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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Coaker	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Collins of Highbury	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 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 Moraes	Whip
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 Clunly	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
Lord Wilson of Sedgfield	Whip

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Written Statements

Friday, 14 March 2025

Infected Blood Inquiry: 13 March Announcement

[HLWS522]

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

Yesterday, the Infected Blood Inquiry set out its intention to publish an additional report. The Inquiry also published a number of witness statements, including ones provided by the Cabinet Office, the Infected Blood Compensation Authority and a number of people directly impacted by the Infected Blood scandal and their representatives.

The victims of the Infected Blood scandal have suffered unspeakably and their needs continue to remain at the forefront of our work. The Government will give careful consideration to the statements published by the Inquiry. I am committed to continuing to build trust with people who are impacted by this scandal, and to engage further with representatives of the infected blood community on the Government's response. We will continue to cooperate with the Inquiry over the coming months.

The Government is determined to deliver justice for people who are infected and affected as a result of the Infected Blood Scandal. That is why, in the Autumn Budget, we set aside £11.8 billion to compensate victims of the Infected Blood scandal. This is one of the biggest compensation schemes in our country's history - and that is entirely right given the scale of this injustice. In line with our commitment, in December last year the Infected Blood Compensation Authority began delivering this compensation. As of Friday 21 February, 204 people have been invited to start their claim, and IBCA is on track to meet its commitment for 250 people to start their claim by the end of March.

Before the end of March, both Houses will have the opportunity to debate the draft regulations for people who are affected including partners, parents, children, siblings and, in some instances, carers. Once in force, the draft Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Regulations 2025 will provide IBCA with the powers it needs to begin making payments to eligible affected people. We have committed that payments to affected people will start by the end of 2025.

The Government also recognises that delivering justice is much more than financial compensation. I am continuing to work with the Department of Health and Social Care, taking forward the Inquiry's recommendations to ensure that everything is done to prevent further such tragedies in the future.

My personal commitment to this work, and the people impacted by it, remains steadfast. The Government is acting on the findings of the Inquiry. We will continue to work with the Infected Blood Compensation Authority to ensure compensation is delivered as swiftly and compassionately as possible to everyone who so greatly deserves it.

Single Source Defence Contracts: Baseline Profit Rates 2025-26

[HLWS519]

Lord Coaker: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry (Maria Eagle MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today announcing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence that the baseline profit rate for single source defence contracts will be set at 8.56%, in line with the rate recommended by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO). This is an increase of 0.32% from 2024-25. The Secretary of State has accepted the methodology used by the SSRO to calculate these figures. A full explanation of the SSRO methodology is published on their website.

The SSRO's recommendation on the Capital Servicing Allowance to be applied to single source defence contracts has also been accepted and these rates are set out in Table 1. These rates have been published in the London Gazette, as required by the Defence Reform Act 2014.

All of these new rates will come into effect from 1 April 2025.

Table 1: Recommended Rates by the Secretary of State for Defence

<i>Element</i>	<i>2024-25 rates</i>	<i>2025-26 rates</i>
Baseline Profit Rate (BPR) (% on contract cost)	8.24%	8.56%
Baseline Profit Rate to apply to contracts between the Secretary of State and a company wholly owned by the UK Government and where both parties agree (% on contract cost)	0.00%	0.00%
Fixed Capital Servicing Rate (% on Fixed Capital employed)	3.26%	3.64%
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on positive Working Capital employed)	3.10%	4.69%
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on negative Working Capital employed)	1.61%	3.21%

UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly Membership

[HLWS520]

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

The Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in the place of the Lord Lamont of Lerwick.

UK Trade Envoy to Brazil: Lord Evans of Sealand

[HLWS521]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Hon Friend the Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports (Gareth Thomas MP) has today made the following statement:

The Secretary of State has today appointed Lord Evans of Sealand to the United Kingdom's Trade Envoy programme as the UK Trade Envoy to Brazil.

The United Kingdom's Trade Envoys will play an integral role in the Government's growth mission and delivering our Plan for Change by helping to create opportunities for UK business to compete abroad, break into new markets and attract greater inward investment from their markets.

Lord Evans of Sealand will play a crucial role in supporting my Department's growth priorities, in particular through helping deliver the industrial and trade strategies and attracting foreign direct investment to every region in the UK.

The role as a United Kingdom Trade Envoy is unpaid and voluntary with cross-party membership from both Houses.

Written Answers

Friday, 14 March 2025

Afghanistan: Development Aid

Asked by *Baroness D'Souza*

To ask His Majesty's Government what impact the reduction of the overseas aid budget, announced by the Prime Minister on 25 February, will have on support for women and girls in Afghanistan. [HL5402]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

Afghanistan: Resettlement

Asked by *Lord Sedwill*

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants who served with British forces (1) prior to October 2014, and (2) after October 2014, were successful; and what is their assessment of the reason for any discrepancy. [HL5326]

Lord Coaker: It is not possible to provide a comprehensive breakdown of figures by employment dates or job roles, including those who served with British Forces. This is because this information is not presented in a format that is readily available, nor included in published statistics.

Each application is assessed individually against the eligibility criteria using a case-by-case approach which takes into account the evidence available. The ARAP eligibility criteria are outlined under the Immigration Rules: Appendix ARAP. Further information on this can be found in the attached document.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

ARAP Eligibility Criteria [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy_ further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-26/HL5326>

Bats: Nature Conservation

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of comments by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, reported in *New Civil Engineer* on 4 March, that spending "vast sums" on High Speed 2's bat tunnel is "ludicrous", why they have allowed

construction to continue at a cost of £119 million. [HL5584]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The cost of the Sheephouse Wood bat structure is £95m in 2019 prices. It has been designed and constructed to comply with species protection laws as they currently stand, and to fulfil the requirements of the licence issued by Natural England in 2023. Abandoning construction in advance of any changes to the relevant legislation would be a breach of the conditions under which the new railway can be legally operated, and a presumption of the will of Parliament. Furthermore, and in common with much of the civil engineering structures for HS2, construction of the bat mitigation structure is well advanced and forms part of an integrated design for the railway in the Calvert area. In such circumstances, decommissioning and removing the elements of the structure already built, and redesigning and then constructing an alternative scheme for this section of railway would - at this stage in the construction schedule - cost more than completing the existing structure.

British Retail Consortium: Part-time Employment

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the British Retail Consortium that 160,000 part-time retail jobs may be at risk as a result of regulatory changes and increased employer costs. [HL5333]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government is creating a fairer business rate system and transforming the apprenticeship levy to support business and boost opportunities.

Delivering on our plan to Make Work Pay is a core part of the Government's Plan for Change, supporting the mission to grow the economy, raise living standards and create opportunities for all. The Department has published a set of Impact Assessments that provide a comprehensive analysis on the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill. This analysis includes consideration of increases in labour costs for businesses and the subsequent effects. This analysis is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>.

Gaza: Reconstruction

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Southwark*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the peace and reconstruction plan for Gaza that was endorsed by the Arab League summit on 4 March. [HL5529]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Government welcomes the Arab initiative of a recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza. The plan proposes a realistic pathway to the reconstruction of Gaza and, if

implemented, will alleviate the catastrophic living conditions for the Palestinians living in Gaza. Reconstruction must be based upon a solid political and security framework acceptable to both Israelis and Palestinians. The Government is clear that Hamas must not govern Gaza, and there should be a central role for the Palestinian Authority. On 8 March, the Foreign Secretary issued a joint statement with European partners commending the serious efforts of the Arab states in developing this plan.

High Speed 2 Line

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government for what duration they estimate that services between London Paddington and Cardiff Central stations will be disrupted to facilitate the development of HS2; and from what date disruptions will begin. [HL5434]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The construction works at Old Oak Common are scheduled to take place in stages, with several planned possessions through to the early 2030's, of which the most extensive will be over the Christmas periods. Network Rail's current plans do not involve widespread weekend closures; while most of the construction work will take place during the Christmas period closures, it is expected only two of the four tracks will be available on the Great Western Mainline at times.

The Government is working with Network Rail, HS2 Ltd, Transport for London, and the train operating companies to minimise the impacts of disruption, synchronising the timing of works with other works planned on the route wherever possible and ensuring the continued operation of rail services.

During the All-Line Blocks where no trains will be able to go to London Paddington, a limited number of services will be diverted to London Euston (to continue to provide service access into Central London), and other trains will terminate at Reading or Ealing Broadway (where passengers can use London Underground services to continue their journey to Central London). As the minister responsible for the delivery of HS2 Phase 1, I understand that minor and preparatory works for Old Oak Common will proceed in parallel with routine maintenance on the line, while I expect that the significant possessions required to bring Old Oak Common into use will not happen for several years.

Iran: Women

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they plan to take regarding the plight of Iranian women and girls who have been jailed for engaging in peaceful rights activism and for supporting freedom equality and basic civil liberties. [HL5521]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We continue to stand with women and girls in Iran in their daily fight for equal

rights and fundamental freedoms. The UK was instrumental in delivering the Iran human rights resolution, adopted by the UN Third Committee in November 2024, which called on Iran to release women human rights defenders imprisoned for exercising their rights. On the second anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini, we issued a joint statement alongside international partners, emphasising our commitment to holding Iran accountable for its rights violations. We continue to support the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran, which is essential for monitoring rights abuses committed during the protests of 2022-23, especially against women and children.

Nigeria: Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of escalating violence and targeted attacks by armed groups against Christian and Muslim minorities in Nigeria and what steps they are taking to address the religious persecution of these minorities, particularly in the northern and central regions of Nigeria. [HL5392]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Ongoing security challenges in Nigeria, including violent extremism and intercommunal violence, continue to impinge on the rights of Nigerians to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). In the North East, terrorist groups including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa target all those who do not subscribe to their extremist views, including both Christians and Muslims. These incidents are distinct from the ongoing intercommunal violence elsewhere in Nigeria. The UK supports programmes working to address the complex root causes of intercommunal violence in Nigeria through locally led peace-building efforts. This support aims to reduce intercommunal tensions by improving access to security and justice, and natural resource management in specific areas across northern Nigeria. In addition, the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) works with Nigeria's security forces to tackle violence against all civilian communities, including those of different religious backgrounds and belief systems.

Prisoners' Release

Asked by Lord Keen of Elie

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of prisoners released early under the prisoner early release scheme have been recalled to custody due to breaches of their licence conditions. [HL5409]

Lord Timpson: Data on SDS40 recalls forms a subset of data intended for future publication via the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly (available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>).

Smuggling: Balkans

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of the Western Balkans as a transit route for irregular migration, arms smuggling and drug trafficking; and what concrete steps they have taken since June 2024 with European allies to strengthen partnerships aimed at disrupting criminal networks in the Western Balkans that facilitate irregular migration. [[HL5499](#)]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Western Balkans is a notable transit route for third country nationals being trafficked to the UK, as well as being a route of concern for the trafficking of illicit commodities.

Since July 2024, this Government has sought to further cooperation across the region to target a range of threats from organised crime groups based in the Western Balkans. This has included agreeing a series of joint operational initiatives with Albania in December 2024 to further our work on preventing irregular migration and the smuggling of illicit commodities, and in November 2024 reaching new agreements with Kosovo and Serbia on preventing organised immigration crime, and with North Macedonia on working together to disrupt the activities of organised criminals who seek to undermine border security.

The UK is hosting the Berlin Process later this year, bringing together Western Balkan states and other European partners to discuss shared solutions to these issues.

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