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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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<b>Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent</b>	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
<b>Baroness Blake of Leeds</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Chapman of Darlington</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Coaker</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Lord Collins of Highbury</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
<b>Baroness Gustafsson</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
<b>Lord Hanson of Flint</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Baroness Hayman of Ullock</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill</b>	Minister of State, Department for Transport
<b>Lord Hermer</b>	Attorney-General
<b>Lord Hunt of Kings Heath</b>	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
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<b>Lord Leong</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Livermore</b>	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
<b>Baroness Merron</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Lord Moraes</b>	Whip
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<b>Baroness Sherlock</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
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## Written Statements

*Wednesday, 12 March 2025*

### **Bathing Water Regulations 2013: Government Response to the Consultation**

[HLWS512]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** My honourable friend, the Minister for Water and Flooding, Emma Hardy MP, has made the following Written Statement:

In November last year, the Government, jointly with Welsh Government, announced the consultation on Reforms to The Bathing Water Regulations 2013, in the first shake-up to our bathing waters since the Regulations were introduced. These reforms include removing strict automatic de-designation, amending the designation process to include feasibility of improvement as a criterion for designation, and moving the current fixed dates of the monitored bathing season into guidance.

The Government received clear public support for its proposed three proposed reforms, nine technical amendments, and two wider reforms. These reforms align with the recommendations made in the Office of Environmental Protection's report on the implementation of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013. We now intend to proceed with their implementation. We will also begin robust research and development on the wider reforms to see how they can best be implemented in future. Defra will work closely with the Environment Agency to ensure the new measures are implemented effectively and innovatively.

We are also reopening the bathing water application window in 2025. From May, communities in England can apply for new bathing waters, meaning that some additional sites may be designated ahead of the 2026 season. Prospective sites will be assessed against the Government's newly reformed standards, set to become law later this year. Further details of the application process will be published in guidance at the start of the 2025 bathing season.

Updating bathing water regulations is part of the wider action the Government is taking to fix our water system. To meet the scale of the challenge, and deliver transformational change, the Government last year launched an Independent Commission into the water sector to review its regulatory system. On 27 February, the Commission launched a wide-ranging Call for Evidence, which is open for views from all interested parties until 23 April. The Commission is focused on recommendations to strengthen the water sector and the regulatory framework, whereas the planned reforms to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 are focused on specific improvements to the operation and management of the bathing water system, so that more people have the opportunity to experience the benefits of our beautiful waters.

### **Sustainable Farming Incentive**

[HLWS510]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** My honourable friend, the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs, Daniel Zeichner MP, has made the following Written Statement:

With record numbers of farm businesses in farming schemes and the sustainable farming budget successfully allocated, yesterday the Government has stopped accepting new applications for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI24).

Our Environmental Land Management schemes will remain in place, including SFI, and there will be a new and improved SFI offer with more information in summer 2025.

Every penny in all existing SFI24 agreements will be paid to farmers, and outstanding eligible applications that have been submitted will also be taken forward.

Our vision is for a sector with food production at its core because food security is national security. We want farm businesses to be more resilient to shocks and disruption, and an agricultural sector that recognises restoring nature is not in competition with sustainable food production but is essential to it.

By pursuing these principles, we will support farm businesses to be more profitable, addressing the underlying problem that some farmers do not make enough money for the hard work they put in.

This Government inherited farming schemes which were underspent, meaning millions of pounds were not going to farming businesses. This Government is proud to have secured the largest budget for sustainable food production in our country's history, with £5 billion over a 2-year period to sustainable farming and nature recovery.

We have left no stone unturned in our determination to get farmers into our Environmental Land Management schemes. As a result, we now have a record number of farmers in these schemes with more than 50,000 farm businesses and more than half of all farmed land now being managed under our schemes.

The largest of these schemes, SFI, now has more than 37,000 live agreements in place. It is not only delivering sustainable food production and nature's recovery for today and the years ahead, but it is also putting money back into farm businesses.

However, this Government inherited an uncapped scheme aimed at mass participation of farm businesses, despite a finite farming budget. The high level of participation in SFI means we have now reached the upper limit.

Now is the right time for a reset: supporting farmers, delivering for nature and targeting public funds fairly and effectively towards our priorities for food, farming and nature.

We will take forward any submitted SFI application where the agreement has not yet started. If farmers have already submitted an application, they will receive an

agreement. If farmers are in the SFI Pilot, they will be able to apply when the pilot agreement ends.

The reformed and improved SFI will:

- deliver our vision of a sector with food production at its core, supporting less resilient farm businesses while ensuring nature recovery;
- ensure we deliver value for money for taxpayers as we invest in sustainable food production and nature recovery;
- have a clear budget set and put in place strong budgetary controls so that SFI is affordable; and
- better target SFI actions fairly and effectively, focusing on helping less productive land contribute to our priorities for food, farming and nature.

As we evolve the scheme, we will listen to farmers' feedback to ensure we learn and improve for the future.

Our improved SFI scheme will be another step in this Government's New Deal for Farmers to support growth and return farm businesses to profitability. In recent weeks we have already:

- extended the Seasonal Worker Visa Scheme for 5 years;
- outlined plans to back British produce across the public estate;
- protected farmers in trade deals;
- invested £110 million in farming grants to improve productivity, trial new technologies and drive innovation in the sector;
- made the supply chain fairer, including new regulations for the pig sector by the end of this month; and
- invested over £200 million in a new National Biosecurity Centre to protect livestock from diseases.

The Government is committed to working with farmers and farm organisations to ensure future policies deliver in the best interests of farming for the long term. For instance, we are developing the first-ever long-term Farming Roadmap to understand the barriers facing farmers and identify ways to reform the farming budget so that it can best deliver for food production and the environment.

The Land Use Framework will guarantee our long-term food security and future-proof our farm businesses, supporting economic growth on the limited land we have available.

I will be making an oral statement on this subject later today.

## Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules

[HLWS511]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Citizenship (Seema Malhotra) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

My rt hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

### *Introduction of a Visit Visa requirement on Trinidad and Tobago*

We are today introducing a visa requirement on all visitors from Trinidad and Tobago. Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago will also be required to obtain a Direct Airside Transit Visa if they intend to transit via the UK having booked travel to another country. The visa requirement comes into force at 15:00 GMT today.

Consequential to this, nationals of Trinidad and Tobago will no longer be eligible to apply for an electronic travel authorisation for travel to the UK.

There will be a six-week, visa-free transition period for those who already hold an electronic travel authorisation and confirmed bookings to the UK obtained on or before 15:00 GMT 12 March 2025 where arrival in the UK is no later than 15:00 BST 23 April 2025.

Arrangements are in place so that nationals of Trinidad and Tobago can apply for visas. We are publicising the changes so travellers are aware and can plan accordingly.

We are taking this action due to an increase in the number of Trinidad and Tobago nationals travelling to the UK for purposes other than those permitted under visitor rules. This has included a significant and sustained increase in asylum claims, which has added significantly to operational pressures at the border and resulted in frontline resource being diverted from other operational priorities.

The decision to introduce a visa requirement has been taken solely for migration and border security reasons. Our relationship with our Commonwealth partner Trinidad and Tobago remains a strong and friendly one. Any decision to change a visa status is not taken lightly and we keep the border and immigration system under regular review to ensure it continues to work in the UK national interest.

### *Changes to the Ukraine Scheme*

The Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE) opened on 4 February 2025, and allows Ukrainians, and their eligible family members, who have been living in the UK with permission under one of the existing routes within Appendix Ukraine Scheme, or outside the Immigration Rules in specified circumstances, to apply for a further period of 18 months' permission to stay in the UK. The launch of UPE reflects our commitment to providing further support for Ukrainians in the UK whilst the conflict with Russia continues.

We are making some minor changes to UPE to extend the validity requirements further. This will include bringing in scope children under 18 who were granted Leave to Enter the UK outside the Immigration Rules so they could join or stay with their parents who already held Ukraine Scheme permission. Going forward, a change to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme guidance that was published on 31 January will enable eligible parents to sponsor their children to come to UK under the Homes for

Ukraine route. However, making this change to the UPE requirements now will enable children who have already been granted Leave Outside the Rules in these circumstances to align their status with their parents by enabling them to apply to UPE when their current permission is due to expire. This will provide further reassurance and certainty about their status in the UK.

There will also be some minor drafting changes to the eligibility rules for UPE to better reflect the existing policy intention.

We are also making changes to the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme, to include the ‘approved sponsor’ requirements for eligible minors in both validity and eligibility sections of the Rules. This will enable decision makers to determine applications which do not have an approved sponsor. We will also align the definition of parent across HfU and UPE, so it is consistent with the wider immigration system. In order to preserve the integrity of the broader immigration system, we will also introduce a requirement that parents who wish to be joined by their children in the UK under the HfU scheme must be lawfully resident in the UK.

Finally, changes to the Immigration Rules were laid in November 2024 (HC 334) to end the use of ‘permission to travel’ (PTT) letters on the Ukraine schemes from 13 February onwards. The Rules currently allow PTT arrivals to vary their permission in country within 6 months of their arrival. As there will be no further PTT arrivals from 13 February, no one will be able to vary their permission in this way from 13 August onwards. We are consequently making a change to the Rules to remove this provision from that date, as it will no longer be required.

These changes to Appendix Ukraine Scheme do not constitute a reduction of support for Ukraine and the UK government remains steadfast in its commitment to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

#### *Changes relating to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)*

The EUSS enables EU, other European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens living in the UK before the end of the post-EU exit transition period at 11pm on 31 December 2020, and their family members, to obtain the immigration status they need to continue living in the UK, consistently with the Citizens’ Rights Agreements.

The main changes enable a non-EEA national applicant to use a UK-issued biometric residence card or permit which has expired by up to 18 months as proof of their identity and nationality; confirm that a person with a pending administrative review of an EUSS decision, who has not left the UK or has been granted entry into the UK (except on immigration bail), will not be removed from the UK; and enable an application to be refused on suitability grounds, without a deportation or exclusion order being in place, where the applicant’s conduct before the end of the transition period meets the relevant EU law public policy test applicable under the Agreements.

#### *Changes relating to care workers in the Skilled Worker route*

The Government values the important contribution care workers from overseas make to social care services. However, too many providers have recruited care workers to the UK and failed to provide them with the work they were promised, or have subjected them to appalling exploitation. We have a duty to protect people against destitution, exploitation and modern slavery, and the best way to do so is through secure, properly paid work and employment conditions.

We are therefore making changes to address the growing pool of care workers and senior care workers in this route who no longer have sponsorship, because their sponsors have been unable to offer sufficient work and/or have lost their sponsor licences.

The changes require providers to try to recruit from this pool of workers who are seeking new employment, before seeking to sponsor new recruits from other immigration routes or from overseas.

The changes do not apply to workers outside England, or where providers are seeking to sponsor someone switching from another immigration route who has already been working for them for at least three months. We will keep the geographic coverage of this requirement under close review.

#### *Changes to the minimum salary for Skilled Worker visas*

A routine change is being made to update the minimum salary floor from £23,200 per year (or £11.90 per hour) to £25,000 per year (or £12.82 per hour). It is standard practice to update this and other salary requirements across work visa routes each year, using the latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This ensures these salary requirements continue to reflect the latest pay situation for UK workers. As the Government intends to shortly publish an Immigration White Paper, the changes are being limited to only updating the minimum salary floor. This is to ensure it reflects the latest ASHE data and remains significantly above the National Living Wage, which is also increasing in April 2025.

#### *Appendix ETA – exemption for British Nationals (Overseas)*

We are removing British Nationals (Overseas) from the list of nationalities requiring an electronic travel authorisation (ETA) for travel to the UK.

This means that holders of a BN(O) passport will be able to travel to or transit via the UK without requiring an ETA. We will keep this exemption under review.

These changes to the Immigration Rules are being laid on 12 March 2025. For the changes that introduce a Visa requirement on Trinidad and Tobago, due to safeguarding the operation of the UK’s immigration system, those changes will come into effect at 15:00 GMT on 12 March

2025. For the changes relating to the Ukraine Scheme, those changes will come into effect on various dates from 2 April 2025, as detailed in the Statement of Changes. All other changes will come into effect on 9 April 2025.



# Written Answers

Wednesday, 12 March 2025

## British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Asked by *Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government from which law firms and individuals they have commissioned external legal advice in relation to negotiations over the Chagos Islands since 5 July 2024. [HL5128]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Government has sought external legal advice at various times throughout the negotiations with Mauritius. The specific counsel instructed has depended on the nature of the legal issues involved. Counsel has a professional obligation not to accept instructions where there is a conflict of interest.

## Care Quality Commission: Standards

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Care Quality Commission concerning the reliability of ratings for GP practices. [HL4991]

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Care Quality Commission concerning the process of timely onboarding of new clients and patients having access to services. [HL4992]

**Baroness Merron:** The Department has regular performance discussions with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). These discussions include, but are not limited to, the CQC's ratings of general practices and the CQC's registration process.

The CQC has experienced significant delays in registering providers and publishing updated ratings. Between 2023 and March 2024, the CQC rolled out a new IT system. The delays are partially the result of an increase in registration applications and failures in the CQC's IT system. The CQC is undertaking rapid changes to increase the number of assessments, provide updated ratings, and speed up its registration process for timely onboarding of new providers, with 25,230 completed since April 2024. It has recently reported that the 500 assessments stuck in its IT system have now reduced to 301 and will gradually result in updated ratings.

## Cats: Animal Breeding

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Animal Welfare Committee's report Opinion on the welfare implications of current and emergent feline breeding practices, published in September 2024, and its recommendation that the

breeding of cats with known and harmful extreme traits should be banned. [HL5489]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government welcomes the Animal Welfare Committee's Opinion on the welfare implications of current and emergent feline breeding practices. We are carefully considering the Committee's recommendations.

## Ceramics: Stoke on Trent

Asked by *Lord Freyberg*

To ask His Majesty's Government what tax incentives or business rate relief measures they are considering to support small and medium-sized pottery enterprises in Stoke-on-Trent, particularly those focusing on traditional production methods and local employment. [HL5357]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government has introduced a number of tax measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises across the country, including those in the pottery sector in Stoke-on-Trent.

At the Autumn Budget, the Government published the Corporate Tax Roadmap to provide certainty for businesses to invest, committing to maintaining the Annual Investment Allowance at £1 million, which covers the qualifying expenditure of the vast majority of businesses.

The Government also took the decision to support the smallest businesses by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500, which means that this year, 865,000 employers (43%) will pay no National Insurance contributions at all.

At Autumn Budget, the Government also froze the small business multiplier. Together with Small Business Rates Relief, which exempts over a third of properties from business rates, these measures protect 90% of properties from inflationary increases in business rate liabilities. The Government also remains committed to delivering a fairer business rates system.

The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review, in order to ensure they strike the right balance between keeping taxes simple to administer, well-targeted and effective.

## China: Democratic Republic of Congo

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the bid by the China North Industries Corporation to buy copper and cobalt assets in the Democratic Republic of the Congo owned by Chemaf; and of the implications for security, resilience, and supply chain transparency, especially with regard to the use of child labour. [HL5064]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK government understands this is a commercial deal between foreign businesses, though we have not assessed

further at this time. Our resources are focused on supporting British business in this sector. The UK is committed to addressing risks around conflict minerals through promoting responsible business practice, and protecting human rights, including against the use of child labour. We work through a number of international mechanisms to deliver on this, including supporting the OECD's Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Mineral Supply Chains which enables businesses to continue to operate responsibly from conflict-affected and high-risk areas.

### Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Health Services

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to move care for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease from hospitals into community settings. [HL5179]

**Baroness Merron:** NHS England is leading on the development of an approach for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease management to support proactive identification and management of rising risk patients in winter to reduce demand on primary and secondary care. The approach fully aligns with a Neighbourhood Health Service model and includes: identification of rising risk patients through a nationally developed search tool for use in General Practice IT and clinical review; optimisation of care through an in depth OPTIMISE review by a respiratory specialist in an integrated team to prevent deterioration; support and management through remote monitoring and a greater focus on self-management and education; and strengthened support via access to support in the community, for example, through out of hours and seven-day service.

OPTIMISE includes eight processes of care:

- optimise treatment;
- pulmonary rehabilitation;
- tobacco dependence;
- inhaler technique;
- maximising vaccination coverage;
- increasing physical activity;
- support for psychological wellbeing; and
- education and self-management.

To assist with the testing of this approach and to support services this winter, NHS England has developed a range of accompanying resources, including a patient search tool to identify potential patients who would benefit from review and a template to support the OPTIMISE review.

### Civil Service

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Armstrong Memorandum remains extant. [HL5299]

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Civil Service is independent of His Majesty's Government; and whether the statement that civil servants are independent of Government on the Civil Service 'About us' page on Gov.uk is compatible with (1) the Carltona principle, (2) the Civil Service Code, (3) the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, and (4) the Prime minister's role as Minister for the Civil Service. [HL5302]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Civil Service 'About us' page on Gov.uk was inaccurate and has been updated.

The Armstrong memorandum of 1985 set out that "it is the duty of civil servants to serve their Ministers with integrity and to the best of their ability", and that "the British civil service is a non-political and disciplined career service". This was codified in 1996 with the creation of the Civil Service Code, a document that governs the conduct of civil servants to this day.

### Consumer Goods: Safety

*Asked by Lord Frost*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cost to British businesses selling to customers in the European Union and Northern Ireland of complying with the European Union General Product Safety Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2023/988). [HL5305]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The UK enjoys a high level of product safety. The updated GPSR therefore largely formalises the reality of how businesses are already operating across the UK, and many UK businesses will already be going further than many of these requirements.

*Asked by Lord Frost*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cost to the economy of aligning the United Kingdom with the requirements of the European Union General Product Safety Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2023/988). [HL5306]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The UK enjoys a high level of product safety. The updated GPSR therefore largely formalises the reality of how businesses are already operating across the UK, and many UK businesses will already be going further than many of these requirements.



## Defence: Pensions

Asked by *Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of the current defence budget is spent on pensions. [HL5303]

**Lord Coaker:** I refer the noble Baroness to the answer given by my hon. friend, the Minister for Veterans and People (Al Carns), on 30 January 2025 to Question UIN 26778 in the House of Commons.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Question number 26778 HoC [UIN 26778.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-26/HL5303>

## Dementia: Video Games

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of video games in assessing and treating dementia symptoms, and whether they plan to fund research in this area. [HL5573]

**Baroness Merron:** The Department delivers research into the prevention, treatment and care for dementia via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). This includes a feasibility study to develop an online video game and test whether it can screen, diagnose, and distinguish between people with early or late-phase Alzheimer's disease and people without dementia. NIHR-funded research, through the START trial, a three-minute computerized cognitive training program, has also led to the development of an online tool shown to improve attention, memory and problem-solving in older adults.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including dementia. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made based on the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

## Female Genital Mutilation

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the study by Arpita Ghosh, Heather Flowe and James Rockey Estimating excess mortality due to female genital mutilation, published August 2023, and (2) the number of avoidable deaths resulting from female genital mutilation (FGM); and of the organisations which receive FGM aid grants from the UK, how many provide medical assistance to women and girls suffering life-threatening complications as a result of FGM, including severe bleeding, obstructed labour, and infection. [HL5374]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is very interested in the study conducted by the University of Birmingham, estimating the excess mortality due to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Officials are meeting with authors this month to discuss the findings.

The UK funds the Support to the Africa-Led Movement to End FGM: Phase 2 programme (ALM). The programme funds a Model Health Facility (MHF) in Narok, Kenya, which provides direct medical assistance to women and girls suffering because of FGM. The ALM programme has developed a FGM-specific curriculum for healthcare professionals undergoing pre-service training, equipping them to contribute towards the prevention of FGM and improving healthcare services for women with FGM-related complications. The MHF trained 239 faculties and 2,534 students across Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Senegal by October 2024.

The UK also funds the UNICEF/UNFPA Joint Programme for the Elimination of FGM through which 86, 823 women and girls received healthcare services related to FGM last year.

In 2024, the Sudan Free from FGM: Phase 2 programme provided 97,601 women and girls with health-related services to mitigate, prevent or respond to a combination of FGM, Gender-Based Violence and Child Marriage. In addition, 206,407 women and girls received mental health and psychosocial support.

## Foreign Investment in UK

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the Department for Business and Trade has sufficient resources to attract inward investment into the UK. [HL5334]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** We are expanding the Office for Investment to ensure it is fit for purpose and has the capability needed to continue to showcase the UK as the first choice for investment and the best place in the world to do business. The enhanced OFI will originate and execute major deals, develop commercially attractive investment propositions, market the UK to investors globally, and coordinate investment activity across Government. This will ensure that the UK continues to be a world leader for attracting international investment which is central to our mission to drive growth, job creation and productivity across the UK.

## Gambling: Tax Yields

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much was raised in tax in each of the past three years from gambling activities. [HL5465]

**Lord Livermore:** The table below contains the latest betting and gaming duty receipts totals for each of the past three calendar years.

<i>UK betting and gaming duty receipts by calendar year</i>	<i>Total betting and gaming receipts</i>
2022	£3,254 million
2023	£3,393 million
2024 (provisional)	£3,552 million

The totals above are composed of receipts from General Betting Duty, Pool Betting Duty, Gaming Duty, Bingo Duty, Remote Gaming Duty, Machine Games Duty, and Lottery Duty.

### General Practitioners: Internet

*Asked by Baroness Golding*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of online systems for booking same-day GP appointments on elderly and disabled people who cannot use a computer or the internet independently. [HL5452]

**Baroness Merron:** NHS England has published a framework for National Health Service action on digital inclusion and is developing further resources to support practical actions. All programmes are actively considering how they can contribute to improvements in healthcare inequalities and digital inclusion. Digital health tools are part of a wider offering that includes face-to-face support and telephone services, with appropriate help for people who struggle to access digital services.

### General Practitioners: Recruitment

*Asked by Lord Kamall*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in the House of Commons on the 15 January (HC Deb col 371), how many extra GPs they have hired since 4 July 2024. [HL5121]

**Baroness Merron:** The number of fully qualified general practitioners (GPs) increased by 535 full-time equivalent between July 2024 and December 2024. This data includes estimates for practices that did not provide fully valid staff records. This does not include recently qualified GPs employed through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS).

Information on the number of recently qualified general practitioners for which primary care networks are claiming reimbursement via the ARRS is currently being collated and is not yet published. We are working to verify the data and establish its reliability, which is necessary before any dataset can be published.

### Horizon IT System: Compensation

*Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Gustafsson on 11 February (HL

Deb cols 1104–07), what plans they have to provide a further update to the House on the remedial actions they have taken following the Post Office Horizon scandal; and what steps they have taken to improve the skills of, and accountability measures relating to, directors from the Civil Service who represent the Government on the boards of organisations of which the Government owns a share. [HL5163]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I provided the House an update on the redress schemes on the 27 February.

There are currently over 300 public bodies, many of whom operate with independent Boards. The decision on whether to place a representative on the Board is for the sponsoring Department.

UK Government Investments (UKGI) currently provides a Shareholder Representative function on behalf of Departments for 25 of government's most commercially focused bodies, including providing Board representatives for 22 of these bodies. UKGI provides extensive training for its representatives covering a range of corporate governance issues. This training has developed significantly in recent years and is regularly updated.

### Import Duties: USA

*Asked by Lord Tyrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effects on UK GDP of the imposition of tariffs by the President of the United States of America on Mexico and Canada. [HL5534]

**Lord Livermore:** HMT continuously monitors external developments and potential impacts on the UK economy and is committed to considering what actions are best to promote and safeguard UK business interests.

Global trade is an important driver of global and domestic growth; increased trade barriers and increased uncertainty about trade policies between partners will be detrimental to the global and UK economies. We are clear – as a very open economy – that free and open global trade is in our national interest.

### Inquiries: Civil Servants

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 19 February (HL4743), whether they continue to adhere to the guidance set out in Chapter 1 of the Public Inquiries Handbook (Guidance for Sponsor Departments), as published on the House of Lords Select Committee on the Inquiries Act 2005 website as it was on 8 August 2012, which advises that Permanent Secretaries should, under certain circumstances, issue written assurances that no information officials provide to an inquiry will be used against them in later disciplinary proceedings; and, whether they will lay a

copy of the current version in the Library of the House. [HL5352]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The position on written assurances is as set out in the previous answer (HL4743).

In our response to the recommendations of the House of Lords Statutory Inquiries Committee, published on 10 February, the Government has committed to publish guidance on inquiries.

### Intimate Image Abuse: Convictions

*Asked by Baroness Taylor of Bolton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many deprivation orders have been issued in cases of conviction for revenge porn offences. [HL5332]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The numbers of all types of deprivation orders issued in cases of conviction for offences of “Disclosing private, sexual images” under section 33, Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 and “Sharing intimate images without consent” under section 66B, Sexual Offences Act 2003 is as follows.

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Jan- Sept 2024
5	4	2	1	1	8	3	17

These figures relate to all instances that a deprivation order was issued to a defendant for these offences.

The Government is committed to halving violence against women and girls and has introduced legislation to criminalise several types of intimate image abuse, and to extend the powers of the court to issue deprivation orders in these cases. We are exploring what can be done to encourage the use of deprivation orders in cases such as these.

### Middle East: Treaties

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what provisions they have in place to audit adherence to treaty agreements between the UK and countries in the Middle East. [HL5274]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK enjoys a wide range of agreements with the countries of North Africa and the Middle East. We keep all aspects of our relationships, including participation in any bilateral or multilateral agreements, under review.

### Nuclear Weapons

*Asked by Lord Oates*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to securing the full independence of the UK's nuclear deterrent. [HL5315]

**Lord Coaker:** I can assure the noble Lord that the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent is completely operationally independent. Only the Prime Minister can authorise the firing of our nuclear weapons, even if they are to be employed as part of a NATO response.

The UK has a longstanding, close relationship with the US on all defence nuclear issues, which has endured through many changes of Government in our two nations. Our extant long-term arrangements under the 1958 Mutual Defense Agreement and the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement (as amended in 1982 for Trident) provide for co-operation and collaboration which has been, and continues to be, of considerable mutual benefit to both nations.

### Ofcom: Staff

*Asked by Lord Young of Acton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many members of staff are employed by Ofcom. [HL5337]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave on 25 February 2025 to Question HL4944.

### Pharmacy

*Asked by Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the independent economic analysis of community pharmacy commissioned by NHS England. [HL5471]

**Baroness Merron:** NHS England commissioned Frontier Economics to undertake an independent economic analysis of National Health Service pharmacy funding in 2024. This work is nearing completion and will be published at the earliest opportunity.

### Pornography Review

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect the Independent Pornography Review conducted by Baroness Bertin to be completed and published. [HL5319]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Independent Pornography Review assessed the effectiveness of current pornography legislation, regulation and enforcement. The Review has now concluded, and the report was published on Thursday 27 of February 2025. It is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-a-safer-world-the-challenge-of-regulating-online-pornography>.

## Poultry: Animal Welfare

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce a ban on the retail sale of eggs and egg products from caged hens; and, if not, whether they plan to establish a consultation on the issue. [HL5074]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The transition to non-cage egg production has been accelerated in recent years by the major supermarkets pledging to stop selling shell eggs from hens kept in colony cages by 2025, and some supermarkets have extended this to products containing liquid or powdered eggs.

We remain firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards. The use of cages for laying hens is an issue which we are currently considering very carefully.

## Probation: Suicide

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Lichfield*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many deaths by suicide of people on probation there were in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years. [HL5260]

**Lord Timpson:** In the table below, please find the number of self-inflicted deaths of offenders supervised in the community by the Probation Service, financial year 2014/15 to 2023/24, England and Wales (1) (2) (3).

Financial year	Number
2014/15	190
2015/16 (4)	271
2016/17	251
2017/18	282
2018/19	359
2019/20	347
2020/21	422
2021/22	490
2022/23 (5)	453
2023/24 (p)	392

(p) The 2023/24 figures are provisional and may be updated in future publications to account for any changes or additions to the data since they were originally collected.

### Notes

(1) These figures are published annually in the Deaths of offenders in the community publication, which is available at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-of-offenders-in-the-community>.

(2) Apparent cause is as reported in annual returns (prior to 2020/21 only) or the national Delius case management system (nDelius) and has not been independently verified.

(3) The reporting period for these statistics (financial year 1 April to 31 March) relates to when the death occurred.

(4) The Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) was introduced on 1 February 2015 and corresponded with an increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision. Caution should be used when comparing with earlier periods.

(5) A new set of death classifications was implemented on 1 April 2022 and, as such, figures from 2022/23 are not comparable to those presented for previous years. The category of 'self-inflicted death' up to 31 March 2022 includes any death of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life, irrespective of intent. The category of 'self-inflicted death' from 1 April 2022 includes any death of a person at their own hand, including where intent is undetermined. This includes some drug poisonings (e.g. where a suicide note is found, or the circumstances are suspicious) but not drug poisonings which appear to have been the accidental result of consumption for another purpose. Refer to the guide to deaths of offenders supervised in the community statistics ([www.gov.uk/government/statistics/deaths-of-offenders-in-the-community-annual-update-to-march-2024/guide-to-deaths-of-offenders-in-the-community](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/deaths-of-offenders-in-the-community-annual-update-to-march-2024/guide-to-deaths-of-offenders-in-the-community)) for further details about the new set of classifications.

Data sources and quality: The figures in this table have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large-scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Source: National Delius (nDelius) case management system

## Propriety and Constitution Group: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by *Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many members of the Senior Civil Service in the Propriety and Constitution Group are based outside of London. [HL5298]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** As of February 2025 Propriety and Constitution Group has fewer than 10 SCS based outside of London.

Asked by *Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government, for each of the last five years, how many individuals have been appointed to the Senior Civil Service in the Propriety and Constitution Group; and of these (1) what was their grade on appointment, (2) how many were appointed through external competition, cross-government competition, intra-departmental competition, or managed moves, (3) how many were recruited from



outside the Civil Service, and (4) how many were made on a temporary basis. [HL5300]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Cabinet Office's Propriety and Constitution Group was created in 2022/23 from parts of three separate business units; the Cabinet Secretary's Group, Union and Constitution Group, and the Inquiries BU. We have therefore included data from 2022 to present.

Our central data does not record managed moves so we are unable to include information on these.

There were no intra-departmental competitions.

Year appointed	Grade	Approach	Successful candidate	Contract	Roles appointed
2022	SCS Pay Band 1	Across government External	Internal	Permanent	1 1
2023	SCS Pay Band 1	External	Internal	Permanent	1
2024	SCS Pay Band 1	Across government EOI	Internal	Temporary	1
	SCS Pay Band 1	External	External	Temporary	1
2025	None	To Date			

## Reoffenders: Prison Sentences

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reoffending rates of those serving short custodial sentences of six months or less. [HL5265]

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reoffending rates of those serving short community sentences of six months or less. [HL5266]

**Lord Timpson:** In 2022/23, the proven reoffending rate for adults serving immediate custodial sentences of six months or less was 59.6%. For further details, please see here: [proven-reoffending-jan23-mar23-annual.ods](#). We do not have a published breakdown for community sentences by sentence length. To produce this data would incur disproportionate costs.

However, studies found that short custodial sentences of 12 months or less were associated with higher reoffending rates (approximately 4 percentage points higher) than court orders of any length (which includes both community orders and suspended sentence orders) had been given.

The Government has delivered on a manifesto commitment to bring sentencing up to date and ensure the framework is consistent by launching an Independent

Review of Sentencing chaired by former Lord Chancellor, David Gauke.

## Rural Areas: Policy

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of government policy on rural areas, and how they intend to ensure that government policy takes the needs of rural communities into account. [HL5187]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what methods they use to assess the impact of their policies on rural communities. [HL5278]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government has made a commitment that all policy decision-making should be rural proofed. Defra leads on rural proofing, but individual departments are responsible for ensuring that their policy decision-making is rural proofed.

Rural proofing ensures that rural areas are not overlooked and that the intended outcomes are deliverable in rural areas.

Defra works with government departments to encourage rural proofing by providing advice and guidance. As set out in our response to the House of Lords Select Committee report 2018, we have also published three annual reports detailing how rural proofing has been applied in England. All the reports were compiled with contributions from other Government Departments.

Our commitment to rural proofing remains strong and has been carried forward through meetings and discussions with other departments and external stakeholders. The government is also reviewing how we can improve the effectiveness of rural proofing for the future.

## UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many times have the specialised committees created by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement met, and how many of these meetings have been attended by ministers. [HL5314]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** Under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement there are 19 Specialised Committees. These are co-chaired by a UK and EU senior official, and have met 67 times since 2021. The Specialised Committees report into the Partnership Council, which is the ministerial body set up by the TCA. It has met three times since 2021 and is currently chaired by Minister for the Cabinet Office Nick Thomas-Symonds and Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič. Further information is provided on [GOV.UK](#).

## Water Companies: Finance

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government how Ofwat adjusted the regulatory capital value of each water company to take account of (1) capitalisation of interest payments, and repair and maintenance costs, and (2) intragroup debt and interest payments. [HL5525]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Regulatory Capital Value (RCV) of a water company represents the net stock of investment that has been contributed by debt and investors over time in delivering their investment activities. This is used by Ofwat for the purposes of setting its regulatory determinations.

Ofwat calculates an efficient totex (total expenditure) allowance for each company, covering operating, maintenance, and enhancement costs. Totex is funded in one of two ways; pay-as-you-go expenditure funded through revenue allowances, or long-term investment funded through the RCV and run-off from the RCV over time. Pay-as-you-go expenditure generally reflects forecast operational costs. Capital costs are generally added to the RCV, with the RCV run-off allowance providing companies with a funding allowance for carrying out activities such as maintenance.

As the RCV represents only the net stock of investment for delivering investment activities, it takes no account of

intragroup debt and interest payments. Ofwat set the allowed return for companies on the basis of a notional capital structure which makes no assumption about the need for intragroup debt and interest payments. Where such arrangements exist, these arrangements are not funded in the determinations that are set by Ofwat and are matters for companies and their investors.

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government why Ofwat did not use actual gearing levels of water companies in its calculation of weighted average cost of capital for the 2024 pricing review. [HL5526]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** In all of Ofwat's price determinations since privatisation, Ofwat has set the allowed return by reference to a notional capital structure. Ofwat uses a notional capital structure as it protects customers from bearing the risk of companies' actual financing decisions and it sets a signal to companies and investors on regulatory expectations about the allocation of risk within the capital structure. The use of the notional structure means it is companies and investors, rather than customers, that bear the risks of their capital and financing choices where the financing arrangements depart from the notional structure.



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