimes signs of recovery between years. The severity and impact of the disease at a local level also varies by tree age and condition, climate, the presence of secondary pathogens and other environmental factors.

From observations in Europe and the UK, we expect a minimum of 1-5% of ash trees to be naturally resistant to the disease. Resistance is heritable which offers hope for a future breeding programme and Defra is investing in R&D to support this.

Aviation: Fuels

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will respond to their consultation on sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) mandate published on 30 March 2023; whether it is still their policy to have five SAF plants under construction by 2025; and, if so, what is their progress towards meeting that target. [HL2447]

Lord Davies of Gower: The Government is on track to introduce the UK sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) mandate in 2025, with a target of at least 10% SAF in UK jet fuel by 2030. We will publish the government response to the second mandate consultation, setting out our final policy positions, in the Spring.

There are currently two commercial-scale sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) plants operational or under construction in the UK. The Government's Advanced Fuels Fund has allocated £135m across 13 projects to supporting our aim to have at least five commercial SAF plants under construction in the UK by 2025.

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ratify the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions; when they expect to be able to ratify the Agreement; and what discussions they have had with international partners to encourage other countries to ratify it. [HL2420]

Lord Benyon: Work is in hand on the legislation and other measures needed to translate the detailed and complex provisions of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement) into UK law before we can ratify the Agreement. Legislation will be taken forward when parliamentary time allows.

The UK continues to be proactive in supporting other, particularly developing, countries to implement and ratify the BBNJ Agreement. This includes contributing to the BBNJ Voluntary Trust Fund to enable participation by developing countries in UN discussions on preparatory work, and supporting the BBNJ Informal Dialogues, discussions that bring together participants from a wide range of countries online to discuss implementation. The UK also co-funded and organised a workshop for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries to share best practice and support the implementation and ratification of the BBNJ Agreement in the Philippines in November 2023. The UK is supporting a Commonwealth Secretariat project to provide technical assistance on implementation and ratification to smaller Commonwealth countries.

British Nationals Abroad: Hostage Taking

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to implement the recommendation by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee in its report, *Stolen years: combatting state hostage diplomacy*, published on 4 April 2023, that a position of Director for Arbitrary and Complex Detentions should be established. [HL2314]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO is committed to dedicating senior leadership and expertise in our approach to complex detention cases. We continue to believe that our current approach, led by the Foreign Secretary and his Ministers, and supported by senior officials and Heads of Mission, provides the most appropriate means for coordinating our case handling and responses to the most complex consular cases.

Business: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are taking steps to ensure that there is legal liability to provide effective remedies for all forms of human rights violations committed abroad by corporations domiciled in the United Kingdom. [HL2344]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has consistently supported the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and supports voluntary human rights due diligence approaches by UK businesses to respect human rights across their operations. In line with the Principles, the UK has a range of judicial and state-based, non-judicial mechanisms that help to support access to remedy for human rights abuses by UK business enterprises both in the UK and overseas. For example, the UK operates a National Contact Point to run a non-judicial grievance mechanism to assess alleged non-compliance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, offering a platform for mediation and conciliation.

Child Benefit

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what research they have carried out, if any, to ascertain the effect of the two-child benefit cap on the lives of the affected children and their families. [HL2370]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: There has been no research completed to ascertain the effect of the policy on the lives of the affected children and their families. However, DWP is committed to supporting families and helping parents into work. This requires a balanced system that provides strong work incentives and support for those who need it, but that also ensures a sense of fairness to the taxpayer and many working families who do not see their incomes rise when they have more children.

Community Housing: Cooperatives

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to support the housing cooperative sector. [HL2362]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government is committed to supporting housing co-operatives and other providers of community-led housing. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, and was most recently revised in December 2023. The National Planning Policy Framework now includes several measures that will support the diversification of the housing market, including the growth of the community-led housing sector. These new measures include:

- A new community-led housing exception sites policy to encourage local authorities to support the development of community-led sites that deliver affordable housing to meet local need;
- encouragement to local planning authorities to seek opportunities to support small sites to come forward for community-led development for housing;
- greater emphasis on the role that community-led development can have in supporting the provision of housing in rural areas; and
- a definition of “community-led developments”, which will help planning authorities provide support for local proposals for community-led housing development.

Community-based groups (or their partner organisations) who are registered as providers of social housing may apply for capital grant through the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme (AHP).

In addition, in 2023, we provided £3 million to support a social finance fund to provide equity and loan finance for community-led housing schemes across England. This fund is expected to support the delivery of 1587 homes over ten years.

Darfur: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UN Security Council Panel of Experts of Sudan's report on attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Darfur, and in particular of any role of individuals among the RSF and allies in those abuses. [[HL2375](#)]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking, following the UN Security Council Panel of Experts on the Sudan's report on the horrific attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Darfur, concerning any charges being brought against Abdel Rahman Juma, the West Darfur RSF commander, concerning any involvement in abuses set out in the report. [[HL2376](#)]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of allegations of internally displaced people in South Darfur being abused by the

Rapid Support Forces, including allegations of rape, assault and looting; and what steps they are taking with international partners to provide (1) protection, and (2) collect and preserve evidence to bring charges against any perpetrators. [[HL2378](#)]

Lord Benyon: The UK condemns the continuing violence and suffering being wrought by the warring parties on the people of Sudan, including in Darfur. We welcome the UN Panel of Experts' report and look forward to its final publication. The UK remains committed to ensuring that those responsible for atrocities in Sudan are held to account. As well as the work of the UN Panel of Experts, we continue to support the essential work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sudan (OHCHR) and the International Criminal Court in investigating and documenting reports of atrocities. In addition, on 11 October, the Human Rights Council adopted the UK-led 'Sudan Core Group' resolution to establish an independent and international Fact-Finding Mission to ensure credible allegations of human rights violations and abuses in Sudan will be investigated impartially. The UK is also funding open-source investigation experts to use satellite imagery and social media to verify and preserve information relating to attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Deer and Squirrels: Conservation

Asked by The Earl of Caithness

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards their national deer management strategy and their updated Grey Squirrel Action Plan, as committed to in the England Trees Action Plan 2021–2024, and when is the publication date. [[HL2644](#)]

Lord Benyon: We held a public consultation on key proposals for the English deer management strategy in 2022. Consultation responses have been collated, analysed and fed into the development of the deer management strategy. We are also working to refresh the Grey Squirrel Action Plan.

It is our intention to publish them as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Development Aid: Nature Conservation

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of Official Development Assistance has been spent on ecosystem conservation, protection and restoration and tree planting internationally in the last five years, and what proportion of Official Development Assistance is forecast to be spent in these areas in the next budget period. [[HL2339](#)]

Lord Benyon: Over the last five years (2018/19 - 2022/23) the UK spent £1,397 million of Official Development Assistance (ODA) on programmes that protected and restored nature, including £865 million specifically targeting forests. Between 2021/22 and

2025/26 the UK has pledged to spend at least £3 billion of our International Climate Finance (ICF) on restoring and protecting nature, including £1.5 billion on forests. Our latest results [UK International Climate Finance results 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)] show that between 2011 and 2023 UK ICF has avoided 413,000 hectares of ecosystem loss, and generated or protected ecosystem services valued at £5,302,000.

Diplomatic Relations

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many countries have permanent diplomatic representation in the UK. [[HL2392](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office publishes details of foreign embassies, high commissions and consulates in the UK on gov.uk, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk>.

This page includes the London Diplomatic List (LDL), which contains details of all embassies and high commissions, as well as the names of heads of mission and other diplomatic agents appointed in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The LDL lists 169 diplomatic missions with their permanent seat in the UK. 17 countries have non-resident diplomatic representation to the UK. Nine countries are represented by an Honorary Consul.

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many countries the UK have permanent diplomatic representation in. [[HL2393](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has diplomatic representation present in 160 countries recognised by the UK Government. This number periodically changes for political and operational reasons. It excludes countries in which we have closed or temporarily suspended a Post in country, which may operate elsewhere. The UK also has representation present in 15 territories, which includes 12 UK Overseas Territories.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) publishes a full list of locations where the UK has a diplomatic presence on GOV.UK at www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-foreign-office-posts. This list is regularly updated.

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government which countries do not have permanent diplomatic representation in the UK. [[HL2394](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office publishes details of foreign embassies, high commissions and consulates in the UK on gov.uk, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk>.

This page includes the London Diplomatic List (LDL), which contains details of all embassies and high commissions, as well as the names of heads of mission and other diplomatic agents appointed in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The LDL lists 169 diplomatic missions with their permanent seat in the UK. 17 countries have non-resident diplomatic representation to the UK. Nine countries are represented by an Honorary Consul.

Some countries do not have a UK diplomatic presence or Honorary Consul representation. The FCDO does not publish a complete list of countries without UK diplomatic representation as this information is publicly available by comparing the LDL against the official map of countries as recognised by the UN: <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/world-today>.

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government in which countries the UK does not have a permanent diplomatic presence. [[HL2395](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has a network of 281 officially designated overseas Posts. It does not currently have a permanent diplomatic presence in the countries listed below. However, the list includes countries in which we have officially designated Posts which are temporarily suspended in country and our mission to that country operates elsewhere for political or operational reasons (Afghanistan, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, Yemen) or have diplomatic staff who are not in permanent residence (Haiti, Burundi, Gabon). Locations defined as UK territories are excluded. Information about the FCDO overseas network is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-foreign-office-posts.

- Afghanistan(1)
- Andorra
- Benin
- Bhutan
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi(2)
- Cape Verde
- Central African Republic
- Comoros
- Congo
- Dominica
- East Timor
- Equatorial Guinea
- Gabon(2)
- Guinea-Bissau
- Haiti(2)
- Honduras

- Kiribati
- Liechtenstein
- Marshall Islands
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Monaco
- Nauru
- Nicaragua
- North Korea(1)
- Palau
- St Kitts and Nevis
- San Marino
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Sudan(1)
- Suriname
- Syria(1)
- Togo
- Tuvalu
- Yemen(1)

Key:

- (1) Temporarily suspended
- (2) Diplomats not in permanent residence

Domestic Waste: Waste Management

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of household waste and recycling centre closures on incidences of fly-tipping. [HL2575]

Lord Douglas-Miller: We have previously commissioned research into the drivers, deterrents and impacts of fly-tipping that suggested any friction in the system relating to the use of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), which have negative impacts on cost or convenience, can act as provocations for normally law-abiding people or businesses to fly-tip or give their waste to someone who goes on to fly-tip. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires waste disposal authorities to provide places for residents to deposit household waste. It is a Local Authority responsibility to manage suitable availability.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government how many household waste and recycling centres have closed since January 2023 because of budgetary constraints of local authorities. [HL2576]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Government does not have detailed information on decisions behind local authority service implementation. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) are an important service to help ensure residents can dispose of waste in a responsible manner and we encourage local authorities to ensure appropriate provisions are made.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to encourage local councils to replicate the 'mega skip' days run by Wandsworth Council to reduce incidences of fly-tipping. [HL2577]

Lord Douglas-Miller: Across two rounds of our fly-tipping grant scheme we have awarded nearly £1.2m to help councils across the country introduce interventions to tackle fly-tipping hotspots. Successful projects have included community or 'waste amnesty' days. A selection of case studies from completed projects are available online so that others can learn about those interventions which were most successful. These can be found at <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/fly-tipping-intervention-grant-scheme>.

We are currently reviewing applications for a further round of grants, which could see an additional £1m handed out in the spring to help even more councils tackle the issue.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government what conversations Ministers and officials have had with local authorities which have published local guidance against, or sought to restrict, the use of cable gullies or cable protectors to charge electric vehicles; and what was the outcome of those conversations. [HL2448]

Lord Davies of Gower: As part of the Plan for Drivers, the Government has committed to providing guidance for local authorities on the safe and effective use of cross-pavement solutions. This guidance is being drafted and officials have engaged several local authorities as part of this process, including site visits. Local authority feedback will be reflected in the guidance, which we intend to publish in Spring 2024.

Electric Vehicles: Disinformation and Sales

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address any misinformation surrounding electric vehicles; and what consideration they have given to reintroducing incentives for purchasing electric cars. [HL2413]

Lord Davies of Gower: As committed in the Plan for Drivers, the Government has published factual information on electric vehicle (EVs) and EV charging infrastructure, to address misinformation surrounding EVs.

Due to the success of the Plug-in Car Grant in driving the growth of the EV market, the Government is now targeting its incentives toward charging infrastructure and grants for harder to transition vehicles. In June 2022, the Government published a public evaluation report, highlighting that while the plug-in car grant was vital in

building the early market for EVs, it had since been having less of an effect on demand.

The Government continues to provide tax incentives to encourage the uptake of EVs. EVs currently pay zero rates of VED and from 2025, they will continue to have preferential first year rates in comparison to the most polluting vehicles. Favourable rates of company car tax for EVs have been confirmed out to April 2028.

Energy Charter Treaty

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to withdraw from the Energy Charter Treaty. [HL2365]

Lord Callanan: On 22 February 2024, the UK announced it is withdrawing from the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). The UK will now initiate the process to withdraw from the ECT. The UK is required to give a one-year notification of withdrawal, removing Treaty protections for new investments made after this period.

EU Law

Asked by Lord Krebs

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Retained EU Law Parliamentary Report for the period June 2023–December 2023, published on 22 January, what is the departmental breakdown for the following categories set out in Table 2 ('HMG roadmap for the stock of REUL'): (1) 'Propose to revoke in 2024', (2) 'Propose to revoke in 2025–26', (3) 'Propose to reform in 2024', and (4) 'Propose to reform in 2025–26'. [HL2363]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: To meet our obligations under Section 17 of the Retained EU Law Revocation and Reform (REUL) Act, the first REUL report included a comprehensive list of REUL which has been reformed and revoked and detailed our plans for forthcoming reform SIs. In addition, and to provide Parliament with further insight, the report provided an indication of Government's future roadmap for REUL reform for the whole period to June 2026, informed by reporting from government departments to the Department for Business and Trade (i.e Table 2). In many cases the reforms in the roadmap for future years, are still under development and so the full details of these reforms have not been included in this first report. As details of future reforms are finalised, the Government will provide updates every 6 months via future reports alongside updating the REUL dashboard.

Fertilisers: Sales

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that ammonium nitrate, calcium

ammonium nitrate and potassium nitrate are sold securely for lawful purposes. [HL2486]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Control of Poisons and Explosives Precursors Regulations 2023 introduced new substances to the lists of regulated explosives precursors and poisons including the acquisition, importation, supply, possession and use of ammonium nitrate above 16% nitrogen. From 1 October 2023 businesses supplying ammonium nitrate above 16% nitrogen to business customers need to take additional steps to verify the legitimacy of the professional user or business. They must now obtain a form of photographic identification as well as the business name and address, a statement of the nature of their trade and their VAT registration number. This information must be recorded and retained for 18 months and available for inspection. Ammonium nitrate is listed as a regulated explosives precursor meaning a member of the public is only able to import, acquire possess or use the substance with a valid Explosives Precursors and Poisons Licence. Calcium ammonium nitrate and potassium nitrate are listed as reportable explosives precursors under the Poisons Act 1972 meaning a business selling these substances must report any potential suspicious transactions within 24 hours.

The Fertiliser Industry Assurance Scheme (FIAS) controls the supply and distribution of AN in GB. The Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) manages the development and implementation of the scheme under the supervision of the FIAS Steering Group.

In GB, should any products contain more than 28% by weight of ammonium nitrate, then they should also meet the requirements of The Ammonium Nitrate Materials (High Nitrogen Content) Safety Regulations 2003.

In Northern Ireland, the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 are in operation. Under these regulations, ammonium nitrate is classified as a tier 1 substance, and therefore requires a licence for supply, acquisition, possession, use or import into Northern Ireland. Individuals who hold a tier 1 substance licence must complete a record of each acquisition, supply or import into Northern Ireland. Individuals with a licence have obligations towards keeping records and obtaining police consent for transactions over a certain weight or measure.

Food and Nutrition

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, under the proposed new Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering, they have completed an assessment to determine if it is possible for food to be both locally sourced and consumed according to its proposed local maps, meeting all specialist dietary needs. [HL2390]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Government consulted on changes to the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering including increasing the sourcing and consumption of local food. The consultation sought views

on several different proposals for a working definition of local in this context. As the Government response to the consultation has not been published it is too soon to comment and pre-empt any specific findings. However, we recognise that pursuing the local target poses feasibility issues and so we will continue to work closely with external partners in developing new policy which does not impact the availability of foods for those needing special diets.

Food: Hospitals

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that there is no significant cost increase to the NHS from proposed changes to the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering which would introduce new targets for sourcing locally produced food. [HL2476]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The Government consulted on changes to the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) in summer 2022. This included seeking views on different proposals for increasing the proportion of local food to be sourced within public sector procurement. The Government is considering its response and we are working closely with the NHS, as well as the HM Prisons and Probation Service and the Armed Forces, to ensure that any proposed changes to the GBSF are workable.

Food: Labelling

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the information on food packaging to enable consumers to make informed choices. [HL2484]

Lord Douglas-Miller: All food sold in the UK must comply with food labelling rules, which include the requirement for specific information to be presented in a specific way. These rules require that a food label on pre-packed foods must show:

- the name of the food;
- a list of ingredients;
- the net quantity of the food and the quantity of certain ingredients used;
- ingredients causing allergies or intolerances;
- a best before or use by date;
- any special storage conditions and/or conditions of use;
- the name and address of the food business operator;
- instructions for use where necessary; and
- a nutrition declaration.

Country of origin information is already required for fresh and frozen meat of beef, sheep, goat, pigs and poultry, as well as for uncut fresh fruit and vegetables, honey, olive oil and wine. For all other prepacked food, origin is required where its omission would be misleading

to consumers. For processed food, where the origin of the primary ingredient is different to that of the food itself and the origin of the food is given, an indication that the origin of the primary ingredient is different or the specific origin must also be provided.

At the Oxford Farming Conference, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced a rapid consultation to gather views on how we can make packaging information clearer to help boost consumer confidence and ensure farmers are fairly rewarded.

Forced Marriage Unit: Training

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government how many professionals the Forced Marriage Unit delivered training to in 2023; and how many people took the Forced Marriage Unit's "Awareness of Forced Marriage" free online course in 2023. [HL2410]

Lord Benyon: In 2023, the Forced Marriage Unit delivered training to a total of 3657 professionals through their bespoke training and workshops.

We currently do not have the figure for how many people took the free online course in 2023 - these will be released in due course. In 2022, 5,029 people from a wide range of professions took the Government's "Awareness of Forced Marriage" free online course.

Glyphosate

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to commission or gather evidence about the real-world impacts of glyphosate on human health and the natural environment, ahead of the decision on whether to renew approval of glyphosate in 2025. [HL2354]

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of the acknowledgement by the European Food Safety Authority when assessing glyphosate in the EU of concerns regarding impacts on both human health and the environment which were not addressed due to missing data and a lack of guidelines, what steps they plan to take to address these information gaps in the run up to, and during, the renewal process for glyphosate. [HL2355]

Lord Douglas-Miller: Glyphosate is currently approved as an active substance for use in pesticide products in Great Britain. As part of its renewal assessment the Health and Safety Executive, as the Government's expert regulator for pesticides, will conduct a thorough and robust scientific risk assessment to determine if the approval of glyphosate should be renewed in line with assimilated Regulation 1107/2009 of the GB plant protection products legislation.

As part of this assessment HSE will consider all data required by the legislation and can request additional data

from the approval holder should this be required before reaching its decision.

Government Departments: Communication

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the account of the workings of the communications function across Government set out in the chapter entitled "Government (Mis)Communications" in Dame Kate Bingham's book *The Long Shot*. [HL2380]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: During a crisis, effective communication is essential. As public bodies we must be the source of accurate, relevant and timely information. The Government Communication Service has recently published a new operating model for Crisis Communications to ensure that we learn lessons from previous experiences, including the UK's Covid response. This sets out clear guidelines for preparing for, responding to and recovering from crises. Our response to emergencies are kept under constant review.

Hamas: UNRWA

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government when they first received any information or intelligence of allegations that staff of UNRWA were aiding and abetting Hamas. [HL2268]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, called myself on 26 January to report that Israel had brought allegations against 10-12 UNRWA employees who Israel claims had taken part in Hamas' 7 October attack, and to outline the actions that UNRWA had taken.

Health: Disadvantaged

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Institute of Health Equity's report *Health Inequalities* published in January, which showed that between 2010 and 2020 nearly 1.2 million people died prematurely from a combination of poverty, austerity and COVID-19, and what redress have they offered to the families of the victims. [HL2367]

Lord Markham: The Department commissioned a review of trends in mortality in England which was published in 2018. This concluded that the overall slowdown in improvement in mortality trends, evident in many other countries, was likely due to number of factors operating across a wide range of age groups, geographies and causes of death. The Department publishes and monitors data on trends and disparities in mortality, including premature mortality and excess deaths, and this

is part of a wide range of data that informs policy decisions.

Horizon IT System

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Post Office entered into a standstill agreement with Fujitsu over the flaws found in the Horizon IT system. [HL1816]

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government whether all the flaws in the Horizon IT system operated by the Post Office and referred to in the High Court judgement in *Alan Bates and Others v Post Office Limited* [2019] EWHC 3408 (QB) have since been rectified. [HL1817]

Lord Offord of Garvel: There have been several versions of Horizon since its introduction in 1999 and the current version of the system, introduced from 2017, was found in the Group Litigation to be reliable, relative to comparable systems. Post Office continue to make improvements to the system and will be moving away from Horizon to a new IT system. The Government is providing funding to support this programme. In the meantime, Horizon remains in place. Fujitsu's role in the Horizon scandal is one of the issues being examined by the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. Post Office Limited has entered into a standstill agreement with Fujitsu.

Import Controls: Disease Control

Asked by Baroness Hayman of Ullock

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of consignments will be physically inspected for compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary controls under their Border Target Operating Model; and how the suitability of that proportion will be kept under review. [HL2471]

Lord Douglas-Miller: The physical inspection rate for is determined by the risk categorisation of a particular commodity, as set out below. The review of risk categorisation is an ongoing and continual process. Defra undertake the risk modelling necessary to categorise commodities, advised by an expert panel comprised of risk analysts, risk managers and policy representatives from the Animal and Plant Health Agency, the Food Standards Agency (which advises the UK and Welsh Governments), and Food Standards Scotland, alongside public health and disease control policy experts from the UK Health Security Agency and from the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments. The categorisation is based on the inherent risk (high, medium or low) that the commodity poses to animal and plant health, food safety, alongside any specific risk from the country/region of origin. The categorisation approach draws on a range of data including disease outbreak data, known public health risks, transmission data, trade restrictions, non-compliance data and our confidence in the exporting

country's production standards and health controls, among other sources.

Live animals and products of animal origin physical inspection rates

<i>Risk Category</i>	<i>Physical inspection rate</i>
High risk (live animals and high risk POAO, such as those subject to safeguarding measures)	100%
Medium risk	1%-30%, depending on specifics of the import
Low risk	0%

Plant and plant products physical inspection rates

<i>Risk Category</i>	<i>Physical inspection rate</i>
High risk	100% - Plants for planting, woody and/or for commercial production 30% - Plants for planting, non woody and for retail sale as outdoor plants 5% - Plants for planting, non woody and for retail sale as indoor plants
Medium Risk	3%-5%
Low Risk	0%

Iran: Baha'i Faith

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the seizure of 100 hectares of land belonging to Baha'i farmers by agents of the Iranian state in the Province of Mazandaran in January; and what steps they are taking to raise this matter through bilateral or multilateral means. [HL2415]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the persecution of members of the Baha'i community, including of reports of the expropriation of farming land in Mazandaran Province; and what assessment they have made of the impact of these actions on this community. [HL2417]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK condemns the continued persecution of religious minorities in Iran and we are aware of recent reports of land expropriation discriminately targeting the Baha'i community. At the 78th UN General Assembly, we co-sponsored the Iran Human Rights Resolution calling for Iran to eliminate, in law and in practice, all forms of discrimination on the basis of thought, conscience, religion or belief. We are committed to promoting religious freedom and will continue to work with partners and the UK Baha'i community to hold the Iranian authorities to account.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the number of children injured in Israel and Palestine since 7 October 2023, and (2) the level of medical support available for children in Gaza. [HL1958]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are supporting NGO and UN partners to deliver medical aid and care in the Gaza Strip. This includes support for primary healthcare, trauma and emergency care services, disease surveillance and outbreak response, and deployment of Emergency Medical Teams. We have targeted support for children through our £5.75 million contribution to UNICEF.

We are also exploring further options to help meet the medical needs of Palestinians.

The early work we have done shows there is much we can do in the region, for example helping in the field hospitals that have been established, helping to send medical teams to referral hospitals in the region and supporting organisations such as Medical Aid for Palestinians.

A shocking number of civilians including children, have been injured and killed in Gaza. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

Joint Ministerial Committee

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the operation and effectiveness of the Joint Ministerial Committee. [HL2324]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The system of Joint Ministerial Committees (JMCs) was replaced as part of the 2022 Review of Intergovernmental Relations. The structures which replace the JMCs provide a more flexible and fit-for-purpose approach with department-led Interministerial Groups overseen by an Interministerial Standing Committee, and, ultimately, a Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Governments Council.

Since the 2022 Review, there have been almost 500 intergovernmental ministerial meetings. Ensuring the structures work effectively is the joint responsibility of UK Government and the devolved governments. The UK Government monitors the effectiveness of engagement including through quarterly and end of year transparency reports, published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Intergovernmental Relations [Intergovernmental relations.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-02-08/HL2324>

Lighting: Pollution

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the efficacy of current planning legislation in limiting light pollution of the night skies in England. [HL2402]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should “limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”

The character of the area and the surrounding environment is already a material consideration about what will be considered an appropriate level of lighting for a development. This applies to both new housing and new commercial developments.

Osteoporosis: Screening

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government what actions they have taken in response to the Medical Research Council's UK primary care-based ‘Screening for Osteoporosis in Older People’ trial. [HL2251]

Lord Markham: The Government has not taken any specific action in response to the Medical Research Council's primary care-based trial, Screening for Osteoporosis in Older People. However, there are actions that the Government is taking more generally, to support people with osteoporosis and increase early diagnosis.

The Government is working to set up 160 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) across the country by March 2024. Some of these CDCs will offer bone density scans which can be used to diagnose or assess patients’ risk of osteoporosis. Our ambition is that 95% of patients needing a diagnostic check will receive it within six weeks, by March 2025.

On 24 January 2023, we announced our plan to publish the Major Conditions Strategy. The strategy will focus on six major groups of conditions, including musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders such as osteoporosis. We have since published our initial report Major conditions strategy: case for change and our strategic framework, which is available on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format. For MSK conditions such as osteoporosis, it sets out our aims to improve services where medical treatment is necessary. Together with NHS England, we will explore supporting the further provision of fracture liaison services. This could include identifying people at risk of further osteoporotic fragility fractures and implementing strategies to reduce the risk of future fractures, including from falls, and mortality.

Valuable research work is also being funded by the Department, through the National Institute of Health and Care Research, which has awarded £173 million to research into MSK conditions in the last five years.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) last reviewed the evidence to screen for osteoporosis in postmenopausal women in 2019, recommending that a population screening programme should not be introduced. The review identified that there were key areas of uncertainty around the test and treatment and that further research was needed. The research showed that screening all women for osteoporosis does not reduce the number of fractures compared to current care.

The UK NSC can be alerted to any new published peer-reviewed evidence which may suggest the case for a new screening programme via its annual call, which will open in July 2024.

Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 10 February of the report of the Local Government Association (LGA) The Path To Inclusive Footways, what assessment they have made of the statement by the LGA that “inconsiderate parking presents a real hazard and a potential danger to life”; and what plans they have to extend powers of local councils to enable them to ban pavement parking across England. [HL2558]

Lord Davies of Gower: The Department is fully aware that pavement parking can pose problems for all pedestrians. Local authorities are responsible for parking restrictions and already have powers to tackle pavement parking by implementing Traffic Regulation Orders. The Department has consulted on further options to help local authorities outside London tackle this issue and will publish a formal response when final decisions have been taken.

Personal Care Services: T-levels

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cost in time and resources to schools and colleges in preparing for the aborted T-levels in hairdressing and barbering. [HL2389]

Baroness Barran: The department wrote to all T Level providers in January informing them that a combined T Level in Hairdressing, Barbering and Beauty Therapy (HBBT) would no longer be introduced. This decision was taken following discussions with employers and representatives of the hair and beauty sector.

The time and resources spent in preparing for the introduction of this T Level will vary from provider to provider. To minimise any impacts, the department is allowing providers who have received capital funding for

specialist equipment and/or buildings and facilities improvement relating to HBBT, to retain these grants to be used for future courses in this subject area.

Providers will receive the normal 16-19 funding for their students, and this can be used to support those who switch to alternative Level 3 courses.

Probate

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that probate applications are processed within 16 weeks of being submitted, in line with the Government's target, following reports that at present some applicants are experiencing delays of up to a year. [HL2444]

Lord Bellamy: The probate service received record levels of applications during 2022 and this has continued to grow with higher levels of receipts during January to September 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

HMCTS is focused on increasing outputs to reduce overall timeliness on all types of applications and the average mean length of time taken for a grant of probate, following receipt of the documents required, is 13 weeks during July to September 2023.

Average waiting times for probate grants are routinely published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly and currently cover the period up to September 2023.

HMCTS has increased staffing levels, streamlined internal processes and continued to invest in further improving the digital service.

As a result, the number of grants issued for recent months has been at record levels, with over 15,500 more grants issued than applications received during the last four months (September to December) using more recent management information published by HMCTS (which does not go through the same level of quality assurance and analysis as the Family Court Statistics Quarterly).

Protective Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with producers of personal protective equipment regarding regulatory or technological solutions to the issue of short use-by dates for such equipment. [HL1976]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The Personal Protective Equipment Regulation 2016/425 sets out essential safety requirements that PPE must meet. This includes an obligation on the manufacturer to give, if possible, the month and year of obsolescence, if it is known that the design performance may be significantly affected by ageing.

The Government has had no discussions with PPE producers about changing this requirement in the

Regulation, but welcomes new technological innovation to improve short PPE use-by dates.

Regional Planning and Development

Asked by Lord Young of Cookham

To ask His Majesty's Government how many responses they received to the consultation on street vote development orders, which ran from 22 December 2023 to 2 February 2024. [HL2414]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Over 250 responses were received, and they are currently being analysed.

Road Signs and Markings: Rural Areas

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how much was spent on the installation and maintenance of traffic signs on minor roads in small villages in England in the financial year 2022–23. [HL2488]

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the number of traffic signs on minor roads in small villages in England has increased over the past decade; and if so, by what percentage, and what are the reasons for that increase. [HL2489]

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the policy for installing the same traffic sign on both sides of the road on minor roads in small villages. [HL2490]

Lord Davies of Gower: The policy for installing the same traffic sign on both sides of minor (and all other) roads is set out in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, as amended, which provides for both one or two traffic signs. The relevant local authority has responsibility for deciding how many to place depending on site circumstance and their own local transport policy.

The Department for Transport does not hold any information about how much was spent on the installation and maintenance of traffic signs on minor roads in small villages in England in the financial year 2022–23 or whether the number of those traffic signs has increased over the past decade.

No assessment has been made of sign installation and maintenance costs on minor roads in small villages in England for any year because that is a devolved budgetary matter for local authorities.

Schools: Inspections

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of how many Ofsted inspections have been impacted by inspectors losing live notes because of

faults in the electronic evidence gathering digital platform. [HL2435]

Baroness Barran: This is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver. I have asked him to write to the noble Lord and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Sudan: Internally Displaced People

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any (1) any recent increase in the number of displaced persons from Sudan to the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile region, and (2) the impact on people in that region from crop failures and locust infestations; and what consequences there have been for the delivery of humanitarian aid to that region. [HL2377]

Lord Benyon: Sudan currently represents the largest displacement crisis in the world, including almost 9 million people internally displaced. We don't hold data for more recent influxes or any data for the Nuba Mountain region, but as of 23 January, 127,119 people had fled to Blue Nile and 125,373 to South Kordofan since 15 April 2023. While we don't hold specific data on crop failures and locust infestations in those regions, we remain aware of acute food insecurity throughout Sudan. The UK calls on both the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to grant immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access and we condemn the continuing lack of access. The UK is providing assistance to those in need through our humanitarian aid package of £38 million, as well as £7.75 million in funding for South Sudan, which includes £3.5 million to address food security in the Maban refugee camps.

Tigray: Death

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Benyon on 9 February (HL1953), whether they will now answer the question put; namely, what assessment they have made of reports by the Mekelle branch of the Ethiopian Ombudsman Institution on 24 January that in five camps of internally displaced people in Tigray, 900 had died due to starvation. [HL2374]

Lord Benyon: A press release relating to the Ombudsman's report was issued on 30 January. It did not state what evidence the Ombudsman team were basing their observations on or what methodology they had used to determine cause of death. We use all available data sources to assess the severity of food insecurity across northern Ethiopia. In his recent visit to Ethiopia in February 2024, Minister Andrew Mitchell saw firsthand the worsening humanitarian situation in Tigray and announced an additional £100 million to end preventable deaths, targeting three million people across Ethiopia

including those who are most at risk in the northern regions.

Trade Agreements: India

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the potential trade agreement with India (1) promotes fair and balanced terms, and (2) contains safeguards that protect the interest of the economy. [HL2411]

Lord Offord of Garvel: We are working hard on a deal with India that would boost our current trading relationship, already worth over £38 billion, helping businesses and communities across the UK.

We remain clear that we will only sign when we have a deal that is fair, reciprocal, and ultimately in the best interests of the British people and the economy.

We ensure that all trade agreements maintain our ability to apply trade remedies, including a global safeguard, under the WTO framework to protect UK industries.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, following publication of the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper (CP 1021) on 31 January, when they intend to introduce legislation to fulfil the commitment in that paper to repeal all statutory duties relating to the 'all-island economy'. [HL2621]

Lord Caine: The Government is working actively to deliver commitments made in the *Safeguarding the Union* command paper, which was published on 31 January (CP 1021). This includes the passing into law on 20 February of two statutory instruments to give effect to legislative assurances contained within the command paper. Any required further legislation will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government, following publication of the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper (CP 1021) on 31 January, when they intend to introduce legislation to fulfil the commitment in that paper to repeal all statutory duties relating to the 'all-island economy'. [HL2659]

Lord Caine: I would refer the Noble Baroness to the answer I gave to Lord Dodds of Duncairn in response to WPQ UIN HL2621 on 23 February 2024.

Universities: Research

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any risk to the UK's status as a location for research presented by the planned closure

of the anthropology department of the University of Kent, particularly with regard to ethnobotany; and what broader assessment they have made of any risk posed by the closure of significant numbers of departments and faculties at universities. [[HL2379](#)]

Baroness Barran: Higher education providers are independent, autonomous institutions and are best placed to make decisions about the future focus of their research and their institutional strategy. Where it is necessary to reshape their activities, it is important that universities carefully consider the impact of job losses on staff and students, and the overall sustainability of teaching and research in this country.

VAT: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government in which areas Northern Ireland is not subject to VAT changes which apply to other parts of the UK under the provisions of the Windsor Framework. [[HL2466](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Windsor Framework ensures Northern Ireland benefits from the same VAT changes as the rest of the UK. That includes the zero-rate on Energy Saving Materials and the newly expanded zero-rate on Women's Sanitary Products.

Visual Arts: Income

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government how the Department of Culture, Media and Sport captures information about visual artists' overall income when they derive their main income from sources other than their artistic endeavours. [[HL2381](#)]

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government how the Department of Culture, Media and Sport distinguishes and accounts for different income scenarios when

collecting and analysing data related to visual artists, for example, where the artists derive their main income from sources other than their artistic endeavours. [[HL2382](#)]

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government how the Department for Culture, Media and Sport ensures accuracy and comprehensiveness in capturing the financial details of visual artists who may have diverse income streams. [[HL2383](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) publishes official statistics on earnings in the sectors and occupations for which it has policy responsibility. These statistics focus on how much is earned by an individual in a particular job, rather than providing information on an individual's total earnings.

We publish the following estimates of earnings:

1) Based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS)'s Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, we publish [median annual and weekly earnings for any job in a DCMS sector](#). This would include anyone working in, for example, the cultural subsector of 'Arts' and the creative industries subsector 'Music, performing and visual arts'. Earnings of visual artists who are self-employed or who work in industries outside these statistics would not be captured in these earnings estimates.

2) Based on ONS's Annual Population Survey, we publish [hourly gross pay estimates for any self-identified main job in a DCMS sector](#). Using the same data source, we also publish hourly gross pay estimates for any self-identified main job in a DCMS creative occupation. This would include, for example, Artists (SOC 3411) and Graphic Designers (SOC 3421).

We recently asked users of our statistics for feedback on these estimates and are considering our plans for these publications in the future.

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