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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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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
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
Baroness Sherlock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
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

Thursday, 13 February 2025

Bank of England and Treasury: Financial Relationship

[HLWS450]

Lord Livermore: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Emma Reynolds) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I can announce today the conclusion of a Bank of England and HM Treasury 5-yearly review of the Bank's capital framework parameters, as set out in Section 2B of the Bank and HM Treasury Financial Relationship Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The Review concluded that:

- the capital framework has been effective in delivering its intended objectives at inception in 2018: to ensure that the Bank is equipped with capital resources consistent with the monetary and financial stability remits it has been given by Parliament.
- the existing parameters of the capital framework remain adequate to support the Bank's balance sheet. [1]
- the existing Bank-HMT financial arrangements, as set out in the MoU, are sufficient to support the Bank's planned transition to a demand-driven operating framework fully backed by repo. [2]

The Bank and HM Treasury will keep these arrangements under review during the Bank's balance sheet transition to a new steady state in coming years, ensuring close engagement as per the existing governance and information sharing channels set out in the MoU.

The Bank and HM Treasury have updated the MoU accordingly:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/memorandum-of-understanding-between-hm-treasury-and-the-bank-of-england-2025>

[1] The parameters of the capital framework include a target, a floor, and a ceiling. As set out in the 2018 letter from the Governor of the Bank of England to the Chancellor, the values of the capital parameters are £0.5bn for the floor, £3.5bn for the target and £5.5bn for the ceiling.

[Letter from the Governor to the Chancellor - 21 June 2018.](#)

[2] Further detail on the transition of the Bank's operating framework can be found at:

- [Transitioning to a repo-led operating framework | Bank of England](#)
- [The importance of central bank reserves - lecture by Andrew Bailey | Bank of England](#)
- [Let's get ready to repo! - speech by Victoria Saporta](#)

Crown Land: Planning Permission for Development

[HLWS449]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook MP) has today made the following statement:

Planning is principally a local activity, but it is a well-established principle that in limited circumstances, and where issues of more than local importance are involved, it is appropriate for the Secretary of State to make planning decisions.

Recent experience, including the response to COVID-19, has exposed that the existing route for securing planning permission on Crown Land, namely the Urgent Crown Development route under Section 293A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 introduced in 2006, is not fit for purpose and it is telling that it has never once been used.

I am therefore confirming today that the government will implement two new routes by which Crown bodies can apply for planning permission for development on Crown land in England, as legislated for through the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

The first route, referred to as the Crown Development route, will allow planning applications for Crown developments which are considered of 'national importance' to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate directly instead of to local planning authorities.

Allowing such planning applications to be determined in this manner will allow for a more timely and proportionate process. Applications taken through this route will still be determined on the basis of their planning merits, with due consideration of local and national planning policy, and local communities and local planning authorities will still be fully engaged throughout the decision-making process and their views taken into account.

This process will be led by an independent Planning Inspector, with the inspector usually taking the decision, with provision for the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to make the final decision where deemed appropriate.

The second route, an updated Urgent Crown Development process, will enable applications for 'nationally important' development that is needed 'urgently' to be determined rapidly under a simplified procedure. Applications under the urgent route will be submitted to, and dealt with directly by, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government.

The government believes that it is vital to ensure these routes are in place, and it is our sincere hope that it will remain a matter of cross-party consensus that where circumstances warrant it, decisions on nationally important development by the Crown can and should be made appropriately at the national level.

However, as I argued from Opposition during the passage of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act, it is imperative that such powers are used only where necessary, and that appropriate safeguards to their use are put in place. Where they are used, I also want to ensure there is transparency not just with those involved, but with Parliament. In implementing these routes, we have been careful to account for both points, which I will address in turn.

First, these new routes can only be used if the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government considers the proposed development from a Crown body to be of ‘national importance’. To this end, all applications must be accompanied by a statement setting out why the development is considered to meet that criteria.

The Secretary of State will in general only consider a development to be of national importance if, in her opinion, the development would:

- involve the interests of national security or of foreign Governments;
- contribute towards the provision of national public services or infrastructure, such as new prisons, defence, or border infrastructure;
- support a response to international, national, or regional civil emergencies; or
- otherwise have significant economic, social, or environmental effects and strong public interest at a regional or national level.

For Urgent Crown Development, the Secretary of State must in addition be satisfied that the development subject to the application is genuinely needed as a matter of urgency. The Secretary of State will only consider this to be the case where the applicant can demonstrate the need for an expedited planning process. The applicant will need to demonstrate that the proposed development will need to be made operational to an accelerated timeframe that is unlikely to be feasible using other application routes, including Crown Development, and will need evidence of the likely consequences of not securing a decision within the accelerated timeframe.

Second, where these routes are used, the government is committed to ensuring proper transparency at every stage. This will take the form of three distinct steps:

- First, where an application is accepted by the Secretary of State, the relevant Members of Parliament will be notified at the same time as the applicant and the relevant local planning authorities. A notification will also be deposited in the libraries of both Houses and will include details as to where the application can be viewed and the process that will follow.
- Second, at the point of decision, and again at the same time as the applicant and relevant local planning authorities, the relevant Members of Parliament will be notified of either the grant or refusal of planning permission, and this letter will also be deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

- Third, on an annual basis, I will publish a report of all decisions taken under these routes, including a link to the decision letters, which again will be deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

I am confident that, taken together, these steps will ensure Members are properly apprised of any applications being considered through these routes that relate to their constituencies, and will provide the House as a whole will the opportunity to consider and scrutinise their general operation. The government will keep these steps under review as the routes begin to be used.

Finally, with regards to implementation, I have today laid draft regulations which make consequential amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and other primary legislation, as well as to planning application fee regulations, to reflect the two new Crown Development routes.

These regulations are subject to the affirmative procedure enabling Parliament to debate them. To support scrutiny ahead of Parliamentary debates, I will publish in draft the regulations setting out the procedures for both routes, which will be laid following Parliamentary approval of the affirmative regulations. Our aim, subject to parliamentary approval, is to bring both routes into force in April 2025. Further guidance will be published on the operation of the two routes closer to implementation.

Firearms Licensing Consultation: Government Response

[HLWS446]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Government is today publishing its response to the public consultation that was run by the previous Government on firearms licensing controls. The consultation ran between 29 June and 23 August 2023. The consultation sought views on recommendations that were made to the Government by the Senior Coroner in his Prevention of Future Deaths reports following inquests into the deaths of the five people who were shot and killed in Keyham on 12 August 2021; on recommendations made by the Independent Office for Police Conduct following its investigation into the police force involved; and recommendations made by the Scottish Affairs Select Committee following its review of firearms licensing regulations which followed on from a fatal shooting by a licensed shotgun holder on the Isle of Skye on 10 August 2022.

A total of 91,385 responses to the consultation were received either online or by post and email and we are grateful to all those who took the time to respond. The Government response sets out the actions that the Government intends to take to further strengthen firearms licensing controls.

The previous Government decided not to consult on the recommendations that had been made to consider greater alignment of shotgun and firearms controls and legislation. The Government is, however, mindful that the shootings in both Keyham and Skye involved lawfully held shotguns, and that there have been other incidents involving shotguns since these tragic events occurred. We therefore take the view that it is right to look again at the differences in the controls and to consider whether changes should be made to better protect the public. We intend to publish a new consultation on this issue later this year.

A copy of the Government response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on gov.uk.

Large-scale Housing Site Delivery

[HLWS447]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook MP) has today made the following statement:

The delivery of significant numbers of large-scale housing developments in England is integral to driving economic growth and meeting the government's ambitious Plan for Change milestone of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in this Parliament.

I am today updating the House on the progress that is being made to build out large sites across the country and to take forward the next generation of new towns.

The next generation of new towns

The post-war new towns programme was the most ambitious town-building effort ever undertaken in the UK. It transformed the lives of millions of working people by giving them affordable and well-designed homes in well-planned and beautiful surroundings. This government will continue to invest in their regeneration, but we also remain committed to bringing forward the next generation of new towns.

In September 2024, we established an independent [New Towns Taskforce](#) and tasked the experts on it with identifying and recommending locations for new towns within 12 months. Over the past five months, the Taskforce has made significant progress. Its nationwide call for evidence, which invited proposals for sites with the potential to accommodate large-scale new communities of at least 10,000 homes, attracted over 100 submissions from every region in England, demonstrating the enthusiasm that exists across the country to be part of this transformative programme.

Today, the Taskforce is publishing an update on its work, setting out the vision and aims of the programme, as well as the unique benefits it would deliver and the lessons learnt from a comprehensive review of the three phases of the post-war new towns programme.

The government has been clear that we want exemplary development to be the norm not the exception, so that more communities feel the benefits of new development

and welcome it. We remain fully committed to creating high-quality, beautiful, and sustainable buildings and places.

We are therefore determined to ensure that the next generation of new towns are well-connected, well-designed, sustainable and attractive places where people want to live and have all the infrastructure, amenities and services necessary to sustain thriving mixed communities, including public transport and services like GP surgeries and schools.

The Taskforce is also today sharing its emerging thinking on how to best to meet these expectations, setting out what principles should guide the delivery of the kind of new large-scale communities we want to create through the programme. The intention is to begin a national conversation about what constitutes an ideal new town and a series of engagement events will be held with the residents of existing new towns to secure their insight.

The government is clear that public investment, leadership, and focus will be needed to kickstart the delivery of the next generation of new towns. However, our clear long-term objective is to ensure that the settlements brought forward under the programme pay for themselves through the value they create. This requires that the price paid for land reflects the costs of quickly and efficiently providing the infrastructure, amenities and affordable housing essential to the creation of high-quality places. We look forward to receiving the Taskforce's recommendations as to how this can be best achieved.

The Taskforce will submit its final report to the Deputy Prime Minister and I in the summer, setting out its recommended locations for potential new towns, and its view on how best to fund and deliver them. The government will then make decisions on the basis of those recommendations and begin the process of initiating the programme.

The Spending Review will confirm the government's plans to provide certainty for this transformative programme, demonstrating our commitment to bringing forward sustainable new communities and unlocking economic growth across the country. In the immediate term, an initial £15 million has been allocated for the next financial year, to enable early scoping work on new sites to begin, ensuring delivery can start as soon as ministerial decisions have been made.

New Homes Accelerator

Following its launch in July 2024, the New Homes Accelerator has been working with national and local partners to speed up housing delivery on a series of large sites across the country.

These include seven sites that were previously announced, namely Liverpool Central Docks, Northstowe, Worcestershire Parkway, Langley Sutton Coldfield, Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, Stretton Hall, and Biggleswade Garden Community, which together have the potential to deliver more than 28,500 homes.

Through intensive engagement with other government departments and statutory consultees as a convener and broker, the Accelerator has also helped progress a number of other sites with the capacity to deliver more than 20,000 homes.

The call for evidence that the Accelerator launched last year identified 350 sites, with a combined potential delivery pipeline of approximately 700,000 homes, as requiring some form of support to progress.

Today, the Accelerator is announcing that it will focus attention on three new sites: Frome Gateway Regeneration Area in Bristol, South of Cayton in Scarborough, and Beam Park in London. Together, these have the potential to deliver more than 7,400 homes.

The New Homes Accelerator is also providing £3 million of grant funding to local authorities for site-specific support. This will be supplemented by the ongoing direct advice provided by its dedicated team of built environment specialists. We are also announcing £1 million of funding to key statutory consultees and £2 million of funding to the Building Safety Regulator to accelerate processing of applications.

Regeneration funding

To further increase the supply of new homes, I am today announcing several new investments. These include confirming £29.6 million from the Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to unlock one thousand new homes in Broadford City Village; announcing £1.5 million to support a joint venture between Manchester City Council and private partners to deliver a new district in Manchester Victoria North; and £20 million towards remediating small council owned brownfield sites, as part of the Brownfield Land Release Fund.

Machinery of Government

[HLWS451]

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement:

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government change.

On 4 September 2024 I announced that the Government would respond in full to the Grenfell Phase 2 Inquiry report within six months. In response to one of the recommendations from the report, I am confirming today that responsibility for fire will move from the Home Office to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This change will bring responsibility for building safety and fire under a single Secretary of State, providing for a more coherent approach to keeping people safe from fire in their homes. The Home Office will retain management of the Airwave Service Contract on behalf of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and will remain responsible for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

This change will be effective from 1 April 2025. The Government will respond to the full report in due course.

National Procurement Policy Statement

[HLWS445]

Baroness Twycross: My Honourable friend the Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office, Georgia Gould MP, has today made the following statement:

Today the Government is publishing a National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS), which sets out our priorities for public procurement and maximises the impact of every pound spent. This will come into effect alongside the commencement of the Procurement Act 2023 on Monday 24 February. The Government is determined to ensure the £400 billion of public money spent on public procurement annually delivers economic growth, supports small businesses, champions innovation, and creates good jobs and opportunities across the country.

For too long, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) have been held back by government procurement processes that are too slow, bureaucratic, and difficult to navigate. Therefore, today, the Government is also announcing new measures to support the transformation of public procurement and deliver on the Government's Plan for Small Businesses.

New rules will require all government departments and their arm's length bodies to set three-year targets for direct spend with SMEs (from 1 April 2025) and VCSEs (from 1 April 2026) and publish progress annually. On top of this, regular spot checks will ensure smaller companies in the supply chain are paid within 30 days. This builds on previous interventions in the Budget that require government departments to exclude suppliers from bidding for major contracts if they cannot demonstrate prompt payment of invoices. We will be reforming the way social value is taken into account in central government procurement, streamlining the current model to focus on delivery of our missions, and taking forward new standards on fair work in support of our growth mission.

The new National Procurement Policy Statement sets out an expectation for the public sector to maximise procurement spend with SMEs and VCSEs. It sets out how early market engagement and collaboration combined with a clear pipeline of projects can help deliver this. To support local businesses the Government has listened to concerns from local authorities and is working to implement changes to allow them to reserve competitions for low value contracts for local small businesses and social enterprises.

A new Commercial Innovation Hub will foster procurement innovation, by trialling new approaches to service design and procurement. Delivering on the commitment in the blueprint for modern digital government, we will explore establishing a Digital

Commercial Centre of Excellence bringing together digital and commercial expertise to make it possible to buy once and well, and to open up opportunities for small and medium businesses to work on digital transformation.

This Government is clear we want the value of contracts to go into delivering for citizens and are making changes to deliver value for money in procurement through stronger expectations around commercial capability and contract management. A new online register of commercial agreements will increase visibility of frameworks and fees, curbing excessive profits. We will deploy new AI commercial tools to cut bureaucracy, boost productivity, and free-up commercial staff for higher-value tasks.

To build on this progress, the Government will consult on further reforms to our public procurement processes to drive economic growth, support small businesses, and better support innovation. This consultation is intended to inform the development of primary legislation when parliamentary time allows.

The Government will update its Sourcing Playbook and consult on introducing a new public interest test for contracting authorities to assess, at the outset of a procurement process, whether work should be outsourced or if it could be done more effectively, and drive better value for money, in-house. This will strengthen market stewardship in procurement and ensure there is a rigorous evaluation of the broader public interest of inhouse, outsourced or hybrid delivery models, ensuring that decisions properly reflect the long-term value for taxpayers and are aligned with government priorities.

This transformative package of reform ensures public procurement delivers real benefits for taxpayers, businesses and communities alike. By setting ambitious targets for small business spend and aligning social value with our missions, we are driving economic growth, strengthening supply chains, and fostering innovation. By maximising the power of public procurement, we will fuel job creation around the country, drive local and national

outcomes and ensure that every pound spent delivers the maximum value for the people of this country.

Syria: Sanctions

[HLWS448]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: My honourable friend the Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories (Stephen Doughty) has today made the following statement:

Today I am updating the House on the future of the UK's Syria sanctions regime following the welcome fall of Assad's dictatorship late last year.

Sanctions remain a powerful foreign and security policy tool, and this Government is committed to maximising their impact, which includes reviewing their use in light of changing circumstances.

Therefore, I am pleased to inform the House that the Government will bring forward measures in the coming months adapting the Syria sanctions regime, including amendments to the Syria Regulations, which Members of Parliament will have the opportunity to debate.

We are making these changes to support the Syrian people in re-building their country and promote security and stability. They will include the relaxation of restrictions that apply to the energy, transport and finance sectors, and provisions to further support humanitarian delivery.

The Government remains determined to hold Bashar al-Assad and his associates to account for their actions against the people of Syria. We will ensure that asset freezes and travel bans imposed on members of the former regime remain in force.

In this way, the FCDO will continue to use sanctions in a manner that is targeted, proportionate and robust to hold accountable those responsible for atrocious crimes committed during Assad's reign and to support what we hope will be Syria's transition to a more secure, prosperous and stable future.

Written Answers

Thursday, 13 February 2025

Artificial Intelligence: Languages

Asked by **Baroness Coussins**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they are holding with foreign language professionals and their representative bodies about the regulation of machine translation in the context of developing AI policy. [HL4597]

Lord Vallance of Balham: We recognise that the vast majority of AI systems - including machine translation - are best regulated at the point of use and in the context in which they are deployed. That's why in response to the AI Action Plan, the government has committed to supporting regulators in evaluating their AI capabilities and understanding how these can be strengthened.

In regard to foreign language professionals, the GCHQ-chaired cross-Government Languages Group brings together government language professionals, developers and commissioning officers who have a stake in machine translation capability, to capture use cases and develop best practice for its development and deployment.

Bellwin Scheme

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask His Majesty's Government, following recent red weather warnings issued by the Met Office, what plans they have to activate a Bellwin scheme of emergency financial assistance to local authorities. [HL4691]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government is ready to consider local authority requests for Bellwin Scheme support. This can reimburse immediate eligible response costs for authorities affected by emergencies and disasters in their area including severe weather events after they occur.

Link to the Bellwin guidance: [Bellwin scheme of emergency financial assistance to local authorities: guidance notes for claims - GOV.UK.](#)

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Guidance [Bellwin scheme of emergency financial assistance to local authorities_ guidance notes for claims - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-04/HL4691>

Chemicals: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Baroness Hoey**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 30 January (HL4226), what discussions

officials in any department have had with European Union officials before rejecting a request from members of the Northern Ireland assembly to apply "the Stormont Brake" procedure to the Chemical Classification, Labelling and Packaging Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/2865). [HL4752]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government routinely engages with the European Commission on the Windsor Framework and those discussions are confidential. However, I can confirm that no discussions were held between Government and European Union officials that affected the decision by the Secretary of State on the notification in question, which was made solely in accordance with the terms of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Communities and Recovery Steering Group

Asked by **Lord Green of Deddington**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the conclusions of the Communities and Recovery Steering Group regarding the causes of the violent disorder in summer 2024. [HL4637]

Lord Khan of Burnley: As set out in [PQ 20983](#), we will publish further information about the CRSG in due course.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

PQ 20983 [PQ 20983.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-03/HL4637>

Deposit Return Schemes

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Deposit Scheme for Drinks Containers (England and Northern Ireland) Regulations 2024 on the ability of waste disposal authorities to generate an income from disposing of recyclable materials. [HL4624]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The DRS (Deposit Return Scheme) aims to reduce littering of in-scope containers. Once the DRS is operational, our Impact Assessment analysis estimates savings to local authority street cleaning costs of around £30 million per year.

Many of the containers not returned through the scheme may continue to travel through local authority waste streams such as kerbside recycling. The introduction of a DRS has a varying impact on local authorities recycling collections; there may be efficiency savings from collecting and processing less material, however we also understand the DRS will remove a material from local authority recycling streams. Details can be found in the [Final Impact Assessment](#).

We anticipate the scheme administrator – the Deposit Management Organisation – working closely with local authorities to ensure as much material is returned as possible and to help meet collection targets and keep material within the closed-loop model of the DRS.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Final Impact Assessment (DRS) [HL4624 attachment (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-03/HL4624>

Developing Countries: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Hussein-Ece

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of inequalities in access to, and the quality of, reproductive, maternal and newborn healthcare services in fragile states. [HL4600]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is proud to champion and protect reproductive, maternal, and newborn health services, and seeks to take a 'no regrets' approach to supporting the provision of sexual and reproductive health services in all settings, including in conflict and crises.

Reproductive, maternal, child and newborn health outcomes are inextricably linked to strong health systems and the attainment of universal health coverage. The UK works with partners to enable health systems to respond quickly including in humanitarian disasters: from access to skilled health workers, to clean and sanitary health facilities to prevent infection and strong, predictable, supply chains. We provide core funding to the International Confederation of Midwives to strengthen midwifery globally, enabling midwives to save lives, reduce complications, and uphold the fundamental rights of women and girls including in humanitarian settings.

UK investment in the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supports delivery of emergency reproductive health and dignity kits to meet immediate needs in acute crises and focuses on strengthening supply and healthcare systems in fragile states.

Economic Growth

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the economy continues to grow due to any low business confidence. [HL4724]

Lord Livermore: Securing economic growth is the government's number one priority. In her speech on January 29 of this year, the Chancellor outlined the next steps forwards in the government's plan for growth, including a new approach to the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor and support for a third runway at Heathrow Airport.

The government has also announced an ambitious programme of reform across planning, infrastructure,

pensions, industrial strategy, and the labour market. We have also increased capital investment by over £13 billion for 2025-26 compared to 2024-25 and created the National Wealth Fund.

Britain was recently ranked the second most attractive investment destination globally in PwC's Annual CEO Survey.

Firearms: Licensing

Asked by Lord Cameron of Lochiel

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they consulted (1) British Association for Shooting and Conservation Scotland, (2) the Scottish Gamekeepers Association, (3) Scottish Land & Estates, (4) NFU Scotland, (5) the Scottish Association for Country Sports, (6) Scottish Target Shooting and (7) the Scottish Clay Target Association prior to laying the Firearms (Variation of Fees) Order 2025 before Parliament; and, if so, what details they can provide of the consultation and responses to it. [HL4593]

Asked by Lord Cameron of Lochiel

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact on the rural economy in Scotland of the Firearms (Variation of Fees) Order 2025. [HL4594]

Lord Hanson of Flint: On 15 January 2025, the Government laid a statutory instrument before Parliament that will increase fees charged by police forces to provide full-cost recovery for firearms licensing applications, in line with the Government's manifesto commitment on firearms fees. The fees were last increased in 2015 and they are now considerably below the cost of the service provided. It is essential for both public safety and police efficiency that increased fees are introduced so that service improvements can be made. The new fees will come into effect on 5 February.

The new fees are based on data produced by a review of firearms licensing costs in 31 police forces in January 2023. This data has since been updated to reflect increases in costs since then. The review was discussed at the Firearms Fees Working Group, chaired by the Home Office, which met in 2022 and 2023 with representation from:

- National Police Chiefs' Council
- Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- British Shooting Sports Council
- British Association for Shooting and Conservation
- Gun Trade Association
- National Rifle Association
- Countryside Alliance
- National Gamekeepers Organisation

· Scottish Association for Country Sports.

A full impact assessment, which covers the impact of increased fees on rural communities, was published alongside the statutory instrument. The Policing Minister met with both the BSSC and BASC on the 13 January 2025.

Football: Equality

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the powers in the Football Governance Bill for the independent football regulator to require football clubs to set out action they are taking on equality, diversity and inclusion. [HL4524]

Baroness Twycross: Clubs will be required to report on what action they are taking with regard to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as part of the corporate governance code included within the Football Governance Bill.

EDI is a key part of good corporate governance. Good EDI on boards and in clubs promotes better governance, decision-making and transparency, all of which links to improved financial sustainability.

Gatwick Airport: Construction

*Asked by **Lord Booth***

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the level of growth expected during this parliament as a result of the expansion of Gatwick Airport to two runways. [HL4586]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: An application for a Development Consent Order has been made by Gatwick Airport Limited to bring their existing Northern runway into routine use alongside their main runway.

The Planning Inspectorate submitted its recommendation report to the Department for Transport on 27 November 2024 and the Secretary of State for Transport has until the 27 February 2025 to make a decision.

As this is a live planning application, it would not be appropriate to comment.

Government Departments: Digital Technology

*Asked by **Lord Agnew of Oulton***

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the 2022–2025 Roadmap for Digital and Data, published on 29 November 2023, how many of the 50 government services that were due to reach a “great” standard by 2025 have now met that standard; whether they remain committed to this target; and if not, why this commitment has been omitted from the Blueprint for Modern Digital Government, published on 21 January. [HL4576]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology has provided a report to the Public Accounts Committee on the closure of the 2022–25 Roadmap. The report indicates that 29 of the Top 75 Services have reached the ‘Great’ standard, an increase from 8 ‘Great’ services at baselining.

The Government Digital Service has established a Service Transformation team to drive delivery of the next phase of service transformation work set out in Blueprint for Modern Digital Government, building on the learnings from the Top75 Services Programme.

As set out in the Blueprint, the government will develop a detailed Government Digital & AI Roadmap alongside the second phase of the Spending Review, to be published in summer 2025. This will supersede the 2022–2025 Roadmap, and will include details of how we plan to measure progress through the next phase of digital transformation.

*Asked by **Lord Agnew of Oulton***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many government departments met the April 2023 deadline to confirm an adoption strategy for One Login, as set out in the 2022–2025 Roadmap for Digital and Data, published on 29 November 2023; whether the Blueprint for Modern Digital Government sets a new deadline for full adoption; and if not, why no specific timeframe has been included in the strategy. [HL4577]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: In the 2022 to 2025 roadmap for digital and data, Mission Two states that 'All departments will confirm an adoption strategy and roadmap for One Login by April 2023 and their services will have begun onboarding by 2025.'

In April 2023, 16 of the 17 departments in scope had a delivery plan and were working with GDS to onboard their first services. All departments in scope have now committed to onboarding services to GOV.UK One Login, and are actively implementing delivery plans. 59 services have onboarded to GOV.UK One Login, with an extensive roadmap of new services scheduled to onboard over the course of the next 12 months. They are supported by the GDS Onboarding and Engagement team who provide advice and assets to enable technical service teams to onboard their services smoothly.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

*Asked by **Lord Foster of Bath***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath on 29 January (HL4088), where the Climate Change Committee has advised that "it did not consider it necessary for Government to reset existing targets". [HL4632]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: In December 2020, the UK's Committee on Climate Change (CCC) presented a report to the Secretary of State entitled “The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's Path to Net Zero.” This report, a

statutory obligation under Section 34 of the Climate Change Act, included recommendations for the UK's Sixth Carbon Budget, set to run from 2033 to 2037. In the report, the CCC noted that "it is for the Government to decide whether the currently legislated budgets [the fourth and fifth, covering 2023-2027 and 2028-32] should be amended to bring them in line with the Net Zero 2050 target, however the Committee does not consider it necessary to change the budget level in law – the focus should be on developing policy to deliver the new Sixth Carbon Budget and the UK's NDC for 2030." We will deliver an updated plan that sets out the policy package out to the end of Carbon Budget 6 in 2037 for all the sectors in due course.

Listed Buildings: Energy

Asked by Lord Mackinlay of Richborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to reducing the costs of improving the energy efficiency of listed properties with respect to (1) planning fees, (2) professional support, (3) materials, and (4) labour. [HL4762]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is committed to supporting all homeowners in installing energy efficiency measures to drive down bills and reduce our overall energy consumption. Many of these measures will support listed buildings. In November 2024, the Government announced the Warm Homes Plan which has committed £3.2 billion of investment for energy efficiency across 2025 to 2026, including an increased budget for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Historic England is Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. It has resources available online to support owners of listed buildings in installing appropriate energy efficiency measures. Last summer, Historic England updated their advice note on Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency to provide clarity and support consistent decision-making to reduce carbon emissions and improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings.

Local Government: Devolution and Elections

Asked by Lord Fuller

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the letter regarding local government reorganisation sent by the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to the leaders of all two-tier councils and neighbouring unitary authorities, published on 15 January, what assessment they have made of the capacity of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Boundary Commission for England to meet the Government's proposed timetable for devolution; and in how many areas is it practical to cancel local council elections to achieve the Government's objectives. [HL4177]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Devolution Priority Programme will provide a fast-track to mayoral devolution, aiming to see a new wave of mayoral elections in May 2026. The areas on the Devolution Priority Programme will receive the full backing of government to deliver to these ambitious timescales. We will commence Government-led consultations in early in February, and we have a team in the department who will be focused on supporting these places through the process.

My department is liaising closely with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England so that they are involved at the appropriate time to ensure fair electoral arrangements across the area of any new unitary local authorities.

The Government wrote to local authorities in December setting out that, where it will help deliver both reorganisation and devolution to the most ambitious timeframe, the government would be prepared to postpone local elections from May 2025 to May 2026. Of the 18 requests, Government agreed that for Norfolk and Suffolk; Essex and Thurrock; Hampshire and the Isle of Wight; East Sussex and West Sussex postponement is essential for the delivery of the Devolution Priority Programme and complementary reorganisation. Government has also agreed to postpone elections in Surrey, where reorganisation is essential to unlocking devolution options.

Local Government: Elections

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their timescale for the next local elections in the devolution areas on the Devolution Primary Programme where the May 2025 local elections have been postponed. [HL4882]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has been clear that our intention is that elections for mayors for the Devolution Priority Areas will be held in May 2026. The election to the county councils of East Sussex, Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and West Sussex and the unitary councils of Isle of Wight and Thurrock will be postponed to take place alongside the Mayoral election in May 2026. Elections to other councils in the Devolution Priority Programme areas are also scheduled to take place in May 2026.

Local Government: Translation Services

Asked by Lord Gilbert of Panteg

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 17 December (HL3301), what steps the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government is taking to discourage local authorities from translating into foreign languages, in line with the Guidance on Diversity and Inclusion and Impartiality for Civil

Servants, published on 14 May, and the associated guidance in 2013. [HL3664]

Lord Khan of Burnley: I refer the Noble Lord to the answer given to Question UIN HL2739 on 4 December 2024.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UIN HL2739 [HL2739.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-19/HL3664>

Ministry of Justice: Planning Permission

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Ministry of Justice projects in the Government Major Projects Portfolio have been delayed due to planning permission in each of the past five years, broken down by (1) project, (2) length of delay, and (3) additional costs incurred. [HL4575]

Lord Timpon: The Ministry of Justice's Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) includes 21 projects. 7 of these make up the 20k Prison Place Programmes, which developed from the original 10,000 places commitment announced in 2019 under the previous Government.

These projects are:

- 10k Additional Prison Places – New Build
- 10k Additional Prison Places Estate Expansion Category D
- 10k Additional Prison Places Estate Expansion Houseblocks and Refurbishments
- Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme
- PFI Expiry and Transfer Tranche 2
- Rapid Deployment Cell Project
- Small Secure Houseblocks

Several of the 20k programmes experienced a range of delays due to planning determination outside of the statutory timeframe. It means that despite promising to deliver 20,000 prison places by the mid-2020s, the previous Government only delivered approximately 6,000 as set out in the 10-year Capacity Strategy.

Within the New Prisons Programme, known as the 10k Additional Prison Places – New Build within the GMPP, delays to planning determinations have been documented in the recently published 10-Year Prison Capacity Strategy. The strategy outlines challenges in securing planning permission at the new prisons in Lancashire, Buckinghamshire and Leicestershire, which were in the planning system for 40 months, 30 months and 29 months respectively. The strategy notes that each three-month delay to a new prison adds around £8 million in construction cost inflation.

We are unable to draw out the specific, quantifiable time and cost impact of individual planning delays alone on the overall delivery of the majority of the 20k programmes, as the delays were cumulative with planning being one of several factors, including site-specific requirements and administration of key contractors.

No other Ministry of Justice GMPP projects on the list published in January 2025 have been delayed due to planning permission.

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Khan of Burnley on 20 January (HL3595), whether there has been any further expenditure on the planned UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre since the £138.8m estimate of March 2023; and if so, how much has been spent and what does the additional spending relate to. [HL4207]

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 22 May 2024 (HC Deb cols 975–6) that £18 million had already been spent on the planned UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, how much they have spent since that date and what the additional spending relates to. [HL4243]

Lord Khan of Burnley: From 1 April 2023 to 22 January 2025 £2.71 million has been spent on project costs, including work on the Holocaust Memorial Bill, preparations for redetermination of the planning application and preparation for the commencement of construction. £1.66 million of that money has been spent since 22 May 2024.

Population: Greater London

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that one in 12 residents of London are “hidden and transient”, which includes people living at secondary addresses, visitors and tourists and irregular migrants. [HL4535]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Noble Lord will wish to be aware that those media outlets who published those reports have subsequently published corrections accepting that they were not accurate. Estimates of the illegal population are inherently uncertain, and no current accurate assessment is available.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that individuals with no right to be in the UK are removed, either voluntarily or through enforcement action.

Remote Working: Productivity

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of remote working and its impact on productivity levels. [HL4606]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The government continues to monitor the impact of flexible working.

According to recent ONS data, the trend in working only from home has fallen since 2021, and a hybrid working model has become the 'new normal' for around a quarter of workers.

Reported benefits of remote working include improved recruitment, inclusivity, wellbeing, and productivity, and reduced employer overheads. Furthermore, the ONS' Business Insights and Conditions Survey covering 18 November to 1 December 2024 found that, of those that have adopted or extended homeworking, 43% reported that this was due to increased productivity.

Sports: Transgender People

Asked by Lord Reay

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport on 15 November 2024 (HC13602), what guidance they have issued regarding people who have a different sex recorded at birth participating in competitive sport, including where biological sex gives a competitive advantage. [HL4652]

Baroness Twycross: Sporting bodies have a responsibility to protect the integrity and fairness of women's sport and the safety of all participants, particularly when it is not possible to balance those factors with inclusion.

National Governing Bodies set their own policies for who can participate in their sports in domestic competitions. Our UK sports councils have produced guidance to help domestic sports bodies determine the right position for their sport. The guidance covers transgender participation in sport, and makes clear that fairness and safety cannot be balanced with inclusion in gender-affected sport.

Unitary Councils

Asked by Baroness Thornhill

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it will be possible to take account of geographical coherence when establishing a unitary council. [HL4519]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The statutory invitation letter of 5 February sent to leaders of all councils in two-tier areas and neighbouring unitaries set out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed and decisions made on whether proposals are to be implemented. The criteria includes that proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.

Water Charges

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government, following reports that water bills are expected to rise by £10 per month from April, what steps they are taking to support customers with rising costs. [HL4605]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We understand the financial pressures hardworking families are currently facing and the Government is therefore committed to take action to address water poverty and ensure support is available for vulnerable customers who are struggling to pay their bills.

All water companies have measures in place for people who struggle to pay for their water and wastewater services, including measures such as WaterSure, social tariffs, payment breaks and holidays, and debt management support. We expect all companies to make sure households are aware of the measures available to them and do everything they can to support all customers who are vulnerable.

The Government is also improving protections for customers, with new and increased compensation for water companies to pay to customers and businesses in the event of issues like water supply outages, sewer flooding or low water pressure. In addition, the Government has recently introduced a new clause to the Water (Special Measures) Bill to add to existing powers for water companies to provide for special charging arrangements for customers in need.

Furthermore, we expect companies to hold themselves accountable for their public commitment to end water poverty by 2030 and will work with the sector to ensure appropriate measures are taken to deliver this.

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