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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Coaker	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Collins of Highbury	Whip
Lord Cryer	Whip
Baroness Gustafsson	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
Lord Hanson of Flint	Minister of State, Home Office
Baroness Hayman of Ullock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill	Minister of State, Department for Transport
Lord Hermer	Attorney-General
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Baroness Jones of Whitchurch	Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Whip
Lord Kennedy of Southwark	Chief Whip
Lord Khan of Burnley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Leong	Whip
Lord Livermore	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Merron	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, Whip
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Baroness Smith of Cluny	Advocate-General for Scotland
Baroness Smith of Malvern	Minister of State, Department for Education
Baroness Taylor of Stevenage	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Whip
Lord Timpson	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
Baroness Twycross	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport, Spokesperson, Cabinet Office, Whip
Lord Vallance of Balham	Minister of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Baroness Wheeler	Deputy Chief Whip

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Written Statements

Monday, 10 February 2025

Energy Performance of Privately Rented Homes: England and Wales

[HLWS425]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband MP) has today made the following statement:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is today publishing a consultation on reforms to the minimum energy efficiency standards that are applied to private rented sector homes under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015. Improving the energy efficiency of private rented homes is essential to cutting bills, tackling fuel poverty, reducing carbon emissions and increasing our energy independence.

Everyone deserves the security and comfort of a warm home. Our aim is to raise as many households in the private rented sector out of fuel poverty as possible. This consultation is a key step towards meeting our fuel poverty target and ensuring tenants have the warmer homes that they deserve. We are seeking views on a range of proposals to address poorly insulated homes to help improve living standards and the enforcement of regulations to ensure tenants are better protected.

The Government is also seeking views on how best to support landlords deliver effective and high-quality changes, such as the EPC metrics the new standard should be set against, the implementation timeline, and the maximum required investment, including whether the maximum required investment should be the same for all properties, or whether it should be varied, and under what circumstances a reduced investment might be allowed. Government also seeks views on whether short-term let properties should be regulated under these standards, as well as what role smart meter installation and letting agents should play.

Once we have considered the responses to the consultation, we intend, subject to Parliamentary time and approvals, to bring forward changes to both primary and secondary legislation so that we can implement improvements to the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015.

Government welcomes responses to the consultation from all stakeholders, tenants, landlords, letting agencies and local authorities. We look forward to receiving feedback through the consultation and working with all those with an interest in improving the domestic private rented sector and tackling fuel poverty.

Drax Power Station: Biomass

[HLWS422]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero (Michael Shanks MP) made the following Statement today:

In January 2024, the previous government launched a consultation on supporting large scale biomass generators when existing support ends in 2027. Since this government came to office, we have carefully considered responses to the consultation and assessed the case for a new support mechanism.

Biomass currently plays an important role in our energy system, but we are conscious of concerns about sustainability and the level of subsidy biomass plants have received in the past.

The department will very shortly publish our response to the consultation. Alongside it, I want to report on our conclusions about the role of Drax Power Station in Yorkshire in the years 2027 to 2031.

In coming to this view, we have taken advice from the National Energy System Operator (NESO) on security of supply; analysed the effect on consumers of support for biomass versus alternatives; looked at issues around subsidy and sustainability in existing arrangements; and considered longer term issues around decarbonisation.

First, on security of supply, we inherited a situation from the previous government where there was no long-term planning for our energy system and its resilience. In the system we have inherited, large-scale biomass provides around 5% of our annual electricity generation, serving a specific role as a source of firm power.

To meet our needs between 2027 and 2031 we could seek to replace Drax with new gas fired power stations, but in the timescale we have there would be significant risks to relying on this approach. In that context, NESO have advised us that Drax plays an important role in delivering security of supply between 2027 and 2031.

Second, on price, we have undertaken comprehensive analysis of the costs of biomass against alternatives. Our central projections show that, on the right terms and in a much more limited role than today, biomass generation at Drax is the lowest cost option, including when compared to gas-fired power stations, for billpayers during this period.

Third, we have looked at previous arrangements for subsidy and sustainability. We believe that they simply did not deliver a good enough deal for billpayers and enabled Drax to make unacceptably large profits.

At the same time, they demanded levels of sustainability that are not now in line with the latest scientific evidence or global best practice, including supply chain emissions well above the European standards.

We have concluded that if Drax is to continue to play a role in our power system these arrangements must urgently be improved going forward.

Fourth, we have looked at issues around decarbonisation. Our finding is there is a potential role for bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, or Power BECCS, but realistically this will take time to implement and therefore cannot form the primary basis of this decision.

Following this assessment, and given the circumstances we have inherited, the clear evidence is that Drax is important to delivering a secure, value for money power system in the period 2027 to 2031. But we have also concluded that we cannot allow Drax to operate in the way it has done before or with the level of subsidy it received in the past.

On this basis, we have secured Heads of Terms that will form the basis of a very different agreement with Drax for support during the period 2027 to 2031. A summary of this agreement is included at the end of this statement.

First, it will ensure Drax plays a much more limited role in the system, providing low carbon dispatchable power only when it is really needed.

Drax currently operates as a baseload plant, running around two thirds of the time. This means it provides power even when other renewable sources are abundant. This must not continue in the same way. Under the new arrangement, Drax will be supported to operate at a maximum load factor of just 27% – operating less than half as often as it currently does.

This will be guaranteed by the design of the dispatchable Contract for Difference that we have agreed. When renewable power is abundant, Drax won't generate, and consumers will benefit from cheaper wind and solar instead.

Second, the contract will deliver much better value for consumers. It will significantly reduce the amount paid in subsidies compared to the existing support mechanism. This new deal halves the subsidies for Drax – equivalent to a saving of nearly £6 per household per year.

Furthermore, our analysis shows this will save consumers £170m in subsidy in each year of the agreement compared with the alternative of procuring gas in the capacity market.

The deal limits the expected rate of return for Drax to a level below that of monopolies regulated by Ofgem. But while this is our central estimate, we are not prepared to take the risk of prices soaring in response to volatile fossil fuel markets. As a result, the agreement includes a built-in windfall mechanism with rates of 30% and 60% that would claw back excess profits made by Drax. This will guarantee a much fairer deal for consumers than the past.

Third, we will introduce tough new measures on sustainability. We will increase the proportion of woody biomass that must come from sustainable sources from 70% to 100%. We will also significantly cut the allowable supply chain emissions to a level in line with the much

stricter regulations currently operating in the rest of Europe. And we will exclude material sourced from primary forests and old growth forests from receiving support payments.

There will be substantial penalties on Drax if these criteria are not met.

We will go further to ensure greater confidence that these standards will be met. The government will appoint an independent sustainability adviser to work with my department, the Low Carbon Contracts Company and Ofgem to ensure our monitoring and enforcement measures are robust and keep pace with the science.

These measures represent a profound shift from the past on sustainability and on value for money. In this context, this is the right deal for security of supply and price in the period 2027 to 2031, given the circumstances we have inherited from the previous government.

But nevertheless, we recognise the strength of concerns about the use of unabated biomass. It is not a long-term solution. We are determined that the next time these decisions are made government is not left in the circumstances we have been. So we will do the work that was not done by the previous administration on strong and credible low carbon alternatives, so that we have proper options in 4 years' time.

To help that process, we are setting up an independent review to consider how respective greenhouse gas removal, including large-scale power BECCS and DACCS, can assist the UK in meeting our net zero targets and ensuring security of supply, out to 2050. Further details of the review will be shared in due course.

These steps are about fulfilling our duty to ensure security of supply and the best deal for billpayers.

We have faced up to the circumstances left by the previous government and delivered a step change in value for money and sustainability. This government will do whatever it takes to deliver energy security and protect billpayers now and into the future.

Overview of Heads of Terms for a Low Carbon Dispatchable Contract for Difference with Drax Power Ltd - related to electricity generation at their Selby plant.

Overview

Government has agreed Heads of Terms with Drax Power Ltd for a Low Carbon Dispatchable Contract for Difference (CfD) at their 2.6GW Selby power station. The Heads of Terms define the commercial terms that will underpin a new contract to be finalised over the coming months.

Following advice from the National Energy System Operator as to the utility of this plant for security of supply purposes, the Heads of Terms for a four-year CfD was agreed that ensures Drax will provide low carbon dispatchable electricity when the system, and in turn consumers, most require it.

Heads of Terms Summary

The key terms are as follows:

- Duration - 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2031.

This arrangement will commence on 1 April, the day after existing support arrangements conclude, and be limited to four years in duration.

- Strike price - £113MWh (2012 prices).
- Generation collar – that caps the annual load factor eligible for subsidy at 27%.

Together the strike price and the capped load factor are projected to halve the subsidy that Drax will receive during this contract period, compared against Drax's current arrangements (under the Renewables Obligation and CfD). This is equivalent to savings of nearly £6 per household per year.

Furthermore, Drax is obliged to generate to a minimum annual contract floor of 22%, ensuring the system, and consumers, can rely on their presence.

- Excess Returns Mechanism on Profit.

This contract has been calibrated to provide Drax with a limited return over the contract period. However, should Drax make higher than anticipated profits in an extreme price scenario, a profit clawback mechanism is in place to protect the consumer.

- Enhanced sustainability criteria.

The CfD substantially tightens sustainability criteria. It, i) increases the proportion of biomass that must be sustainably sourced from 70% to 100%; ii) reduces the supply chain emission threshold from 55.6 gCO₂e/MJ to 36.6 gCO₂e/MJ (aligned with international best practice, eg. EU's RED III); and, iii) will include provisions to exclude material sourced from primary and old growth forests from receiving support payments.

- Robust contract compliance arrangements.

Should Drax not comply with the sustainability criteria, then subsidy payments for electricity generated from whole consignments of biomass generation can be revoked and there is a termination right for repeated breaches of those requirements.

Local Authority Public Health Grant

[HLWS427]

Baroness Merron: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Ashley Dalton MP) has made the following Written Statement:

On 7 February, the Government published the Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities in England for 2025/26.

Funding for local government's health responsibilities is an essential element of our commitment to invest in preventing ill health, promoting healthier lives and addressing health disparities.

It is an important component of our Plan for Change in health, through which we will build an NHS fit for the future, tackle the underlying drivers of ill health and health inequalities, and deliver three fundamental shifts: from hospital to community, from analogue to digital and from sickness to prevention.

In 2025/26 we are increasing funding through the Public Health Grant, and the 100% retained business rate arrangement for local authorities in Greater Manchester, to £3.858 billion. This represents an average 5.4% cash increase, or 3.0% real-terms increase, compared to 2024/25.

The 2025/26 Public Health Grant will continue to be subject to conditions, including a ring-fence requiring local authorities to use the grant exclusively for public health activity.

Following the next phase of the Spending Review in Spring, we will aim to issue multi-year allocations from 2026/27 and will also consider whether further funding reforms could support local authorities to improve health outcomes for their local populations.

Full details of the Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities for 2025/26 can be found on gov.uk. This information has been communicated to local authorities in a Local Authority Circular.

Plan for Barrow

[HLWS424]

Lord Khan of Burnley: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety (Alex Norris MP) has today made the following statement:

Economic stability, secure borders and national security are the foundations of the Government's Plan for Change. To deliver long-term change and achieve the Government's missions, everything possible must be done to secure these foundations.

This Government is committed to supporting the town of Barrow-in-Furness to play its crucial role in supporting and sustaining the Defence Nuclear Enterprise. The BAE Systems' Barrow shipyard is the only facility in the UK with the infrastructure, site licence and resource to design and build the UK's nuclear submarines – including the new *Dreadnought* class. At the heart of that role is Barrow's community, and that is why the £200 million Barrow Transformation Fund is a long-term investment in the people of Barrow.

The Barrow Delivery Board is the local governance institution that will decide on use of the Transformation Fund and deliver the Plan for Barrow. The Board, including representation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Ministry of Defence, will embody this Government's commitment to empowering local leadership, taking independent and bold decisions in Barrow's best interests.

The Government is today announcing the appointment of Dr Simon Case as Chair of the Barrow Delivery Board. This is a crucial, outward-facing role that will set the strategic vision of the Board, deliver the Plan for Barrow, and ensure that Barrow's community sees the fullest benefits. Dr Simon Case was most recently Cabinet Secretary and Head of the UK Civil Service, bringing with him a wealth of leadership experience and

understanding of complex policy and delivery challenges. As Cabinet Secretary, Dr Case was part of the development of the Plan for Barrow, providing him with an understanding of both the area and the defence imperative of the work required.

The Government is confident in the Board's ability to deliver the Plan for Barrow and committed to continuing to work with local partners on this important priority.

Public Inquiries: Enhancing Public Trust

[HLWS421]

Baroness Twycross: My Right Honourable friend the Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office, the Rt Hon. Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, has today made the following statement:

I am today publishing the Government's response to the House of Lords Statutory Inquiries Committee report *Public Inquiries: Enhancing public trust*.

Public inquiries are a valued and well-established part of our administrative justice system. Recent years have provided ample demonstration of their value. They are widely considered to be an independent, legitimate and trusted method of investigating complex issues of deep public concern. Inquiries have shown themselves to be a way to shed light on injustices of the past, have provided a means for victims and survivors to finally have their voices heard, and to help to rebuild trust in national institutions.

The House of Lords Statutory Inquiries Committee was appointed last year to consider the efficacy and practice of inquiries established under the Inquiries Act 2005. The evidence it heard and the thoughtful report it published recognised that despite the value of inquiries, there is scope for improvements to make them more efficient and effective, and in particular, to ensure greater transparency and accountability in response to inquiry recommendations.

The Committee's report is a valuable contribution to a timely discussion and the Government is grateful to Lord Norton and his colleagues for their report. Our response, which is published on gov.uk, signals my intention to build on this important work with a wider review of the policy and operational framework around public inquiries and I look forward to providing an update to Parliament on this work in due course.

Reform of Home Buying and Selling: Next Steps

[HLWS423]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Homelessness and Democracy (Rushanara Ali MP) has today made the following statement:

The current home buying and selling process is notoriously slow, with transactions taking 21 weeks on average whilst countries like Norway manage this in as

little as 4 weeks. This is costly and uncertain for households with one in three transactions falling through. The cost of these failed transactions is felt by households who lose around £400m each year in direct costs alone as a result, and much larger indirect impacts on people's ability to make the right choices for their work and families. This government is committed to reforming the housing market, making transactions easier and giving people more control over the management of their homes.

That is why, this week, the Government has set out new plans to modernise and streamline the way in which people buy and sell property. These modern, digital transactions will revolutionise the information available to consumers, delivering the right data at the right time, reducing the number of collapsing chains. The system will be enabled by accessible, standardised data, meaning that trusted information can be shared easily between customers and property professionals. This improved system will support our economy, increasing the volume of property transactions, and facilitating the labour market.

We have unveiled a package of measures to push this vision forwards. This includes: piloting approaches to digitalising and opening up crucial property data; committing to the introduction of common data standards across the home buying and selling sector and continuing to drive adoption of digital identity services and electronic signatures in home buying and selling; and harnessing the information and expertise held by HMLR to drive innovation in the proptech sector and develop new services.

We know that this Government cannot do this on its own. That is why this work will be carried out in conjunction with the Digital Property Market Steering Group: representatives of industry and government experts committed to digitalising home buying and selling, and delivering this change that is so badly needed.

Our vision is for a housing market that works for people of all ages, across all tenures, and in communities across the country. We therefore intend to publish a long-term housing strategy later this year setting out this vision, the steps we will take to achieve this, and how we will provide long-term certainty to the market.

Requirements on Ukrainian Drivers and Vehicles

[HLWS426]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: My Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport (Lilian Greenwood), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

The UK is continuing to support Ukrainians following the illegal invasion by Putin.

The Government is extending by 18 months the period for which certain Ukrainian driving licence holders can drive Mopeds, motor bicycles and cars (category B) in Great Britain (GB), beyond the current 36-months. This will allow certain Ukrainian licence holders to drive in

GB for a period of up to 54 months (4 years and 6 months) after becoming resident.

This will continue to support Ukrainian licence holders' ability to get around and adapt to living in GB.

Separate to the driving licensing extension SI, the Government will extend the existing exemption for certain Ukrainians on specific visa schemes from registering, and paying vehicle excise duty (VED), on their Ukrainian-plated and registered vehicles to align

with the length of their UK visas. The extension is effective from 4 March 2025, to ensure Ukrainians can continue to use their vehicles without needing to register or pay VED. Further information will be posted on Gov.UK.

Finally, driver licensing is devolved in Northern Ireland so the relevant regulations would need to be followed by those Ukrainian Refugees resident there.

Written Answers

Monday, 10 February 2025

Actuaries: Regulation

Asked by *Lord Davies of Brixton*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to publish draft legislation on the oversight and regulation of the actuarial profession during this parliamentary Session. [HL4599]

Lord Livermore: In the King's Speech in July 2024, the Government confirmed its intention to bring forward draft legislation setting out its proposals to create a new statutory regulator – the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA) – with a wider remit and the powers it needs to uphold standards in financial reporting in the UK.

A draft Bill and further information about the Government's proposals for ARGA, including its responsibilities and scope, will be published in due course.

Air Routes: Cyprus

Asked by *Lord Rogan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) legal, and (2) diplomatic, considerations relevant to establishing direct flights from the United Kingdom to Northern Cyprus. [HL4442]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Under the 1944 Chicago Convention, only the Republic of Cyprus may designate Ercan as an international customs airport and grant permission for flights. It has not done so. This means that no direct air services between the north of Cyprus and the UK can take place as it would be contrary to the UK's obligations under the Chicago Convention.

A just and lasting settlement on the island is the best chance of resolving these complex issues. The UK's commitment to helping the sides achieve this remains unwavering.

Artificial Intelligence

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure creative industries remain protected from being used by artificial intelligence models, particularly regarding the music industry. [HL4455]

Lord Vallance of Balham: Copying protected material in the UK will infringe copyright unless it is licensed, or an exception to copyright applies.

The Government published a consultation on Copyright and AI in December 2024.

The consultation seeks views on how to give rights holders of creative works, including those in the music industry, greater control over use of their material, and greater transparency about when their material is used to train AI models, while supporting the development of world-leading AI models in the UK.

The consultation closes on 25 February.

Artificial Intelligence: China

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any links between the DeepSeek artificial intelligence (AI) model and the Chinese Communist Party, of the implications for national interests of its built-in censorship functionality, and of its capabilities for military use and political interference. [HL4479]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The use of DeepSeek is a personal choice. The public should use their discretion and be alive to the risks that come with any new AI model, including familiarising themselves with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) advice. As a Chinese company, data inputted into the model will be sent to China and thus is subject to Chinese law. The UK supports freedom of expression and we expect companies to be transparent about their AI models. While we cannot comment on individual cases, the NCSC is able to assess technologies in line with their role as the National Technical Authority.

Aviation: Storms

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the safety implications of passenger aircrafts landing at airports during Storm Eowyn. [HL4397]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The safety of the traveling public is a priority for the Government. Whether or not it is safe to land at an airport is an operational decision between the aircraft operator, air traffic controllers, and ultimately the pilot in command of an aircraft.

UK aviation operates predominately in the private sector, with each airline responsible for its own severe weather plans, tailored to specific operations, locations, and infrastructure.

Bangladesh: Religious Freedom

Asked by *Lord Moylan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they intend to make to the government of Bangladesh concerning the increase of freedom of religion violations experienced by minority groups. [HL4433]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK has a long-standing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). In November 2024, The Minister for the Indo-Pacific visited Bangladesh and discussed the importance of the protection of religious minorities with Chief Adviser Yunus who has been vocal about support for minorities. We are providing up to £27 million under the Bangladesh Collaborative, Accountable and Peaceful Politics programme for protecting civic and political space, fostering collaboration, reducing corruption, and mitigating tensions that lead to any violence. We are supporting the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, who are working with Bangladesh's Interim Government to produce credible independent data on incidents of religious violence.

BBC World Service: Redundancy

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 29 January (HL4288), what discussions they have had with the BBC regarding the announcement on 29 January to make redundancies in the World Service. [HL4584]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The BBC are operationally, editorially independent and decide the most effective and efficient way to deliver the World Service, this includes staffing matters.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Ministers engage routinely with the BBC on the World Service. The BBC discussed their plans for the World Service in 2025/26 with the FCDO, as part of the Spending Review process.

Cancer: Diagnosis

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential benefits of artificial intelligence for addressing delays in processing cancer scans. [HL4664]

Baroness Merron: The Department has not made a formal assessment, but is carrying out work to assess the barriers of effective adoption and improve the way artificial intelligence (AI) tools are deployed, which includes addressing delays in processing cancer scans, across the National Health Service, through a number of initiatives.

AI technology supports magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanners to increase the number of patients scanned per day without impacting on the image quality of the scans. Over the last three years, more than 200 MRI scanners have benefited from this acceleration technology, with approximately 20% to 30% of additional scans being performed per day, depending on the

complexity of the patient referrals. This increased capacity supports improving access for patients referred under urgent referrals for an MRI scan, and will also supports patients who suffer from claustrophobia, as the time the patient is required to lie in the scanner is reduced.

The AI Diagnostic Fund is supporting the deployment of technologies in high-volume diagnostic services, such as chest x-rays and chest computed tomography scans, to enable faster diagnosis. Funding has been provided to twelve imaging networks, covering 66 acute and specialist trusts across England. During this pilot phase the impact of the deployment will be measured in areas such as the reduced time between the scan and the diagnosis, the reduced waiting time for cancer treatment, the accuracy of diagnoses, and improved patient outcomes.

The Department will continue to look at opportunities to utilise AI to transform diagnostic performance and address delays in processing cancer scans.

Cancer: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase workforce capacity in (1) cancer care, and (2) radiotherapy treatment services. [HL4714]

Baroness Merron: The Government recognises that a cancer-specific approach is needed to meet the challenges in cancer care, and to improve outcomes for people living with cancer. Following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will publish a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients. We will continue to ensure that we train the staff we need to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it, and the cancer plan will reflect this.

We will continue to recruit radiographers and radiologists. We continue to recruit priority medical specialties including clinical oncologists, medical oncologists, and clinical radiologists. We are also supporting employers to train new radiographers through the apprenticeship pathway, ensuring that imaging training academies can increase training capacity in addition to reforming training to support rapid development for both radiologists and radiographers. These actions will help to improve outcomes for radiotherapy patients.

This summer, 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 set out next steps in due course.

Carbon Emissions: Taxation

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they still intend to implement the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. [HL4670]

Lord Livermore: Yes, the government will introduce the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) on 1 January 2027.

China: Tibet

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of China about the reported disappearance of nine Tibetans, raised by UN special rapporteurs and working groups in a letter dated 14 November 2024 (AL CHN 15/2024). [HL4396]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: This Government stands firm on human rights, including China's repression of the people of Tibet. We raise our concerns at the highest levels: the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Chancellor all raised human rights recently with their counterparts (President Xi, Foreign Minister Wang and Vice Premier He respectively).

More broadly, we will continue to champion freedom of religion and belief for all abroad, including through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora. For example, the UK joined a statement on the situation in Tibet led by Australia at the UN General Assembly last October.

Competition and Markets Authority: Staff

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government how many members of staff the Competition and Markets Authority employs in each directorate. [HL4428]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Competition and Markets Authority employs approximately 1,120 staff. Full Time Equivalent staff numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number. These figures include individuals with a CMA contract of employment, irrespective of the length of contract, whether being paid or not and so includes those on parental leave, a career break or those loaned or seconded out of the CMA. It excludes agency workers and CMA Board and Panel members.

The breakdown for each Directorate is as follows:

Senior Executive Team - 11
 Competition Enforcement - 131
 Consumer Protection and Markets - 118
 Digital Markets Unit - 70
 Mergers - 76
 Office for the Internal Market and Subsidy Advice Unit - 33
 Office of the Chief Economic Adviser - 160
 Legal Service - 176
 Corporate Services - 121
 Data, Technology and Insight - 133
 Strategy, Communications and Advocacy - 91

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government how many members of staff the Competition and Markets Authority employs in the communications team, and what is the total annual budget for the team. [HL4429]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The CMA currently employs 35 people in its Communications Team, which includes stakeholder and business engagement, compliance communications, digital communications, media relations and strategic communications. It has a total annual budget of £3.2m in the current financial year (2024-25). Like other organisations, the CMA is in the process of reviewing its future budgets, and expects to reduce the budget for the Communications Team by at least 10%.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any increase in winter hospital admissions in the 2025 season, including for respiratory illnesses and COVID-19-related complications, as a result of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's revised recommendations on eligibility for the COVID-19 autumn vaccination campaign; and what steps they will take to mitigate any associated strain on the NHS. [HL4657]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the economic impact, including workforce absenteeism and productivity losses, of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendation to limit COVID-19 vaccine eligibility for the autumn 2025 vaccination campaign. [HL4659]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendation in November 2024 to limit COVID-19 vaccine eligibility for the Autumn 2025 vaccination campaign, what assessment they have made of the resulting risk of social isolation and requirements for households to shield clinically at-risk family members excluded from COVID-19 vaccination. [HL4712]

Baroness Merron: The independent Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises the Department on the approach to vaccination and immunisation. On 13 November 2024, the JCVI published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme covering vaccination in 2025 and spring 2026. This advice is available on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format.

The Government is considering the JCVI's advice on autumn 2025 carefully and will respond in due course.

Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations

Asked by Viscount Trenchard

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the value of the independence of the external scrutiny team of the Council of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations. [HL4459]

Lord Coaker: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave him on 29 January 2025, to Question HL4334.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association
[HL4334.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-27/HL4459>

Counter-terrorism: Departmental Responsibilities

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential benefits of having a single definition of extremism. [HL4412]

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions have taken place between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office regarding the handover of responsibility for counter-extremism work to the Home Office. [HL4413]

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether a decision has been made as to whether or not the process of listing extremist organisations and groups should be continued and, if not, whether they have any plans to publicly announce its discontinuance. [HL4414]

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the context of any handover of responsibility for counter-extremism work from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Home Office, which department will have responsibility for (1) cross-Government engagement principles, (2) establishing an extremism-specific due diligence tool, (3) blasphemy-related extremism, and (4) religiously motivated hate crime. [HL4415]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office work on countering extremism, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government continues to lead work on strengthening community cohesion with local councils. It is vital that the two programmes on cohesion and extremism work in parallel.

On the definition of extremism, I refer Lord Godson to the Answer provided by the Security Minister on 22

January to Question UIN 23874, and to the Urgent Question response provided by the Security Minister on 28 January.

Death: Weather

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government when the Office for National Statistics will publish their latest data on winter deaths; what criteria they will use to calculate them; and whether they have any plans to return to a static reporting date. [HL4448]

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

Please see the letter attached from the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority.

The Lord Sikka

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

31 January 2025

Dear Lord Sikka,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking when the Office for National Statistics (ONS) will publish their latest data on winter deaths; what criteria they will use to calculate them; and whether they have any plans to return to a static reporting date (HL4448).

The ONS previously published a regular release on winter mortality in England and Wales. However, following the recent consultation on health and social care statistical outputs[1], this release has been paused to enable a review of the methodology and timeliness of the statistics to be completed. Once the review is complete, a proposal on the future status of this output will be published.

The ONS does publish regular statistics on deaths registered each week[2] which may be of interest to you. This includes deaths registered over the winter period as well as estimates of excess deaths using the methodology that was implemented in February 2024[3].

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/health-and-social-care-statistical-outputs/outcome/health-and-social-care-statistical-outputs-consultation-response>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere dweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/previousreleases>

[3]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/>

[healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/articles/estimatingexcessdeathsintheukmethodologychanges/february2024.](https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-27/HL4448)

The Answer includes the following attached material:

ONS letter for PQ HL4448 [PQHL4448.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-27/HL4448>

Democratic Republic of Congo: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with counterparts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda over the seizure of Goma by M23 militia, and what assessment they have made of the security, humanitarian and human rights implications. [HL4617]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Foreign Secretary spoke to President Kagame to urge Rwanda to de-escalate this conflict and return to negotiations. We made clear that an attack on Goma would provoke a strong response from the international community. The Foreign Secretary spoke with President Tshisekedi to express his deep concern about M23 and the Rwandan Defence Force's advances. I have spoken to the Rwandan Foreign Minister and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Foreign Minister to urge both countries to return to the negotiating table. The UK condemns the occupation of Goma and other territories in eastern DRC by M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces as an unacceptable breach of DRC's sovereignty and the United Nations Charter, which poses a fundamental risk to regional stability. The humanitarian situation is now critical, with hundreds of thousands of people re-displaced, acute food insecurity and an increased risk of violence against civilians, especially women and girls. More than 800,000 people in the area who were prioritised for support may no longer receive vital food and nutritional assistance.

Employment: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk that increased labour costs could cause firms (1) to hire fewer workers, and (2) to replace jobs with robots and artificial intelligence technologies. [HL4456]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Delivering on our plan to Make Work Pay is a core part of the mission to grow the economy, raise living standards and create opportunities for all. We are committed to working in partnership with businesses to realise that ambition, enabling businesses and workers to thrive.

My department has published a set of Impact Assessments that provide a comprehensive analysis on the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill. This

analysis includes consideration of increases in labour costs for businesses and the subsequent effects. This analysis is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>.

Euston Station: Pedestrians

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment has been made of the risk to pedestrians from crossing traffic to get to the new taxi rank point at Euston railway station. [HL4398]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: A full Road Safety Audit, as required by Transport for London, has been carried out on both crossing points (adjacent to Eversholt Street and adjacent to Euston Road). Both crossings were enhanced as part of the taxi rank design to improve safety for pedestrians, including widening the islands and changing the signal timings.

Euston Station: Taxis

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the business justification and cost of creating a new taxi rank at Euston station, and what representations they have received from taxi drivers who find it too difficult to use. [HL4399]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The taxi rank was relocated in April 2024 to enable the construction of the HS2 station. A number of studies were carried out to find a suitable location, concluding with the choice of Euston Square Gardens East which was agreed with Camden Council, Network Rail (NR) and Transport for London (TfL).

TfL have received representations from taxi drivers relating to issues accessing the rank from the west due to a banned left turn in to Eversholt Street and Churchway. These left turns were banned to improve road safety and to help manage traffic flow along the Inner London Ring Road.

Access was worsened for a temporary period prior to Christmas 2024 whilst urgent road works took place on Upper Woburn Place.

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultation they had with (1) disabled users, and (2) the London taxi trade, before the creation of new taxi rank at Euston station. [HL4400]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: It was necessary to move the taxi rank from its previous Euston Square Gardens West location to enable construction of the HS2 station. The design of the new eastern rank, and its access, was the subject of extensive engagement with the taxi trade.

The final design was reviewed by the Network Rail's Built Environment Accessibility Panel, an independent panel of experts that supports NR to plan spaces and places for everyone. It was also reviewed by HS2 Ltd's Inclusive Design Lead, and NR Accessibility Lead.

The designated Mobility Assistance Taxi Bays remain on the western Euston Gardens site to cater for passengers with restricted mobility, as required by Network Rail.

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the distance in metres between the disabled assistance room at Euston station and (1) the new taxi rank, and (2) the site of the old taxi pick-up point on Cardington Street. [HL4401]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The designated Mobility Assistance Taxi Bays remain on the western Euston Gardens site to help reduce the distance to the Mobility Assistance Reception in the station. This is approximately 120m from the Assisted Travel Lounge, similar to the previous facility, which was located underground (and which required use of a lift).

The distance to/from the Assisted Travel Lounge from the new eastern rank pick-up/drop-off points is approximately 275m and 252m respectively (via Doric passageway), though this is not the designated Mobility Assistance Taxi Bay.

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to review the site of the taxi rank at Euston station. [HL4402]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The current taxi rank location is temporary to enable the construction of the HS2 station. Work is in progress to determine the new permanent location of the taxi rank.

In the interim, Transport for London are investigating potential improvements, such as changing turning priorities, having close regard to applicable road safety and highway management issues requirements.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Flags

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 22 November 2024 (HL2411) and the equalities assessment on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office flying the bisexual flag, what plans they have for it to fly (1) the transgender flag, (2) the asexual flag, (3) the aromantic flag, or (4) the intersex flag. [HL4525]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The FCDO's flag flying policy is that all our buildings should fly the Union flag, as appropriate, throughout the year on working days during office hours. In addition, the FCDO continues to

fly the Ukrainian flag from the secondary flagpole at King Charles Street. Any other flags flown on the estate are considered on a case-by-case basis and must have a compelling reason for inclusion. The FCDO does not advertise in advance which additional flags it will be flying and when.

Genocide: Rwanda

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask His Majesty's Government what information they have about the five Rwandan genocide suspects named in an extradition judgment and currently living in the UK. [HL4315]

Lord Hanson of Flint: I refer Lord Mendelsohn to UIN 249920 and UIN HL787, where similar questions were posed.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) War Crimes Unit is a dedicated specialist unit which investigates and prosecutes people living in the UK suspected of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in line with universal jurisdiction and the CPS Counter Terrorism Division has the responsibility for prosecuting such crimes. Criminal investigations are an operational matter for law-enforcement agencies, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further.

I would invite Lord Mendelsohn to consider referring the second part of the question to the Attorney General and the Metropolitan Police for a response.

Asked by Lord Mendelsohn

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date the Attorney General last received a briefing from the Metropolitan Police regarding the five Rwandan genocide suspects named in an extradition judgement and currently living in the UK. [HL4316]

Lord Hanson of Flint: We would invite you to consider referring this question to the Attorney General and the Metropolitan Police for a response.

Greenland: Sovereignty

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the status of the agreement reached between the UK and Denmark in 1917 on the sovereignty of Greenland. [HL4502]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: There were discussions between the UK and Denmark about Greenland's status in the early 20th Century, but our position remains that Greenland is part of the Kingdom of Denmark and that the future of their constitutional arrangements is a matter for the people and government of Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark as the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State, Stephen Doughty, have repeatedly and publicly made clear.

Housing: Construction

Asked by *Lord Crathorne*

To ask His Majesty's Government what mechanisms they plan to put in place to ensure that the housing built to meet their targets will be of a high design standard; and whether they intend to seek the advice of bodies, such as the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust, to help ensure that new housing is an embellishment to the communities where it is built. [HL4242]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 12 November 2024 ([HCWS209](#)).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HCWS209 [HCWS209.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-21/HL4242>

Incinerators: Recycling

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much recyclable waste was incinerated in 2023. [HL4103]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: A total of 18 million tonnes of waste was incinerated in 2023 in England (Source: Waste Management Summary for England for 2023). This compares with 17.2 million tonnes in 2022. Information on how much of this was recyclable is not held.

Local Government Finance: Rural Areas

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government why they are abolishing the Rural Delivery Services Grant; and what assessment they have made of the impact of its removal on rural counties such as North Yorkshire. [HL4427]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: I refer the noble lady to the answer given to Question UIN 20652 on 27 December 2024 and the answer to Question UIN 22380 on 15 January 2025.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

PQ20652 [UIN20652.pdf]

PQ22380 [UIN 22380.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-27/HL4427>

Local Government Pension Scheme: Councillors

Asked by *Lord Porter of Spalding*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have for allowing elected councillors to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. [HL4439]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Currently, councillors in England are not eligible for membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme, after access was removed in 2014. As the Responsible Authority for the LGPS, MHCLG keeps access to the scheme under regular review.

Local Government: Equality

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 25 October 2024 (11179), what assessment they have made of the Local Government Association guidance A councillor's workbook on equality, diversity and inclusion, published on 10 January 2024, which states that being gender fluid or gender neutral constitute the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. [HL4540]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: MHCLG has not made an assessment of the Local Government Association (LGA) guidance referred to in the question. The LGA is independent of central government and is responsible for publishing and assessing its own guidance for the local government sector.

Multinational Companies: Tax Evasion

Asked by *Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many corporations have been prosecuted and convicted for tax evasion under the Criminal Finances Act 2017. [HL4449]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Ministry of Justice publishes data on prosecutions and convictions for a wide range of offences including for tax evasion under the Criminal Finances Act 2017 in the Outcomes by Offences data tool. This can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice Statistics](#).

Since its introduction, there have been no prosecutions or convictions of corporations for the following two specific tax evasion offences recorded under the Criminal Finances Act 2017 in England and Wales:

- 1) Relevant body fail to prevent facilitation of UK tax evasion; and,
- 2) Relevant body fail to prevent facilitation of foreign tax evasion offence.

National Security Online Information Team

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government what role the National Security Online Information Team played in responding to the 2024 summer riots. [HL4405]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: During last summer's unrest, the National Security and Online Information Team identified mis and disinformation themes and trends which resulted from the tragic events in Southport. It worked with wider government and major social media platforms to understand emerging risks and tackle content contributing to the subsequent disorder. This included proactively referring content within the team's remit for platforms to independently assess and act on in line with their terms of service.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the National Security Online Information Team's work on freedom of expression. [HL4417]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: NSOIT's commitment to protecting freedom of expression is embedded in its compliance policies and practices. For example, NSOIT has a blanket ban on referring content from journalists and politicians to social media platforms. Its privacy notices are publicly available on gov.uk.

Asked by Lord Strathcarron

To ask His Majesty's Government how many pieces of content the National Security Online Information Team has flagged for review by social media platforms in the past 12 months. [HL4454]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: In 2024, 180 examples of content were provided to platforms across national security and public safety risks.

National Trust

Asked by Lord Tyrie

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to review the National Trusts Acts to require the National Trust to publish a comprehensive annual statement of the financial benefits it enjoys from tax reliefs and other disbursements from the Exchequer, whether direct or indirect. [HL4460]

Baroness Twycross: The Government has no plans to review the National Trust Acts. The National Trust is an independent charity, run by its board of Trustees who are responsible for the organisation's governance.

The accounts and annual reports of all registered charities with an income of over £25,000 are freely accessible on the public register of charities provided by the Charity Commission on gov.uk. These provide detailed information on the charity's income and expenditure, which can help the public better understand the charity and its finances.

NHS: Equality

Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 4 November 2024 (HL1879), whether they will issue guidance to NHS England and NHS Trusts on reducing equality, diversity and inclusion spending to help deliver the 2-percent administration savings announced at Budget 2024. [HL4452]

Baroness Merron: The Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance was published on 14 May 2024, and required all departments and arm's length bodies to set controls on all equality, diversity, and inclusion related expenditure. No further guidance was issued by the Department to National Health Service trusts.

The Government is committed to creating a fair health system that tackles health inequalities effectively, whilst deriving maximum value from taxpayers' money.

Nigeria: Crimes against Humanity

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the International Criminal Court regarding its stalled investigation into alleged atrocity crimes in Nigeria. [HL4581]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an impartial, professional and independent court. It is a court of last resort, which is complementary to national legal systems, undertaking investigations only when national authorities are unable or unwilling to do so. In 2024, the ICC Deputy Prosecutor visited Nigeria and stressed that the ICC would move forward with an investigation if the Nigerian authorities did not bridge existing impunity gaps. The UK Government is committed to supporting the ICC internationally and it is for the ICC Prosecutor to determine the focus of his investigations in accordance with his mandate. It is important that all criminal proceedings are taken forward impartially and independently by the Court under the framework of the Rome Statute. The UK Government respects the independence of the Court.

Offences against Children

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 22 January

(HL3896), how and when they propose to “support victims and take action on delivering against the recommendations of the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse”; and how their proposed localised inquiries will compel witnesses to give evidence about girls trafficked across county boundaries. [HL4435]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 22 January (HL3896), what assessment they have made of the proportion of Muslims among members of grooming gangs. [HL4436]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 22 January (HL3896), what assessment they have made of the appropriateness of identifying membership of grooming gangs by reference to Pakistani origin. [HL4437]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Further to my previous response, the Government will lay out a clear timetable before Easter on how we will take forward the 20 recommendations from the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. We will also set up a new panel to ensure victims' and survivors' voices are prioritised in future policy making.

We have been clear that local authorities, who are responsible for delivering local services, are best placed to commission local inquiries, and we stand ready to support as we can. That is why the Home Secretary announced to Parliament on the 6 and 16 January 2025 a range of measures, including stronger national backing for local inquiries and funding provisions to help local councils set up their own reviews. The Home Office will develop a new effective framework for victim-centred, locally-led inquiries, and work with Oldham Council and four other pilot areas to implement it. Additionally, local councils which are yet to hold regional investigations where the group-based sexual offences have been more prevalent will be urged to conduct their own reviews to prevent offending happening again.

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the Home Secretary's statement made on 16 January, which set out the actions the Government is taking forward to improve our response to, and understanding of, child sexual exploitation and abuse, including group-based abuse. This includes improving the data available on the perpetration of these crimes and the Home Secretary has asked the Child Sexual Exploitation Police Taskforce to expand the ethnicity data it collects and publishes - gathering data from the end of the investigation when a fuller picture is available.

The Home Secretary is also appointing Baroness Louise Casey to lead an audit to improve our understanding of the scale, nature and drivers of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse at a national and local level, including what is known about the demographics of

perpetrators and victims, and to make recommendations on what additional action is needed to improve our response.

Parliamentary Scrutiny

Asked by Lord Norton of Louth

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by Lord Hanson of Flint on 22 January (HLWS374), what plans they have to encourage other Departments to emulate the Home Office in (1) undertaking detailed post-legislative scrutiny of Acts, (2) engaging with key government and operational stakeholders, and (3) in making written statements when memoranda are produced and laid as Command Papers. [HL4505]

Baroness Twycross: The Cabinet Office has written to departments reminding them of the importance of post-legislative scrutiny.

It is a matter for each department to determine whether a written statement should accompany publication, and which stakeholders to engage when conducting post-legislative scrutiny.

While all bills that have reached Royal Assent are eligible for post-legislative scrutiny, it can be agreed between the department and the relevant Commons departmental select committee that a memorandum is not required.

Public Libraries

Asked by Baroness Sanderson of Welton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Department of Culture, Media and Sport intends to publish a strategy for English public libraries. [HL4443]

Baroness Twycross: The Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, Sir Chris Bryant MP, who has the policy remit for public libraries in England, has engaged with library sector organisations and leaders. They discussed the challenges in the sector and reflected on priority policy areas. He is considering their views and DCMS continues to promote the role of libraries across a range of government priorities.

Radiotherapy

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve access to radiotherapy treatment. [HL4713]

Baroness Merron: A £70 million investment in new radiotherapy machines will ensure that the most advanced treatment is available and accessible to patients. Following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, the Department will publish the new National Cancer Plan for England, which will include further details on how we

will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including improving access to treatment for patients.

Addressing healthcare inequalities is a core focus of the 10-Year Health Plan, to ensure the National Health Service in England is there for anyone who needs it, whenever they need it. The Department has established 11 working groups to take forward policy development that will feed into the plan. This includes working groups focused on how care should be designed and delivered in England to improve healthcare equity, alongside ensuring that access to healthcare services is effective and responsive.

Regulation

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that regulators are accountable for their decisions and that businesses and consumers have avenues to challenge regulatory actions. [HL4432]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The ability to challenge regulatory decisions where necessary is critical to an effective regulatory system that drives economic growth. Most regulatory decisions are subject to internal appeal within regulators. This Government is committed to ensuring regulators are effective and fully accountable, as demonstrated by the Chancellor and Secretary of State for Business and Trade's recent meeting with regulators where they scrutinised the pro-growth measures that regulators had identified to support the growth mission. The Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury are leading the regulatory reform agenda across Government and we will set out our overall regulatory vision shortly.

Regulation: Cooperation

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve coordination between different regulatory bodies in the UK to ensure a coherent regulatory framework. [HL4431]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: This Government is determined to address concerns about the complexity and structure of the regulatory system by providing clear and consistent strategic direction, enabling regulators to plan effectively and deliver long-term objectives in line with the Government's priorities. This is why the Prime Minister, in conjunction with the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, wrote to key regulators asking them to provide concrete proposals to prioritise growth with the support of Government. Our overall regulatory vision, which will address these will issues, will be set out in due course.

Rwanda: Democratic Republic of Congo

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Commonwealth Secretariat regarding Rwanda's compliance with Article 2 of the Commonwealth Charter in the light of allegations of Rwanda's support for the M23 rebel group. [HL4638]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is engaging with the Commonwealth Secretariat to ensure they continue to urge immediate de-escalation, a return to negotiations and the respect of human rights and dignity, as was outlined in the Secretary General's recent statement. The UK condemns the occupation of Goma and other territories in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces, as well as all human rights abuses by armed groups in DRC.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have (1) made representations to, or (2) received representations from, other Commonwealth member states about Rwanda's alleged involvement in destabilising activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL4639]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Foreign Secretary has spoken with President Kagame, and I have spoken to the Rwandan Foreign Minister and High Commissioner in the UK, to call for immediate de-escalation and a return to diplomatic talks. We have urged Rwanda that there would be a strong response to an attack on Goma from the international community. The Foreign Secretary also raised eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo with the Kenyan, and South African Foreign Ministers, with whom he expressed condolences for their 14 peacekeepers killed. I have also spoken to the Ugandan Foreign Minister, emphasising the importance of a coordinated international response. The UK has further engaged with other Commonwealth partners at official level to push for an end to the killing and a return to peaceful negotiations.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review (1) the provision of UK aid to, or (2) other forms of co-operation with, Rwanda in light of its alleged support for the M23 rebel group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL4640]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK condemns the occupation of Goma and other territories in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces as an unacceptable breach of DRC's sovereignty and the United Nations Charter which poses a fundamental risk to regional stability. We have been clear with Rwanda that this would provoke a strong response from the international community and called for the immediate withdrawal of all Rwandan Defence Forces from Congolese territory. We are considering all options with partners.

Sellafield: Plutonium

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government why they have decided to immobilise and dispose of 140 tonnes of civil plutonium stored at Sellafield rather than repurposing the material for energy generation, selling it, or putting it to an alternative use, such as in medical or scientific research. [HL4420]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Implementing a long-term solution for plutonium is essential to dealing with the UK's nuclear legacy and leaving the environment safer for future generations.

The material in its current form presents a significant and costly burden. DESNZ and NDA has considered re-use options and found that immobilisation is more likely to put the material into a safe, stable and disposable form soonest and with greatest delivery confidence.

All current and planned UK reactors use uranium fuel. We will continue to take wider strategic factors and technologies into account in making the final investment decision.

Senior Civil Servants: Qualifications

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Civil Service People Plan 2024–2027, published on 10 January 2024, what was the cost to central government departments of ensuring 100 per cent of Senior Civil Servants achieved Chartered FCIPD status and 100 per cent of G6/G7 officials achieved Chartered MCIPD status by 1 April 2024. [HL4475]

Baroness Twycross: There are several methods of gaining CIPD Membership including study options, apprenticeships and experiential routes. For experiential routes, there is a central Cabinet Office contract with the CIPD for departments to utilise. The costs associated with this accreditation to date are provided below:

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>FCIPD</i>	<i>MCIPD</i>
January 2024 - April 2024	£8,090	£67,725
May 2024 - January 2025	£16,920	£197,615

Departments may also utilise other methods that are available for their SCS and Grade 6/7 HR professionals to gain CIPD membership that are not included in the central Cabinet Office contract

Small Businesses: Regulation

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government whether all new regulations are subject to impact assessments, particularly in relation to their regional impact and impact on small businesses. [HL4430]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Where government intervention requires a legislative or policy change, departments are expected to analyse and assess the impact of the change on the different groups affected.

Impact assessments are generally required for all the Government's interventions of a regulatory nature that affect the private sector and-or civil society organisation or public services. The Better Regulation Framework requires regulatory provisions with impacts on business of greater than +/-£10 million to be accompanied by a final impact assessment which is laid before Parliament alongside the regulations. These assessments must consider impact on small and micro businesses, explore whether such businesses need to be in scope and, where appropriate, identify mitigations for the additional burden. Provisions with lower impacts should provide a proportionate assessment or estimate of the impacts in the accompanying Explanatory Notes or Memorandum.

South Western Railway: Yeovil

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the service provided by South Western Railway between London and Yeovil. [HL4434]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: There are currently no plans to review the service between London and Yeovil. South-Western Railway is in continued contact with the Department regarding its service provision, including on the West of England line on which Yeovil sits. When reviewing services, the Department needs to assess business cases and balance demand with value for the taxpayer in its considerations.

Spaceflight

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what contribution they are making to human spaceflight, what assessment they have made of whether the UK should establish its own human space flight programme, and what estimate they have made of when a British mission will visit the moon and Mars. [HL4422]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The UK makes a significant contribution to human space exploration via investment through the European Space Agency (ESA). Rosemary Coogan is now training with NASA in Houston ahead of a long-term mission to the International Space Station. John McFall and Meganne Christian, who are both in the ESA astronaut reserve, are currently training at the European Astronaut Centre in Germany to prepare them for future space missions. These missions are not yet identified.

The UK Space Agency is also working with Axiom Space to explore the potential for a first of-a-kind commercially sponsored UK astronaut mission to the ISS. We have not made a specific estimate of when a British mission will visit the moon or Mars.

Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to be a global leader in protecting freedom of religion or belief around the world. [HL4534]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK remains strongly committed to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. It is our firm opinion that no one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We are championing the right to FoRB and promoting tolerance and mutual respect through our engagement in multilateral fora, our bilateral work, and our programme funding, including the FCDO John Bunyan Fund, a designated programme for FoRB-focused overseas projects. The appointment of David Smith MP as the Special Envoy for FoRB is a clear signal of the UK's ongoing commitment to these efforts.

Speed Limits: Urban Areas

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the reduction of the general speed limit from 30 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour in built-up residential areas in England. [HL4469]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: There has not been any consideration given to reducing the general speed limit from 30 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour in built-up residential areas in England.

It is for local authorities to decide where reduced speed limits will be effective on the roads they manage, and consultation and community support should be at the heart of the process.

Suicide

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce rates of suicide. [HL4700]

Baroness Merron: We have committed to tackling suicide, as one of the biggest killers in this country. As part of this, the 8,500 new mental health staff we will recruit will be specially trained to support people at risk, to reduce the lives lost to suicide.

The Suicide Prevention Strategy for England, published in September 2023, identifies a number of groups for tailored or targeted action at a national level, and we are exploring opportunities to go further.

79 organisations have been allocated funding between 2023 and 2025, through the £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund, and are delivering a broad and diverse range of activities that will prevent suicides and save lives.

UK Relations with EU

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with EU officials regarding the UK joining the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention. [HL4423]

Baroness Twycross: We are always looking at ways to reduce barriers to trade - within our clear red lines - because having a smooth trading relationship with European partners is essential to driving growth at home.

This is one of the options we are open to looking at to reduce barriers, and it's right and responsible that we are looking at it to determine what is in the UK's national interest. But we do not currently have any plans to join PEM.

Universal Credit

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government for how many universal credit claimants the calculation of earnings includes a work allowance, broken down by (1) gender of claimant, (2) whether it is a single or joint claim, and (3) whether the claimant has children or not. [HL4425]

Baroness Sherlock: The table below provides the number of Universal Credit claimants in October 2024 where the calculation of earnings includes a work allowance, broken down by gender of claimant, whether it is a single or joint claim, and whether the claimant has children or not.

<i>Single or joint claim</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Volumes</i>
Single	Female	Yes	1,004,000
		No	57,000
	Male	Yes	107,000
		No	39,000
Couple	Female	Yes	620,000
		No	57,000
	Male	Yes	610,000
		No	56,000

Note: the data in the table above is from Universal Credit administrative data from October 2024 and subject to retrospective changes. The volumes are of people who were in payment of UC in October 2024 and those with positive earnings recorded in their award calculation. The figures have been rounded to 2 significant figures. Those with missing values have been excluded from the figures above. We have defined single status and couple status according to their standard allowance amount.

Universal Credit: Bank Services

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government what statistics have been published regarding the gender of the bank account holder for Universal Credit since the 2019 publication Universal Credit Statistical Ad Hoc: Gender of bank account holder on Universal Credit; and what information is available, broken down by gender, of the person nominated as the lead carer in couples with children. [HL4426]

Baroness Sherlock: There have been no further publications since 2019 on the gender of the bank account holder for UC.

A flag was developed to identify lead carers in our administrative data in July 2023, to enable us to monitor the rollout of the 2023 changes to lead carer conditionality. Based on data from October 2024, there were around 825,000 lead carers in receipt of UC with a couple claim: 87% are female, 13% are male. The tables below provide a breakdown of some further characteristics:

Characteristics of lead carers who are part of a couple claim on Universal Credit, October 2024

Age group	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-49	50-54	55+
Female	4%	33%	46%	11%	4%	1%
Male	1%	16%	40%	19%	13%	11%

Employed	No	Yes
Female	57%	43%
Male	44%	56%

Age of youngest child	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-19
Female	45%	35%	19%	0%
Male	33%	39%	27%	1%

Note: totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. These figures are from DWP administrative data.

Universal Credit: Young People

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Universal Credit claimants receive the lower rate of the standard allowance due to being below the age of 25, broken down by (1) gender of claimant, (2) whether it is a single or joint claim, and (3) whether the claimant has children or not. [HL4424]

Baroness Sherlock: The table below provides the number of Universal Credit claimants who receive the lower rate of standard allowance due to being below the

age of 25. The data is for October 2024 and broken down by gender of claimant, whether it is a single or joint claim, and whether the claimant has children or not

Single or joint claim	Gender	Children	Volumes
Single and under 25	Female	Yes	110,000
		No	180,000
	Male	Yes	4,200
		No	270,000
Joint claim and both under 25	Female	Yes	12,000
		No	5,400
	Male	Yes	11,000
		No	4,600

Note: the data in the table above is from Universal Credit administrative data from October 2024 and subject to retrospective changes. The volumes are of people who were in payment of UC in October 2024. The figures have been rounded to 2 significant figures. Those with missing values have been excluded from the figure above. We have defined single status and couple status according to their standard allowance amount.

USA: Foreign Relations

Asked by **Lord Gascoigne**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister has spoken to Vice President Vance of the United States since the latter took office, and if not, when he plans to do so. [HL4410]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump on 26 January and congratulated him on his inauguration.

War Crimes: Rwanda

Asked by **Lord Mendelsohn**

To ask His Majesty's Government what explanations they have received from the police regarding the length of time taken to investigate the cases of the five suspected Rwandan war criminals currently living in the UK following the judgment in Government of Rwanda v Nteziryayo & Others [2017] EWHC 1912 (Admin), and what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of those police investigations. [HL4601]

Lord Hanson of Flint: I refer Lord Mendelsohn to UIN 249920 and UIN HL787, where similar questions were posed.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) War Crimes Unit is a dedicated specialist unit which investigates and prosecutes people living in the UK suspected of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in line with universal jurisdiction and the CPS Counter

Terrorism Division has the responsibility for prosecuting such crimes. Criminal investigations are an operational matter for law-enforcement agencies, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further.

I would invite Lord Mendelsohn to consider referring the second part of the question to the Attorney General and the Metropolitan Police for a response.

Waste Disposal

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government how much residual waste was disposed of in 2022 (1) by weight, and (2) as a proportion of all waste. [HL4377]

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government how much residual waste was incinerated in 2022 (1) by weight, and (2) as a proportion of all residual waste. [HL4378]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: For too long the nation has seen recycling rates stagnate and relied on burning or burying waste.

The Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy, a future where we keep our resources in use for longer, waste is reduced, we accelerate the path to net zero, we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs, our economy prospers, and nature thrives. Key to this commitment is the reduction of residual waste. The Government has set out that it will only back new waste incineration projects that meet strict conditions and that these are in accordance with the long-term residual waste reduction target.

Estimates of residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) in England, and their treatment method, for 2022 were published in April 2024 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/estimates-of-residual-waste-excluding-major-mineral-wastes-and-municipal-residual-waste-in-england>).

It is not possible to provide a figure for residual waste as a proportion of all waste. A comparable figure of all waste is not available.

Water Companies: Pay

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to issue guidelines to water companies operating in England regarding the salaries paid to their senior management. [HL3781]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: For too long, customers have been let down and water companies have discharged record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas.

That is why we are placing water companies under special measures through the Water (Special Measures) Bill, which will strengthen regulation, including delivering new powers to ban the payment of bonuses for polluting water bosses and bringing criminal charges against persistent law breakers.

Executives will no longer be able to take home eye-watering bonuses where companies fail to meet standards on environmental performance, financial resilience, customer outcomes or criminal liability.

In October 2024, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Welsh Government, also launched an Independent Commission on the water sector regulatory system. This is a wide-ranging review to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

Windsor Framework: Veterinary Services

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 28 January (HL4030), what are the (1) names or (2) job titles of the members of the Veterinary Medicines Working Group set up in relation to the implementation of the Windsor Framework. [HL4533]

Baroness Twycross: The names and affiliations of members of the Veterinary Medicines Working Group are included in the Terms of Reference, which have been deposited in the House of Commons and House of Lords libraries.

Workplace Pensions: Low Pay

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there are any requirements to inform low-paid workers that they will pay 25 per cent more for their employer's pension than they would if their employer auto-enrolled them into a pension fund with relief at source administration; and, if so, whose responsibility it is to inform them. [HL4523]

Baroness Sherlock: Employers are responsible for choosing a workplace pension scheme for their qualifying employees under the automatic enrolment framework.

The Pensions Regulator provides guidance for employers about how to comply with their automatic enrolment duties, including the information they must share with eligible employees.

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