



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 March 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:42 P.M., 18 March 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Bicycles: Manufacturing Industries

Pippa Heylings:

[\[36853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he is taking steps to support UK bicycle manufacturers.

Sarah Jones:

UK bicycle manufacturers will benefit from the Secretary of State's vision to support all businesses as outlined in the Government's Industrial and Trade Strategies. These strategies aim to boost scale-ups, grow the co-operative economy, create thriving high streets, make it easier to access finance, open up overseas and domestic markets, build capabilities, and provide a strong business environment. Recently, the Business Secretary announced a new Business Growth Service (BGS) to streamline the process for businesses across the UK to access the support they need to grow. The Department will continue to engage with the industry on key issues moving forward.

■ Business: Exports

Pippa Heylings:

[\[36855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take to support businesses exporting goods.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is committed to supporting small businesses grow and export. UK businesses can access DBT's wealth of export support via Great.gov.uk. This comprises an online support offer and a wider network of support including the Export Academy, UK Export Finance, the International Markets network and one-to-one support from International Trade Advisers.

DBT is also piloting an enhanced partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, taking a targeted place-based approach to accelerate small business growth through exporting across the region. This will be rolled out to other regions across England over the next 12 months.

We will bring forward further measures in due course.

■ Ceramics: Manufacturing Industries

Gareth Snell:

[\[37257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of the long-term viability of the UK ceramics sector.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade has a close and productive relationship with the UK ceramics sector, particularly its leading Trade Association, Ceramics UK, who meet regularly with officials and Ministers.

As part of our ongoing dialogue, we will continue to engage with ceramics business on the challenges they face now and in the future.

I will continue to work to ensure that long-term viability of the UK ceramics sector.

■ Ceramics: Task Forces**Gareth Snell:**[\[36730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will convene a ceramics taskforce, chaired by a Minister.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade works closely with the ceramics sector through Ceramics UK and directly with businesses to understand its challenges and provide support to help its global competitiveness. If we take a view that a ceramics taskforce is required, we will convene it.

Our engagement includes the Energy Intensive Users Group which includes representation from the ceramics sector. I recently held a roundtable with members of EIUG and met with a ceramics sector delegation today.

■ Companies House: Fines**Liam Byrne:**[\[36606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what was the total (a) number and (b) value of financial penalties (i) levied and (ii) collected by Companies House since October 2024.

Justin Madders:

Since October 2024, 234 financial penalties have been issued. These had a total value of £58,500. The volume of penalties issued will rise once initial work to deploy the required systems and processes has been completed.

5 financial penalties have been collected, totalling £1,250. Action to collect penalties will accelerate during summer 2025. Outstanding penalties will be referred to debt collection and litigation where appropriate.

This information is unaudited and subject to change. Audited figures will be made available when Companies House's annual accounts are laid in Parliament. This is currently expected to be delivered in July 2025.

■ Electric Bicycles: Exports

Pippa Heylings:

[\[36854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing British exports of (a) e-bikes and (b) pedal cycles.

Gareth Thomas:

Growing the economy is a key mission for the Government, and we recognise the importance of boosting UK exports in achieving this. We are working hard to ensure that UK businesses, including those that sell e-bikes and pedal cycles, have the support they need to sell to the world and grow.

As part of our work on a new trade strategy and a small business strategy, we are looking at further proposals to help UK businesses, including those that sell e-bikes and pedal cycles, export more.

■ Electric Vehicles and Lithium: Supply Chains

Luke Myer:

[\[37418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support the growth of the (a) electric vehicle and (b) lithium salts supply chains.

Sarah Jones:

We support the Automotive sector via the Automotive Transformation Fund to build a globally competitive electric vehicle supply chain, including gigafactories and their supply chains. The Budget committed over £2 billion of capital and R&D funding to 2030 for zero emission vehicle manufacturing and supply chains. We will set out more information on this in due course as part of the Industrial Strategy.

■ Energy Intensive Industries: Ceramics

Gareth Snell:

[\[36727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing the business-level test from the Energy Intensive industry scheme eligibility requirements for UK ceramic manufacturers.

Sarah Jones:

The business level test was introduced to focus support under the British Industry Supercharger at those individual businesses most at risk of carbon leakage and to balance the cost of the scheme to other electricity users with the benefits to Energy Intensive Industries. There are currently no plans to amend that business level test and any proposed amendments to the scheme criteria would be subject to consultation.

Gareth Snell: [\[38090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36726 on Energy Intensive Industries: Ceramics, whether he has undertaken a sectoral assessment.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade has a close and productive relationship with the UK ceramics sector, particularly its leading Trade Association Ceramics UK who meet regularly with officials and Ministers.

As part of our ongoing dialogue, we will continue to engage with ceramics business on the challenges they face now and in the future.

Gareth Snell: [\[38092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36726, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the eligibility criteria for accessing the British Energy Supercharge scheme for sectors that already qualify.

Sarah Jones:

Sectors have been assessed against their electricity and trade intensity. As part of our review of eligibility in 2026, we will assess whether these data sets and the thresholds we have previously used remain the best approach to judging eligibility for the Supercharger.

■ Foreign Investment in UK

Clive Jones: [\[36932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Harrington Review of Foreign Direct Investment, published on 22 November 2023, what recent progress his Department has made on implementing (a) the recommendation on a concierge service for new investors and (b) other recommendations.

Sarah Jones:

The Government is continuing to deliver on the recommendations set out in the Harrington Review. That includes launching our new, modern Industrial Strategy, that will set out our vision for growth. In parallel, we are expanding the Office for Investment (OfI) which will continue to provide a concierge service for strategically important businesses and investors, with additional commercial capability, and will have a presence across the country, to work with Mayors and Devolved Administrations so that investors have access to the most attractive and commercially credible opportunities in our nations and regions.

■ Industry: Scotland**Dr Scott Arthur:**[\[36535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Scottish Government's National innovation strategy 2023 to 2033 on his industrial strategy.

Sarah Jones:

Accelerating the rate of innovation and increasing the adoption and diffusion of ideas, technologies, and processes is an essential step for growing productivity of our growth-driving sectors. My officials are working with the Scottish Government on how we can drive growth in Scotland and the wider UK within the context of our Industrial Strategy. This includes the role of innovation in helping us reach our shared growth objectives. This partnership will help make the Industrial Strategy a UK-wide effort and support the considerable sectoral strengths of Scotland.

■ Military Equipment: EU Countries**David Chadwick:**[\[37048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he is taking steps to help support British (a) defence and (b) technology companies to participate in procurement processes arising from proposed increased military production in EU countries.

Sarah Jones:

Working with industry, the government will continue focusing on markets offering the best export opportunities, and with whom stronger defence, digital and technology relationships support delivery of UK defence objectives, including across Europe. Domestically, the Cabinet Office's recent National Procurement Policy Statement sets out how public procurement can be used to kickstart economic growth, including by encouraging innovation and new technologies in line with the Industrial Strategy.

As part of a defence innovation drive, the government will also look to enhance investment in defence start-ups and scale-up technology and capability, including through the National Security Strategic Investment Fund.

More broadly, the government recognises the defence, digital and technology sector's importance to our economic growth mission which is why they were identified as two of the eight growth-driving sectors in our forthcoming Industrial Strategy, which will be published in spring 2025.

■ Public Interest**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[36794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to widen the definition of a public interest entity to include the largest companies not listed on the main London Stock Exchange.

Justin Madders:

The Government's plans to widen the definition of a Public Interest Entity were announced in the King's Speech.

■ **Retail Trade: Ilford South****Jas Athwal:**[\[36949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent steps he has taken to support high street businesses in Ilford South constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

Revitalising our high streets is a priority for this government. We are delivering across government to create better conditions for high street businesses to thrive.

We have heard businesses' concerns about the impact of anti-social behaviour in town centres, including in Ilford South. Last month, we introduced the Crime and Policing Bill, which will scrap the effective immunity for low-value shoplifting and do more to protect retail workers from assault. We are also introducing High Street Rental Auction powers for local authorities and over 100 Banking Hubs have now opened - providing essential banking services for businesses and high street users.

Last year the Business Secretary announced a new Business Growth Service which will make it easier and quicker for businesses across the UK to get the help, support and advice they need to grow and thrive. Our Small Business Strategy, to be published later this year, will set out this Government's plan for further supporting small businesses across key areas, including on the high street.

■ **Small Businesses: Young People****Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[37933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he has taken to support young entrepreneurs in (a) creating and (b) sustaining small businesses in Surrey Heath constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

We will publish our Small Business Strategy later this year with a clear ambition to promote startups and encourage entrepreneurship in Surrey Heath and across the UK including amongst young people, built around the new Business Growth Service.

There is a range of existing support offers available via the Business Support Service, Gov.uk, the network of local Growth Hubs across England, and The Help to Grow: Management scheme to help improve leadership, performance and management capabilities.

The Government continues to support entrepreneurs with funding and mentoring through the British Business Bank, via Start-up Loans.

■ Trade Agreements: Israel**Tom Morrison:**[\[36875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to prohibit the import of goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements under the terms of proposed UK-Israel free trade agreement.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements are not entitled to tariff and trade preferences under either the agreement between the UK and Israel, or in our agreement with the Palestinian Authority.

The UK will not compromise on any of our longstanding positions on the Middle East Peace Process through the FTA negotiation, including with respect to settlements.

■ Trade Agreements: USA**Andrew Griffith:**[\[37728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 5 March 2025, column 273, how many officials from his Department have travelled to the United States to discuss a potential UK-US trade deal since 20 January 2025; and on what dates.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Prime Minister travelled to Washington DC to meet with President Trump on 27 February. During their meeting, they agreed to deepen the UK-US relationship and to work together on a trade deal focused on tech. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has been engaging with the US Administration including Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, to make the case for stronger UK-US trade that benefits both our countries. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade and UK government officials will be travelling to the US during the week beginning 17 March to meet with members of the US administration.

Clive Jones:[\[38273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what are the criteria by which it would be determined whether any prospective trade treaty between the UK and the US that does not deal with substantially all trade would be subject to scrutiny under the Constitutional Reform and Government Act 2010.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 is the statutory framework for the parliamentary scrutiny of all legally binding international agreements, regardless of the extent to which the relevant international agreement deals with trade, either substantially or in part. The criteria for an international agreement being subject to the provisions of the Act is set out in sections 23 and 25 of the Act.

Clive Jones: [\[38274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) oversight and (b) governance procedures will prospective US-UK trade negotiations be subject to from (i) Parliament and (ii) external stakeholders.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Any treaty signed between the UK and the US that requires ratification will be subject to the scrutiny procedure under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. The CRaG process requires that a treaty, along with an Explanatory Memorandum, be laid before Parliament for 21 joint sitting days before the treaty can be ratified.

The Government will engage with external stakeholders, and it will also provide comprehensive information with Parliament, including negotiating objectives, in line with our commitment to a transparent trade policy.

The Government will work with relevant select committees to ensure proper parliamentary scrutiny of any trade negotiations between the UK and the US.

■ Worker Support Centre

Chris Law: [\[37198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will meet with representatives from the Worker Support Centre to discuss their 2024 Annual Report, published on 14 February 2025.

Chris Law: [\[37204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will meet with representatives from the Worker Support Centre to discuss reports of alleged non-payment of wages for workers on the Seasonal Worker Visa.

Justin Madders:

We appreciate the valuable work the Worker Support Centre (WSC) does in supporting workers.

The Department acknowledges the challenges for seasonal workers published in the WSC's Annual report.

I have asked officials to ensure that the WSC are given the opportunity to input their expertise as we move forward with the implementation of the Fair Work Agency.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Business: Powys

David Chadwick: [\[37475\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many active businesses were registered in (a) Powys and (b) Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe constituency on the Companies House register in each of the last five financial years.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

As the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set out in his statement to the House on Friday 19 July, this government is committed to undertaking a comprehensive review of long-term resilience.

The resilience review is considering established practices and policies to improve UK resilience against the full spectrum of risks we face. It is evidence based and is identifying what should be kept, changed or improved to ensure we are best prepared now and into the future. It is considering recommendations from recent inquiries including the Covid-19 Module 1 report and the Grenfell Tower tragedy to ensure the needs of communities and individuals – in particular vulnerable people – are better addressed.

The review will conclude later this year.

Department for Work and Pensions: Muslim Council of Britain**Joe Robertson:**[\[35949\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2025 to Question 31697 on Department for Work and Pensions: Muslim Council of Britain, if the Prime Minister will have discussions with the Minister for Social Security and Disability on his attendance at that event.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Our policy on engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain has not changed. I refer the Hon Member to the answer of the Rt Hon Member for East Ham on 27 February 2025, Official Report, PQ 31697.

Government Departments: Disclosure of Information**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[37428\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress he has made on the new integrated transparency platform.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

This Government is fully committed to transparency and ensuring information published is as useful as possible. For example, the Government introduced a central register of ministers' gifts and hospitality on a monthly basis. These registers are published by the Cabinet Office and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/register-of-ministers-gifts-and-hospitality#:~:text=The%20Register%20details%20the%20gifts,available%20on%20departmental%20web%20pages.>

Great British Railways: Statistics**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[37426\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to lay a new Official Statistics Order to designate Great British Railways' statistical outputs as official statistics.

Georgia Gould:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 11th March is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ37426 (2).pdf]

■ Ministers: Helicopters**Mike Wood:**[\[36675\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 30825 on Ministers: Helicopters, if he will list all the providers that can provide helicopter transport under the terms of the Commercial Air Transport contract.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office has a general travel contract in place provided by Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd (CTM) that can arrange travel by various modes. CTM maintains a comprehensive database of pre-approved operators. Owing to security considerations, and the commercially sensitive nature of the contract, CTM is unable to provide details of individual operators.

This contract started in September 2022, under the previous administration. This contract has not been used for helicopter travel by this Government.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: EU Countries****Max Wilkinson:**[\[37354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to her Answer to the hon. Member for Cheltenham of 27 February 2025, Official Report, column 919, what the content was of her discussions with EU commissioners on reducing bureaucracy for artists touring EU countries.

Chris Bryant:

The Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, Chris Bryant, met the EU Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Glenn Micallef, on 26 February.

The Minister communicated the UK's commitment to seeking a closer, more cooperative relationship with the EU, including by supporting UK creative professionals to tour in Europe. By ensuring artists and crew can move efficiently, we can support economic growth, job creation, and artistic innovation across the continent. The Minister and the Commissioner agreed to meet again to continue these discussions.

■ Charities: Finance**Mr Louie French:**[\[36803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that charities in the United Kingdom are supported during periods of financial hardship.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government recognises the vital role that charities play up and down the country, by providing crucial support to different groups and communities.

DCMS supports charities in several ways. This includes delivery of a number of grant schemes, such as the £25.5m Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Energy Efficiency Scheme, which is supporting frontline organisations across England to improve their energy efficiency and sustainability.

Support for charities is also available through social investment which provides access to grants, repayable finance and a blend of the two. This government is continuing to look at how dormant assets can be used to support the availability of finance to facilitate VCSEs becoming more entrepreneurial and financially resilient. An estimated £350 million will flow into the Dormant Assets Scheme between 2024-28, with details on how this money will be distributed to be provided in due course.

Within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving. The tax reliefs available to charities are a vital element in supporting charitable causes across the UK, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities. The biggest individual reliefs provided are Gift Aid at £1.6 billion and business rates relief at nearly £2.4 billion.

Stuart Anderson:[\[37276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to promote the availability of funding for small charities.

Stephanie Peacock:

This government recognises the vital role that charities play in providing crucial support to different groups and communities. This Government is committed to resetting the relationship with civil society and treating them as an equal, expert partner who are integral to the delivery of the Government's vision for national renewal.

DCMS is promoting the availability of funding for smaller charities in several ways. This includes delivery of a number of grant schemes, such as the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund and the £25.5m Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Energy Efficiency Scheme, which is supporting frontline organisations across England to improve their energy efficiency and sustainability.

Support for charities is also available through social investment which provides access to grants, repayable finance and a blend of the two. This government is continuing to look at how dormant assets can be used to support the availability of

finance to facilitate VCSEs becoming more entrepreneurial and financially resilient. An estimated £350 million will flow into the Dormant Assets Scheme between 2024-28, with details on how this money will be distributed to be provided in due course.

■ Cricket: Finance

Mr Louie French: [\[36805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the continuation of the Future of Cricket Fund.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Secretary of State regularly discusses Departmental spending with HM Treasury Ministers. Future funding of sports facilities will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Cultural Heritage: Buildings

Matt Bishop: [\[37498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the University of Manchester's blog entitled Addressing the UK's heritage skills crisis: why we must act now, published on 23 January 2025, what steps she is taking to preserve heritage buildings.

Chris Bryant:

My response to PQ 30997 sets out how we are considering heritage skills in relation to the University of Manchester's blog and associated report.

On preserving heritage buildings, there is funding and a protection regime in place. In particular, the Secretary of State announced in February £15 million of additional funding for Heritage at Risk, building on Historic England's existing Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk programme - providing grants for repairs and conservation to heritage buildings at risk, focusing on those sites with most need, and a new £4.85 million Heritage Revival Fund to enable local people to take ownership of heritage they love and bring historic buildings back into use. The National Lottery Heritage Fund also delivers project-based heritage funding. Since 1994, The National Lottery Heritage Fund has distributed £8.6bn of National Lottery funds to more than 47,000 projects.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Internet

Saqib Bhatti: [\[37319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025, to Question 33995, on Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Internet what proportion of spending on the First Draft podcast was allocated to its (a) production and (b) promotion.

Stephanie Peacock:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to PQ 33995.

■ Internet: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:**[\[32237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has written to her counterpart in the new Irish government on the creation of a unique IP address for Northern Ireland residents.

Stephanie Peacock:

Further to my response of 14 October 2024 to question 6604, my officials have subsequently discussed the issue of geoblocking with their counterparts in both the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government. Those discussions are ongoing. Following the formation of the new Irish Government on 23 January, I have written to the Minister for Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport to seek his views.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**Stuart Andrew:**[\[36063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 33865, on Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, if she will place a copy of the (a) internal Equality Impact Assessment and (b) equality screening in the Library of the House.

Chris Bryant:

DCMS Ministers received advice on changes to the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme including careful consideration of the potential equality impacts of the changes, in particular with regard to the protected characteristic of religion or belief. A separate equality screening or impact assessment document has not been produced, so will not be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Sports: Community Development**Mr Louie French:**[\[36800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that the hosting of (a) the Commonwealth Games and (b) other international sporting events results in long-term benefits to local communities.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government recognises the significant economic and social benefits major sporting events provide to the UK. UK Sport, our expert arm's-length body, works with those hosting major sporting events to ensure they all have a robust social impact and legacy plan, and an evaluation to help identify and quantify those socio-economic benefits.

The UK has been proud to host the Commonwealth Games twice since 2014, and the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games delivered at least £1.2bn economic value to the UK.

The Glasgow 2026 Organising Company has confirmed that delivery of the Games will include £6 million of facility investment into the city's existing sporting venues, including a new athletics track at Scotstoun Stadium and upgrades to Tollcross International Swimming Centre, which will benefit local communities. It is also anticipated that 3,000 volunteers - the vast majority of which are expected to be from Glasgow - will be recruited and trained. The Organising Company is also working with city partners on a Glasgow cultural programme. I recently met with the CEO and Chair of Glasgow 26 and attended the launch of the Kings Baton Relay at Buckingham Palace, and will continue to engage and support on plans for the successful delivery of the Games.

In 2028, the UK and Ireland will host UEFA EURO 2028. It will be the biggest sporting event the UK and Ireland have ever jointly hosted. Government and Football Partners are committing c.£45m to a central Legacy and Impact fund, which will deliver socio-economic benefits for communities across the UK and Ireland.

■ Sports: Disability

Mr Louie French:

[36801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that sporting events held in the UK are accessible for people with disabilities.

Stephanie Peacock:

We remain committed to delivering international events with pride, showcasing the UK's expertise, generating significant socio-economic benefits and inspiring the next generation's talent. We expect any bids to host major sporting events which are seeking government support to provide evidence that accessibility has been considered from the earliest stage.

The Government's expert arm's-length body, UK Sport, has committed to consult on the accessibility of ticketing to major events, with a view of protecting the social and cultural value of live sport to all communities across the UK as part of their strategy [Making Live Sport Matter](#). In order to support the delivery of the strategy, UK Sport are currently working with partners with expertise on accessibility to drive understanding and best practice. This is in addition to work taking place on trialling spectator communication resources at events for visually impaired and blind visitors.

The Sports Ground Safety Authority, a Government arm's-length body and the world leader in stadium safety, has published a free Accessible Stadia document and Supplementary Guidance to help deliver high-quality grounds with facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and welcoming for all.

The Government has also ratified the St Denis Convention, reinforcing our commitment to providing an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events. Ensuring that all fans are able to participate is a key element of service, and something we will continue to champion.

DEFENCE**■ Air Force: Training**

Sir John Hayes: [\[36584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people began RAF pilot training in each of the last 10 years.

Luke Pollard:

I hope the hon. Member will understand that his question engages national security considerations. I can reassure him that the RAF has a plan to recruit and retain pilots and a program is being made against this plan.

■ Armed Forces

Wendy Morton: [\[36669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the readiness of UK Armed Forces to meet potential future defence commitments within Europe.

Luke Pollard:

The UK offers almost all the British Armed Forces to NATO, with the majority at high readiness. These forces are across the full spectrum of military capability, including our nuclear deterrent, the ultimate guarantor of Alliance security.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

James Cartlidge: [\[36716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to continue the implementation of the Damp and Mould Taskforce.

Al Carns:

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) Damp and Mould Taskforce is scheduled to maintain operations throughout 2025 and 2026.

Since the Damp and Mould Taskforce was established in 2023, over 9,000 Service personnel and their families have benefitted from the delivery of damp and mould packages of works.

The severity of damp and mould cases being raised now is has reduced from when the Taskforce was first established with circa 3% of reported cases at the most severe level.

The DIO will continue its current approach to ensure cases are addressed on a priority basis.

James Cartlidge: [\[36717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to conduct the next Learning from Experience exercise into Service Family Accommodation.

AI Carns:

The Department has scheduled the next Learning from Experience exercise into Service Family Accommodation this Spring with outcomes available during early Summer.

■ Armed Forces: Protective Clothing**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[37366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2025 to Question 33149 on Armed Forces: Protective Clothing, how many personnel in the (a) Royal Navy, (b) Army and (c) Royal Air Force have a pair of Peltor ComTac XP/XPI issued to them.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 10 March 2025, to Question 34996.

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Protective Clothing [34996 - Armed Forces Protective Clothing.docx]

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the NSN is of the (a) Peltor ComTac XP and (b) Peltor ComTac XPI.

Maria Eagle:

The current NATO Stock Numbers (NSNs) for the Peltor ComTac XPI are 5965-25-161-5983 for the headset and 5895-99-984-8647 for the headset with boom microphone. The Peltor ComTac XP was superseded by the XPI in 2016, and had the NSN 4240-99-282-2906 for the headset.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, under what circumstances an individual would be issued the Peltor ComTac XP/XPI Ear defenders over the Peltor General Service Ear Muffs.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 5 March 2025 to Question 34362 which explained that due to the varying nature of environments and tasks that require a form of ear protection, Service personnel (SP) are issued with ear protection that has been assessed as the most appropriate for the situation.

The Peltor General Service Ear Muff offers a more basic level of protection and are typically used for activities that do not require movement or communication, such as static Live Fire Marksmanship Training or in engineering workshops.

The Peltor ComTac XP/XPI provides a greater level of hearing protection and enhanced situational awareness through the use of an active electronic system. They provide SP with hearing protection that does not need to be removed to communicate or move, as when conducting Transition to Tactical Live Fire Training or Live Fire

Tactical Training. They can also be used for the same activities as the Peltor General Service Ear Muff.

■ Defence: Finance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[38098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral statement by the Prime Minister of 25 February 2025 on Defence and Security, Official Report, columns 631 to 634, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the announcements on defence spending on the publication timescale for the new Defence Industrial Strategy.

Maria Eagle:

This Government recognises the vital role the UK defence industry plays not only in our national security but also to the economic prosperity and growth of the UK.

Raising defence expenditure to 2.5% of GDP has the potential to enhance the security and economic prosperity of the entire UK. The announcement of increased defence spending does not affect the schedule for the Defence Industrial Strategy.

■ Defence: Foreign Investment in UK

Callum Anderson:

[\[37446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of foreign investment on the UK defence industrial base.

Maria Eagle:

The UK's defence industry plays a vital role not only in our national security but also to the economic prosperity and growth of the UK. We want to boost investment in our defence industry, including from overseas, and the Defence Industrial Strategy will align our security and economic priorities to boost the prosperity of our people across the country, provide resilience for the UK, and ensure the credibility of our deterrence.

The investment in defence announced by the Prime Minister on 25 February 2025 will protect UK citizens from threats and create a secure and stable environment in which businesses of all sizes can thrive. Alongside this, the Defence Industrial Strategy will consider how best to create the conditions needed for the private sector to invest more. We will maximise opportunities of dual-use technology and sectors to bring in investment that supports the broader industrial strategy as well as benefiting Defence.

Equally this Government recognises that foreign investment can bring threats and risks as well as opportunity. The National Security and Investment Act is part of a robust system for scrutinising and where necessary intervening to protect national security, while providing businesses and investors with the certainty and transparency they need to do business in the UK.

■ Defence: Supply Chains

Callum Anderson:

[\[37441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of domestic industrial capacity to support defence supply chains.

Maria Eagle:

This Government is bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy that will ensure a strong Defence sector and resilient supply chains across the whole of the UK.

The Statement of Intent for the Defence Industrial Strategy, published in December 2024, set out a commitment to prioritising UK businesses for investment and boosting sovereign capacity. Through the Defence Industrial Strategy and the Strategic Defence Review, the Ministry of Defence is currently undertaking a review and reconfirmation of sovereign capabilities required onshore.

The Department is also actively improving the capabilities of the UK's Defence sector through initiatives such as the Defence Supplier Capability Development Programme and the new support hub for small and medium enterprises that the Prime Minister announced on 3 March 2025.

■ Diego Garcia: Military Bases

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[37771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 35009 on Diego Garcia: Military Bases, what the responsibilities and authorities for the operations of Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia are as agreed with the United Kingdom and set out in the 1966 UK-US Exchange of Notes, including the 1976 amendment.

Luke Pollard:

The Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia is a United States defence facility. The responsibilities and authorities for its operations as agreed with the United Kingdom are set out in the 1966 UK-US Exchange of Notes, including the 1976 amendment.

■ F-35 Aircraft

David Chadwick:

[\[37046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the operational independence of the UK's F-35 fighter jet fleet.

Luke Pollard:

The UK maintains the freedom of action to operate the F-35 Lightning at a time and place of our choosing.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the delivery timeline is for the remaining F-35B jets ordered from Lockheed Martin.

Maria Eagle:

The declaration of Full Operating Capability for the first procurement phase is scheduled to occur no later than 31 December 2025, with graduation as a Government Major Projects Portfolio programme by 31 March 2026. The first procurement phase of 48 aircraft continues to be delivered, with 37 aircraft received to date and delivery of the 48th aircraft due by programme graduation.

■ Gaza: RAF Akrotiri**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[37040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times UK Shadow R1 planes have flown from RAF Akrotiri towards Gaza since 19 January 2025; and for what purpose.

Luke Pollard:

Since the terrorist attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023, the UK Government has been working with partners across the region to secure the release of hostages, including British nationals.

In support of this, the Ministry of Defence has been conducting surveillance flights over the Eastern Mediterranean, including operating in airspace over Israel and Gaza. For the avoidance of doubt, our mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of hostages only; surveillance aircraft are unarmed and do not have a combat role.

■ HMS Bulwark: Decommissioning**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[32950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what outstanding refit work remained on HMS Bulwark at the time of HMS Albion's decommissioning in July 2023; and whether this work was completed before the decision to decommission Bulwark was taken.

Mr Mark Francois:[\[32953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total expenditure was on the refit of HMS Bulwark prior to its decommissioning; and what specific refit work remained incomplete at the time of HMS Albion's decommissioning in July 2023.

Maria Eagle:

The decision to decommission both HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark was announced in November 2024. As of that date, a considerable amount of refit work was still outstanding to materially prepare HMS Bulwark for her return to sea. In the period from 2022 to 2024, a total of £72.1 million had been spent on refitting HMS Bulwark.

Neither HMS Albion nor HMS Bulwark were due to go to sea ahead of their out-of-service dates in 2033 and 2034. Their disposal shows that we are delivering for defence by divesting ourselves of old capabilities to make way for the future. These ships were effectively mothballed by the previous Government.

■ Ministry of Defence: Hakluyt

Jon Trickett: [\[37132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Al Carns:

No staff have been seconded from Hakluyt into the Ministry of Defence or its Executive Agencies since July 2024.

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

James Cartlidge: [\[36721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to provide an Answer Question 26308 on Army and Marines: Training, tabled on 24 January 2025.

Luke Pollard:

I will respond to the hon. Member shortly.

James Cartlidge: [\[36722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to provide an Answer to Question 28549 on Ministry of Defence: Pay, tabled on 4 February 2025.

Al Carns:

I will respond to the hon. Member shortly.

■ Nuclear Weapons

Jim Shannon: [\[36644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the nuclear capability of other countries.

Luke Pollard:

The department works closely across Government to support nuclear counter proliferation activity, while also maintaining under constant review its assessment of hostile Nations Nuclear Capabilities

■ Rifles: Procurement

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[36868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many L403A1 rifles his Department had (a) ordered and (b) received by 10 March 2025.

Maria Eagle:

An order of 1,620 L403A1 rifles was made by Defence Equipment and Support, all of which were received by 10 March 2025.

■ Service Justice Board: Membership**James Cartlidge:**[\[37248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 33508 on Defence Serious Crime Unit, if he will publish the full membership of the Service Justice Board.

James Cartlidge:[\[37249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 33508 on Defence Serious Crime Unit, how frequently does the Service Justice Board meet.

Al Carns:

The Service Justice Board (SJB) is responsible to the Secretary of State for providing assurance that an effective and efficient system for dispensing Service Justice is in place, in support of the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

The full membership of the SJB is:

- Minister for Veterans and People (Chair)
- A Minister from the Ministry of Justice
- The Solicitor General
- Ministry of Defence (MOD) Permanent Secretary
- Chief of Defence People
- Two Non-Executive Directors
- Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force Principal Personnel Officers
- Director Service Prosecutions
- Director Military Court Service
- Director MOD Legal Advisers
- The Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales
- Observer

The Judge Advocate General (or nominated representative) is invited to attend the SJB as an observer, having due regard to the independence and constitutional separation from the executive function of Government as a member of the judiciary.

The SJB is held at least once a year. It last met on 3 December 2024.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

Helen Grant: [\[36627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to further support Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

The UK continues to step up its assistance, spending £4.5 billion on military support for Ukraine this year - more than ever before. This includes £2.26 billion of interest from frozen Russian assets which the UK will use to source essential military capabilities for Ukraine.

We also recently agreed a £1.6 billion export finance deal which will supply Ukraine with more than 5,000 air defence missiles. The deal marks a historic step for industrial relations between the UK and Ukraine, building on the 100 Year Partnership signed recently by the Prime Minister and President Zelenskyy in Kyiv.

Furthermore, we also announced the biggest package of sanctions in over two years to continue to bear down on Russia's economy.

■ Uncrewed Systems: Testing

James Cartlidge: [\[37243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 34902 on Uncrewed Systems: Procurement, what the process is for issuing a Defence Infrastructure Organisation license for the use of uncrewed systems on the defence estate.

James Cartlidge: [\[37244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 34902 on Uncrewed Systems: Procurement, whether he has plans to change the process for issuing Defence Infrastructure Organisation licenses for the use of uncrewed systems on the defence estate.

Maria Eagle:

Anyone wishing to apply for a licence to use Uncrewed Systems on the Defence Estate should contact the local Defence Infrastructure Organisation Office.

Officials will engage with the relevant Head of Establishment to determine availability of the site and any security restrictions. If the proposed use is considered acceptable, Officials will engage with the originator to issue a licence for which there would be a charge.

There are no plans to change this process.

■ War Pensions

Kanishka Narayan: [\[37345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of war pension applications pending review on (a) 11 March 2025, (b) 11 March 2024 and (c) 11 March 2023; and what steps he is taking to tackle the backlog.

Kanishka Narayan: [\[37346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to accelerate the review process for war pension application; and whether any changes to internal procedures or decision-making frameworks are being considered to reduce waiting times.

Kanishka Narayan: [\[37347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether interim financial assistance is available for veterans awaiting a decision on their war pension applications; and what steps are being taken to support those experiencing financial hardship due to prolonged processing times.

AI Carns:

Work is underway to tackle the backlog war pension applications pending action, of which has increased in the last few months. The department continually review and evaluate its processes to look for ways to improve and minimise claim processing times. The caseload is subject to constant review and when necessary, steps are taken to target resources to a particular team or work area to expedite the workflow.

Please refer to the following table for the current number of pending War Pension applications:

DATE	HOLDING DATA (NO OF CLAIMS ON HAND)
1 March 2022	4,874
1 March 2023	5,334
1 March 2024	6,228
28 February 2025	9,964

The extract numbers held on the specific date of the 11 March each year could not be produced, therefore the data above was taken from 1 March for 2022-2024 and 28 February 2025.

■ Warrior Vehicles

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the status is of the Army's Warrior AFVs

Maria Eagle:

As of 1 April 2025, there will be 359 Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles in service.

A decision to extend Warrior's Out of Service Date to 2027 ensures Warrior will remain supported during transition to a modernised fleet. It remains our intent that Warrior be withdrawn from service by 2030.

EDUCATION**■ Cybersecurity: Apprentices****Jim Shannon:****[36650]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the number of cyber security industry apprentices.

Janet Daby:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Apprenticeship starts for individual standards are published in the apprenticeships statistics publication.

Starts on apprenticeships that are cyber-related are shown here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/97cccb00-3175-41c6-f1bf-08dd5cc661f7>.

Employers in the cyber security industry can also benefit from additional apprenticeship standards, including others in the digital sector.

■ Foster Care**Mrs Elsie Blundell:****[35826]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help retain skilled and experienced foster carers.

Janet Daby:

Currently, there are ten fostering regional programmes active across England, collaborating with 64% of all local authorities to recruit and retain foster carers who will provide loving homes, local to the children who need them. An additional £15 million was announced to support this programme in the budget, and the department intends to move towards full national roll-out in the next financial year.

As part of this model, the department is supporting foster carers, and the children they care for, by expanding 'The Mockingbird Family Model'. This innovative evidence-based approach, where relationships are central to the design of the programme, involves six to ten satellite families grouped into a constellation around a hub home carer. Research shows that carers who participate in Mockingbird are 82% less likely to de-register than households that do not participate.

In addition, the department funds 'Fosterlink', a diagnostic support service for local authority fostering services, which will review current processes to identify areas for service and practice improvements, as well as creating a national network in which to share best practice. Finally, the department is continuing to fund 'Fosterline', a free helpline service for current and prospective foster carers.

■ Lifelong Education

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[36617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether providers receiving educational oversight from Ofsted for Level 5 and 6 provision will have a third category route to registration with the Office for Students during the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[36618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support she plans to provide to the Office for Students to (a) allow more providers to complete the registration process for the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and (b) support additional applications from small specialist providers who receive educational oversight from Ofsted for eligible Level 5 and 6 provision.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to delivering the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) as set out in the Autumn Budget statement in October 2024. From the LLE's launch in January 2027, the Office for Students (OfS) will regulate all providers offering LLE-funded provision.

The OfS has made clear that it expects to restart work on registrations, degree awarding powers and university titles in August 2025, although the changes will remain under review until then. The department understands the OfS will keep providers updated throughout this period about its plans, including confirming application arrangements from August onwards. The government supports the reasons for the temporary pause so that the OfS can refocus its efforts on provider financial sustainability. As the independent regulator, it is for the OfS to process registrations in the manner it deems most appropriate.

The government will continue to engage closely with the OfS and providers to support timely transition arrangements for the launch of the LLE. The government, together with the OfS, will provide further information on the regulation of providers under the LLE in spring 2025.

■ Personal Care Services: Apprentices

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[36976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her department is taking to promote apprenticeships in the hair and beauty industry.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeships are a great way for individuals to begin, or progress in, a successful career in the hair and beauty industry. Employers in the hair and beauty sector have developed several high quality apprenticeships, including the level 2 hairdressing professional standard, to help them develop their workforce.

The department continues to promote the benefits that apprenticeships offer to students in schools and colleges through the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme and through the Skills for Life campaign.

To support smaller employers to access apprenticeships, the government pays the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21, and for apprentices aged 22 to 24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care.

Employers can also benefit from £1,000 payments when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18, or apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care. Employers can choose how they spend these payments.

Special Educational Needs: Finance**Pippa Heylings:**[\[36465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to provide additional funding to expand enhanced resource bases.

Catherine McKinnell:

In December, the department announced £740 million of capital for high needs funding in 2025/26. This can be used to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings, including resourced provision. It can also be used to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings.

We will publish local authorities' allocation of the £740 million funding later in the spring.

Teachers: Disciplinary Proceedings**Cameron Thomas:**[\[36570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that teachers have access to accompaniment by professionally trained companions during (a) disciplinary and (b) grievance hearings.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Employment Relations Act (ERA) 1999 states that teachers, like any other workers, are entitled to be accompanied by a colleague, a trade union employee or an official accredited by a trade union if called to a disciplinary or grievance meeting by their employer. Individuals may also ask to be accompanied by someone else, but the employer does not have to agree. The government has no plans to change that position for teachers.

■ Youth Services: Surrey Heath

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[35976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of expanding youth schemes to reduce anti-social behaviour in Surrey Heath constituency.

Janet Daby:

Too many children and young people do not have access to the same enrichment opportunities as their peers, suffer from poor mental health and, in some cases, end up being drawn into crime rather than going on to achieve and thrive.

The government has committed to the creation of the new Young Futures programme, which will establish a network of Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships, to intervene earlier to ensure this cohort is identified and offered support in a more systematic way.

Young Futures Hubs will bring together services to improve access to opportunities and support for children and young people at community level, promoting positive outcomes and enabling them to thrive. Prevention Partnerships will identify children and young people who are vulnerable to being drawn into crime, including anti-social behaviour, and divert them by offering them suitable support in a more systematic way.

The Young Futures programme is one part of delivering support within a much wider youth landscape. They will be designed to complement core services and wider initiatives spanning youth, education, employment, social care, mental health, youth justice and policing.

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this government and is a key part of our Safer Streets Mission. Anti-social behaviour causes great harm and misery to communities and, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious offending. Effective youth anti-social behaviour intervention is crucial in disrupting this pipeline. In many cases, informal and early intervention can be successful in changing behaviour and protecting communities.

As part of the wider youth landscape, this government has launched the co-production of an ambitious National Youth Strategy to set out a new vision for young people and an action plan for delivering this.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Community Energy

Claire Young:

[\[903252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support community energy projects.

Kerry McCarthy:

Through Great British Energy we will turbocharge community energy. Our Local Power Plan will mean communities taking back control of their energy, bringing cheap clean power and energy security.

I look forward to further details being announced as the GBE Bill goes through its final stages.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Secondment**Jon Trickett:**[\[36590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many of his Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has not seconded any staff from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute, (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

■ Electricity: Imports**Jas Athwal:**[\[36953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to help reduce the need for imported electricity in the UK.

Michael Shanks:

The Government's Clean Power 2030 action plan details the Government's strategy to protect people from increased energy bills caused by volatile global gas markets and accelerate our pathway towards greater energy independence through the deployment of clean energy.

Importing cheaper electricity during peak times reduces the need to turn on carbon-intensive domestic generation and enhances security of supply by providing access to a more diverse generation pool that complements our domestic energy mix.

■ Electricity: Prices**Pippa Heylings:**[\[36848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing locational pricing in the electricity grid.

Michael Shanks:

As part of the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements or 'REMA' we are continuing to assess reforms for sending more efficient locational signals in the electricity market. This includes robustly assessing the costs and benefits of both locational (or zonal) pricing against improvements to locational signals in a reformed

national pricing market. This will feed into the cost-benefit assessment of REMA reforms.

We have not made any decisions yet and aim to take a decision by around mid-2025.

Martin Wrigley: [\[36895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has plans to review the use of marginal-cost pricing for wholesale electricity.

Michael Shanks:

The second REMA consultation, published in March 2024, considered a range of options related to reform the market. Among other things, the previous government decided to retain marginal pricing across the wholesale market and to proceed with the rapid rollout of renewable generation via a CfD-type scheme. We believe we can achieve this through Clean Power 2030, which represents the best way to decouple gas and electricity prices and enable efficient electricity system operation.

■ Energy: Hospitality Industry

Jim Shannon: [\[36646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support the hospitality sector with energy costs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that our mission to deliver clean power by 2030 is the best way to break our dependence on global fossil fuel markets and protect billpayers permanently.

The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy with less reliance on volatile international energy markets and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

In the short-term, the Government wants to provide businesses with better protection from being locked into unfair and expensive energy contracts, and more redress when they have a complaint. Last year, the Government launched a consultation on introducing regulation of Third-Party Intermediaries (TPIs), such as energy brokers. This is aimed at enhancing consumer protections, particularly for non-domestic consumers. The consultation has now closed, and a Government response will follow in due course once all feedback has been reviewed.

For non-domestic consumers who agreed to contracts at very expensive rates at the peak of price spikes, I recommend that they contact their supplier to enquire about 'blend and extend' contracts. These contracts blend the original, higher, unit rate with a new lower rate, spreading the cost over the course of an extended contract lifetime.

■ Energy: Land Use**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[903249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of how agricultural land classification is assessed in energy infrastructure project decisions.

Michael Shanks:

Both the National Planning Policy Framework and National Policy Statements were updated in 2024. They make clear that energy infrastructure should always be located in areas of poorer quality land rather than higher quality land where possible. At the end of September 2024, ground-mount solar PV panels only covered around 0.1 per cent of the total land area of the UK.

■ Energy: Meters**Sir John Hayes:**[\[36576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many households used the radio teleswitch service for their energy meter connections in Lincolnshire in the latest period for which data is available.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department does not hold unitary authority or county level data on the number of remaining RTS meters. However, we are regularly engaging with energy suppliers, Ofgem and the industry body Energy UK to review local plans for the switch-off.

Energy suppliers have contacted all premises with RTS meters and Ofgem is encouraging customers to book an appointment to ensure they are provided with a replacement meter ahead of the switch-off.

Mr Angus MacDonald:[\[36973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the transition from the radio teleswitch service on households in (a) rural and (b) remote areas; and what steps he is taking to ensure that these households are not disproportionately affected.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department and Ofgem have been clear that they expect energy suppliers to promptly arrange suitable replacement metering solutions for their remaining RTS customers.

Suppliers should sufficiently resource themselves to ensure they have installer workforce capacity to replace RTS meters in rural and remote areas. This could involve measures such as deploying roaming teams of installers in areas with low installer capacity.

Ofgem has consulted on new licence conditions which will seek to ensure consumers are treated fairly and have an alternative metering arrangement following the cessation of RTS.

Mr Angus MacDonald:

[\[36974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions his Department has had with (a) Ofgem and (b) energy suppliers on (i) providing additional financial support and (ii) targeted protection for vulnerable households with increased costs associated with the replacement of radio teleswitch service meters.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department attends the Industry Taskforce on the Radio Teleswitch Service, which was convened by Ofgem last year and is led by Energy UK. The Taskforce's Call to Action in October 2024 highlighted that energy suppliers should fast-track meter upgrades to RTS customers, particularly prioritising vulnerable customers, ahead of the switch-off.

Ofgem has also consulted on plans to introduce new RTS specific licence conditions for energy suppliers. These propose that suppliers must take all reasonable steps to provide an energy tariff that leaves all their customers 'no worse off' than before once their RTS meter is replaced.

Steve Yemm:

[\[903251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support people who use a pre-payment energy meter.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We are delivering the £150 Warm Home Discount to eligible customers – including those with Pre Payment Meters – to support them with their bills.

Ofgem has introduced stringent rules for the involuntary installation of Pre Payment Meters, helping to ensure vulnerable households are protected. Through our review of Ofgem, we will make sure that the regulator is a proper consumer champion that stands up for the interests of billpayers across the country.

■ Energy: Prices

Sir John Hayes:

[\[36575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Great British Energy on household energy bills in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Michael Shanks:

In an unstable world, the only way to guarantee energy security and protect billpayers is to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels. That is why government has a mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

We have a sustainable, long-term plan to protect all UK billpayers, including households in South Hollands and the Deepings, and in Lincolnshire more widely, from volatile international gas markets. Backed by £8.3 billion, Great British Energy is part of this plan, driving the deployment of the clean, homegrown energy we need to boost our energy independence. As a publicly-owned company, Great British Energy will ensure UK taxpayers, billpayers, and communities reap the benefits of this.

Gareth Snell:

[\[38093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will introduce an energy price cap for (a) the ceramics industry and (b) other energy intensive industries.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce a non-domestic price cap. Businesses have different needs to households. Non-domestic demand varies in scale, flexibility and seasonality. From high demand from large industrial users to intermittent demand from some microbusinesses. Accordingly, there are a range of suppliers and energy products that are available to efficiently meet these needs.

However, the Government is committed to championing businesses and improving non-domestic consumer protections. Since December 2024 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 50 employees can now access free support to resolve issues with their energy supplier through the Energy Ombudsman. This means that 99% of British businesses can now access this service with outcomes ranging up to £20,000 in financial awards. Last year, the Government also launched a consultation on introducing regulation of Third-Party Intermediaries (TPIs), such as energy brokers. This is aimed at enhancing consumer protections, particularly for non-domestic consumers.

The consultation has now closed, and a Government response will follow in due course once all feedback has been reviewed.

■ **Energy: Private Rented Housing**

Pippa Heylings:

[\[36851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support landlords to improve energy efficiency in the private rented sector.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is now consulting on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector. The consultation sets out proposals on the maximum spend required from landlords and the exemptions regime to manage the cost burden placed on landlords and the impact on the rental market. We are considering how we can best support landlords to meet the new standards and welcome responses from landlords to the consultation.

■ **Energy: Rented Housing**

Pippa Heylings:

[\[36850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will work with Cabinet colleagues to introduce a national register of landlords to assist local authorities with identifying landlords to help by enforcing energy efficiency standards.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Enforcement is a critical aspect of the policy and is something we are working to address. Government will be increasing our engagement with local authorities to

understand the impact and burden of the proposed policy to enable us to take steps to mitigate the impact and support local authorities. The development of the PRS Database in England and Rent Smart Wales will also greatly increase availability and ease of access to information for local authorities.

■ Heat Pumps: Rented Housing

Pippa Heylings:

[36846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to engage with landlords to (a) raise awareness of heat pumps and (b) reassure them on (i) installation, (ii) cost and (iii) tenant disruption.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has launched the 'Warm and Fuzzy' campaign to promote the Boiler Upgrade Scheme. The campaign seeks to build consumer awareness and understanding of heat pumps, as well as publicising the £7,500 government grant which is available to homeowners, including landlords.

The Government continues to provide advice and support for home upgrades, including the GOV.UK webpage 'Find Ways to Save Energy in Your Home' (<https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency>) and the GOV.UK Heat Pump Suitability tool (<https://www.gov.uk/check-heat-pump>) which landlords can access.

All heat pump installations are expected to comply with Building Regulations. Heat Pumps installed under Government schemes are required to be installed by a Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) certified installer.

■ Liquefied Natural Gas: Imports

Sir Julian Lewis:

[37978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent estimate his Department has made of the (a) volume and (b) proportion of liquefied natural gas imported from the United States derived from shale gas in each of the last three years; and whether emissions created by the (i) extraction, (ii) liquefaction and (iii) transportation to the UK of that gas exceed the emissions which would be created by extracting an equivalent volume of shale gas in the UK.

Michael Shanks:

Data on gas import origins (including imports of liquified natural gas (LNG) from the US) is published each month in [Energy Trends table 4.4](#). Further disaggregation of US LNG by method of extraction is not collected or available.

The UK has no active commercial shale gas production and hence no emissions data from production to allow a comparison with emissions from imported gas.

■ Local Area Energy Plans

Pippa Heylings: [\[36849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will develop a national framework for developing local area energy plans.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department has been undertaking work to explore how the future role of local energy planning might support net zero, clean power 2030 and efficient network planning. This includes engaging with Ofgem on Regional Energy Strategic Plans, as well as working closely with Innovate UK and the Local Net Zero Hubs.

Additionally, Great British Energy will partner with, and provide funding and support to, local and combined authorities, as well as community energy groups, to roll out a pipeline of local renewable energy projects and develop up to 8GW of cleaner power.

■ Natural Gas: Imports

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[37979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence on the potential impact of putting the UK's shale gas wells permanently beyond use on their policies; and whether he has put contingency plans in place to replace gas imports in the event of overseas supplies being (a) reduced and (b) cut off during an international conflict.

Michael Shanks:

The UK has a secure and diverse energy system. Over the past three years the market has successfully delivered sufficient supplies amidst a period characterised by high energy prices and uncertainties caused by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, and conflict in the Middle East. The National Emergency Plan for Downstream Gas and Electricity also sets out the arrangements for the safe and effective management of downstream gas or electricity disruption.

Decisions on whether to abandon wells are ultimately a matter for the company. Hydrocarbon wells must be safely plugged and abandoned when they are no longer in use.

■ Offshore Industry: Pollution

Pippa Heylings: [\[36856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oil spill map published by the Ocean Alliance Against Offshore Drilling on 19 February 2025, what steps he is taking to help tackle the cumulative impacts of chronic pollution from oil and gas activities in UK seas.

Pippa Heylings: [\[36857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oil spill map published by the Ocean Alliance Against Offshore Drilling on 19 February 2025,

what steps he is taking to help tackle the systematic and ongoing oil and chemical pollution that occurs in UK marine protected areas.

Michael Shanks:

The data presented in the oil spill map overstates the number of permit breaches associated with oil or chemicals discharged to sea as a number of these report duplicate discharges while some relate to administrative failures to comply with permit conditions, such as sampling and late reporting. The UK has a comprehensive environmental regulatory regime for the offshore oil and gas sector which ensures that provisions are in place to minimise the chances of and, if required, respond to oil and chemical spills. Oil and chemical spills from offshore oil operations are of significant concern to OPRED which is why there is no minimum quantity for reporting. The number of oil and chemical spills reported to OPRED has almost halved since 2018 and the amount of oil and chemical spilled in 2023 is at a historic low. Every spill is investigated by OPRED proportionately and OPRED can take enforcement action against operators if needed, including the use of fines or referral for criminal prosecution. OPRED continues to work with industry to improve their performance and further reduce the occurrence of oil and chemical spills.

■ **Pylons: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[36580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if (a) his Department and (b) Ofgem will make an estimate of the cost of the construction of (i) National Grid's proposed Grimsby to Walpole pylon scheme and (ii) alternative schemes to transmitting electricity on the route including underground cabling.

Michael Shanks:

The Department cannot comment on specific projects which will come before the Secretary of State for a final planning decision. It is the responsibility of the developers of electricity network projects – in this case National Grid Electricity Transmission - to propose a route and obtain planning permission for that route. Ofgem reviews proposed project costs and ensures that network companies spend efficiently, protecting consumers from unduly high costs.

In general, undergrounding costs an estimated 5 to 10 times more than overhead lines. The cost of building this infrastructure is borne by electricity bill payers so it is key we keep costs down.

■ **Renewable Energy: Employment**

Tom Morrison:

[\[36870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support a just transition for workers in the oil and gas sector; and what steps he has taken to support (a) retraining and (b) reskilling them for jobs in the renewable energy industry.

Sarah Jones:

The Office of Clean Energy Jobs (OCEJ) is engaging widely with industry, experts, and trade unions for a clear assessment of the skills opportunities and challenges. It is working closely with Skills England to ensure that skills systems reforms support the clean energy transition.

The OCEJ will also set out targeted interventions to support specific skills needs in the clean energy workforce. It has recently launched the initial version of the Energy Skills Passport to support oil and gas workers into new roles in the clean energy sector like offshore wind. In phase two, we are exploring opportunities to expand it into other clean energy sectors such as CCUS and Hydrogen.

Renewable Energy: Infrastructure**Robbie Moore:**[\[903243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure that local opinion is considered during the development of large-scale renewable energy infrastructure.

Chris Hinchliff:[\[903244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of renewable energy projects on local communities.

Michael Shanks:

This government has a very simple principle: if you live near new clean energy infrastructure, you should benefit from it. That's why the Planning and Infrastructure Bill proposes much-needed reforms, including direct bill discounts for communities, easier access to community funds, and a streamlined, less burdensome planning process. We know that to deliver on our mission we must bring communities with us.

UK Emissions Trading Scheme: Ceramics**Gareth Snell:**[\[38089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36729 on UK Emissions Trading Scheme: Ceramics, whether he has made a sectoral assessment of the potential merits of exempting ceramics from the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme, whose coverage includes energy intensive industries such as those in the ceramics sector, allows installations who meet certain criteria to apply to be exempted from the main scheme by obtaining 'small emitter' classification.

Over half of sites in the ceramics sector are already exempted from the UK ETS via achieving Small Emitter status. The UK Emissions Trading Scheme as an essential part of our approach to cutting emissions and driving green investment. UK ETS participants, including those in the ceramics sector, are provided with free allocations,

to incentivise emissions reduction and protect energy intensive, trade exposed industries from the risk of carbon leakage. We have guaranteed current free allocation levels until 2027 and are currently reviewing how we calculate free allocations to better support sectors most at risk of carbon leakage.

We will always work in the best interest of industry.

Gareth Snell:

[\[38091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36729, if he will give an example of a cost effective solution to decarbonise for the ceramics sector.

Sarah Jones:

Making Britain a clean energy superpower is one of the five missions of this Government — delivering clean power by 2030 and accelerating to net zero. British industries, such as those in the ceramics sector, have been held back by high electricity costs, which has often made investing here uncompetitive. The Government's clean energy mission will drive down costs, making British businesses internationally competitive while our National Wealth Fund supports the most energy intensive sectors to decarbonise.

A recent report from Ceramics UK, Decarbonising UK Ceramic Manufacturing, outlines potential solutions for decarbonising the ceramics sector.

■ Warm Homes Plan

Pippa Heylings:

[\[36852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has modelled the effectiveness of the Warm Homes Plan on reducing energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Homes Plan will help cut household bills for families and slash fuel poverty. The Government has committed £3.4 billion towards the Warm Homes Plan over the next three years. Further details on the Warm Homes Plan will be set out in due course.

Future funding towards decarbonisation and to tackle fuel poverty will be considered as part of Phase 2 of the Spending Review, which will conclude in late Spring 2025.

By investing in the electrification of heat in buildings, the Warm Homes Plan will help to protect families and businesses from the volatile costs of the international fossil fuel market and make us more secure from the actions of foreign powers.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Products: Labelling**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[36450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February to Question 31434 on Animal Products: Labelling, what discussions he has had with (a) statutory bodies and (b) animal welfare campaign groups on including animal welfare labelling in future food labelling regulations.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government was elected on a mandate to improve animal welfare and has committed to introducing the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation.

The Department is engaging with a range of key animal welfare stakeholders as part of the development of our overarching approach to animal welfare. We will be outlining more details on this in due course.

■ Animal Welfare: Standards

Andrew Rosindell: [\[35238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with her international counterparts on raising animal welfare standards within (a) zoos and (b) aquariums internationally.

Daniel Zeichner:

While the UK has a wider programme of international engagement on animal welfare, there have been no recent discussions with international counterparts on raising animal welfare standards within zoos or aquariums specifically.

■ Batteries: Storage

Wendy Morton: [\[37176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to take steps to protect green belt land from fire risks when developing battery energy storage systems.

Emma Hardy:

The Government agrees with the need to have robust measures in place to manage the risks associated with facilities that use large numbers of lithium-ion batteries.

The Health and Safety Executive regulates grid-scale lithium-ion batteries within a robust regulatory framework which requires Battery Energy and Storage Systems (BESS) designers, installers, and operators to take the necessary measures throughout all stages of the system's construction, operation and decommissioning to ensure its health and safety.

Defra is considering further options, including environmental permitting, for managing the environmental and public health risks from fires at BESS sites.

■ Cats and Dogs: Animal Breeding

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[37095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Animal Welfare Committee Opinions on specialised dog reproductive practices and cat breeding practices, published on 19 December 2024, whether his Department is planning to take steps to tackle the health and welfare issues caused by the breeding for extreme conformations of (a) dogs and (b) cats.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government welcomes the Animal Welfare Committee's Opinions on the welfare implications of specialised canine reproductive practices and on the welfare implications of current and emergent feline breeding practices. We are carefully considering the Committee's recommendations in both Opinions.

■ Chemicals

Ruth Jones:

[\[37693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on establishing a chemicals strategy; and whether this strategy will help phase out animal testing.

Emma Hardy:

Delivery of a Chemicals Strategy was a commitment set by the previous Government. This commitment is being considered as part of the Government's revision of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

Beyond delivery of a Chemicals Strategy, the Government is committed to supporting the uptake and development of alternative methods to the use of animals in science. The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to "partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing", which is a long-term goal, and will likely take many years of scientific and technical advancement and validation to reach this point.

Our current approach is to support and fund the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs), and to ensure that the UK has a robust regulatory system for licensing animal studies and enforcing legal standards.

In line with the Government's Manifesto commitment, we are currently engaging with partners from sectors with interests in animal science and on a cross-Government level as to how we will take this commitment forward, including the publishing of a strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods. We expect to publish this strategy later this year.

■ Environment Protection: Tourism

Edward Morello: [\[36988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of limiting protections within designated (a) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and (b) National Parks on the tourism sector.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to retaining the existing protections in national planning policy for National Parks, National Landscapes and The Broads (Protected Landscapes). We have committed to supporting our Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible for all. In delivering on this commitment we will consider impacts on all sectors, including tourism, businesses and communities.

■ Farms: Educational Visits

Andrew Pakes: [\[36967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of trends in the number of educational access visits to farms over the last five years; and what plans he has to support educational visits to farms in future.

Daniel Zeichner:

Educational access features as part of the wider Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes and we are developing it further as a new 3-year capital item; we expect this to be available later in 2025. It will be a stand-alone capital item, though applicants must have an agri-environment or woodland agreement with management actions for this capital item. In countryside stewardship, currently eligible visitor groups are school age children and care farming groups only, but in the new educational access capital item, more diverse groups of people will be able to visit and benefit from an educational experience on farms and woodland across England.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL) provides grant funding for farmers and land managers to work in partnership with National Parks and National Landscape bodies in England to deliver projects achieving positive outcomes for climate, nature, people, and place. Between July 2021 and March 2024, the programme delivered over 3,400 educational access visits and engaged over 600 schools to create more opportunities for diverse audiences to explore, enjoy and understand farming in these unique landscapes.

■ Flood Control

Amanda Martin: [\[37084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to help protect communities that are vulnerable to flooding.

Emma Hardy:

As part of the Government's Plan for Change, a record £2.65 billion will be invested over two years in building, maintaining and repairing flood defences, better protecting 52,000 properties by March 2026. Around 1,000 projects will receive funding in 24/25 and 25/26.

An additional £50 million has been allocated to internal drainage boards for flood resilience in rural areas, while £60 million has been distributed to farmers affected by severe weather.

From the investment programme, £108 million is being redirected for the maintenance and repair of flood assets, including £36 million for repairs following recent storms.

The Government inherited an outdated funding formula for allocating money to proposed flood defences. The existing formula slows down the delivery of new flood schemes through a complex application process, and also neglects more innovative approaches to flood management such as nature-based approaches and sustainable drainage

A consultation will be launched in the coming months which will include a review of the existing formula to ensure that the challenges facing businesses and communities are adequately taken into account when delivering flood protection.

Additionally, in September 2024, the Government established the Floods Resilience Taskforce to improve preparedness and coordination across national, regional, and local levels.

■ Fly-tipping: Local Government**Jas Athwal:**[\[36955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with local authorities to help tackle fly-tipping.

Mary Creagh:

Fly-tipping is a serious crime which blights local communities and the environment.

Local authorities have enforcement powers to help them tackle fly-tipping, including fixed penalty notices of up to £1000, and prosecution action which can lead to significant fine or even imprisonment. We encourage councils to make good use of their fly-tipping enforcement powers and we are also taking steps so that we may develop further guidance to support local authorities to consistently, appropriately and effectively exercise these existing powers.

We committed to forcing fly-tippers and vandals to clean up the mess that they have created as part of a crackdown on anti-social behaviour. We will provide further details on this commitment, and other actions to tackle fly-tipping, in due course.

In the meantime, Defra chairs the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group through which we work with a wide range of stakeholders such as local authorities and the Environment Agency, to promote and disseminate good practice with regards to

preventing fly-tipping. Various practical tools are available from their webpage which is available at: <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/national-fly-tipping-prevention-group#>.

■ Food

Preet Kaur Gill: [36740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on developing a food strategy that addresses both (a) public health and health inequalities and (b) affordability.

Daniel Zeichner:

Our ambitious food strategy will set and deliver clear long-term outcomes that create a healthier, fairer, and more resilient food system, and in doing so will consider elements of the food system that can contribute towards those outcomes.

In developing the strategy, we are establishing a new way of working with the sector and building on strong partnerships across the food system to pool our expertise, influence and effort and develop collective commitments, backed by a clear vision and framework for change from the Government, to improve the outcomes the food system delivers. We will provide details of process, engagement and milestones in the coming months.

■ Glass: Recycling

Nick Timothy: [38161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report packaging data system for extended producer responsibility, what assessment his Department has made of the reasons for which there has been a decline in glass volumes in the first six months of 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The 2024 pEPR impact assessment assessed the impact of introducing the pEPR scheme on packaging producers as a whole. The illustrative base fees use packaging tonnage data submitted to date by producers on the Report Packaging Data (RPD) online portal for the first six months of 2024. We continue to monitor all data submitted by producers on the RPD portal and will publish an update to the illustrative base fees if the estimates significantly change. We do not have enough of a time series to identify reasons for, or impact on the policy on Placed On Market tonnages. We aim to calculate final fees in June, following regulator checks of the data.

■ Incontinence: Men

Steve Darling: [36834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Health and Safety Executive on the provision of waste disposal bins in male toilets for people experiencing incontinence due to (a) prostate cancer treatment and (b) other medical conditions.

Mary Creagh:

Officials are working across the Government to deal with this important issue. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is reviewing the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 regarding provision of disposal facilities in workplace toilets. This work is included within the Government's wider plans under Make Work Pay, and HSE will hold appropriate consultation in due course.

Meat: Ritual Slaughter**Rupert Lowe:**[\[36520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislation to prohibit the slaughter of animals without being stunned for Halal meat.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government encourages the highest standards of animal welfare at slaughter and would prefer all animals to be stunned before slaughter, but we respect the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. There are no plans to bring forward legislation to prohibit the slaughter of animals without prior stunning when slaughtered in accordance with religious rites.

Existing legislation sets out the main requirements to protect the welfare of animals when being slaughtered and there are additional rules that apply when animals are slaughtered by either the Jewish or Muslim method without prior stunning to ensure that animals are spared avoidable pain, suffering, or distress during the slaughter process.

Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal: Water Abstraction**David Chadwick:**[\[37098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Welsh government on the cost of water extraction to supply the Monmouth and Brecon canal.

David Chadwick:[\[37099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh government on the limit of water abstractions from the river Usk to supply Monmouth and Brecon canal.

David Chadwick:[\[37100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh government on the provision of support for the cost of water supplied by Dŵr Cymru for the Monmouth and Brecon canal.

Emma Hardy:

Water abstraction licensing in Wales, and conditions that may be attached to licences, are a devolved matter for Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh

Government. Defra and the Environment Agency do not have a role in that. Issues of concern about the supply of water for the Monmouth and Brecon Canal are an operational matter for the Canal and River Trust, as the independent charity owning the canal, to resolve with Natural Resources Wales.

■ Rivers: Newbury

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[37037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2025 to Question 32541 on the Chalk Stream Recovery Plan, whether any of the chalk stream projects in receipt of funding from the Government's Water Environment Improvement Fund in the 2024-25 financial year are located in the Newbury constituency.

Emma Hardy:

This financial year, there are over 45 chalk stream projects receiving funding from the Government's Water Environment Improvement Fund, each leveraging private investment and delivering on our commitment to ensure clean water for the future.

The River Shalbourne is a chalk stream within the Newbury constituency. In 2024/25 £80,000 of WEIF Capital funding was granted to Action for the River Kennet to deliver the River Shalbourne River and Floodplain Restoration project. This project restored a section of the river to more natural conditions by 'remeandering' (creating bends in the river) and reconnecting the river to the floodplain. These new wetlands will provide benefits including increased water storage, drought resilience and reduction of sediment and nutrient run-off. This work has addressed pressures which will support WFD (Water Framework Directive) element improvements (currently at Moderate WFD status).

■ Sewage: Kent

Sojan Joseph:

[\[38287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to enforce the publication of real-time data on sewage released into (a) rivers (b) the sea and (c) other waterways in Kent.

Emma Hardy:

Since 1 January 2025, water companies have been required to publish data related to discharges from all storm overflows within one hour of the discharge beginning. The Secretary of State has authorised Ofwat to carry out enforcement action for this duty, in accordance with the powers conferred under sections 18 and 141DA (4) of the Water Industry Act 1991. Ofwat's enforcement powers provide for a wide range of enforcement activity, including substantial penalties.

Ofwat is monitoring compliance with the duty to report relevant data in real time. Where it detects non-compliance, it will take appropriate enforcement action. In addition to this, the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 has introduced an equivalent duty for water companies to publish data related to discharges from all emergency

overflows within one hour of the discharge beginning. Once commenced, this duty will be enforced in the same way.

■ **Sewage: West Dorset**

Edward Morello: [\[36994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of sewage discharges from combined sewer overflows at (a) Charmouth West Stream and (b) Lyme Regis Church Cliff Beach in the last 12 months.

Edward Morello: [\[36995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the impact of combined sewer overflows on water quality at (a) Charmouth West Stream and (b) Lyme Regis Church Cliff Beach.

Edward Morello: [\[36996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has issued recent enforcement actions against water companies for sewage discharges at (a) Charmouth West Stream and (b) Lyme Regis Church Cliff beach.

Edward Morello: [\[36997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with Wessex Water on improving sewage infrastructure to prevent discharges at (a) Charmouth West Stream and (b) Lyme Regis Church Cliff beach.

Edward Morello: [\[36998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide additional funding for local authorities to help tackle the impact of sewage pollution on (a) Charmouth West Stream and (b) Lyme Regis Church Cliff beach.

Edward Morello: [\[36999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of sewage discharges at (a) Charmouth West Stream and (b) Lyme Regis Church Cliff beach on (i) public health (ii) local businesses and (iii) marine ecology.

Emma Hardy:

For too long, water companies have discharged unacceptable levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas.

It is the responsibility of water companies to invest in infrastructure and other improvements to reduce untreated wastewater pollution incidents. The Price Review 24 programme, which runs from 2025-2030, will see Wessex Water investing £580

million to reduce the use of storm overflows. This investment includes the following actions to protect the River Lim and Church Cliff bathing water in Lyme Regis:

- Uplyme sewage treatment works and Gun Cliff sewage pumping station will be fitted with certified flow monitoring equipment,
- Improvements to Uplyme storm sewage tanks,
- Improvements to the Cobb sewage pumping station,
- Two combined sewage overflows (CSO) are to be investigated and assessed in relation to the possible impact on water quality,
- Five further CSOs to be improved to meet the bathing water standard of no more than 2 spills per bathing season
- An investigation will be undertaken to confirm the benefits of these works for Church Cliff beach.

There are no improvements identified in the Price Review 24 programme specifically for the West Stream in Charmouth.

The Environment Agency (EA) is not currently pursuing any enforcement action in the Charmouth Lyme Regis area. However, water company assets in the Char and Lim catchments may be inspected as part of the EA's new water industry regulation inspection programme. The EA will continue to monitor all this work to ensure the quality of the River Lim and Church Cliff beach further improves.

Full details of the storm water overflows in the area are available [here](#) and information on Lyme Regis Church Cliff Beach is available [here](#).

■ Solid Fuels: Air Pollution

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[37259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to review rules around burning solid fuels in (a) general and (b) smoke control zones.

Emma Hardy:

Domestic combustion remains a major source of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) emissions in the UK, and ownership of solid fuel appliances is increasing.

The Government recognises that it is important that we take further action to reduce emissions from domestic burning, and the impact on human health. We are currently evaluating a number of options to reduce emissions of PM_{2.5} from domestic burning both in and outside of Smoke Control Areas.

■ Trees

Blake Stephenson:

[\[36878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of all (a) ancient and (b) veteran trees included in the Ancient Woodland inventory.

Mary Creagh:

The Ancient Woodland inventory (AWI) identifies the location of ancient woodland sites and does not map individual ancient and veteran trees therein or outside of ancient woodlands. The Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) is hosted and managed by the Woodland Trust and records the number and location of ancient and veteran trees. It currently has 190,000 trees mapped for the UK.

Vegetable Oils: Forests**Navendu Mishra:**[\[36789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of vegetable oils not included in the due diligence regulations under Schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021 on deforestation and whether he plans to extend due diligence obligations to cover these oils.

Mary Creagh:

The Global Environmental Impacts of Consumption Indicator, funded by Defra, estimates that UK-linked deforestation driven by soy and palm oil was 7-9 times and 15-20 times greater respectively than deforestation linked to sunflower and rapeseed oil in 2022.

We recognise the need to take action to ensure that UK consumption of forest risk commodities is not driving deforestation and we will set out our approach to addressing this in due course.

Waste Disposal: Advertising**Darren Paffey:**[\[37467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to (a) support a repair and reuse economy and (b) prioritise waste reduction measures; and whether his Department plans to help reduce advertising of disposable products.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. We have convened a Circular Economy Taskforce, comprising experts from industry, academia, and civil society, to help develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. The Strategy will map our transition to a circular economy, supported by a series of roadmaps that detail the interventions that the Government and others will make on a sector-by-sector basis.

Defra recognises that reuse and repair are fundamental tenets of any circular economy, and a successful transition aims to eliminate waste and promote sustainability through reuse and resource efficiency. We will consider the evidence for appropriate action right across the economy as we develop the Strategy.

■ Water Companies: Enforcement

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[37039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take with (a) the Environment Agency and (b) Ofwat to ensure water companies comply with the terms of their permits.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency's (EA) annual water company inspections have intensified, with 4,000 planned for the end of March 2025 already completed, and a further 10,000 inspections in 2025/26. The evidence they gather will inform future annual performance assessments, investment plans and proactive enforcement action.

The Water Special Measure Act will enable the EA to build on its biggest ever transformation in the way it regulates the water industry, enabling them to uncover more non-compliance and ultimately drive better performance. The Act will enable them to take action faster and with more impact.

Ofwat does not have a role in monitoring or enforcing individual environmental permits, that is a matter for the EA. Ofwat may have a role if a water company is breaching legal obligations that Ofwat is responsible for enforcing.

Ofwat has an on-going enforcement action against wastewater companies relating to compliance with wastewater obligations that Ofwat is responsible for enforcing, details of which can be found online: [Investigation into sewage treatment works and sewerage networks](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Albania: Corruption

Wendy Morton:

[\[36673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support Albania to tackle corruption.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) remains a consistent supporter of efforts to tackle corruption in Albania, through diplomatic engagement and programmes funded by the UK's Integrated Security Fund (ISF) and FCDO Official Development Assistance (ODA). Ongoing support includes working with Albania's security and justice institutions to strengthen accountability and transparency, support to lawmakers to improve the effectiveness of legislation, and empowering journalists to act as effective watchdogs for corruption in public procurement and appointments.

■ Albania: Elections

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[34792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to send officials to monitor the upcoming Albanian parliamentary election.

Stephen Doughty:

UK officials, including staff from our Embassy in Tirana, are working with international partners on monitoring plans ahead of May's Parliamentary elections in Albania, and the UK will be contributing monitors to join the scheduled Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) International Monitoring Mission.

■ Balkans: Politics and Government

Wendy Morton:

[\[37162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on (a) security and (b) regional stability in the western Balkans.

Stephen Doughty:

A just and lasting peace is vital for Ukraine and for wider Euro-Atlantic and international security and prosperity. Russia has sought to undermine fragile democracies and fan ethnic tensions across the Western Balkans. This threatens hard-won peace and stability in the region and the ambitions for greater European integration chosen by states. We will continue to counter Russian interference in the region, including through supporting North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) partners, programming on cyber security and counter-disinformation and wider efforts to promote stability and security.

■ Balkans: Russia

Wendy Morton:

[\[36674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support (a) Albania and (b) other Western Balkan to maintain regional stability in the context of Russian destabilisation efforts.

Stephen Doughty:

Russia has sought to undermine fragile democracies and fan ethnic tensions across the Western Balkans. This threatens hard-won peace and stability in the region and the ambitions for greater European integration chosen by states. We will continue work to counter other Russian hybrid threats in the region, including through support to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) partners and programming on cyber security and counter-disinformation. Furthermore, the UK will host the 2025 Berlin Process, to support wider efforts for stability, security and economic co-operation across the Western Balkans region (including Albania).

■ Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement

Barry Gardiner: [\[35215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his planned timetable is to complete work necessary for the participation of the UK in the first conference of Members 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.

Stephen Doughty:

The Government is completely committed to ratification 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, which is in line with our determination to reinvigorate the UK's wider international leadership on climate and nature. Legislation to implement the BBNJ Agreement will be introduced as soon as the legislative timetable allows.

Josh Babarinde: [\[35828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's timetable is for ratifying the United Nations Global Ocean Treaty.

Stephen Doughty:

The Government is completely committed to ratification 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 (BBNJ Agreement, also known as the "High Seas Treaty" or "Global Ocean Treaty"), which is in line with our determination to reinvigorate the UK's wider international leadership on climate and nature. Legislation to implement the BBNJ Agreement will be introduced as soon as the legislative timetable allows.

■ Bosnia and Herzegovina: EUFOR

James Naish: [\[34956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has considered re-joining the EUFOR peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of a new security pact with the EU.

Stephen Doughty:

Europe's security is critical to our own and we recognise the contribution of many of the EU's military operations and missions to regional security. We see the European Union Force Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) as vital for peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). We are open to discussions about opportunities for the UK to cooperate more closely with EU missions, considering UK engagement on a case-by-case basis. We will continue to support security and stability in BiH through our bilateral contributions in support of their Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Marine Environment

Dr Luke Evans: [\[36454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department has provided through the Blue Belt Programme to help protect ocean health in the British Indian Ocean Territories since 2022.

Stephen Doughty:

The Blue Belt Programme, which is funded by the FCDO, has provided £1,230,562 since 1 April 2022 to support the British Indian Ocean Territory manage its Marine Protected Area. This includes measures to prevent illegal fishing through satellite monitoring and joint surveillance with Sri Lanka and India, as well as a coastal monitoring plan.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Marine Protected Areas

Dr Luke Evans: [\[36452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the annual cost to the public purse is of maintaining the Chagos Marine Protected Area.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) provides money for the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) Administration for the good governance of the territory, including environmental protection. The FCDO does not itself spend money for maintaining the BIOT Marine Protected Area, outside of the Blue Belt programme. The Blue Belt Programme, which is funded by the FCDO, has provided £1,230,562 since 1 April 2022 to support BIOT manage its Marine Protected Area.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Mauritius

Dr Luke Evans: [\[36453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed treaty with Mauritius on the Chagos Islands on the long term sustainability of the Chagos Marine Protected Area.

Stephen Doughty:

The agreement will be supported by an enhanced partnership between the UK and Mauritius on conservation. This partnership will prioritise high conservation standards, with the UK supporting Mauritius' ambitions to establish a Marine Protected Area (MPA) that protects the globally significant ecosystems in the Chagos Archipelago. This will extend to technical, financial, capacity-building assistance, fostering long-term sustainable management.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Bradley Thomas: [\[35913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 29154 on British Indian Ocean

Territory: Sovereignty, whether any conditions will be placed on how the package of financial support can be spent.

Stephen Doughty:

Once an agreement is signed further details of the Treaty will be put before both Houses for scrutiny and treaty ratification in the usual way.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Australia and New Zealand**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[34797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his (a) Australian and (b) New Zealand counterpart on areas of mutual interest between the British Overseas Territories and the external territories of Australia and New Zealand.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[34798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with representatives of the British Overseas Territories on enhancing cooperation with the external territories of (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[34799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to facilitate (a) environmental and (b) conservation cooperation between the British Overseas Territories and the external territories of (i) Australia and (ii) New Zealand.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[34800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has considered establishing formal mechanisms for dialogue between the British Overseas Territories and the external territories of (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand.

Stephen Doughty:

The Territories have not recently to our knowledge requested enhanced co-operation with Australia, New Zealand, or their external territories. The UK, Australia, and New Zealand liaise on topics of mutual interest including recent developments in the external territories and the conservation of Antarctic marine life. The UK remains open to considering requests to facilitate dialogues between the UK Overseas Territories and other territories.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Companies**

Steff Aquarone:

[\[36916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made on ensuring publicly accessible registers of beneficial ownership in all overseas territories.

Stephen Doughty:

At the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) in November 2024, all Overseas Territories committed to implementing registers with the maximum possible degree of access and transparency. The Falkland Islands and Saint Helena committed to join Montserrat and Gibraltar in implementing fully public registers by April 2025. The British Virgin Islands (BVI), Cayman, Bermuda, Anguilla and Turks & Caicos Islands agreed to implement registers of beneficial ownership, accessible to those with a legitimate interest, by June 2025.

UK Officials are working proactively with Overseas Territories officials to ensure their proposals meet the agreements made at the JMC. I have and will continue to raise this directly with elected leaders, including in my meeting with Premier Wheatley of BVI, in his own capacity, and as President of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) last week.

■ British Overseas Territories: Development Aid**Mr James Cleverly:**[\[35288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the reduction in Overseas Development Assistance on the Overseas Territories; and what steps he is taking to help mitigate that impact.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government remains committed to supporting the Overseas Territories, and is funding programmes to increase long term capacity and capability in the Overseas Territories in receipt of Official Development Assistance (ODA). The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and ODA. We will set out our spending plans following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes.

■ Commonwealth: Foreign Relations**Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[36189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to strength ties between the UK and (a) Canada, (b) New Zealand, (c) Australia and (d) other Commonwealth countries.

Stephen Doughty:

UK-Commonwealth relationships are built on shared values and strategic cooperation. UK accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will deepen trade ties with Australia and boost prosperity, we remain committed to working together to address shared global challenges. As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons, the UK and Canada are the closest of allies. We cooperate with New Zealand on security, growth, climate and development. Recently, the Foreign Secretary hosted Foreign Minister Peters for talks. We are working closely with members to implement

CHOGM commitments, including bolstering human rights and democratic governance, tackling impacts of climate change, mobilising trade and investment.

■ **Cyprus: Military Bases**

Euan Stainbank: [\[37396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received advice from the Attorney General on activity originating from military bases in Cyprus since July 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

By long-standing convention, observed by successive Governments, the fact of, and substance of advice from, the law officers of the Crown is not disclosed outside government. This convention is referred to in paragraph [5.14] of the Ministerial Code [updated on 6 November 2024]. The purpose of this convention is to enable the Government to obtain frank and full legal advice in confidence.

Our military activities at the Sovereign Base Areas are central to the UK's humanitarian and hostage rescue efforts, support the UK's efforts with international partners to de-escalate conflict and reinforce stability. The use of the military bases is in line with international humanitarian law and with our humanitarian objectives.

■ **Diego Garcia: Military Bases**

Wendy Morton: [\[35677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the autonomy of the UK and US operations on Diego Garcia.

Stephen Doughty:

We will retain full control over Diego Garcia with robust provisions to keep adversaries out. These include unrestricted access to and use of the base for the UK and US, including control over the electromagnetic spectrum; a buffer zone around Diego Garcia; a comprehensive mechanism to ensure no activity in the other islands threatens base operations; and a ban on the presence of any foreign security forces. The details will be set out when the treaty is laid before Parliament.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the terms are of the agreement with the US for the Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia signed in 2016.

Stephen Doughty:

As stated in the reply to PQ 25391, the US presence and operations in the British Indian Ocean Territory are governed by a series of international agreements, which set out that the whole Territory should be made available for UK and US defence purposes. In 2016, the UK and US agreed to extend the provisions of the 1966 Exchange of Notes for an additional 20 years. The 1966 Exchange of Notes and

other additions to the Notes are available at the United Nations Treaty Database Website.

Priti Patel:

[\[36636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2025 to Question 32985 on Diego Garcia: Military Bases, whether the proposed treaty announced on 3 October 2024 would have permitted the UK to unilaterally extend the lease for the base.

Stephen Doughty:

The treaty will allow the UK and US to continue to operate the base as we have done for the next 99 years, with a provision to extend and the right of first refusal.

■ Disinformation

Wendy Morton:

[\[36663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to counter foreign disinformation and manipulation campaigns.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) works closely with the Home Office, which leads on addressing malign information activity aimed at UK audiences, and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) which leads on online safety and information threats in the UK. The FCDO is responsible for understanding and addressing information threats relating to third countries, deterring hostile activity globally and building a global ecosystem through partnerships to collectively challenge the threat.

The Foreign Secretary recognised the importance of 'stepping up action with allies on Kremlin Disinformation' in his January 2025 Locarno speech.

We have dedicated resources to identifying foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) and taking action against Russian networks. This includes sanctioning the Social Design Agency (SDA) for attempting to undermine and destabilise Ukraine; exposing Russia's attempts at electoral interference in Moldova and exposing how RT (formerly Russia Today) engages in covert influence on behalf of the Kremlin.

We are driving a collaborative international approach - the G7 pledged to 'strengthen our coordinated efforts to better prevent, detect and respond to FIMI threats'. In January 2025, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism exposed ongoing deceitful activity of RT and the SDA to advance Russia's interests.

We have a range of programmes to build societal resilience in third countries to protect against deceptive information campaigns, and we will continue to provide factual narratives to global audiences.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Hakluyt**Jon Trickett:** [\[37127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Catherine West:

Since July 2024, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has had no staff seconded from Hakluyt.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Mauritius**Priti Patel:** [\[36637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when (a) he, (b) Ministers in his Department and (c) other Government Ministers plan to meet with their Mauritius counterparts in 2025.

Stephen Doughty:

As we and Mauritius have repeatedly said, including in joint statements on 20 December 2024 and on 13 January, both sides remain committed to concluding a deal on the future of the Chagos Archipelago. We look forward to future meetings with the Mauritian government and others as per the normal conduct of business.

India: Religious Freedom**Bob Blackman:** [\[37546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Indian counterpart on (a) the alleged demolishing of properties belonging to the Hindu Nallur Mutt in Chikkamagaluru and (b) the protection of freedom of religion or belief in India.

Catherine West:

The UK Government condemns any instances of discrimination because of religion or belief, regardless of the country or faith involved. Concerns about the rights and opportunities of some religious minorities and communities in India are widely reported, and our High Commission in New Delhi and network of Deputy High Commissions across India track these issues closely.

Dialogue concerning freedom of religion or belief is an important aspect of the UK-India relationship, and where we have specific concerns, we raise them directly with Indian authorities. Our network in India also meets regularly with religious representatives from different faith communities.

Kashmir: Humanitarian Situation**Jim Shannon:** [\[37558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the humanitarian situation in Kashmir.

Catherine West:

I recognise there are human rights issues in both India Administered Kashmir and Pakistan Administered Kashmir. We raise issues, where we have them, directly with the governments of India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan are important friends of the UK, and we have strong and deep bilateral relationships with both. It is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

■ **NATO: USA****Sir Julian Lewis:**[\[37108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the willingness of the US administration to (a) consult with and (b) include in peace negotiations representatives of (i) the UK, (ii) France and (iii) other allied NATO member states.

Stephen Doughty:

We share the US administration's desire to bring this war to an end. As the Prime Minister has said, we warmly welcome the agreement reached between the US and Ukraine in Saudi Arabia on 11 March.

We are regularly engaging with the US, together with other international partners, to drive progress towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. The Foreign Secretary has been discussing this further with G7 partners at the Foreign Ministers' meeting.

■ **Russia: Sanctions****James Naish:**[\[34954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that sanctions placed on Russia by (a) the UK and (b) other countries are not being circumvented by Serbia.

Stephen Doughty:

Russia is making extensive efforts to circumvent sanctions in order to maintain its military machine. Our focus is on stopping these critical goods from reaching Russia and deprive Russia from generating revenue to fund the war. That includes ensuring our sanctions are as effective as possible. We are coordinating closely with G7 partners on our efforts to tackle circumvention risks across a number of priority countries including Serbia, and our support has ranged from technical assistance to diplomatic engagement at all levels.

■ **Russia: Ukraine****Wendy Morton:**[\[36662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with NATO allies on the potential deployment of peacekeeping troops in Ukraine in the event of any ceasefire.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Allies as well as Ukraine on how to achieve a just and lasting peace that safeguards Ukraine's security and sovereignty. The Foreign Secretary attended the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Canada from 12-14 March 2025, which discussed security support for Ukraine. The UK has been clear that when this war ends, Ukraine will need robust security guarantees to ensure against future Russian aggression. The UK is playing a leading role alongside France to build a coalition of countries willing to play a role in supporting Ukraine's future security.

Wendy Morton:[\[36665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of China's position on the conflict in Ukraine.

Catherine West:

China remains the decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine through its large-scale support for Russia.

On 13 February the Foreign Secretary met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, underlined the UK's ironclad commitment to Ukraine and urged China to prevent its companies supporting Russia's military. The Foreign Secretary made it clear that we would continue to sanction Chinese companies which are providing the vast majority of dual use components to Russia.

The House will also wish to note that in light of the continued flow of these components from China to Russia this Government is now minded to refuse licenses for controlled goods on the Common High Priority list exported for stock to China. Guidance for UK exporters has been updated to this effect.

■ USA: Foreign Relations**Wendy Morton:**[\[35676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on delivering on the Action Plan in the Atlantic Declaration (2023) since July 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

The Atlantic Declaration was agreed with the Biden Administration under the previous UK government. Since entering office last year, we have taken a case-by-case approach to its initiatives in support of this government's missions. This included a meeting of the UK-US Joint Standing Committee on Nuclear Energy Cooperation in August 2024 and the second Strategic Technologies Investment Council in November 2024. As the Prime Minister said, we are committed to pursuing an economic deal with the new US administration with advanced technology at its core.

■ USA: Trade Agreements

Wendy Morton:

[\[36660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on a free trade agreement with the United States.

Stephen Doughty:

Both the Foreign Secretary and his officials are speaking regularly with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade and his officials about the future of the UK-US Trade partnership. To echo the Prime Minister's remarks during his meeting with President Trump on 27 February 2025: we will go further and work on a new economic deal with advanced technology at its core. We will set out more details as discussions evolve.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alzheimer's Disease: Tomography

Joe Robertson:

[\[36986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of (a) CT and (b) MRI scans for diagnosing Alzheimer's disease.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services and will support the National Health Service to increase diagnostic capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners.

Our Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, builds on the investments already made with an ambitious vision for the future of diagnostic testing. This will include more straight-to-test pathways, increasing and expanding community diagnostic centres (CDCs) and better use of technology.

With 170 CDCs due to be up and running by the end of March 2025, CDCs can take on more of the growing diagnostic demand within elective care. We will also deliver additional CDC capacity in 2025/26 by expanding several existing CDCs and building up to five new ones.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis

Sarah Bool:

[\[37041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to the NHS Payment Scheme on waiting times for ADHD assessments.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: As required by law, NHS England has assessed the impact of the proposed NHS Payment Scheme. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/25-26-NHSPS-Consultation-notice-C-impact-assessment.pdf>

This impact assessment includes consideration of the impact on patient choice, as well as an assessment of the impact on patients, in line with NHS England's public sector equality duty.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) patients will continue to benefit from the Right to Choose their provider at the point of referral. None of the proposed changes to the NHS Payment Scheme included in the consultation would change this.

Local integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for planning service provision in their local area, including for ADHD assessments. In doing so, ICBs should take account of waiting lists, considering how local funding can be deployed to best meet the needs of their local population.

The consultation on the proposed NHS Payment Scheme closed on 28 February 2025. The outcome of the consultation will be published shortly once all responses received have been fully considered and any decisions made about the final Payment Scheme.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Health Services**Sarah Bool:****[37043]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure NHS England engages directly with ADHD (a) charities and (b) clinicians before finalising the NHS Payment Scheme structure.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: NHS England is following standard procedure in its consultation on the NHS Payment Scheme. NHS England consults on changes to the payment scheme each year, as it is required to by law. While the legal requirement is just for NHS England to consult commissioners and providers, it does accept responses from other interested parties and members of the general public.

The statutory consultation period of 28 days ended on 28 February 2025. The outcome of the consultation will be published shortly once all responses received have been fully considered and any decisions made about the final Payment Scheme.

Sarah Bool:**[37044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent regional variations in ADHD (a) assessment and (b) treatment times.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including assessments and treatment for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

NHS England has established the ADHD taskforce which is working to bring together those with lived experience with experts from the National Health Service, education, charity, and justice sectors. The taskforce is working to get a better understanding of the challenges affecting those with ADHD, including timely and equitable access to services and support. The final report is expected in the summer, which will make recommendations about how to address the challenges faced by those affected by ADHD.

There is, at present, no single, established dataset that can be used to monitor waiting times for assessment for, or treatment of, ADHD either nationally or for individual organisations or geographies in England. Although the data requested is not held centrally, relevant information may be held locally by individual NHS trusts or commissioners.

In conjunction with the taskforce, NHS England has carried out detailed work to develop an ADHD data improvement plan to inform future service planning. NHS England has also conducted detailed work to understand the provider and commissioning landscape, capturing examples from ICBs who are trialling innovative ways of delivering ADHD services. NHS England is using this information to support systems to tackle ADHD waiting lists and provide support to address people's needs.

Sarah Bool:[\[37045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ring-fencing funding for ADHD services.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: The Department has not made an assessment of the potential merits of ring-fencing funding for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) services. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including those with ADHD, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, recently announced a series of reforms to the National Health Service operating model to move power from the health centre to local leaders. In keeping with these reforms, we are giving systems greater control and flexibility over how funding is deployed to best meet the needs of their local population.

NHS England has established the ADHD taskforce which is working to bring together those with lived experience with experts from the NHS, education, charity, and justice sectors. The taskforce is working to get a better understanding of the challenges

affecting those with ADHD, including timely and equitable access to services and support, with the final report expected in summer 2025.

Gregory Stafford:

[\[37050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to ADHD (a) diagnosis, (b) medication and (c) other treatment in (i) areas where waiting times are long and (ii) other areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including assessments and treatment for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

NHS England has established the ADHD taskforce which is working to bring together those with lived experience with experts from the National Health Service, education, charity, and justice sectors. The taskforce is working to get a better understanding of the challenges affecting those with ADHD, including timely and equitable access to services and support, with the final report expected to make recommendations in the summer.

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■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Low Incomes

Gregory Stafford:

[\[37051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people on low incomes to access ADHD treatment that is not available through the NHS.

Stephen Kinnock:

As set out in the NHS Constitution, access to services in the National Health Service is based on clinical need, not an individual's ability to pay. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) services, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

NHS England has established an ADHD taskforce which is working to bring together those with lived experience with experts from the NHS, education, charity, and justice sectors. The taskforce is working to get a better understanding of the challenges

affecting those with ADHD, including timely and equitable access to services and support, with the final report expected in the summer.

In conjunction with the taskforce, NHS England has carried out detailed work to develop an ADHD data improvement plan to inform future service planning. NHS England has also conducted detailed work to understand the provider and commissioning landscape, capturing examples from ICBs who are trialling innovative ways of delivering ADHD services. NHS England is using this information to support systems to tackle ADHD waiting lists and provide support to address people's needs.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Health Services

Jeremy Hunt:

[R] [36619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the timely publication of the 2023-24 report by NHS England on learning from lives and deaths: people with a learning disability and autistic people.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England commissions Kings College London and its partners to analyse data from the publication, Learning from Lives and Deaths: People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People. The annual report is published by Kings College London, which is currently working on the next annual report and NHS England advises it will publish this shortly. The last report was published in November 2023 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/assets/fans-dept/leder-2022-v2.0.pdf>

■ Better Care Fund: Carers

Alison Bennett:

[37470]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish funding by the Better Care Fund to support unpaid carers for (a) 2023 and (b) 2024, by region.

Stephen Kinnock:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 3 March 2025 to Question [33291](#).

■ Cardiovascular Diseases: Health Services

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[36117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to improve cardiovascular disease outcomes.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is committed to tackling the biggest killers, including cardiovascular disease (CVD), and the Health Mission sets an ambition to reduce premature mortality from heart disease and stroke by 25% in the next 10 years. The Department held a symposium on heart disease and stroke on 13 March 2025 where charities, patient advocacy groups, clinicians, think-tanks and other experts discussed how to deliver on the ambition.

We are tackling the root cause of preventable heart disease and stroke by introducing the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, implementing the advertising regulations for less healthy food and drink on television and online, and empowering councils to block the development of new fast-food shops outside schools.

To improve access to the NHS Health Check, a core component of England's CVD prevention programme, we are developing a new NHS Health Check Online tool so that people can have a check at a time and place convenient to them to understand and act on their CVD risk.

Furthermore, we are trialling a new workplace CVD check which will deliver more than 130,000 lifesaving heart health checks in the workplace.

■ **Cardiovascular Diseases: Medical Treatments**

Jim Shannon:

[\[35666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5319 on Peripheral Arterial Disease, whether he plans to include policies on the treatment of (a) peripheral arterial disease and (b) other cardiovascular diseases in the 10-Year Health Plan.

Ashley Dalton:

The 10-Year Health Plan will deliver the three big shifts the National Health Service needs to be fit for the future: from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. All of these are relevant to improving cardiovascular health in all parts of the county.

More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions, including cardiovascular disease, closer to home. Moving from sickness to prevention will help us reduce the causes of the biggest killers, and provide treatment earlier, rather than only intervening when conditions deteriorate.

As part of the 10-Year Health Plan engagement exercise, I hosted a symposium on cardiovascular disease on 13 March 2025. This brought together a range of charities and clinical experts in the disease. This is in addition to the responses received to the consultation from numerous national and local charities and organisations and their attendance at the National Partners Council.

■ **Defibrillators: Essex**

James McMurdock:

[\[36036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of postcodes outside the recommended minimum distance from a defibrillator in (a) Essex, (b) the South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

To improve patients' survival rates following out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, the Government has committed to improving access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. Following the depletion of the existing AED fund, launched in September 2023, the Government approved a further £500,000 in August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the Fund.

As part of the application process, the Department has selected the Smarter Society as its independent partner to manage grant applications against requirements specified by the Department to ensure that resource is allocated where there is the greatest need; for example, remote communities with extended ambulance response times, places with high footfall and high population densities, hotspots for cardiac arrest including sporting venues and venues with vulnerable people, and deprived areas.

When an AED is installed, these defibrillators are required to be registered on The Circuit, the national defibrillator ambulance service database. Upon registration, contact details are provided for the nominated AED guardian/s who are local to the defibrillator's location and conduct checks when required.

87 AEDs have been distributed through the fund in Essex, including 1 in the South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

■ Dementia**Joe Robertson:**[\[36984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle dementia cases which could be (a) prevented and (b) delayed by addressing modifiable risk factors.

Stephen Kinnock:

For most people, their local general practice surgery is the first port of call when a health problem starts, so excellent primary care is the key to unlocking timely diagnosis of progressive health conditions like dementia.

The NHS Health Check aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and some cases of dementia among adults aged between 40 and 74 years old. Through the check, people aged between 65 and 74 years old should be made aware of the signs and symptoms of dementia and be signposted to memory services as appropriate.

The Government is investing in dementia research across all areas, from causes, diagnosis and prevention to treatment, care and support, including for carers.

■ Dementia: Diagnosis

Joe Robertson:

[\[36977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) pilot and (b) support the adoption of new diagnostic tools for dementia (i) including blood tests and (ii) generally.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services and will support the National Health Service to increase diagnostic capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners.

The Department funds research into dementia via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Alongside Alzheimer's Research UK, Alzheimer's Society and the People's Postcode Lottery, the NIHR is funding the Blood Biomarker Challenge which seeks to produce the clinical and economic data that could make the case for the use of a blood test in the NHS to support diagnosis of dementia.

■ Dementia: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Joe Robertson:

[\[36980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) expand capacity in dementia diagnostics and (b) facilitate access to new dementia treatments when available.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services and will support the National Health Service to increase diagnostic capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners. Our Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, builds on the investments already made with an ambitious vision for the future of diagnostic testing. This will include more straight-to-test pathways, increasing and expanding community diagnostic centres (CDCs) and better use of technology. With 170 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) due to be up and running by the end of March 2025, CDCs can take on more of the growing diagnostic demand within elective care. We will also deliver additional CDC capacity in 2025/26 by expanding several existing CDCs and building up to five new ones.

NHS England has a dedicated team in place which has been planning for the roll out of new treatments for Alzheimer's disease, if and when they are approved for use. To prepare for the new generation of dementia treatments in development, NHS England is working to ensure the diagnostic and treatment capacity, clinical pathway redesign and investment are in place to support the adoption of any new licensed and National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended treatments as soon as possible.

NICE and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency have piloted enhanced information sharing arrangements for new disease-modifying treatments enabling the organisations to fully align their processes and make faster decisions on the use of these medicines within the NHS in England.

■ Dental Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[36647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the adequacy of the provision of NHS dental services across the UK.

Stephen Kinnock:

Whilst the provision of National Health Service dental care is devolved, my Rt. Hon. friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and I have engaged and intend to continue to engage fully with Ministers from all four nations on matters crucial to the future of our health and social care system.

■ Dental Services: Children

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[36788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of access to dental services for children with SEND.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government recognises that certain groups of patients such as people with disabilities may find it difficult to access dental care. We are committed to ensuring National Health Service dental services are available to all who need them.

Community dental services (CDS) are available to people whose additional needs may mean they are not able to be treated at high street dental practices. CDS provide specialised dental services to ensure that everyone can have access to the dental care they need. This may include treatments delivered in hospitals, specialist health centres and mobile clinics, as well as home visits or visits in nursing and care homes.

Integrated care boards are responsible for identifying areas of local need and determining the priorities for investment, including the commissioning of community dental services.

■ Dental Services: Disability

Helen Maguire:

[\[37086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (a) what percentage of NHS dental appointments for people with disabilities were (i) missed, (ii) cancelled and (iii) delayed in the year 2024 and (b) if he will provide comparative figures for the same year on these metrics for non-disabled people that used NHS dental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Data is not held on the percentage of National Health Service dental appointments that were missed, cancelled or delayed. The Government recognises that certain groups of patients such as people with disabilities may find it difficult to access dental care. We are committed to ensuring NHS dental services are available to all who need them.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England.

■ Dental Services: Eastleigh**Liz Jarvis:**[\[36819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dental patients in Eastleigh constituency will benefit from the 700,000 extra urgent appointments.

Stephen Kinnock:

We will deliver 700,000 extra urgent dental appointments per year, with integrated care boards (ICBs) asked to start making extra appointments available from April 2025. The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including National Health Service dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to ICBs across England. Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB, which includes Eastleigh constituency, is expected to deliver 30,032 additional urgent dental appointments.

The urgent appointments will be available to NHS patients experiencing painful oral health issues, such as infections, abscesses, or cracked or broken teeth. Patients can contact their usual dental practice or call NHS 111 if they do not have a regular dentist or need help out-of-hours.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Carers**Chris Bloore:**[\[33187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department offers (a) paid time off work and (b) other support to employees who become kinship carers.

Karin Smyth:

We do not have a policy which explicitly covers paid time off work and other support to employees who become kinship carers. Employees can take time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant or are able to request other special leave, paid and unpaid, as well as annual and flexi leave as required to support them when they become a kinship carer. Employees are also able to request flexible working to support both short term and longer-term arrangements.

As with all requests for time off under our policies, each case is taken on a case-by-case basis, and consideration to grant requests, either paid or unpaid, taken in line with our provisions.

■ Dyslexia: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[36577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for dyslexia assessments in Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

Data on waiting times for dyslexia assessments is not held centrally. Assessments for dyslexia in children are provided by an educational psychologist or an appropriately qualified specialist dyslexia teacher. If a parent thinks their child may be dyslexic, as a first step they should speak to their child's teacher or their school's special educational needs co-ordinator about their concerns. The school may be able to offer additional support to help the child if necessary. The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Education on policies relating to children with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

Adults who wish to be assessed for dyslexia are advised to contact a local or national dyslexia association for advice. Further information on dyslexia assessments is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/diagnosis/>

■ Eyesight: Hereditary Diseases

Jim Shannon:

[\[34840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the UK have genetic eye conditions impacting the AIPL1 gene.

Ashley Dalton:

Mutations in the AIPL1 gene can cause retinal disorders. Genetic causes of retinal disorders are tested for by R32 testing that is available nationally via the National Genomic Test Directory for any patient that meets the eligibility criteria. R32 tests for 280 genes. There have been 11 individuals reported with causative variants in the AIPL1 gene from over 4000 tests. This data represents testing of patients from England only as NHS England does not hold this information for devolved nations.

This number also does not capture the number of individuals identified by cascade testing following the identification of AIPL1 causative variants through an R32 test of a family member. Cascade testing is the process of informing and testing family members for a genetic condition discovered within the family.

■ Health Services: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[32208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of making the NHS Accessible Information Standard mandatory in all NHS England health and social care settings on the ability of (a) deaf and (b) visually impaired people to access healthcare.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[32209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of expediting the implementation of section 95 of the Health and Care Act 2022 on the rights of disabled people.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 27 February 2025]: Following commencement of the regulations made under the Health and Care Act 2022, new arrangements will come into effect to make information standards mandatory. Existing standards will need to go through a new process to become mandatory, and once a standard becomes mandatory, organisations will be expected to comply. The timing for the Accessible Information Standard will be considered along with those of the other existing standards. These arrangements are expected to happen this year, once the regulations have been approved by Parliament.

The intent of making information standards mandatory is to improve the rigour of standards, and the consistency of their application. The implementation of Section 95 should have a beneficial impact on those using services, by contributing to the effective operation of the health and care sector. The Accessible Information Standard is intended to improve the accessibility of information, while other standards often specify the technical basis for ensuring that data flows through the system in a usable and standardised form, improving the quality of care and patient outcomes. Information standards do not affect people's rights.

NHS England commissioned the North of England Commissioning Support Unit to review compliance with the Accessible Information Standard, prior to reviewing the standard. Their findings matched the independent reviews undertaken by Sign Health and Healthwatch, that implementation was inconsistent. NHS England has considered how to strengthen compliance with the standard, including the requirement to identify local implementation leads, and the development and testing of a self-assessment framework.

■ Health Services: Rehabilitation

Max Wilkinson:

[\[36826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of community rehabilitation services on (a) people's well-being and (b) the prevention of ill-health.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government understands the importance of having effective rehabilitation services available to help people recover. By providing an alternative to hospital or care home admission, community rehabilitation supports the Government's shift from hospital to home and from sickness to prevention.

Successful intermediate care and reablement support services are better for service users, promoting faster recovery, improving independence, reducing risk of physical

deconditioning associated with long stays in hospital, and providing a joined-up experience of health and care.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Joe Robertson:

[\[33275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of what the NHS waiting list will be in (a) 12 months, (b) two years, (c) three years and (d) by the end of the Parliament.

Karin Smyth:

Projected estimates of National Health Service waiting list size are currently being refined. We have delivered a reduction in the list of 160,000 pathways, as well as provision of over two million extra appointments between July and November 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, seven months ahead of schedule. This includes operations, consultations, diagnostic tests, and treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy and endoscopy.

As set out in the Plan for Change, we will ensure 92% of patients return to waiting no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment by March 2029; and the Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, sets out an expectation that national performance will increase from 58% as of December 2024 to 65% by March 2026, with every trust expected to deliver a minimum 5 percentage point improvement by March 2026.

■ Health: Screening

Joe Robertson:

[\[36982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the NHS Health Check digitisation (a) reaches all communities equitably and (b) does not exacerbate health inequalities for dementia.

Ashley Dalton:

The NHS Health Check Online service is being developed to improve access and engagement with the cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention programme by enabling people to take a check at home, at a time convenient to them. The digital service will complement the face-to-face programme and is based on extensive user research and behavioural insight to ensure the service meets user needs.

Increasing uptake in the NHS Health Check Programme through the new online service, for those who are willing and able to do so, will free up primary care capacity to target resources towards underserved groups at the highest risk of CVD.

A six-month pilot in three local authorities will begin from spring 2025, and, as part of the independent evaluation, we will examine the impact on health inequalities. The results of this will inform the development and rollout of the online service in future.

The online service will follow the same assessments and criteria as the current service, signposting people to behavioural support, such as smoking cessation, and

clinical management where appropriate. This includes making people aware of the signs and symptoms of dementia and being signposted to memory services as appropriate.

■ Heroin: Rehabilitation

Ben Maguire:

[\[36030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of patient outcomes for those undergoing heroin detoxification using Buvidal compared to Methadone.

Ashley Dalton:

No assessment has been made on patient outcomes for those undergoing heroin detoxification using buprenorphine long-acting injection, branded Buvidal, compared to methadone specifically. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is currently undertaking analysis of National Drug Treatment Monitoring System data to look at the comparative outcomes between Buvidal and other opioid substitution treatment medicines generally, not just methadone. This work is currently incomplete.

Treatment decisions are taken between a person and their clinician to ensure the right option for them, and long-acting injectable buprenorphine, branded as Buvidal, oral buprenorphine, and methadone should be offered as part of a package of care, alongside the usual talking therapies and recovery support that can help people stay off drugs. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning drug and alcohol services according to local need, and this includes the provision of buprenorphine long-acting injections.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[37036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take with community care providers to help reduce hospital discharge waiting times.

Stephen Kinnock:

We will tackle delayed discharges by developing local partnerships between the National Health Service and social care, and making sure people get the right support to return home.

Every acute hospital trust has access to a care transfer hub. These hubs bring together professionals across health, social care and other partners, including community providers, to manage discharges for people with more complex needs.

We have published Neighbourhood Health Guidelines to help local health and care systems progress neighbourhood health in 2025/26. Integrated intermediate care supports hospital discharge and is a core component that we are asking systems to focus on this year. Close partnership working between adult social care, the NHS and other community partners is vital to the successful delivery of intermediate care.

■ Huntington's Disease: Health Services

Monica Harding: [\[36978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he (a) has taken and (b) is taking to (i) increase and (ii) improve the availability of specialist clinical provision for people with Huntington's Disease.

Monica Harding: [\[36979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of integrated care boards have specialist clinicians for Huntington's Disease; and whether Surrey Heartlands ICB has specialist clinicians for Huntington's Disease.

Monica Harding: [\[36983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to establish a specialist Huntington's Disease Centre in Surrey.

Ashley Dalton:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: Working under the UK Rare Diseases Framework, the Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as Huntington's Disease.

Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board (ICB) commissions a specialist service that provides support to people with Huntington's Disease. The service works closely with the Huntington's Disease clinic at St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. As of November 2024, there are 18 full time equivalent neurology consultants employed in National Health Service trusts within the Surrey Heartlands ICB region. This is seven more than a year previously.

At the national level, there are several initiatives supporting service improvement and better care for patients with neurological conditions, including those with Huntington's disease, such as the RightCare Progressive Neurological Conditions Toolkit and the Getting It Right First Time Programme for Neurology. NHS England has also established a Neurology Transformation Programme, a multi-year, clinically led programme to develop a new model of integrated care for neurology services. The National Neurosciences Advisory Group developed clinical pathways for adults with movement disorders, including Huntington's disease. This is being used to inform the proposed changes to the neurology service model, which will in turn be used to revise the service specification for neurology.

■ Huntington's Disease: Medical Treatments and Research

Monica Harding: [\[36985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve treatment outcomes for people with Huntington's Disease; and what research his Department is supporting into that disease.

Ashley Dalton:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: Working under the UK Rare Diseases Framework, the Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as Huntington's Disease. One of the priorities of the Framework is improving access to specialist care, treatment and drugs. In England, we published the 2025 Rare Diseases Action Plan on 28 February 2025, which provides further information.

The Department funds research into Huntington's disease via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes high quality funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including Huntington's disease. For example, the NIHR's UCL Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) supported the TRACK-HD study. This identified biomarkers for Huntington's disease and generated a database of brain scans available to scientists and led to the development of a rating scale to measure disease progression. BRC-funded researchers have also developed the first human test for the protein, which has now been validated and used as an endpoint in clinical trials.

■ Injuries: Social Media**Max Wilkinson:**[\[34016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an estimate of the cost to the NHS from injuries sustained from following social media trends.

Karin Smyth:

Under the Online Safety Act, providers will need to take steps to protect children from encountering harmful content. This includes providing age-appropriate access to priority content, which includes content encouraging dangerous stunts and challenges. We do not currently hold an estimate of the cost to the National Health Service of injuries sustained from social media trends.

■ Life Sciences: Finance**Clive Jones:**[\[R\] \[36927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle potential barriers to investment for the life science industry; and whether his Department is taking steps to improve partnerships between the NHS and the life science industry in the context of cancer care.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is committed to supporting the United Kingdom's vibrant life sciences sector, which contributes £108 billion to the economy and approximately 300,000 jobs nationwide. A new Life Sciences Sector Plan, part of the upcoming Industrial Strategy, is due to be published in late spring 2025, and will set out a comprehensive plan for how we will drive up investment.

In parallel, we continue to deliver our strategic partnership with BioNTech, which aims to provide up to 10,000 patients with personalised immunotherapies by 2030.

BioNTech and its partners, supported by the Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad, are currently running 12 clinical trials in the UK, with over 50 trial sites covering the country.

We have also co-funded £9 million to the MANIFEST cancer immunotherapy platform consortium composed of academia, the National Health Service and industry partners, to expand UK immunotherapy research and development capabilities and support better targeting and improved efficacy of treatments.

■ **Medical Records: Vaccination**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[36737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on joining up NHS records so a patient's vaccination history is recorded all in one place.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS England has been establishing the digital infrastructure required to maintain a consistent view of vaccination status between both individuals and healthcare providers. This includes data sharing across general practice, National Health Service trusts, community pharmacies and school-aged immunisation services.

The COVID-19 vaccination campaigns have demonstrated effective sharing of vaccination data across the NHS vaccination network. Effective data sharing across general practice, maternity services and targeted community pharmacies has since helped mobilise the delivery of respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programmes for older adults and pregnant women, to protect newborn babies, which were introduced in September 2024. Progress has also been made in the sharing of pertussis vaccination events delivered in maternity services, to protect babies from whooping cough.

NHS England continues to extend this capability across wider NHS vaccinations, ensuring that vaccination records are consistently visible to individuals and vaccination providers.

Work is also underway to improve the public's vaccination experience, via the NHS app. This service will use this same digital infrastructure to help individuals understand which vaccinations they are eligible for, those they've already had, as well as how and where to access them.

■ **Memory Clinics: Waiting Lists**

Joe Robertson:

[\[36541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time from referral to diagnosis has been for people being referred to memory assessment services in the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

A timely diagnosis is vital to ensuring that a person with dementia can access the advice, information, care, and support that can help them to live well and remain independent for as long as possible.

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services, including the detection and diagnosis of dementia, and will support the National Health Service to increase capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services. The Government and NHS England remain committed to recovering the dementia diagnosis rate to the national ambition of 66.7%.

The Dementia Care Pathway: Full Implementation Guidance, commissioned by NHS England, outlines the dementia care pathway and associated benchmarks to support improvements in the delivery and quality of care and support, for people living with dementia and their families and carers. The guide showcases good-practice examples of services that have successfully reduced their waiting times. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/nccmh/dementia/nccmh-dementia-care-pathway-full-implementation-guidance.pdf>

To support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rates and implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, NHS England has developed a dashboard for management information purposes. The aim is to support commissioners and providers of memory services with appropriate data and enable targeted support where needed.

■ Mental Health Services: Children

Blake Stephenson: [36503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of mental health services for children in Bedfordshire.

Blake Stephenson: [36504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to support mental health services for children in Bedfordshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that waits for children and young people's (CYP) mental health services are far too long, including in Bedfordshire. That is why the NHS planning guidance for 2025/26 makes clear that one of the priorities for children's mental health services is to reduce inequalities in access to CYP mental health services.

The Government will also recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across children and adult mental health services and provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school through expanding Mental Health Support Teams, so every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate.

Early intervention and prevention support in the community is vital. That is why we are providing £7 million of funding to extend support for 24 Early Support Hubs that have a track record of helping thousands of young people in their community.

■ **Mental Health Services: Schools**

Sarah Champion:

[\[36393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to (a) formally recognise accredited school-based counsellors as part of the children's mental health workforce and (b) integrate those counsellors into (i) NHS and (ii) education-based mental health services.

Stephen Kinnock:

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future, we will introduce access to a specialist mental health professional in every school, through expanding NHS-funded mental health support teams, so that every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate. We are working with our colleagues at NHS England and the Department for Education to consider options to deliver this commitment.

Department for Education guidance encourages mental health support teams to work with other existing professionals, such as school or college-based counsellors, educational psychologists, school nurses, pastoral care, educational welfare officers, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, local authority provision, primary care, and NHS children and young people's mental health services.

It is important for schools to have the freedom to decide what support to offer to pupils based on their needs, drawing on an evidence base of effective practice. This support can include counselling, which can be an effective part of a whole school approach. However, counselling is not suitable for all needs and many pupils also benefit from other in-school support, including from trained pastoral staff and educational psychologists.

In summer 2025, we will publish a refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade and treat patients on time again. We will ensure the NHS has the right people, in the right places, with the right skills to deliver the care patients need when they need it.

■ **Mentally Disordered Offenders: Crimes of Violence**

James McMurdock:

[\[36348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 33841 on Mentally Disordered Offenders: Crimes of Violence, what (a) practical and (b) legal issues there are with linking medical records with justice datasets.

Karin Smyth:

Effectively and securely linking health and non-health data is critical to delivering the Government's health and wider missions.

Health and justice data can be linked in specific circumstances; the National Health Service already shares some data with the Ministry of Justice as part of the latter's Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD) programme. The programme uses de-identified data held in a Secure Data Environment. More information on BOLD is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-better-outcomes-through-linked-data-bold/ministry-of-justice-better-outcomes-through-linked-data-bold>

Practical issues to sharing health data include how patient information can be stored and accessed safely. The Department of Health and Social Care and the National Health Service in England is moving to a system of 'data access as default' for secondary data uses, through the implementation of Secure Data Environments. These platforms allow approved users to analyse data without it having to leave the environment.

The chief legal issue is usually the absence of an appropriate basis for sharing: the main ones are explicit consent, a statutory requirement, or an overriding public interest. The Department of Health and Social Care is shortly to review the legislation relating to the sharing of patient data for research and planning and other secondary purposes, to ensure it supports sharing and access, where appropriate safeguards are in place.

■ Mirtazapine

Samantha Niblett:

[38245]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is available to patients where tapering off of Mirtazapine has been unsuccessful and subsequently they find themselves taking a drug that they know is causing them harm.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England encourages integrated care boards (ICBs) to address inappropriate antidepressant prescribing and to consider commissioning services for patients wishing to reduce or stop prescribed medicines that can cause dependence and withdrawal.

In March 2023, NHS England published Optimising personalised care for adults prescribed medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms: Framework for action for ICBs and primary care. The framework includes actions, resources and case studies to help systems develop plans that can support people who are taking medicines associated with dependence and withdrawal symptoms. The framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/optimising-personalised-care-for-adults-prescribed-medicines-associated-with-dependence-or-withdrawal-symptoms/>

ICBs are responsible for planning health services for their local population. This includes consideration of services for patients taking medicines associated with dependence and withdrawal symptoms based on local population needs.

An increasing number of non-pharmacological alternatives have become available on the National Health Service, including significant investment in NHS Talking Therapies for common conditions like anxiety and depression, with 1.26 million referrals starting a course of treatment in 2023/24. There has also been considerable investment in social prescribing, which can help people with mental health problems, and there are now over 3700 full-time equivalent trained social prescribing link workers, and over 2.5 million people have been referred to a social prescribing link worker.

Additionally, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published guidelines, Medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms: safe prescribing and withdrawal management for adults, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG215>

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is currently leading a project to improve the information supplied with dependency-forming medicines. The project aims to improve risk minimisation measures and better inform and educate healthcare professionals and patients about the risk of dependence, addiction, tolerance and withdrawal related to a wide range of medicines including antidepressants in the United Kingdom.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Olly Glover:

[36302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the public health risks associated with high levels of nitrogen oxide pollution from diesel vehicles.

Ashley Dalton:

Despite significant progress, air pollution remains a significant environmental threat to human health. Leading our Health Mission, the Department of Health and Social Care is working across Government, including with the Department for Transport, to promote a reduction in the health harms of air pollution.

Tackling the public health risks associated with air pollution involves reducing concentrations of pollutants where people live, work and play. Local authorities have an important role in identifying and implementing the local measures needed to achieve legal air quality limits and clean up the air we breathe. The NO2 programme has provided £575 million to support local authorities to address nitrogen dioxide pollution and achieve compliance with legal limits in the shortest possible time, supporting measures such as Clean Air Zones, traffic management improvements and vehicle upgrade schemes, and recently agreeing Greater Manchester's £86 million Clean Air Plan.

■ Myasthenia Gravis: Medical Treatments

Sadik Al-Hassan:

[\[37488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for when patients with Myasthenia Gravis will have access to recently licenced products.

Karin Smyth:

On 7 March 2024, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved the medicine rozanolixizumab, marketed as Rystiggo, to treat adults with generalised myasthenia gravis.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) evaluates all new licensed medicines and makes recommendations for the National Health Service on whether they should be routinely funded by the NHS based on their clinical and cost effectiveness. NICE aims to publish guidance as close as possible to the time of licensing.

NICE published draft guidance on the use of rozanolixizumab for consultation in September 2024 and was unable to recommend it as a clinically and cost-effective use of NHS resources due to uncertainties in the long-term effectiveness of the treatment, as well as uncertainties in the economic model and the cost-effectiveness at the price proposed by the company. NICE has not yet published final guidance, and it will keep stakeholders informed about next steps as soon as possible.

■ NHS England: Pay

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2025 to Question 27118 on NHS England: Pay, whether the annual salary of the Regional Director of NHS East of England is within the maximum exception zone for the salary band.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: The Regional Director of NHS East of England is not remunerated within the maximum exception zone for the salary band.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2025 to Question 27118 on NHS England: Pay, whether the Strategy Director of NHS East of England is remunerated with an annual salary within the maximum exception zone salary band.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: The Strategy Director of NHS East of England is remunerated within the maximum exception zone salary band.

■ NHS: Standards

Helen Morgan:

[\[33611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) improve the quality of administrative tasks within the NHS and (b) reduce the number of people receiving an invitation to an appointment after the date it is supposed to have taken place.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 March 2025]: The Government is putting patients first, making sure they are seen as quickly as possible and have the best possible experience, which includes receiving timely communication and experiencing high quality administration.

The Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025 as part of the Government's Plan for Change, sets out the reform we will deliver to reduce waiting times and improve experience of care. This will be patient-led and co-developed with people that use the National Health Service. We will work with patients, carers, and their representatives to target the things that matter most and will publish minimum standards patients should expect to experience.

We are reforming the digital landscape to improve productivity, communication, and offer greater convenience for NHS service users, including changing the NHS App to make it easier and more helpful for patients to access information about their appointments. By the end of March 2025, 85% of acute trusts will allow patients to view appointment information via the NHS App if they wish, reducing reliance on physical letters. We will also provide high quality, non-digital options for those who want and need them.

The Government is also reducing the burden of administrative tasks in the NHS. On Friday 4 October 2024, the Government and NHS England launched a Red Tape Challenge to address bureaucracy between primary and secondary care and give our health professionals back time to do what they do best. The challenge is being led by NHS England leaders, Medical Director for Primary Care, Dr Claire Fuller, and Medical Director for Secondary Care and Quality, Stella Vig.

■ Obesity: Children

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[36173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle childhood obesity in Fylde.

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[36186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of obesity-related illnesses on health services in (a) Fylde and (b) Lancashire.

Ashley Dalton:

The prevention of ill health is a clear priority for the Government and the cornerstone of this is supporting children to live healthier lives. Officials in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Northwest regional team prioritise tackling obesity and support children and young people to lead a healthier lifestyle. The Government has: laid secondary legislation to restrict advertisements of less healthy food and drink to children on TV and online from 1 October 2025; announced changes to the planning framework for fast food outlets near schools; and is committed to banning the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children under 16 years old.

Examples of national schemes in Lancashire include: supporting weight management services to help families living with obesity, including the CHANGE weight management service in Fylde; Diabetes and Complications of Excessive Weight Service in NHS England's Royal Preston Hospital, using a holistic approach to treating conditions related to obesity in children and young people; and 14 schools offering school breakfast clubs, as part of the Department for Education's early adaptors programme, with the aim of providing healthy, varied and nutritious breakfasts.

In March 2023, Lancashire County Council published a report on creating healthier weight environments in Lancashire and subsequently established Healthy Hearts as one of three priorities to narrow the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy between local areas by 2030. The report is available at the following link:

https://foodactive.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Creating-Healthier-Weight-Environments-in-Lancashire-Mar23_Final.pdf

A two-year programme of work is being established to strengthen existing activities underway across the county and contribute to improving the food environment.

■ Semaglutide**Gregory Stafford:****[37512]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost to the public purse was of prescribing Ozempic to NHS patients without a diagnosis of diabetes, heart disease or kidney disease in 2024-25.

Karin Smyth:

Information is not collected on the clinical condition a medicine is prescribed for. Ozempic is only licenced for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and guidance is clear that medications licensed to treat type 2 diabetes should not be prescribed for weight loss. The General Pharmaceutical Council, General Medical Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland have issued a joint statement stressing the importance of health and care professionals meeting regulatory standards in relation to these medicines.

■ Social Services

Dr Luke Evans: [\[30200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many times the Minister for Care has met with leadership at the Care Quality Commission to discuss social care provision since July 2024.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[30201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with leadership at the Care Quality Commission on ensuring concerns raised regarding elderly care homes are dealt with appropriately.

Stephen Kinnock:

Ministers regularly meets with external stakeholders and key organisations to discuss a variety of issues, including but not limited to social care provision. I met with the Care Quality Commission on Friday 14 March 2025.

HOME OFFICE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Minimum Unit Prices

Will Stone: [\[36818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has received on the potential merits of Minimum Unit Pricing in England; and whether she plans to introduce the policy in England this Parliament.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Under our Health Mission, this government is committed to prioritising public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives.

We are continuing to work closely across government to better understand what can be done to address the drivers of alcohol-related harms.

■ Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare

Mr Richard Holden: [\[37318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many animals were housed in UK (a) laboratories, (b) breeding centres and (c) universities but not used in scientific procedures in 2023; and how many animals were not used in scientific procedures and euthanised in 2023.

Dan Jarvis:

Cryptoassets exchanges, like all businesses who launder funds, can be prosecuted under the money laundering offences in Part 7 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and fined accordingly. In April 2024, new powers came into force to enable law enforcement to more effectively investigate, seize, and recover the proceeds of crime within the cryptoasset ecosystem.

Since 2020, businesses providing cryptoasset services that fall under the scope of the [Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds \(Information on the Payer\) Regulations 2017](#) (MLRs) in the United Kingdom have also been required to register with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and comply with the requirements of the regulations. They must also comply with the UK sanctions regime and are obliged to report any breach of these regimes to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI). They should further consider their obligation to submit a suspicious activity report (SAR) to the UK Financial Intelligence Unit.

More widely, the government has bolstered law enforcement's capacity and capability to tackle money laundering through cryptoassets. This includes new specialist capability in the NCA and partner agencies, funding public-private crypto collaboration teams in police forces and Regional Organised Crime Units, and the development of a multi-agency operational crypto cell to ensure that knowledge and abilities in investigating cryptoassets are pooled together and all available tools and powers are exploited efficiently.

■ **Animal Experiments: Disclosure of Information**

Perran Moon: [\[37917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase the (a) transparency and (b) accountability of animal testing facilities.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government publishes a detailed Operational Guidance document on how the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 is administered and enforced and also a Code of Practice for care and accommodation requirements.

An annual statistics publication provides full details on the number of licensed procedures carried out, the species of animals and the purposes for which the procedures have been undertaken.

The Animals in Science Regulator publishes an annual report which contains information on licensing, the audit programme, and management of non-compliance.

■ **British Nationality**

Sir John Hayes: [\[37112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many British citizens gave up their citizenship in each of the last 10 years.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes information on British Citizenship in the [Immigration system statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), including annual figures on granted and refused renunciations of British nationality (see Table Cit_05 of the [Citizenship data tables](#)).

Information is available up to 2023. Data for 2024 is due to be published in May 2025. Details on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the ‘ [Research and statistics calendar](#) ’.

Sir John Hayes:

[37114]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many British citizens had their citizenship revoked in each of the last 10 years.

Dan Jarvis:

The British Nationality Act 1981 provides the Secretary of State with powers to deprive a person of citizenship status only under the circumstances set out at sections 40(2) and 40(3) of the Act. Section 40(2) allows the Secretary of State to deprive any person of British citizenship, should they deem it conducive to the public good to do so.

Detail on the numbers of conducive deprivation orders made under Section 40(2) of the 1981 British Nationality Act, are published in the Government Transparency Report: Disruptive and Investigatory Powers. Eight reports have been published to date providing the number of deprivations of citizenship orders made up until the end of 2023 and can be found at the below:

YEAR	SOURCE AND LINK
2015	HM government transparency report 2015: disruptive and investigatory powers
2017	Disruptive and investigatory powers: HM government transparency report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
2018	Disruptive and investigatory powers: transparency report 2018 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
2018/19	Transparency report: disruptive
2020	Disruptive powers 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
2021	Counter-terrorism disruptive powers report 2021 - GOV.UK
2022	Counter-terrorism disruptive powers report 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
2023	Counter-terrorism disruptive powers report 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Section 40(3) of the 1981 British Nationality Act, allows for deprivation of citizenship where fraud, false representation or concealment of material facts have been used to obtain British citizenship. Since August 2020 these figures have been published via the Transparency report on asylum data, which can be found using the link below:

[Immigration and protection data: Q3 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

■ Carbon Monoxide: Poisoning

Paul Davies: [\[37061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the Fire Kills campaign to raise awareness of fatal carbon monoxide poisoning.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office's Fire Kills campaign raises awareness of fire safety advice and seeks to educate people on how to keep themselves and those they care for safe from the risks of fire in the home.

The campaign supports fire and rescue authorities in delivering their statutory duty to promote fire safety through the provision of fire safety resources, materials and campaign initiatives.

Other bodies, such as the Gas Safe Register promote gas safety messages for the public.

■ China and Hong Kong: Visas

Luke Taylor: [\[36231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether additional vetting will be implemented for diplomatic visas issued to PRC and HKSAR applicants, specifically screening for connections to transnational repression activities.

Seema Malhotra:

All visa applications are subject to a number of background checks.

Any attempt by any foreign state to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK will not be tolerated. We have a broad suite of powers to counter foreign interference, including those actions which amount to transnational repression. We will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to keep people safe.

■ Crime Prevention

Jas Athwal: [\[36947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help increase interagency working between (a) local authorities, (b) social services and the (c) police to help prevent crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government recognises the vital role that interagency working plays in helping to prevent crime. We have committed to the creation of a new Young Futures

Programme, which will embed partnership principles in a network of new Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships.

Prevention Partnerships will drive local multi-agency partnership working, and encourage police, local authorities and other agencies to work in partnership to reduce a young person's likelihood of becoming involved in crime. This will include effective information sharing between agencies and improved consistency in joined up-working.

Driving down drug-related crime is another key prevention strand of our work. We ensure join-up at a local level through over 100 Combating Drugs Partnerships, which are multi-agency forums that bring together a range of partners at the local level including local authorities, health and police to address drug use and harms.

■ Cryptocurrencies: Crime

Mark Pritchard:

[\[36621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will introduce increased criminal sanctions for crypto exchange companies who (a) launder stolen crypto currency and (b) allow (i) criminal gangs and (ii) hostile states to trade cryptocurrencies for other assets.

Dan Jarvis:

Cryptoassets exchanges, like all businesses who launder funds, can be prosecuted under the money laundering offences in Part 7 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and fined accordingly. In April 2024, new powers came into force to enable law enforcement to more effectively investigate, seize, and recover the proceeds of crime within the cryptoasset ecosystem.

Since 2020, businesses providing cryptoasset services that fall under the scope of the [Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds \(Information on the Payer\) Regulations 2017](#) (MLRs) in the United Kingdom have also been required to register with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and comply with the requirements of the regulations. They must also comply with the UK sanctions regime and are obliged to report any breach of these regimes to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI). They should further consider their obligation to submit a suspicious activity report (SAR) to the UK Financial Intelligence Unit.

More widely, the government has bolstered law enforcement's capacity and capability to tackle money laundering through cryptoassets. This includes new specialist capability in the NCA and partner agencies, funding public-private crypto collaboration teams in police forces and Regional Organised Crime Units, and the development of a multi-agency operational crypto cell to ensure that knowledge and abilities in investigating cryptoassets are pooled together and all available tools and powers are exploited efficiently.

■ Cryptography: Apple**Edward Morello:** [\[37000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential risks to UK users of Apple's removal of its advanced data protection feature.

Edward Morello: [\[37001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on requiring technology companies to implement backdoors into encrypted services.

Dan Jarvis:

I refer the Hon. Member to the response given to UIN 33378 answered on 3rd March 2025.

■ Cybersecurity**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[37434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will (a) make an assessment of and (b) have discussions with the National Cyber Security Centre on the potential impact of the decision of Apple to discontinue the advanced data protection facility in the UK on (i) cybersecurity for (A) individuals and (B) companies and (ii) UK-US cybersecurity international relations.

Dan Jarvis:

I refer the Honourable Member to the response given to UIN 33378 answered on 3rd March 2025.

The government regularly engages with the NCSC, as the national technical authority for cyber security, for its expert advice on a range of cyber security matters to help make the UK the safest place to live and work online.

■ Defending Democracy Taskforce**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to increase the transparency of the work of the Defending Democracy Taskforce.

Dan Jarvis:

The Defending Democracy Taskforce continues to drive forward a programme of work to address the full range of threats to our democracy.

I will, as Chair of the Taskforce, update Parliament in due course particularly on the work of the Taskforce to tackle harassment and intimidation.

I am also due to give oral evidence to the Joint Committee on National Security Strategy later this month.

■ Electronic Travel Authorisations: Internet**Jim Shannon:**[\[37155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve the accessibility of online electronic travel authorisations for elderly people.

Seema Malhotra:

The ETA application process is quick, light touch and user friendly. Although applications can only be made via the app or internet, applicants are free to ask the assistance of a friend or relative to make an application on their behalf. We regularly review our online application processes to ensure that they are in line with accessibility and usability standards, and provide public information videos on how to apply.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Workplace Pensions**Josh Babarinde:**[\[36864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) the Government Actuary Department and (b) fire service pension providers have adequate tools to calculate pension entitlements for retired fire service workers.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office works closely with the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) to ensure that all actuarial advice, guidance and tools provided to Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) actively reflect changes to the firefighters' pension schemes and regulations.

GAD, in partnership with the Home Office, support FRAs by providing appropriate actuarial guidance to pensions administrators, ensuring they have the means to accurately calculate pension entitlements for retired firefighters, where necessary.

While the Home Office has responsibility for overarching policy and legislative changes to the firefighters' pension scheme regulations, the firefighters' pension scheme is locally administered by each individual FRA.

■ Home Office: Secondment**Jon Trickett:**[\[36601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of their Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not have any seconded staff from these organisations.

■ Human Trafficking: Cambridgeshire

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2025 to Question 36472 on Human Trafficking: Cambridgeshire, if she will publish a breakdown of the nationality of all National Referral Mechanism referrals between 2016 and 2024.

Jess Phillips:

The Home Office publishes National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and Duty to Notify data on a quarterly basis on gov.uk and the National Crime Agencies website.

The Home office have been publishing NRM data since 2019, with the NCA publishing this previously. The Home Office also publish disaggregated data on the UK Data Service which goes back to 2014 with this data included.

This Government has been clear that identifying and supporting victims effectively is a key priority - that is why we have invested in 200 new decision makers to clear the backlog of cases and reduce wait times for victims.

■ Immigration

Alex Burghart: [\[38095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people residing in the UK have indefinite leave to remain.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes statistics relating to indefinite leave to remain in the [Immigration system statistics](#) publication.

Data on grants and refusals of settlement can be found in the [Settlement data tables](#). The latest data relates up to the end of 2024.

■ Immigration: Inspections

Chris Law: [\[37195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK Visas and Immigration Compliance Unit inspections were carried out in each of the last three years in (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales, and (d) Northern Ireland.

Seema Malhotra:

The information requested is not currently available from published statistics, and the relevant data could only be collated and verified for the purpose of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

■ Immigration: Ukraine

Jas Athwal:

[\[37947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of enabling Ukrainian refugees who are living in the UK to obtain the right to remain.

Seema Malhotra:

The Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme opened to applications on 4 February 2025, which enables Ukrainians in the UK under the Ukraine visa schemes to apply for a further 18 months' temporary permission to remain in the UK.

We recognise the Ukrainian government's desire for the future return of its citizens to Ukraine to assist in the rebuilding of the country. It is important our approach respects these wishes.

This is why the temporary sanctuary Ukraine visa Schemes do not lead to settlement in the UK. We continue to keep the Ukraine Schemes under consistent review in line with developments in the ongoing war.

There are other routes available for those who wish to settle in the UK permanently, if they meet the requirements.

■ Lead: Theft

Sir John Hayes:

[\[36582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support police forces to prevent lead theft in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) other rural areas.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Theft, including the theft of lead, is a deeply damaging crime and this Government recognises the distress and disruption it can cause, not only to businesses, but also to local communities and critical infrastructure.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 was introduced to reduce metal theft by strengthening regulation of the scrap metal industry. The Act requires scrap metal dealers to obtain a licence from their local authority and to verify the identity of those selling the scrap metal; it also bans dealers from paying cash.

Following the introduction of the Act, there was an overall downward trend in metal-related theft offences. The latest figures for the year ending March 2024 are 64% lower than in the previous year.

Furthermore, the sentencing guidelines on theft have been amended to highlight that where theft is of heritage assets or causes disruption to infrastructure, this should be taken into account when assessing the harm.

Historic England is leading on a number of initiatives to tackle heritage crime, particularly theft from church roofs and other buildings primarily in rural locations, and the Home Office and National Police Chiefs' Council are continuing to work closely with them.

■ Migrant Workers: Civil Servants**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[37534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made assessment of the potential merits of waiving the Skilled Worker Visa sponsorship salary threshold requirements for civil servants.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government keeps all aspects of the immigration system under regular review, and will set out our policies in each relevant area in the upcoming Immigration White Paper.

■ Resettlement: Chagossians**Wendy Morton:** [\[37161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has allocated funding to support the (a) resettlement and (b) integration of Chagossians in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

The British nationality route for those of Chagossian decent allows individuals to become British citizens and to build their future in the UK, should they wish to, with the full range of rights and entitlements afforded to any other British citizen.

The Home Office has made funding available to cover costs incurred by local authorities providing statutory support to newly arrived Chagossian British citizens.

■ Stop and Search: Ethnic Groups**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[36767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle racial disparities in drug-related stop and search rates.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Disparity in the use of stop and search has reduced significantly in the past five years, but there is still far more work to do. In the year to March 2024, black people were 3.5 times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched on suspicion of carrying drugs. The disparity rate for stop and search as whole (including searches for weapons, stolen goods, etc) is 3.7.

That is why the Government backs the National Police Chief's Council's Police Race Action Plan. The Plan aims to foster an anti-racist culture, values and behaviours within policing, which will inform all operational policing practice, improving experiences and outcomes for black people.

On stop and search in particular, the Plan commits chief constables to identifying and addressing stop and search disparities, particularly on drugs searches and the searches of children.

I will be working with police leaders to ensure the aims of the plan are adopted and embedded in all forces.

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers

Chris Law: [\[37192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will have discussions with the Seasonal Worker Interest Group on the welfare of workers on seasonal worker visas.

Chris Law: [\[37196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to formally respond to the Worker Support Centre Annual Report 2024, published on 14 February 2025.

Chris Law: [\[37197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to make an assessment of the potential impact of the Seasonal Worker visa scheme on recent trends in the level of worker exploitation.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office keeps all aspects of the Seasonal Worker route under close and ongoing review, including the welfare of participating workers. The Government has noted the contents of the Worker Support Centre Annual Review 2024 and will give due consideration to the issues raised when reviewing the Seasonal Worker route.

A key objective of the route is to ensure that overseas workers are protected against modern slavery and other labour abuses. The sponsor licence regime places a broad range of responsibilities on Scheme Operators to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are protected.

Ministers will continue to engage with a range of interested parties on these issues, including the Seasonal Worker Interest Group.

■ Visas: Ukraine

Brian Mathew: [\[36935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to (a) simplify the process and (b) support people making applications for visa extensions for Ukrainian refugees.

Seema Malhotra:

The Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme opened to applications on 4 February 2025, which enables Ukrainians in the UK under the Ukraine visa schemes to apply for a further 18 months' temporary permission to remain in the UK. Further information on eligibility and application processes is available at [Applying to the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme - GOV.UK](#).

Applicants who still have their BRP may be able to reuse previously submitted biometrics (fingerprint and photograph) and may not need to attend a UK Visas and Citizenship Application (UKVCAS) service point. Applicants that apply before their current permission expires will retain the conditions of their current visa whilst their

application is under consideration, and these conditions are demonstrated on an applicant's eVisa.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliament: Food

Sir John Hayes:

[\[36358\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, what proportion of food procured by the Houses of Parliament is sourced in the UK.

Nick Smith:

The Commission is unable to give the exact proportion of procured food that is sourced in the UK due to the size and volume of goods procured. However, when contracts are put out to tender, they stipulate that preference will be given to bidders with robust environmental and local sourcing policies, and those with strong links to British farming organisations such as the English Farming and Food Partnership, and the Red Tractor scheme.

The vast majority of fresh products, such as meat, poultry, dairy, eggs, bread, ice cream, and most fruit and vegetables when in season are sourced from within the UK. This includes a commitment to ensure that menus showcase seasonal variation and that in-season produce be highlighted to customers, as well as championing local producers.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Byelaws

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities on whether byelaws can be applied to regulate inside (a) the curtilage of private property, (b) a dwelling and (c) a business premises where there is no effect on local amenity outside the curtilage.

Jim McMahon:

MHCLG and other government departments publish guidance for local authorities on the process they should follow when making byelaws and also publish model byelaw sets which councils can adopt. Local authorities are required to seek legal advice on their proposed byelaws before applying for Secretary of State confirmation. The department has not provided specific guidance on regulating inside (a) the curtilage of private property, (b) a dwelling and (c) a business premises where there is no effect on local amenity outside the curtilage.

■ Children's Play

Tom Hayes: [\[35483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing Mayoral Strategic Authorities with statutory duties on play via the proposed English Devolution Bill.

Jim McMahon:

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that formal play spaces and recreational areas should not be built on unless they are no longer needed, equivalent or better alternatives are provided, or the new development is for alternative sports or recreational provision which offers greater benefits.

The Government believes that individual local authorities are best placed to make local planning decisions. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill will introduce powers for strategic authorities to produce strategic spatial plans for their area. These powers are about planning for growth across a larger than local area, and do not include specific duties in relation to play. Local planning authorities will still be responsible for developing and agreeing a Local Plan in line with the strategic spatial plan and it is at this level that specific decisions about issues like playgrounds would be made.

■ Councillors and Polling Stations: Databases

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[36695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support open data across-council look up database for (a) councillor contact details and (b) polling station addresses.

Rushanara Ali:

The Electoral Commission provide a comprehensive tool to support electors in finding their local polling station address at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information>. Electors enter their postcode, and the tool shows them where their nearest polling station is. Polling station details are also included on poll cards sent to every elector ahead of relevant electoral events.

The Department does not currently provide open data across-council look up database for councillor contact details. A tool on gov.uk exists to find your local council <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>.

■ Fire Prevention: Regulation

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[36681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the level of duplication of regulation on fire matters in (a) building regulation and (b) planning consent processes.

Alex Norris:

Fire safety regulations in building regulation and planning permission processes serve distinct purposes and are not duplicated. Planning addresses fire safety in relation to land-use planning matters, such site layout, and access for emergency services. Building regulations focus on detailed technical standards for construction, including fire resistance of materials, means of escape, and fire detection systems. These regulations are tested at different gateways, each serving distinct purposes to ensure comprehensive fire safety measures are in place. Together, these elements contribute to a robust fire safety regime that delivers safe buildings and protects occupants.

■ Flood Control

Blake Stephenson: [\[37386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Paragraph 182c of the National Planning Policy Framework, how she plans to enforce those maintenance arrangements.

Blake Stephenson: [R] [\[37387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 182c of the National Planning Policy Framework, if she will publish guidance provided to local authorities on enforcement.

Blake Stephenson: [\[37389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 182c of the National Planning Policy Framework, what penalties can be imposed on developers that do not comply with agreed maintenance arrangements once the development is built.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local planning authorities already have a wide range of planning enforcement powers, with strong penalties for non-compliance.

The government is clear that effective enforcement is important to tackle breaches of planning control, including enforcing SuDS maintenance arrangements which do not conform to the planning permission.

Where the local planning authority thinks that a condition imposed on a planning permission has not been met, they can serve a breach of condition notice, which requires the recipient to remedy the breach within a specified time. There is no appeal against such a notice and failure to comply with it is an offence punishable by an unlimited fine.

We have published guidance on the enforcement powers available to local planning authorities. I do not have plans to publish further guidance on enforcement at this time.

Blake Stephenson:[\[37388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 182c of the National Planning Policy Framework, how she defines the lifetime of the development.

Matthew Pennycook:

Paragraph 182(c) of the revised National Planning Policy Framework sets out that all major development should have maintenance arrangements for sustainable drainage systems in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development.

National planning guidance states that residential development can be assumed to have a lifetime of development of at least 100 years, unless there is specific justification for considering a different period. For non-residential development, the lifetime will depend on its characteristics, but 75 years is likely to form a starting point for assessment. Development such as some major infrastructure projects or new settlements may have a lifetime significantly beyond 100 years.

■ Grenfell Tower: Monuments**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the latest timetable is for the Grenfell memorial.

Alex Norris:

The government is fully committed to supporting the independent Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission in the creation of a fitting and lasting memorial, determined by the community, to honour those who lost their lives, and those whose lives were forever changed, by the tragedy.

In July 2024, the Commission, supported by the government and the Royal Institute for British Architects (RIBA), launched the process to select a team to work with the community to design a future memorial on the Grenfell Tower site. Five teams were shortlisted in January and asked to further develop their design approach.

The chosen design team will work with bereaved families, survivors and local residents, throughout 2026 to develop a detailed design for the memorial, with the community closely involved through-out.

■ HM Land Registry**Alex Sobel:**[\[37267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for (a) restructuring HM Land Registry fees, (b) tabling secondary legislation to restructure fees, prioritising free access to data and (c) ensuring HM Land Registry makes rapid progress towards enabling others to map land ownership data by linking title numbers with INSPIRE IDs.

Matthew Pennycook:

HM Land Registry (HMLR) is reviewing how fees can be made simpler, fairer and enable better access to data.

HMLR intends to launch a public consultation on the design of a new fees and charging structure and to bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to effect changes with the aim of implementing the new structure in 2026.

HMLR is currently exploring how best to make the data it holds more accessible, interoperable and geospatially enabled, in line with the priorities set out in my recent [letter to the HMLR Board Chair](#) as well as the government's blueprint for a modern digital government. This includes reviewing and improving the interoperability of published datasets, for example, adding INSPIRE IDs where appropriate.

Homelessness: Finance**Terry Jermy:****[37525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to increase funding to (a) Shelter and (b) other charities to support their work in (i) South West Norfolk constituency, (ii) Norfolk and (iii) England.

Rushanara Ali:

Funding for homelessness and rough sleeping in England will increase by £233 million in 2025/26. Allocations of funding in 2025/26 can be found [here](#) and future funding will be subject to the Spending Review. Through our grant programmes, we will continue to support charities, such as Shelter, who provide vital workforce skills and capacity support to frontline homeless organisations. Allocations to shelter can be found [here](#).

Housing: Disability**Max Wilkinson:****[36824]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of making building regulation M4(2) Category 2 accessible and adaptable standards mandatory for new homes.

Alex Norris:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [12990](#) provided on 25 November 2024.

Housing: Migrants**Kevin Hollinrake:****[37212]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 23144 on Housing: Migrants, whether her Department holds information on the potential impact of immigration on housing costs.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question [UIN 23144](#) on 18 February 2025.

■ **Housing: North Cornwall****Ben Maguire:**[\[38332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support young people onto the housing ladder in North Cornwall constituency.

Rushanara Ali:

The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people are now locked out of home ownership. This government is determined to change that, ensuring that young families and hardworking renters can buy a home of their own.

The most sustainable long-term method to improve housing affordability and help people into home ownership is to increase the supply of housing. That is why the Government committed to deliver 1.5 million homes over the Parliament in the Plan for Change.

In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, we are committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme meaning first-time buyers in North Cornwall and across the country will be able to take their crucial first step on to the property ladder with only a small deposit.

■ **Housing: Sales****Dave Robertson:**[\[38481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the obligation on (a) sellers, (b) estate agents and (c) solicitors to ensure that property is transferred to buyers in home sales in a clean and tidy state.

Rushanara Ali:

The government has published consumer guidance on how to sell a home which sets out that sellers should leave their property in the condition they wish to find their next home.

We know that the overall process of buying and selling a home is far too time consuming and costly for consumers. On 9 February we announced action to help modernise the way our home buying and selling system works. We want to see consumers at the heart of a system that is faster, more certain and less stressful, resulting in significant savings to consumers and industry.

■ Leasehold: Somerset**Adam Dance:**[\[36925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to improve (a) transparency and (b) professionalism in the leasehold sector in Somerset.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November 2024 ([HCWS244](#)).

■ Levelling Up Fund**David Chadwick:**[\[37052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her plans are for the future of the UK Levelling Up Fund.

Alex Norris:

The Levelling Up Fund is now fully committed. We (MHCLG and DfT) have awarded £4.8 billion across three rounds of the Levelling Up Fund to 271 projects across the UK. We are working with the successful applicants to help deliver the benefits of these projects to communities across the UK.

■ Local Government: Cost Effectiveness**James McMurdock:**[\[37070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure council spending is (a) efficient and (b) value for money for taxpayers.

Jim McMahon:

Local authorities are independent of central government. Councils are responsible for managing their own financial positions and services, including ensuring that their spending is efficient and delivers value for money for taxpayers; the department is not involved in local decisions.

Statutory best value guidance clarifies the government's expectations of how local authorities must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which their functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (the Best Value Duty). In the event of failure to uphold these standards, the Secretary of State has powers of intervention to ensure an authority's compliance with that Duty.

In December the government launched a strategy to overhaul the broken local audit system in England and embed transparency and value for money across local government.

Local Government: Devolution**Gregory Stafford:** [\[37059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the provisions in the English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024, on (a) localism and (b) communities.

Jim McMahon:

The government sees the policies set out in the English Devolution White Paper as supportive of communities and the localism agenda. The White Paper is clear that we cannot deliver the change the public expect, whether more growth, more homes, more joined-up services, or restored trust, without more empowered communities and local government. Its approach to community empowerment focuses on putting people in control of their own lives, alongside devolving power away from Westminster.

That is why alongside committing to greater devolution of powers to area it commits to measures such as replacing the community 'Right to Bid' with a strengthened 'Right to Buy' Assets of Community Value, creating a more robust pathway to community asset ownership. It's also why we have recognised the importance of a thriving local media sector that can continue to play an invaluable role by reporting on the issues that matter to communities and, in the context of local government reorganisation, want to see stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens in the way councils engage at a neighbourhood or area level. Together we have assessed this provides a positive impact on localism and communities.

Local Government: Employers' Contributions**James McMurdock:** [\[37071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of National Insurance contribution increases on (a) council budgets and (b) the financial sustainability of council spending.

Jim McMahon:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to Question UIN [33203](#) and Question UIN [33258](#) on 3 March 2025.

The government is committed to pursuing a comprehensive set of reforms for public services to return the local government sector to a sustainable position. This will be done in partnership with local government and on the principle of giving forward notice and certainty to allow time for councils to plan.

Blake Stephenson: [\[R\] \[38202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 19 February 2025 to Question 30736 on Local Government: Employers' Contributions and with reference to paragraph 5.48 of Bedford Borough Council Executive's report entitled General Fund Revenue Budget 2025/2026, dated 22 January

2025, and paragraph 1.5.3 of Central Bedfordshire Council's report entitled Budget Report 2025/26 to 2028/29, dated December 2024, for what reasons the additional funding for employer National Insurance contributions paid to (a) Bedford Borough Council is £500,000 less than the estimated total cost for directly employed employees and (b) Central Bedfordshire Council is £1.2m less than the estimated additional cost for Central Bedfordshire Council staff.

Jim McMahon:

Additional funding for employer National Insurance contributions (NICs) has been determined based on a national assessment of the costs for directly employed staff. The grant distribution methodology has been published in an explanatory note on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/updated-explanatory-note-on-the-employer-national-insurance-contribution-grant-2025-to-2026>.

We recognise the challenges that local authorities are facing as demand increases for critical services. That is why the government is providing an additional £2 billion of grant funding through the Settlement, which includes £502 million of additional grant funding to manage the impact of employer NICs changes on council budgets, and £13 million for combined authorities, totalling £515 million. The final Settlement for 2025-26 makes available over £69 billion for local government, which is a 6.8% cash terms increase in councils' Core Spending Power on 2024-25.

■ **Local Government: Insolvency**

James McMurdock:

[37068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Local Government Information Unit's report entitled 2025 State of Local Government Finance in England, published in March 2025, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of forecasts that 6% of councils will face effective bankruptcy in the next financial year.

Jim McMahon:

We have delivered a Settlement that has begun to fix the foundations of local government by providing significant investment and redirecting funding towards the services and places that need it most. The Settlement for 2025-26 makes available over £69 billion for local government, which is a 6.8% cash terms increase in councils' Core Spending Power on 2024-25.

We are committed to pursuing a comprehensive set of reforms for public services to fix the foundations of local government, in partnership with the sector and on the principle of giving councils early certainty. The government has committed to a multi-year Spending Review later this year, and we will therefore provide a multi-year funding settlement alongside much needed funding reform in 2026-27.

We are however, under no illusion about the fragile state of the sector and the pressures that some councils are facing and recognise the potential for continued instability as we work to fix the foundations of local government. That is why we have

a framework in place to support councils in the most difficult financial positions and will continue work on a collaborative basis to help them manage financial challenges.

As always, the department stands ready to speak to any council that has concerns about its finances and we will treat all discussions in confidence, with respect and determination to find a solution together.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Conditions of Employment

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[36697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 30659 on Conditions of Employment: Departmental Responsibilities, how many headcount staff in her Department are assigned to work on matters relating to (a) employment law, (b) industrial and trade union relations and (c) the Future of Work Cabinet Committee.

Alex Norris:

Strengthening employment rights is a key priority across Government. The Deputy Prime Minister is supported in her role as the Chair of the Future of Work Cabinet Committee, alongside the delivery of other cross-cutting priorities on Make Work Pay, by a Deputy Director and five FTE policy advisors.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Industrial Disputes

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[36686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with the Public and Commercial Services Union on industrial action in her Department; and whether a formal notice of industrial action has been issued.

Alex Norris:

The Public and Commercial Services Union has declared a Trade Dispute with the Department and is balloting members on industrial action. Discussions with Trade Union representatives on a range of issues continue to take place.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Appointments

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[36680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons she appointed Dominic Grieve as the Chair of the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia working group.

Alex Norris:

The Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group has been established to provide government with a non-statutory definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia, supporting a wider stream of work to tackle the unacceptable incidents of anti-Muslim hatred. The Rt Hon Dominic Grieve KC has a strong legal

background and experience of working with Muslim communities. This technical expertise will be invaluable to meeting the group's objective to advise His Majesty's Government on the appropriate and sensitive language to describe, understand and define unacceptable treatment, prejudice, discrimination and hate targeting Muslims.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Secondment**

Jon Trickett:

[\[36598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of their Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Alex Norris:

Secondments is one way of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and has been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and data is held at Business Unit Level.

There have been no secondments from any of the quoted organisations into the Department since July 2024.

■ **Neighbourhood Plans: Contracts**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2025 to Question 25703 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Consultants, what changes she has made to the neighbourhood planning contract.

Matthew Pennycook:

The current neighbourhood planning support contract was last changed in May 2024. The government launched the procurement for the neighbourhood planning support contract on 1 October 2024 and we will announce the outcome of that exercise in due course.

■ **New Towns: Finance**

Blake Stephenson:

[R] [\[36494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Government unveils plans for next generation of new towns, published on 13 February 2025, how the £20 million to help transform neglected small-scale council-owned sites into new homes for areas most in need will be distributed.

Matthew Pennycook:

This funding will be made available through the next round of the Brownfield Land Release Fund. Further details on the application process and funding criteria will be announced in due course.

■ Permitted Development Rights**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2025 to Question 31491 on Housing: Windows, whether her Department holds records of which local authorities have issued Article 4 directions for removing permitted development rights.

Matthew Pennycook:

A local planning authority must, as soon as practicable after confirming an article 4 direction, inform the Secretary of State. Records of Article 4 Directions made by local authorities dating back to April 2018 are held.

■ Planning: Environment Protection**Blake Stephenson:** [\[37391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 7 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, issued on 27 August 2024, what assessment she has made of the finding that the wholly exceptional reason needs to be better defined.

Blake Stephenson: [\[37392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the average number of planning permissions expected to be granted within 15 metres of ancient woodland each year for the next five years.

Blake Stephenson: [\[37393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 15 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, issued on 27 August 2024, whether she will make an assessment of the potential merits of standardising the assessment of ancient woodland impacts.

Blake Stephenson: [\[37394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring (a) arboricultural reports and (b) impact assessments for major developments.

Blake Stephenson: [\[37395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to section 4.4 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, issued on 27 August 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a group of statutory consultees that planning officers should consult when considering planning applications that impact ancient woodlands.

Matthew Pennycook:

The report in question confirmed that the National Planning Policy Framework contains a high level of protection for ancient woodland.

The Framework makes clear that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists. These protections are strengthened further by the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2024 which requires local planning authorities to consult the Secretary of State where they have resolved to grant planning permission for development affecting ancient woodland.

Local planning authorities have the principal responsibility for applying these protections effectively, and we do not consider it necessary to standardise the assessment of ancient woodland impacts or mandate arboricultural reports. The Ancient Woodland Inventory, updated Planning Practice Guidance and the Standing Advice on ancient woodlands and ancient and veteran trees are in place to support local decision makers make informed decisions about planning applications near these habitats.

With regard to statutory consultees, I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 10 March 2025 ([HCWS510](#)).

We keep policy in this and other areas under review, working closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

■ Planning: Reform**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2025 to Question 31044 on Planning: Reform, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of listing the names of the organisational respondents to a consultation in its summary of consultation responses.

Alex Norris:

The Department does not routinely publish a list of organisations responding to public consultations. Many organisations choose to publish their responses on their websites.

■ Property Development: Floods**Blake Stephenson:**[\[37390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the average time was between completion of a development in areas at risk of flooding and installation of flood defences agreed at planning stage since 2019; and how many developments built since 2019 in areas at risk of flooding do not have flood defences required at planning stage completed.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government does not monitor the status of individual planning conditions. Local planning authorities are responsible for ensuring compliance with planning permissions and conditions, including monitoring and taking enforcement action if necessary.

National planning guidance makes clear that where flood risk management infrastructure such as flood defences form part of the strategy for addressing flood risk, strategic and site-specific flood risk assessments should identify how this infrastructure will be operated, funded and maintained.

■ Rented Housing: Evictions**Imran Hussain:**[\[37189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on trends in the number of people who have been evicted from their homes following rent increases in each of the last five years.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [34191](#) on 10 March 2025.

■ Shared Ownership Schemes**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[37982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to continue to provide support for the building of shared ownership properties.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government will set out set details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme at the Spending Review. This new investment will deliver a mix of homes for sub-market rent and homeownership, with a particular focus on delivering homes for social rent.

■ Social Rented Housing: Repairs and Maintenance**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[37707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of use of management agencies to complete repairs by housing associations.

Matthew Pennycook:

All registered providers of social housing are required to ensure they meet regulatory standards and legal duties relating to repairs, regardless of whether they use a management agency to oversee their repairs services.

Under the regulatory standards set by the independent Regulator of Social Housing, all registered providers must provide an effective, efficient, and timely repairs,

maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.

Social landlords are obliged by law to maintain the structure and exterior of their properties, and to keep in repair and proper working order the sanitation, water, gas, and electricity installations.

■ **Swimming Pools: Neighbourhood Plans**

Josh Babarinde:

[\[35418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether investment in local swimming facilities is accommodated in the pre-approved interventions for the Plan for Neighbourhoods.

Alex Norris:

The new £1.5 billion Plan for Neighbourhoods will deliver up to £20 million of funding and support over the next decade into 75 communities across the UK, laying the foundations to kickstart local growth and drive-up living standards.

We are putting power in the hands of local people to address deprivation and regenerate their local area and unleashing the full potential of places that have for too long been overlooked.

The 75 communities will set up Neighbourhood Boards bringing together residents, businesses, and grassroots campaigners to draw up and implement Plans for how they will spend the up to £20 million of funding, whether that is repairing pavements and high streets, setting up community grocers providing low-cost alternatives when shopping for essentials, or neighbourhood watches to keep people safe.

We have doubled the number of interventions that communities can spend the money on and we are focusing on three long-term aims - building thriving places, strengthening communities and empowering people to taking back control instead of sticking plaster policies. We are giving local people their say by strengthening our consultations to make sure local people have a voice on how the funding is spent.

The pre-approved interventions have been drafted broadly to give flexibility to boards as to how and what they can deliver, providing examples where possible to indicate ideas for spend, but it is not exhaustive. Investment in local swimming facilities would fall under the category of '*Funding for local sport and activity facilities, events, teams and leagues, to foster community engagement and connection*'.

■ **Tenants: Government Assistance**

Paulette Hamilton:

[\[37336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to support renters.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Renters' Rights Bill delivers our manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including by ending Section 21 'no fault' evictions.

The Bill will improve the current system for the 11 million private renters and 2.3 million landlords in England. It will give renters much greater security and stability so they can stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities, and avoid the risk of homelessness.

The Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 11 September 2024 and is now progressing through the House of Lords. Further detail on the measures in the Bill can be found in the relevant guidance on gov.uk here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-renters-rights-bill/guide-to-the-renters-rights-bill#prohibiting-rental-discrimination>.

■ Unitary Councils

Kevin Hollinrake: [36687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to expand existing unitary authorities.

Kevin Hollinrake: [36689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on doughnut-sized unitary local authorities.

Jim McMahon:

The English Devolution White Paper announced a programme of local government reorganisation for two-tier areas, and set out that Government will also facilitate reorganisation for those unitary councils where there is evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries are impacting on their responsibilities. Some of these councils are included in the invitations to develop proposals for reorganisation that were sent to all councils in two-tier areas and neighbouring small unitaries on the 5th February.

Following submission, we will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. We will evaluate each case on its own merits against the criteria set out in the letter which includes that proposals should be for a “sensible geography”.

The Government is open to discussions with all areas where structural change will help them get onto a more sustainable footing.

■ Urban Areas: Regional Assistance

Steve Darling: [36832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to increase funding support for towns and coastal communities.

Alex Norris:

The Government will set out a refreshed approach to local growth funding at the multi-year Spending Review in the Spring. An approach that includes more integrated settlements, over longer term, with less central direction and more local choice.

JUSTICE**■ Cannabis: Sentencing****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[37289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the annual cost of imprisonment due to cannabis-related offences.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

As at 31 December 2024, the number of prisoners with cannabis-related offences recorded as their main offence was 1,073. This figure only includes cases where a cannabis offence (offence which directly involves and specifies cannabis) was recorded as the main offence and will cover prisoners held for varying lengths depending on their sentence.

The overall average annual cost for keeping an individual in a prison is £51,108, which is taken from the latest published Prison Unit Cost statistics for 2022-23.

■ Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel**Sarah Champion:** [\[36654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel entitled Protecting Children and Responding the Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment, published in November 2024, what steps she is taking in the context of the findings of that report on child sexual abuse in private family law proceedings.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Child sexual abuse is among the most vile and damaging of crimes, which is why at the King's Speech we committed to restricting parental responsibility for perpetrators sentenced for child sex offences. The Government is focused on delivering meaningful change for victims impacted by these horrendous crimes, including within the Family Court.

The Panel's report highlighted specific recommendations for the President of the Family Division and Cafcass to consider in relation to the Family Court and the Government will respond fully to the Panel's report and its recommendations in due course.

■ Crimes of Violence: Victims**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[38006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to work with faith groups to support victims of violent crime.

Alex Davies-Jones:

All forms of violent crime, including religiously aggravated violent crime, are completely unacceptable, which is why the Government is committed to making sure

that victims of these crimes are properly supported, and this Department continues to engage with faith groups.

Under the Victims' Code (the Code), all victims are entitled to be referred to support services when they report a crime. However, the Code also explicitly acknowledges that victims of hate crime are more likely to require specialised assistance, and this means they are entitled to enhanced support under the Code.

The Ministry of Justice also provides funding for victim and witness support services, to help victims cope and recover from the impact of crime, through a mix of local and nationally commissioned services. At a national level, the Department provides Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) with annual grant funding to commission local practical, emotional, and therapeutic support services for victims of all crime types.

More broadly, the Government continues to work with police and community partners to monitor and combat racially and religiously motivated hatred. The Government is working with the police to fund True Vision, an online hate crime reporting portal, designed so that victims of hate crime do not have to visit a police station to report.

■ Ministry of Justice: Secondment

Jon Trickett:

[\[36599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of their Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Information about secondments in the Ministry of Justice is not held in a central location and therefore we are not able to report on the number of employees seconded from the Institute for Economic Affairs, Policy Exchange, Adam Smith Institute or Labour Together since July 2024.

All Civil Servants are subject to a Loans and Secondments policy and the provisions of the Official Secrets Act. HR policies outline the Department's stance on political activity, with declaration requirements varying by grade. All Civil Servants are expected to abide by rules governing political activities and to avoid situations that lead to conflicts of interest, such as the non-disclosure of sensitive information.

■ Pre-sentence Reports

Rupert Lowe:

[\[36258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure the provision of pre-sentencing reports for all offenders.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Where a court is considering whether an offender should receive a sentence of immediate custody, a pre-sentencing report must be obtained and considered before forming an opinion unless, in the circumstances of the case, it considers that it is unnecessary to obtain a pre-sentence report. Pre-sentencing reports. These reports

see the Probation Service play an essential role in court by providing an expert assessment of the nature and causes of the offender's behaviour and the risk the offender poses.

The Lord Chancellor has been clear that the recent guidelines published by the Sentencing Council regarding pre-sentencing reports, do not represent the views of this Government. The Lord Chancellor and the Chairman of the Sentencing Council have had a constructive discussion. It was agreed that the Lord Chancellor will set out her position more fully in writing, which the Sentencing Council will then consider before the guideline is due to come into effect.

The Lord Chancellor has already stated that she will be reviewing the role and powers of the Sentencing Council, as well as what role Government should have on issues such as this, and will not hesitate to legislate if necessary.

■ Prisoners: Pregnancy

Jim Shannon:

[\[37153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to support pregnant women in prison.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

There are now dedicated Pregnancy and Mother and Baby Liaison Officers in all women's prisons, as well as mandatory multidisciplinary care planning for pregnant women. We have introduced additional training for prison staff on the care of pregnant women, and are piloting the introduction of social workers in women's prisons to support pregnant women and mothers.

The Lord Chancellor has launched the Women's Justice Board to address the distinctive needs of women in the criminal justice system, with the aim of reducing the number of women in prison. While there will always be some women, including some who are pregnant, who need to be in custody, we must ensure they are given the best possible chance to address the causes of their offending, so that they are able to contribute positively to society.

■ Prisons and Probation: Training

Ayoub Khan:

[\[38331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department consulted on the contents the suicide prevention training provided to prison and probation staff.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

All new members of prison staff with prisoner contact receive training on suicide and self-harm prevention, and all staff who undertake key roles relating to risk assessment and case management also receive specific training relating to those roles. An e-learning module has also recently been made available for all staff to access on postvention support following a self-inflicted death in custody. These products have been developed by the HM Prison and Probation Service learning design team in conjunction with policy leads and subject matter experts. They include

material developed in partnership with Samaritans, and consultation on elements of the content has taken place with healthcare and other partners and the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody.

There are two suicide prevention learning packages for probation staff: a Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA) package for all staff, and a package aimed at new entrant Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) and Probation Service Officers (PSOs) which was developed internally as part of a broader introduction to mental health. The former was developed externally by the ZSA (a suicide awareness and prevention initiative funded via Mersey Cares NHS Charity) in conjunction with HMPPS subject matter experts, and the latter builds upon this and tailors it to the needs of new entrants.

■ Sentencing

Jim Shannon:

[\[37149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme allows anyone to request that Law Officers consider referring certain serious sentences to the Court of Appeal if they believe the sentences are unduly lenient.

Between 2019 and 2024, the number of sentences reviewed by the Law Officers have increased. In 2019, the Law Officers reviewed 577 requests, increasing to 831 in 2024, with a steady referral rate to the Court of Appeal. These increases are likely due to both greater awareness of the scheme and the expansion of offences covered by it.

The Law Commission is currently undertaking a review of the laws governing criminal appeals. Last month, they launched a public consultation which invites views on a range of reforms to the Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme. The consultation is open to all and runs until 30 May: [Criminal Appeals Consultation Paper - Law Commission](#).

The Government will carefully consider the recommendations made in the Law Commission final report in due course.

■ Sexual Offences: Crown Court

Sarah Champion:

[\[36655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2025 to Question 29896 on Sexual Offences: Crown Court, whether she plans to engage with victims and survivors in the evaluation of the pilot scheme.

Sarah Sackman:

Since May 2024, the Ministry of Justice has been running a one-year pilot to enable victims of rape and sexual offences, whose cases were heard at the Crown Court, to request a copy of the judge's sentencing remarks free of charge.

An assessment of the pilot is underway. This includes collecting applicant survey feedback, shared by victims or by those applying on their behalf. The results of the assessment will be published, and presented at victims' sector groups, after the pilot has ended in May 2025. In this way victims' voices will be at the heart of the pilot's evaluation and any consequent decisions.

Surveys were sent to applicants, who gave consent to being contacted for survey purposes, asking for their views, and this information will inform the final assessment of the pilot.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Casement Park

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[36901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he is taking steps to facilitate the construction of Casement Park.

Hilary Benn:

I have met with the GAA to discuss the redevelopment of Casement Park and look forward to meeting with the Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA. I will continue to engage with all involved in this Executive-led project, as all parties assess the options available.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[36902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Minister for Communities on the construction of Casement Park.

Hilary Benn:

I have met with the GAA to discuss the redevelopment of Casement Park and look forward to meeting with the Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA. I will continue to engage with all involved in this Executive-led project, as all parties assess the options available.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[36903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of progress made on the construction of Casement Park.

Hilary Benn:

I have met with the GAA to discuss the redevelopment of Casement Park and look forward to meeting with the Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA. I will continue to engage with all involved in this Executive-led project, as all parties assess the options available.

■ Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[36898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, on what evidential basis he said that Northern Ireland courts had determined that the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery independence has adequate (a) powers and (b) independence to undertake human rights compliant investigations.

Hilary Benn:

The Court of Appeal recognised the structural independence and wide powers of the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR). The Court was clear that ICRIR has the capability to replicate investigations that were previously with the police and the Ombudsman, and to fulfil human rights obligations in those cases.

The Government has committed to introducing legislation to further strengthen ICRIR's independence and powers, and to ensure that ICRIR can discharge the State's ECHR obligations in all cases where that is required, including cases that would otherwise be inquests, and to restore inquests that were previously halted.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Secondment

Jon Trickett:

[\[36602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many of their Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Office has not had any staff seconded from the Institute for Economic Affairs, the Policy Exchange, the Adam Smith Institute and Labour Together since July 2024.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister:

[\[38334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to paragraph 159 of the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper, CP 1021, how often the Independent Monitoring Panel will report on the delivery of the Windsor Framework against the four tests.

Jim Allister:

[\[38337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to paragraph 158 of his Department's publication entitled Safeguarding the Union, published on 31 January 2024, if he will make an assessment of how the membership of the Independent Monitoring Panel reflects the (a) political and (b) economic criteria set out in that paragraph.

Jim Allister: [\[38338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper, what steps he has taken to ensure the Independent Monitoring Committee is independent from Government.

Jim Allister: [\[38339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper, CP1021, what the (a) budget and (b) number of staff is that has been allocated to the Independent Monitoring Committee for its first year of operations.

Hilary Benn:

The Windsor Framework Independent Monitoring Panel consists of independent experts who have been appointed in accordance with the Safeguarding the Union command paper.

The Panel will report to the UK Government bi-yearly and on the basis set out in the command paper. As part of this, I refer the Hon Gentleman to my Written Ministerial Statement ([UIN HCWS463](#)) of 24 February 2025.

Panellists are not employees of the UK Government and do not receive remuneration for this role. A Secretariat is provided by the UK Government to the Panel in accordance with paragraph 160 of the command paper.

■ Windsor Framework: Scotland

Alison Taylor: [\[36877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the Windsor Framework on the economy of the west coast of Scotland.

Hilary Benn:

The UK internal market and trade between the UK's four nations is worth around £129bn.

The Windsor Framework ensures Northern Ireland's businesses have unfettered access to their most important market in Great Britain, including the west coast of Scotland, and the UK internal market system is helping to smooth the flow of trade from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Copyright

Jo Platt: [\[36747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of technical solutions put forward by AI developers to allow individual rightsholders in the creative industries to effectively and efficiently opt-out their work from AI training, without placing additional burdens on rightsholders.

Feryal Clark:

The Government's consultation on Copyright and AI closed on 25th February.

It sought views from both AI developers and rights holders on creating an effective rights reservation system. We will not move forward with any option until we are confident that it will be effective, proportionate, and accessible to both individual creators and larger rights holders.

The Government's priority now is to review all responses to the consultation, gathering the evidence to inform its next steps. The Government will continue to engage extensively before setting out proposals in due course.

Jo Platt: [\[36748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that visual artists and creators (a) nationally and (b) in Leigh and Atherton can access licensing deals with AI developers.

Feryal Clark:

The Government published a consultation on Copyright and AI in December 2024.

This consultation sought views on creating an effective rights reservation system. This would provide rights holders across the UK, including those in Leigh and Atherton, with the ability to prevent AI developers from using their copyright works in AI training, and/or negotiate licences for their use.

The consultation closed on 25 February. The Government's priority now is to review all responses to the consultation, gathering the evidence to inform its next steps. The Government will continue to engage extensively before setting out proposals in due course.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Hakluyt**Jon Trickett:** [\[37121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many staff his Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Secondments are one way of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and has been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and data is held at Business Unit Level.

Since July 2024, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has had no secondees from Hakluyt.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Secondment**Jon Trickett:** [\[36592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many of his Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b)

the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Since July 2024, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has had no secondees from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute, and (d) Labour Together.

■ **Galileo System**

Mary Glendon: [\[36641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of rejoining the Galileo scheme.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is implementing the October 2023 Government Policy Framework for Greater Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) Resilience, which will provide greater resilience for the PNT services that the UK relies upon in the event of any disruption to Global Navigation Satellite Systems such as GPS and Galileo. The UK public and businesses still have access to the Galileo Open Service, though the UK no longer participates in Galileo, and the UK armed forces have access to the US GPS secure service. The Government will consider participation in EU programmes on a case by case basis where participation would meet the UK's interests.

■ **Space Technology**

Damien Egan: [\[36813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of progress toward the Ten Point Plan in the National Space Strategy.

Chris Bryant:

The Government outlined progress toward the Ten Point Plan in the National Space Strategy in Action - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-space-strategy-in-action/national-space-strategy-in-action>.

In addition, a regular Monitoring and Insights workstream is underway, chaired by DSIT, with attendance from the UK Space Agency, the Department of Business and Trade, and the Ministry of Defence, to track progress of the delivery of the National Space Strategy.

■ **Spaceflight: South West**

Damien Egan: [\[36812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic impact of the UK's commercial spaceflight programme on the South West of England.

Chris Bryant:

The South West of England is an important part of the UK's spaceflight ecosystem, being home to the UK's first licensed and operational spaceport, Spaceport Cornwall in Newquay. The establishment of the spaceport has been instrumental in catalysing the growth of the Cornwall Space Cluster, which has created high-skilled jobs and facilitated collaboration and innovation in the UK's space ecosystem.

Telecommunications: Codes of Practice**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[36744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress has been made on revising the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice.

Chris Bryant:

Under the existing regulations telecommunications operators are responsible for the guidelines governing the deployment of above ground infrastructure. In response to my concerns about the installation of unnecessarily intrusive telecommunications infrastructure, the industry convened a working group to examine the existing Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice, and to issue new guidelines for the deployment of telegraph poles.

Whilst this work is entirely for industry to undertake, I understand that industry trade bodies expect to publish the guidelines this spring and urge them to do so as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND**Marriage: Relatives****John Lamont:**[\[37263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will have discussions with the Scottish Government on the potential merits of banning first-cousin marriage in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK.

Ian Murray:

Scotland Office Ministers and officials regularly engage with counterparts in the Scottish Government on issues that matter to the people of Scotland.

We are aware that all aspects of weddings, including first cousin marriage, are important issues. The Scottish Parliament has power to legislate in relation to marriages in Scotland.

Scotland Office: Hakluyt**Jon Trickett:**[\[37130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Ian Murray:

Secondments is one way of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and has been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and data is held at business unit level.

No officials in the Scotland Office have been seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

■ University of Dundee: Redundancy

Dr Scott Arthur:**[R] [37883]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of Dundee University's plan to cut staffing by 20% on the Tay Cities Deal.

Ian Murray:

I am fully aware of the well documented financial situation with the University of Dundee and share concern that any job losses are regrettable, however the University is a key partner in the Tay Cities Region Deal and remains fully committed to delivering its objectives. Economic Growth is one of this Government's key missions and I am absolutely committed to working alongside the Scottish Government to realise our shared ambitions for growth in Scotland. My officials will continue to collaborate with all of the Tay Cities Region Deal partners to ensure the maximum benefits for the region can be realised.

TRANSPORT

■ Active Travel: Finance

Olly Glover:**[38263]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2025 to Question 32531 on Active Travel: Finance, how much funding her Department allocated for active travel by (a) (i) capital and (ii) revenue funding and (b) funding for local authorities, (c) funding for non-governmental organisations and (d) funding for Active Travel England's operational costs in each financial year between 2020-21 and 2023-24.

Simon Lightwood:

The below table sets out capital and revenue funding allocations to (a) local authorities (LA) and (b) non-government organisations (NGO), alongside funding for Active Travel England's (ATE) operating costs from financial year 20/21 to 23/24. Final payments may differ from funding allocations.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
LA capital	173.9	161.0	200.0	45.8
LA revenue	71.1	36.9	45.7	57.2
NGO capital	18.0	48.0		7.7

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
NGO revenue	43.6	32.0	26.5	28.6
ATE operating costs			4.0	10.2
Total	306.6	277.9	276.2	149.5

■ Airports: Carbon Emissions

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[36775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of airport expansion on the ability of the UK to meet its net zero targets.

Mike Kane:

The government is committed to reaching net zero by 2050 and meeting our climate change obligations, as set out in the Climate Change Act. Delivering greener transport to help make Britain a clean energy superpower is a Department for Transport priority.

We have been clear that any airport expansion proposals will need to demonstrate they contribute to economic growth and can be delivered in line with the UK's legally binding climate change commitment.

DfT analysis shows that we can achieve aviation net zero 2050 under a range of assumptions about future technology development without the Government needing to intervene directly to limit airport expansion.

■ Airports: Construction

Rebecca Smith: [\[37934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential impact of airport expansion on meeting targets under the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 to reduce nitrogen dioxide emissions.

Rebecca Smith: [\[37935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of airport expansion on meeting targets under the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions.

Mike Kane:

My Department seeks to minimise the impact of aviation on people's health and wellbeing, in the context of other government priorities. My officials are in regular contact on this issue with other government departments and their agencies, including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The assessment of planning applications for airport expansion will take account of all relevant law, policy and other material considerations. This includes environmental and air quality assessments undertaken as part of the planning application process.

The Government has been clear that any airport expansion proposals need to demonstrate that they contribute to economic growth, can be delivered in line with the UK's legally binding commitments on carbon and meet strict environmental requirements on air quality and noise pollution.

■ **Department for Transport: Hakluyt**

Jon Trickett: [\[37122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many staff her Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Mike Kane:

The Department has no record of staff having being seconded from "Hakluyt" since July 2024.

■ **Department for Transport: Secondment**

Jon Trickett: [\[36593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many of her Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Mike Kane:

The Department has no record of officials having been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Communication**

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[38139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish any guidance provided to the DVLA on methods of communicating with licence holders.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) uses several methods of communicating with licence holders to ensure they are kept informed.

The DVLA sends out important documents, reminders, notifications by traditional mail and encrypted email where a licence holder consents to correspond in this way. The DVLA also provides a suite of online driver services, where customers can renew their driving licence or notify a medical condition.

Licence holders can access their information and manage their driving licence, vehicle registration and other services if they have a customer account. Digital tax reminders are already available within the customer account and this is being extended to include digital driving licence reminders. Customers can track the

progress of their driving licence application and communicate with the DVLA using this service.

The DVLA also provides customer service via telephone, which allows licence holders to ask questions or resolve issues directly. In addition to these services, the DVLA uses social media platforms to share information and updates with the public about its services.

The DVLA has a dedicated team responsible for the improvement of its driver licensing services and communications.

■ Driving Tests

Matt Vickers: [\[37720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on reducing driving test waiting times.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is upholding road safety standards while it works hard to reduce car practical driving test waiting times.

On the 18 December, DVSA set out further plans to reduce driving test waiting times across the country. These steps include recruiting 450 driving examiners and improving rules for booking driving tests. [Full details](#) of these steps can be found on GOV.UK.

As of 10 March 2025, there were 573,352 car practical driving tests booked, and 31,689 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

■ Electric Bicycles: Regulation

Mark Swards: [\[38485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing stronger regulation for e-bikes, including full registration and insurance requirements.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government has no intention of requiring cyclists, including those who ride Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles, to be registered or to have insurance. This would require a national registration scheme for all cycles which would be complex and expensive to design and administer. It would also be likely to lead to a reduction in the number of people cycling, which would have negative health and environmental consequences. The Government believes that insurance for cycling should remain a matter of personal choice. Cyclists who are not insured are liable for the consequences of their actions should these result in injury or damages to others.

Those who ride e-mopeds, or forms of e-cycle that do not comply in full with the Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle Regulations 1983, are already required to have insurance and licence plates. Enforcement of these rules is a matter for the police,

who have the power to seize illegal e-cycles and to fine individuals who fail to stop when instructed to do so.

■ Electric Vehicles

Luke Murphy: [\[38255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of (a) salary sacrifice schemes and (b) the Plug In Car grant in increasing uptake of electric vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

Favourable taxation measures to support electric vehicles (EVs), including Salary Sacrifice, remain a key driver of new EV sales. EVs bought through salary sacrifice schemes can also play a key role in supporting the used EV markets, where these cars are often sold after the end of their lease. Most cars in the UK are bought in the used market.

The Plug-in Car Grant (PICG) closed to new orders in 2022. The Government supported over 360,000 vehicles through the PICG scheme. An independent evaluation of this scheme concluded that it had a material impact on demand for new EVs.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Luke Murphy: [\[37819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with electric vehicle public charging point providers on the comparative costs for (a) charging electric vehicles at public charging points and (b) filling up a petrol or diesel car.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an electric vehicle. The Government consults with public charging point providers regularly and is monitoring the price of charging.

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[37986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the number of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging points per hundred thousand people in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales, and (d) Northern Ireland on 1 December 2024.

Lilian Greenwood:

The number of publicly available electric vehicle charging devices per 100,000 population by country of the UK is published as part of the department's quarterly electric vehicle public charging infrastructure statistics.

These statistics are published quarterly so an equivalent summary as of 1 December 2024 is not available. Data as of 1 January 2025 is given in the table below:

COUNTRY	CHARGING DEVICES PER 100,000 POPULATION
England	111.0
Wales	99.9
Scotland	112.7
Northern Ireland	35.6

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points and Ownership**

Luke Murphy: [\[38258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a public information campaign to tackle common misinformation on electric vehicle ownership and charging.

Lilian Greenwood:

Government is committed to accelerating the transition to zero emission vehicles and increasing awareness of the benefits of electric vehicle ownership. We are working closely with the electric vehicle sector and key partners to ensure that we are delivering consistent and clear information to drivers about making the switch to electric vehicles and charging infrastructure. Combating misinformation is a key part of this, and we continue to assess how we can do this most effectively.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Grants**

Luke Murphy: [\[38256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the uptake of the Plug In Car grant was for (a) working and (b) non-working people.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government holds data only on the number of vehicles supported through the Plug-in Car Grant. We do not hold any data that identifies the employment status of recipients.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Large Goods Vehicles**

Sir John Hayes: [\[36578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of increasing the permitted weight of electric HGVs on the construction sector.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department keeps vehicle regulations, including maximum permitted weight limits, under review, to determine whether they remain appropriate during the transition towards zero emission HGVs. No assessment which focuses exclusively on vehicles used in the construction sector is planned.

■ Electric Vehicles: South East Cornwall

Anna Gelderd:

[\[38317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to improve the (a) infrastructure for and (b) accessibility of electric vehicle for users in South East Cornwall.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of affordable and accessible charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an electric vehicle. As of March 2025, the Government and industry have supported the installation of 75,305 publicly available charging devices, up 32% on this time last year.

Cornwall Council have been allocated over £6m capital and resource funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) Fund to increase local public chargepoints across the area. The LEVI Fund will support the installation of at least 100,000 local chargepoints across England.

We are aware that disabled EV drivers face specific barriers when using public chargepoints. The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles co-sponsored the accessibility standard, Publicly Available Specifications (PAS) 1899, along with national disability charity Motability. The Government has been actively encouraging relevant parties to adopt its specifications, building on improvements already being made in the sector. The Government is supporting the 24-month review of the PAS, which is being led by the British Standards Institution (BSI) and concludes early in 2025.

■ Heathrow Airport

Mr Paul Kohler:

[\[37491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport on future trends in respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

Mike Kane:

The Government has invited proposals for a third runway at Heathrow to be brought forward by the summer. Once proposals have been received, the government will review the Airports National Policy Statement, which provides the basis for decision making on granting development consent for a new runway at Heathrow. The Government has been clear that any airport expansion proposals need to demonstrate that they contribute to economic growth, can be delivered in line with the UK's legally binding commitments on carbon and meet strict environmental requirements on air quality and noise pollution.

■ HM Coastguard: North West**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[37988]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2025 to Question 36365 on HM Coastguard: North West, if she will take steps to distribute copies of the (a) assessments and (b) consequent service level changes to relevant stakeholders.

Mike Kane:

HM Coastguard would not normally share any documentation relating to operational decisions pertaining to the capability and capacity of Coastal Response Teams. HM Coastguard does however proactively engage with all relevant local partners when there is a change to Coastal Response Teams operational skillset. HM Coastguard remains available to re-engage with any stakeholder that has a concern relative to Coastal Response Team operations.

Further, HM Coastguard has never entered into a service level agreement with City of Derry airport, for the provision of mud rescue capability. An internal review of HM Coastguard Mud Rescue capability concluded that the changes would not impact on the statutory role of search and rescue. This includes the mobilisation, organisation and tasking of adequate resources to respond to persons in distress in the air, at sea, in tidal waters or at risk of injury or death on the sea cliffs and shoreline of the UK.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete**Dr Ben Spencer:****[38146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2024 to Question 19765 on Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete, if she will publish the findings of the review of the call for evidence on the operation of Volumetric Concrete Mixers at higher weights.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department has published its findings today. These can be accessed at the following link:

[gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review](https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review).

■ London Underground: Access**Mr Paul Kohler:****[37915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with Transport for London on increasing the number of stations with step-free access on (a) the Northern Line, (b) the District Line and (c) across the London underground network.

Simon Lightwood:

Ministers and officials have regular conversations with Transport for London on a variety of issues including accessibility of their network. Transport in London is devolved to the Mayor and TfL is responsible for managing the London Underground.

■ MV Solong and MV Stena Immaculate: Accidents**Ben Maguire:** [\[38278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of seafarers' (a) welfare and (b) roster patterns, in the context of the collision between Solong and Stena Immaculate.

Mike Kane:

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is undertaking an investigation into the incident. Its findings will be made available in due course. MAIB will consider the circumstances of the incident, including any relevant crewing issues. We must give those teams the time and support to do their job without pre-judging what may have caused this tragic incident.

■ Roads: Death and Injuries**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[37987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce road (a) deaths and (b) serious injuries among young people.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government treats road safety seriously, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. My department is developing our road safety strategy and will set out more details in due course.

Road safety is devolved to Northern Ireland (as well as to Wales and Scotland).

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[38041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether repairing potholes is (a) revenue and (b) capital expenditure for local authorities.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport provides local highway authorities with capital funding for local highway maintenance. Local authorities receive revenue funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Capital funded highway maintenance activities are typically structural in nature and may include planned reactive repairs, such as permanent small-scale repairs to roads and pavements. However, capital funding cannot be used to fund the operating costs of a service, or for recurring expenditure such as grass-cutting or other cyclical maintenance activities, or for temporary short-term patching of potholes.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[38043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what statistics her Department holds on the (a) number of potholes repaired and (b) area of roads resurfaced each year.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department does not collect data on the number of potholes treated or miles of road resurfaced in each local authority area each year, but instead collects information from local highway authorities on the overall condition of their roads. This is published annually, together with other information such as local authority expenditure on highway maintenance, on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-condition-statistics-data-tables-rdc>.

Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[37985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the maritime decarbonisation plan on the UK economy by 2029.

Mike Kane:

We will shortly set out our next steps for reducing shipping emissions in a forthcoming maritime decarbonisation plan, which will include a package of policy and regulatory measures. Maritime has a key role to play in supporting the Governments missions, including to Kickstart Economic Growth, and our plans will ensure that we seize the green growth opportunity of maritime decarbonisation, whilst limiting any impacts to business. We will publish an impact assessment and consult the industry on individual measures, and economic impacts will form part of these assessments.

Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Ben Maguire: [\[38279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to help (a) ports and (b) the shipping industry to (i) reduce emissions and (ii) transition to cleaner fuels.

Mike Kane:

We will shortly set out our next steps for reducing shipping emissions in a forthcoming maritime decarbonisation plan, which will include a package of policy and regulatory measures and action across both the port and shipping industries. Reducing emissions will rely on increased efficiency of operators, combined with a transition to cleaner zero, and near-zero greenhouse gas emission fuels and energy sources, and this plan will consider both the role of these fuels, and how we will support their uptake.

Shipping: National Security

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to update the national maritime security strategy, CP 724, published on 15 August 2022.

Mike Kane:

The Secretary of State for Transport has no current plans to publish a new national maritime security strategy. As announced by the PM, a new national security strategy will be published this summer.

■ **Travel Cards: Greater Manchester****Michael Wheeler:** [\[35491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department holds information on the cost of two zones (1+2) Manchester Metrolink adult annual travelcards in 2010.

Simon Lightwood:

Light rail, including the Manchester Metrolink, is devolved in England where local authorities, such as Greater Manchester Combined Authority, own and are responsible for the operations and financial sustainability of their own systems. This includes setting the costs for their own ticketing and annual fares.

As such, the Department does not hold such records information on the cost of two zones (1+2) Manchester Metrolink adult annual travelcards in 2010.

The honourable member may wish to contact Transport for Greater Manchester who are better placed to provide such information.

TREASURY■ **Agriculture: Inheritance Tax****Wendy Morton:** [\[37166\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33030 on Agriculture: Inheritance Tax, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of these reforms on the agricultural equipment and machinery sector.

James Murray:

I refer the Right Honourable Member to the answers given to her previous questions on this same topic in both UIN 16240 and UIN 33030.

Wendy Morton: [\[37167\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what consultation she has undertaken with agricultural stakeholders on the potential impacts of planned changes to Agricultural Property Relief.

James Murray:

I refer the Right Honourable Member to the answer given to UIN 33134.

■ **Arts and Tourism: Finance****Stuart Anderson:** [\[37280\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to allocate funding to support (a) sustainability and (b) innovation in the arts, tourism and leisure sector.

James Murray:

The Government has included the Creative Industries as one of the priority sectors in the Industrial Strategy, and as part of this is considering opportunities to support sustainability and innovation in the arts.

At Phase 1 of the Spending Review the Government allocated funding to support the arts and cultural sector, including a £270 million Arts Everywhere Fund that will help to improve the financial and environmental sustainability of arts venues and a £60 million package for the Creative Industries announced at the Creative Industries Growth Moment in January that will help creative business to grow and facilitate innovation.

The Government also supports the tourism industry primarily through funding for the British Tourist Authority to support VisitBritain and VisitEngland.

Any new funding plans will be considered as part of Phase 2 of the Spending Review in June.

Business Rates**Jim Shannon:**[\[36648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of the level of business rates on businesses over the last five years.

James Murray:

Business rates are devolved. In England, local authorities reported that the gross non-domestic rates income for 2023-24 was £33 billion.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that it intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for RHL properties in England, with Rateable Values below £500,000, from 2026-27. Ahead of these changes being made, we have prevented RHL relief from ending in April 2025 by extending it for one year at 40 per cent up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business and frozen the small business multiplier.

These announcements reflect the Government's first steps to support the high street. We want to go further to modernise the system, and so, we have published a Discussion Paper setting out priority areas for reform. This paper invites industry to help co-design a fairer business rates system over the course of this Parliament.

Defence: Investment**James Cartlidge:**[\[36719\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with pension firms on investment in the defence sector.

Torsten Bell:

Ministers meet a wide range of pension firms regularly. Trustees and fund managers are responsible for making investment decisions in line with their fiduciary duty and member preferences.

The Government has been actively engaging with the defence industry, trade associations and the financial services sector regarding access to financial services for defence companies. In a time of increasing geopolitical instability, maintaining a robust and thriving defence sector is essential to our national security.

■ Economic Policy

Mary Glendon: [\[36643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what role a) climate and b) nature experts perform in the creation of economic policy in her Department.

James Murray:

HM Treasury works across government to leverage expertise on climate and nature issues. HM Treasury also engages extensively with external stakeholders to inform related economic policy, as we recognise the value of incorporating expertise from outside government in addition to our internal capability.

The [Green Book](#) requires HM Treasury and other government departments to assess the climate and environmental impacts of policy proposals as part of their appraisal of costs and benefits. Within that, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has issued supplementary [guidance](#) for policy makers to consider the value of a natural capital approach. Similarly, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has issued supplementary guidance on the valuation of energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

■ Employers' Contributions: Unemployment

David Chadwick: [\[37471\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions on levels of unemployment.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, which takes into account tax measures announced in the Budget, expects the unemployment rate will fall to 4.1% next year and remain low until 2029.

■ Employers' Contributions: Work Experience

Wendy Morton: [\[37163\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33033 on Employers' Contributions: Apprentices, whether the employers' National Insurance contributions relief for under-21s and under-25 apprentices also applies to employed interns.

James Murray:

Employers of interns are eligible for these National Insurance Contributions reliefs provided the interns are either under age 21 with earnings between the Secondary

Threshold (ST), currently £175 a week and the Upper Secondary Threshold (UST), currently £967 a week; or are under age 25 with earnings above the ST and not exceeding the Apprentice Upper Secondary Threshold (AUST), currently £967 a week, and on an approved UK Government apprenticeship standard or framework.

Full details of the UK Government apprenticeship standard or frameworks which are approved can be found at [Paying employer National Insurance contributions for apprentices under 25 - GOV.UK](#).

■ Government Departments: Energy

Richard Fuller: [\[36622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which government departments have undergone efficiency assessments by the Office for Value for Money.

Richard Fuller: [\[36623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what role the Office for Value for Money plays in assessing the efficiency of government procurement processes; and whether it has been involved in reviewing framework agreements.

Darren Jones:

The Office for Value for Money is working with departments to root out waste and inefficiency. It will do this by working with departments to agree stretching and realistic technical efficiency targets, underpinned by robust delivery plans.

All departments and their arm's-length bodies are in scope for this piece of work.

The Office will target areas where it can have the most impact, rather than duplicating the work of others. It is the role of the Crown Commercial Service to review framework agreements.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Business Rates

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37227\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2025 to Question 30146 on Business Rates, what estimate she has made of the change in overall cost of the retail, hospitality and leisure relief scheme without a cash cap.

James Murray:

Without any Government intervention, retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) relief would have ended entirely in April 2025, creating a cliff-edge for businesses. Instead, the Government has decided to offer a 40 per cent discount to RHL properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business in 2025-26.

To deliver our manifesto pledge, from 2026-27, we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, with rateable values below £500,000. Whereas RHL relief currently limits support to a cash cap of £110,000 per business, the Government intends to have no such limit on

the new multipliers in order to better ensure more widespread support for the high street.

The Government will confirm the rates for the new multipliers at Budget 2025, taking account of the outcomes of the 2026 revaluation as well as the broader economic and fiscal context.

Tax policy and legislation is not subject to the Better Regulation Framework Guidance which requires an Impact Assessment to accompany policy decisions. Nevertheless, when the new, permanently lower tax rates are set at Budget 2025, the Treasury intends to publish analysis of the effects of the new multiplier arrangements.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Max Wilkinson: [\[36823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a lower rate of VAT for the hospitality sector.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[36899\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will consider reducing the rate of VAT on hospitality.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[36900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing VAT on hospitality.

James Murray:

To support hospitality businesses, the Government intends to introduce permanently lower business rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, with Rateable Values below £500,000, from 2026-27.

Ahead of these changes being made, the Government recognises that businesses will need support in 2025-26. As such, the Government has prevented the current RHL relief from ending in April 2025, extending it for one year at 40 per cent up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business, and we have frozen the small business multiplier.

VAT is the UK's second largest tax, forecast to raise £171 billion in 2024/25. Tax breaks reduce the revenue available for vital public services and must represent value for money for the taxpayer. Exceptions to the standard rate have always been limited and balanced against affordability considerations.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Taxation

Mr Richard Holden: [\[36796\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will postpone changes to taxation to double-cab pick-up trucks for 12 months.

James Murray:

Double Cab Pick Up vehicles (DCPUs) have been treated as goods vehicles for tax purposes, rather than cars. Following a judgement by the Court of Appeal, Double

Cab Pick Ups must be treated as cars, rather than goods vehicles, for certain tax purposes, based on their primary suitability.

The government has no plans to legislate to treat DCPUs as goods vehicles as this would depart from the broader principles underpinning the Court of Appeal's judgement, and be a significant tax break worth hundreds of millions per year.

The transitional arrangements mean that this will not affect the capital allowances treatment of any business that already owns a DCPU, or that purchases one before April 2025; and businesses that purchase a DCPU after this date will still be able to deduct the cost from their taxable profits at 18% or 6% per year. Under the transitional arrangements for Benefit-in-Kind, anyone who has accessed a DCPU before April 2025 will not be impacted until the sooner of disposal of the vehicle, April 2029 or when their lease expires. The Government has no plans to legislate to postpone the changes. However, there are alternatives to DCPUs (such as Single Cab Pick Ups) that are still treated as goods vehicles.

■ Music Venues: Business Rates

Martin Wrigley: [\[36893\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to Business Rates Relief on grassroots music venues.

Martin Wrigley: [\[36894\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing grassroots music venues from the business rates system.

James Murray:

As set out at Autumn Budget 2024, the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, including grassroots music venues with Rateable Values below £500,00, from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on all properties with a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above.

In the interim period, for 2025-26, we have prevented the current RHL relief from ending in April 2025, extending it for one year at 40% up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business.

The Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee's report on grassroots music venues recommended that RHL relief should not be wholly withdrawn in April 2025. The Committee's report also highlighted the sector's desire for certainty and long-term stability. That is why the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street RHL properties from 2026-27.

The Government's full response to the CMS Committee's report was published on 14 November 2024 and is available online:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8227/grassroots-music-venues/publications/>.

■ North Sea Oil: Tax Allowances

Tom Morrison:

[36871]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of how much tax relief oil producers will receive for the development of the Rosebank oil field via the North Sea Investment Allowance; and what steps she is taking to ensure this funding scheme aligns with the Government's net-zero commitments.

James Murray:

The government's fiscal approach in relation to the upstream oil and gas sector balances attracting investment with ensuring a fair return for the nation in exchange for the use of its resources. In last year's Autumn Budget, the government increased the duration and rate of the Energy Profits Levy (EPL), a temporary additional tax on upstream oil and gas profits. The government also abolished an investment allowance in the EPL regime which was unique to oil and gas and not available to any other sector. These changes are expected to raise £2.3bn which will help support the transition to clean energy, enhance energy security and independence, and provide sustainable jobs for the future.

The regime includes several tax reliefs and allowances, including in relation to investments which reduce domestic production emissions to support the sector's transition to net zero.

Whilst it would not be appropriate for the government to comment on the tax affairs of individual companies, estimates of tax revenues and the cost of tax reliefs are publicly available from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and the government respectively.

The OBR's most recent forecast of tax revenues from the oil and gas sector is available at the following link: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-october-2024/>. Similarly, where data is available, estimates of the cost of tax reliefs applicable to the oil and gas sector are at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tax-relief-statistics>.

■ Pensions: Investment

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[37005]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of reclassifying weapons as ethical investments for pension funds.

Torsten Bell:

Trustees and fund managers are responsible for making investment decisions in line with their fiduciary duty and member preferences.

In a time of increasing geopolitical instability, maintaining a robust and thriving defence sector is essential to our national security. The Government has therefore been clear that supporting our defence industry is entirely consistent with ethical investing. The Defence Industrial Strategy Statement of Intent, published in

December 2024, recognised issues with regards to access to finance for the defence industry.

The Government has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, including defence suppliers and financial institutions, to assess the ways in which we can reduce these barriers and create a strong and resilient defence sector.

■ Personal Income: Expenditure

Blake Stephenson:

[\[36886\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the second bullet point in paragraph 2.3 of the document Impact on households: distributional analysis to accompany Autumn Budget 2024 and Spending Review 2025, Phase 1, whether her Department regularly undertakes modelling on the potential behavioural impacts of policy announcements.

James Murray:

HM Treasury distributional analysis only includes measures if they have a clear first-order impact on the benefit income, tax paid or the benefits-in-kind received through public services by UK residents. Therefore, this excludes the behavioural impacts of most measures, for example where households might reduce consumption to reduce the amount of tax they might otherwise pay. However, estimates of behavioural impacts from policy announcements are conducted by the government, as set out below.

[As per the Green Book \(2022\)](#), appraisals and evaluation are a key part of detailed policy development and design. HM Treasury officials, independently and in collaboration with other government departments, carry out longlist and shortlist appraisals. These include the consideration of distributional effects and consequences, such as possible changes in behaviour, that may result from an intervention.

As the independent official economic and fiscal forecaster, the Office for Budget Responsibility have a responsibility to report on the impact of policy announcements, including behaviour impacts, which they do in their Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Additionally, [Tax Information and Impact Notes](#), published on gov.uk, describe the 'economic impact' and 'impact on individuals, households and families'.

■ Politically Exposed Persons

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[37984\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the Financial Conduct Authority will publish revised guidance on politically exposed persons under the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government has been working closely with the FCA to follow up on the findings of its review into the treatment of Politically Exposed Persons by financial institutions,

and to ensure firms improve their practices where necessary. The FCA expects that the revised guidance will be published and brought into effect in the first half of 2025.

■ Public Houses and Hospitality Industry: Business Rates

Gregory Stafford: [\[37072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that business rates reform benefit pubs and breweries in every constituency.

James Murray:

From 2026-27, we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, including pubs and breweries, with rateable values below £500,000. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support.

This tax cut must be sustainably funded, and so we intend to introduce a higher rate on the most valuable properties on 2026-27 - those with Rateable Values of £500,000 and above. These represent less than one per cent of all properties, but cover the majority of large distribution warehouses, including those used by online giants.

The Government also published the 'Transforming Business Rates' Discussion Paper at Autumn Budget setting out priority areas for reform. This paper invites industry to help co-design a fairer business rates system that supports investment and is fit for the 21st century. Further information regarding the Discussion Paper can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-business-rates>.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Martin Wrigley: [\[36896\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will ensure that (a) Disability Living Allowance, (b) Personal Independence Payment, (c) SEND support funding and (d) other benefits for (i) children and (ii) their families are not reduced in the Spring Statement 2025.

Darren Jones:

The OBR's spring forecast will take place on 26th March and be accompanied by a statement to Parliament from the Chancellor. Ahead of the statement responding to the forecast, the Government will not give a running commentary on economic developments.

WALES

■ Energy: Prices

David Chadwick: [\[38271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps she is taking to help ensure electricity bills do not increase in Wales, in the context of proposals for zonal energy pricing.

Jo Stevens:

No decision has been taken on Zonal or Reformed National pricing. The Government are currently conducting analysis to understand the impacts of zonal pricing on consumers, including those in Wales.

The Government will ultimately develop proposals that minimise costs and ensure a fair outcome for consumers, as part of our Plan for Change to lower bills and improve living standards.

The Government is working closely with the Welsh Government to understand how any potential review of electricity market arrangements (REMA) reforms could impact Welsh consumers and industry, and this will be taken into account as part of the final decision-making process.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Age: Discrimination****Leigh Ingham:**[\[37835\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the Equality Act 2010 in tackling age discrimination in job applications.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Equality Act 2010 has strong protections that enable people to challenge age discrimination across a range of fields, including recruitment processes. Where age discrimination cannot be objectively justified and is unlawful, individuals can seek redress in the courts or, where relevant, at an employment tribunal.

We would encourage larger employers to monitor their recruitment processes, including job applications in the context of relevant protected characteristics, as a useful indicator of the strength of their compliance with the 2010 Act. More widely, the Government's £240 million Get Britain Working package will improve support for people who are economically inactive, unemployed, or want to develop their careers.

■ Disability: Rural Areas**Joe Morris:**[\[36860\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to reduce discrimination against disabled people in rural communities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

It is crucial that we ensure everyone is treated fairly when accessing services, so that they can thrive and reach their full potential.

Under the Equality Act 2010, businesses that provide goods and services to the public are required not to discriminate against disabled people regardless of location. The Act also places an anticipatory duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve access to premises/buildings and services so that disabled

customers have the same access to goods and services and are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled customers including in rural areas. This duty is anticipatory, meaning that service providers are expected to foresee the requirements of disabled people and the reasonable adjustments that may have to be made for them. However, the Act recognises the need to strike a balance between the needs of disabled people and the interests of service providers. What is 'reasonable' will vary from one situation to another, depending on the circumstances of the case.

The Government is fully committed to the Equality Act 2010 and the protections it provides to people with disabilities across the country.

■ Public Buildings: Sanitary Products

Jas Athwal: [\[37966\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she has made any assessment of the potential merits of the free provision of period products in public buildings in England.

Dame Nia Griffith:

This Government's approach is to resolve the issue at the source by tackling the reasons women and girls are pushed into period poverty to start with. We are protecting women's living standards, alongside the public services they rely on, so that no one has to go without life's essentials.

We are also continuing to make free period products available through several different avenues, including in schools and hospitals, to ensure that they are accessible to those most in need.

■ Racial Discrimination

Jas Athwal: [\[36956\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help end discrimination against ethnic minority people.

Seema Malhotra:

This government is clear that someone's race or ethnicity should never be a barrier to success. We are taking a number of steps across government to address race inequalities through our mission-based programme of reform and our Plan for Change.

As set out in the King's Speech last July, we are committed to introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for large employers. We have been discussing our proposals with trades unions, employers and their representative bodies and others and

have published today a consultation on our proposals.

These measures will be part of the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme**

Tom Morrison: [\[37384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the financial impact of the Access to Work scheme to the UK economy.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department has not made an estimate of the financial impact of the Access to Work scheme to the UK economy and currently does not have plans to do so. It's impact is important, however, in enabling people to work who would not otherwise be able to do so.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Hakluyt

Jon Trickett: [\[37123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Andrew Western:

Secondments is one way of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and has been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and data is held at Business Unit Level.

There have been no staff seconded into DWP from Hakluyt since July 2024.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Secondment

Jon Trickett: [\[36594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many of her Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Andrew Western:

There have been no inward secondments from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute or (d) Labour Together to the Department for Work and Pensions since July 2024.

■ Maternity Leave: Workplace Pensions

Terry Jermy: [\[37062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women have been affected by pension employer contribution discrepancies while on maternity since auto-enrolment began in 2012.

Terry Jermy:

[37063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure that women on maternity leave are not subject to discrepancies in their pension employer contributions.

Torsten Bell:

The Government is committed to raising labour standards and protecting workers' rights.

Employer compliance with Automatic Enrolment is high with over 2.4 million employers complying with their duties to date. The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has a statutory objective to maximise and enforce employer compliance with Automatic Enrolment.

Some employers can make common errors in relation to Automatic Enrolment by missing important steps in respect of calculating pensions contributions and communications to staff. These errors can include miscalculating contributions for staff receiving maternity pay. DWP does not hold data on how many women have been affected by any specific error.

TPR provides guidance and engages with employers, pension schemes and advisory bodies to raise awareness of common errors and maximise employer compliance. Where the Regulator is made aware of an error or discovers one in its regular on-site visits and data monitoring, it will work with the employer where possible to notify them of their error and how to correct it. Pension scheme managers and trustees also have a responsibility to ensure the correct management of schemes including monitoring the payment of accurate and timely contributions. Where employees themselves identify errors, they can raise these with their employer in the first instance and should they need to, they can report issues and seek resolution by contacting The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO) or The Pensions Regulator.

Individuals can find guidance on pension entitlements during maternity and paternity leave via the Money Helper website [Maternity and paternity leave and your pension | MoneyHelper](#)

We would encourage any women who find discrepancies in their employer pensions contributions to alert their employer, and TPR or TPO if necessary, so that they can receive the pension contributions they are entitled to. MoneyHelper also provides further information as to what to do if you think your employer is failing to pay into your pension correctly: [Help if your employer fails to pay into your pension | MoneyHelper](#)

■ Occupational Therapy

Max Wilkinson:

[36825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of occupational therapy-led vocational rehabilitation services in helping people to remain in work.

Alison McGovern:

Evidence shows that expert support such as Occupational Health services (including vocational rehabilitation services) can be a critical component in helping individuals remain in and return to work, reducing unnecessary sickness absence, increasing productivity and enabling individuals to live better for longer. This Government set out our plans to tackle economic inactivity driven by ill health and increase participation in the labour market in the Get Britain Working White Paper last year. These included an independent review which is considering how to support and enable employers to recruit and retain more people with a health condition or disability, promote healthy workplaces and support more people to stay in or return to work from periods of sickness absence.

■ Pensions: Consumer Information**Jas Athwal:**[\[37951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to (a) improve access to pension information and (b) introduce the Pension Dashboards Scheme.

Torsten Bell:

The Government ensures everyone has access to free impartial pension guidance through the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS). Their MoneyHelper service provides guidance to the public on all areas of UK pensions. In September 2024, MaPS launched a new digital service to give individuals more choice on how to access guidance from Pension Wise, which is part of MoneyHelper.

Pensions dashboards will improve access to pensions information by allowing people to view information about their pensions, including the State Pension, securely and in one place online. This will help promote greater engagement with pensions information, empowering people to better prepare for retirement. MaPS oversees the Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP) which is responsible for designing and implementing the digital architecture that will make pensions dashboards work.

The PDP continues to test the connection journeys with around 20 volunteer participants. This activity will help support the connection of pension schemes and providers to the dashboards digital architecture from the end of April 2025, in line with the published timetable. The connection of schemes and providers in line with the dates in guidance will enable MaPS and the PDP to undertake user testing, in turn helping to inform the launch of dashboard services at the earliest possible point. Further information on dashboards delivery progress is set out in the update report, published biannually on the PDP's website: www.pensionsdashboardsprogramme.org.uk/progress-update-report.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Ann Davies:

[\[38295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of PIP recipients in (a) Wales, (b) England and (c) the UK live in post-industrial areas.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Data on the proportion of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) recipients in each region broken down by areas can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#). There is no official definition of post-industrial areas for use in official statistics. This [recent article published by the House of Lords Library](#) references academic research which has produced a working definition of former industrial areas, which may be of use.

The PIP recipients in (a) Wales and (b) England can be found in the 'PIP Cases with Entitlement from 2019' dataset. Figures for England and Wales can be broken down by Census Output Area 2011 to the Local Authority level using the categories under 'DWP policy ownership' within the 'National - Regional - LA – OAs' variable.

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user, and if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

The Department for Work and Pensions only administers PIP in England and Wales and is therefore unable to provide figures for (c) the UK. In Scotland, Adult Disability Payment (ADP) has replaced PIP from summer 2022 and in Northern Ireland, PIP is administered by the Department for Communities.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Payments

Josh Babarinde:

[\[36862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of dispensing PIP payments on a weekly basis.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Payments of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are made every four weeks in arrears, other than SREL (Special Rules, End of Life) cases, which are paid weekly in advance. These are set out in legislation.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Wales

Ann Davies:

[\[38292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) number of PIP recipients and (b) average PIP award amount received each month is in each (i) local authority area and (ii) constituency in Wales for the most recent period for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can be found on [Stat Xplore](#). The requested data can be found in the 'PIP Cases with Entitlement from 2019' dataset. You can use the 'Month' filter to select the latest data available. You can filter by

Local Authority and Constituency in Wales by using the 'Geography' filter to select either 'National – Regional – LA – OAs' or 'Westminster Parliamentary Constituency 2024' and to select Wales you will need to filter by 'DWP policy ownership' and then select 'England and Wales' and then 'Wales'.

To look at the average award amounts, you can use the 'Measures' filter to select 'Financial Award' to get the award amount received.

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

■ Probate

Jonathan Davies: [\[37082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the target timeframe is for completing investigations into estates of deceased individuals where benefits may need to be recovered following the grant of probate; and what measures are in place to prevent prolonged delays.

Andrew Western:

There is no target timeframe for completing investigations into estates of deceased individuals, some cases are more complex than others and take time to conclude. The Recovery from Estates (RFE) team within Debt Management contacts executors to provide historic financial information in order to carry out posthumous reviews of benefit entitlement. This often takes time to progress, which can extend the customer journey.

There has been an increase in the number of DWP RFE cases which has impacted on the length of time to respond to customers. More staff have been trained to deal with the increase in cases and delays to customer responses are being reduced. We are also reviewing our current processes to identify any further improvements to continue to reduce the time to process RFE cases.

■ Seasonal workers: Agriculture

Chris Law: [\[37202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Health and Safety Executive Inspections of farms employing workers on the Seasonal Worker visa were conducted in each of the last five years in (a) Scotland, (b) England and (c) Wales.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety, this includes workplace health and safety risks created in agriculture.

The table below shows the total number of farm inspections carried out by HSE over the last 5 years in Scotland, England and Wales. HSE's farm inspection programme over those years focused on health and safety standards on site for all workers. No farm inspection programmes over the last 5 years were focused exclusively on one

group of farm workers such as seasonal workers. If during a farm site visit, matters directly affecting a specific group or number of workers on a particular site were identified by the inspector, they would be dealt with accordingly.

Please see the figures for farm inspections conducted in each of the last five years in (a) Scotland, (b) England and (c) Wales:

:

YEAR**	NUMBER OF FARM INSPECTIONS*			
	Scotland	England	Wales	Total
2019/20	143	534	18	695
2020/21	34	174	4	212
2021/22	70	263	59	392
2022/23	105	627	51	783
2023/24	22	424	34	480
2024/25	7	62	7	76

*DEFINED BY THE [NATURE OF BUSINESS: STANDARD INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION \(SIC\) CODES](#)

** years commencing 1st April

■ Social Security Benefits: Advisory Services

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[37006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of reductions to the welfare budget on the number of people seeking welfare advice; and what steps she is taking to ensure advice services are adequately funded to meet demand.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[37007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure advice sector staff receive adequate training to deal with potential changes to the welfare budget.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP is not responsible for funding the welfare advice sector which receives funding from a range of sources.

DWP does fund Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to deliver Help to Claim which provides support to people to make a new claim to Universal Credit. DWP provides Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland. DWP constantly

reviews the funding for Help to Claim and has increased Help to Claim funding to meet forecast additional demand from people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance who are being invited to move to Universal Credit. The funding includes money to train staff to deliver Help to Claim.

DWP publishes benefit guidance in the House of Commons library so that it is available to individuals and organisations, and it can be used to develop appropriate training.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Ann Davies:

[\[38294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of the population of (a) Wales, (b) England and (c) the UK received (i) PIP, (ii) Disability Living Allowance, (iii) Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity and (iv) attendance allowance in the most recent period for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Table 1 below contains the proportion of the population of England and Wales receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) and Attendance Allowance (AA).

Table 1: The percentage of the population of England and Wales receiving the different disability benefits

	ENGLAND	WALES
PIP	5%	8%
DLA	2%	2%
LCWRA	2%	3%
AA	2%	3%

The Department for Work and Pensions only administers PIP in England and Wales and is therefore unable to provide figures for the UK. In Scotland, Adult Disability Payment (ADP) has replaced PIP from summer 2022 and in Northern Ireland, PIP is administered by the Department for Communities.

■ Universal Credit

Steve Darling:

[\[37361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of the removal of the additional Limited Capability for Work payment in 2017 on the likelihood of claimants applying for the Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity payment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[Holding answer 17 March 2025]: The removal of the Work-Related Activity Component in the 2017 change made the financial distinction between those found to have Limited Capability for Work (LCW) and those with Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity (LCWRA) sharper.

The Department has not made an assessment of whether this led to rising LCWRA claims. Although, in their “Welfare trends” report for October 2024, the Office for Budget Responsibility did mention this issue. Specifically, the OBR noted an increase of people’s claims to incapacity benefits being approved from 2018-19 to 2022-23, nearly entirely in the more severe incapacity group. They say that this might be in part explained by the reduced generosity of the 2017 policy for the less severe incapacity group creating higher incentives to be placed in the more severe group, as well as a reflection in claimants having more serious health conditions than in the past.

■ Universal Credit: Childcare**Martin Wrigley:**[\[36890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time is for an appeal against a decision following an application for Universal Credit childcare support; and what steps her Department is taking to expedite cases in which the time taken to appeal those decisions is causing financial hardship for families.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP is not solely responsible for the wait time. Appeals are lodged by claimants with HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), which the claimant may take up to 13 months to do. DWP have 28 days to respond to the appeal when notified by HMCTS, after which, the time taken to list the appeal is dependent on HMCTS, who administer tribunal hearings.

■ Universal Credit: Disability**Tom Morrison:**[\[36869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of applying conditionality to disabled people in receipt of Universal Credit who are exempt from conditionality.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Currently, customers with disabilities receiving UC may have to meet certain requirements in return for the benefit they receive. Those with the most severe health conditions and disabilities however are not subject to conditionality requirements.

Today the Government has published a green paper which sets out a new guaranteed offer of high-quality tailored support and a new baseline expectation of engagement for those with health conditions and disabilities and seeks views on which individuals or groups of individuals should be exempt from requirements to engage with this.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ School funding

The Secretary of State for Education (Bridget Phillipson):

[\[HCWS532\]](#)

Today the Department for Education has confirmed National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant funding rates and schools' pupil premium funding rates for the financial year 2025-26.

The NICs Grant will provide schools, colleges, and high needs settings with over £1 billion to support them with the increases to employer National Insurance contributions from April 2025, broken down as set out in the table below.

SETTING/PHASE	NICS GRANT FUNDING IN 2025-26
Mainstream (5-16) schools and academies	£786 million
High needs settings	£125 million
Local authority centrally employed teachers	£22 million
Post-16 providers	£155 million
Early years providers	£25 million

Despite the challenging economic context, core funding for schools was prioritised in the Budget, and the NICs support is additional to the £2.3 billion increase announced in October. This means that the core schools budget will total over £64.8 billion in 2025-26.

Further information can be found on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-insurance-contributions-nics-grant-and-early-years-national-insurance-contributions-ey-nics-grant-for-2025-to-2026>

The pupil premium grant provides additional funding to schools to support disadvantaged pupils so that they achieve and thrive in education. Total pupil premium funding will rise to over £3 billion in 2025-26, an increase of almost 5% from 2024-25.

The pupil premium funding rates are increasing by 2.39% (and then rounded) compared to 2024-25 rates, in line with the forecast GDP deflator measure of inflation. The table below sets out the new pupil premium rates that will take effect from 1 April 2025.

2025-26 PUPIL PREMIUM RATE

Primary pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have been eligible in the past 6 years	£1,515
Secondary pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have been eligible in the past 6 years	£1,075
Children who are looked after by the local authority	£2,630
Pupils previously looked after by a local authority or other state care	£2,630

The grant also provides support for children and young people of service families, referred to as service pupil premium. The service pupil premium rate is also increasing by 2.39% (and then rounded) in 2025-26, to £350 per eligible pupil from 1 April 2025.

Further information can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **World Health Organisation Pandemic Accord Negotiations**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Ashley Dalton): [\[HCWS529\]](#)

I would like to update the House regarding the latest round of negotiations on a legally binding international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response – the Pandemic Accord – at the World Health Organization (WHO).

In March 2021, the UK joined other WHO Member States in calling for a Pandemic Accord that would ensure the world is better prepared for any future pandemic. Negotiations on the Pandemic Accord have been ongoing since 2022, and Member States have until the World Health Assembly in May 2025 to reach an agreement.

The Pandemic Accord aims to enable a better coordinated, global response to pandemic threats and facilitate more equitable and timely access to pandemic-related vaccines, treatments, and tests. With a future pandemic a certainty, the Pandemic Accord is an opportunity to better protect the UK against this threat and to deliver on the Government's health and growth missions, including through improving pandemic prevention, promoting innovation in pandemic related research and development (R&D), and putting in place systems that can promptly respond to pandemic threats when they emerge. The UK will

only sign up to a Pandemic Accord which is both in the national interest and protects the health of people in the UK and around the world.

Member States have reached provisional agreement on around 75% of the text, while negotiating on the principle that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. Since the House was last updated in November, provisional agreement has been reached on Articles covering sustainable financing for the implementation of the agreement, and R&D. During the latest round of negotiations, between 17-21 February, some progress was made on portions of the text covering pandemic prevention, the opening chapter of the Accord (covering definitions, objectives, and principles), and pathogen access and benefit sharing (PABS). However, there is still some way to go on several issues, including on technology transfer and further areas within the pandemic prevention and PABS Articles, with limited time remaining to negotiate the text. The UK Government remains committed to working with Member States to reach an effective agreement.

I will continue to update the House as negotiations near conclusion.

JUSTICE

■ Management of the Prison Estate

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Shabana Mahmood):

[\[HCWS531\]](#)

This Government inherited a prison system on the verge of collapse, which would have left the courts unable to send offenders to prison and the police unable to arrest dangerous criminals. I took decisive action and implemented changes to the standard determinate sentence release point which provided essential but temporary relief to the system.

When I updated parliament in July 2024, I was clear that the capacity crisis would not disappear immediately and the changes to release points were never the whole solution to the prison capacity crisis we inherited. To put our Criminal Justice System on a sustainable footing for the long term, I launched the Independent Review of Sentencing in October and set out the 10 Year Prison Capacity Strategy to deliver the 14,000 new prison places we promised. In my commitment to transparency, I also laid the first Annual Statement on prison capacity, setting out expected demand and supply for prison places.

Over the last three months population growth in the prison estate has been high – January saw the highest average monthly prison population growth in almost two years, which has only just begun to slow. As of 17 March, there were 824 places remaining in the adult male estate. We are operating at more than 99% occupancy. Operating this close to critical capacity increases the risk that prisons do not have sufficient space for a given prisoner entering the system and so an alternative has to be found, which is most frequently in a police cell. In recent weeks this has happened hundreds of times, far above the rate seen during normal operations. On the night of 10 March, there were 124 no-space lockouts, which is the highest number of business-as-usual (BAU) lockouts on record.

We have just opened a new 458-capacity houseblock at HMP Rye Hill. In addition, in a few weeks' time, I will be opening HMP Millsike, a brand new 1,500 capacity prison in North Yorkshire.

However, I expect prison capacity will remain tight until the new capacity is fully operational. Given the recent increase in demand, it is necessary, and prudent, for me to temporarily reactivate Operation Safeguard to better manage the flow of offenders into the prison estate. This is an established protocol that will ensure that HMPPS and police forces can jointly plan which police cells may be required to hold offenders on any particular day. The previous government last activated Operation Safeguard in February 2023; it ran until it was formally deactivated in October 2024 by this government. This time we have a clear plan to improve capacity and minimise the use of Safeguard.

Safeguard will help ensure temporary pressures on the prison estate are managed effectively with partners in the police. We will keep its use under constant review and work closely with police colleagues to ensure we can stand down cells as soon as they are not required.

I am incredibly grateful for the support of police colleagues and want to pay tribute to the continued extraordinary work of our frontline staff in police, courts, prisons and probation whose daily efforts keep the public safe.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Public consultation - Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Equalities) (Seema Malhotra):
[\[HCWS530\]](#)

This government is committed to ensuring that equality and opportunity are at the heart of our programme for national renewal. Our Plan for Change sets out the ambitious - but achievable - milestones we aim to reach by the end of this Parliament. The work we are doing will improve the lives of working people and strengthen our country.

The manifesto and King's Speech last July announced our intention to legislate to deliver mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for larger employers. These measures will help employers identify and tackle pay disparities across their workforces, remove barriers to opportunity for ethnic minority and disabled staff and support our Plan for Change in driving up household income for all.

Today we are launching a public consultation in support of this. Responses to the consultation will help shape the pay gap reporting measures that we will include in the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, to be published later in this session.

We are particularly interested to hear from those who will be impacted by these proposals, including employers, representative bodies, trades unions, race and disability stakeholders, ethnic minority and disabled people, and disabled people's organisations.

We are considering what other measures the draft Bill could incorporate, including through a call for evidence which will be published separately. The call for evidence will

include consideration of how we make the right to equal pay effective for ethnic minority and disabled people.

We are also announcing today that we are establishing a Race Equality Engagement Group to help us develop further measures to tackle race inequality. This group, which will be chaired by Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, will enable us to work closely with communities and stakeholders to find out what matters most to them.

A copy of the consultation document will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).