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**Tuesday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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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
Baroness Gustafsson	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
Lord Hanson of Flint	Minister of State, Home Office
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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 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
Lord Wilson of Sedgefield	Whip

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill: Public Consultation

[HLWS526]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My Honourable friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Equalities), Seema Malhotra MP, has today made the following statement:

This government is committed to ensuring that equality and opportunity are at the heart of our programme for national renewal. Our Plan for Change sets out the ambitious - but achievable - milestones we aim to reach by the end of this Parliament. The work we are doing will improve the lives of working people and strengthen our country.

The manifesto and King's Speech last July announced our intention to legislate to deliver mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for larger employers. These measures will help employers identify and tackle pay disparities across their workforces, remove barriers to opportunity for ethnic minority and disabled staff and support our Plan for Change in driving up household income for all.

Today we are launching a public consultation in support of this. Responses to the consultation will help shape the pay gap reporting measures that we will include in the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, to be published later in this session.

We are particularly interested to hear from those who will be impacted by these proposals, including employers, representative bodies, trades unions, race and disability stakeholders, ethnic minority and disabled people, and disabled people's organisations.

We are considering what other measures the draft Bill could incorporate, including through a call for evidence which will be published separately. The call for evidence will include consideration of how we make the right to equal pay effective for ethnic minority and disabled people.

We are also announcing today that we are establishing a Race Equality Engagement Group to help us develop further measures to tackle race inequality. This group, which will be chaired by Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, will enable us to work closely with communities and stakeholders to find out what matters most to them.

A copy of the consultation document will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available on gov.uk.

Prison Capacity: Operation Safeguard

[HLWS528]

Lord Timpson: My Right Honourable Friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP) has today made the following statement:

This Government inherited a prison system on the verge of collapse, which would have left the courts unable to send offenders to prison and the police unable to arrest dangerous criminals. I took decisive action and implemented changes to the standard determinate sentence release point which provided essential but temporary relief to the system.

When I updated parliament in July 2024, I was clear that the capacity crisis would not disappear immediately and the changes to release points were never the whole solution to the prison capacity crisis we inherited. To put our Criminal Justice System on a sustainable footing for the long term, I launched the Independent Review of Sentencing in October and set out the 10 Year Prison Capacity Strategy to deliver the 14,000 new prison places we promised. In my commitment to transparency, I also laid the first Annual Statement on prison capacity, setting out expected demand and supply for prison places.

Over the last three months population growth in the prison estate has been high – January saw the highest average monthly prison population growth in almost two years, which has only just begun to slow. As of 17 March, there were 824 places remaining in the adult male estate. We are operating at more than 99% occupancy. Operating this close to critical capacity increases the risk that prisons do not have sufficient space for a given prisoner entering the system and so an alternative has to be found, which is most frequently in a police cell. In recent weeks this has happened hundreds of times, far above the rate seen during normal operations. On the night of 10 March, there were 124 no-space lockouts, which is the highest number of business-as-usual (BAU) lockouts on record.

We have just opened a new 458-capacity houseblock at HMP Rye Hill. In addition, in a few weeks' time, I will be opening HMP Millsike, a brand new 1,500 capacity prison in North Yorkshire.

However, I expect prison capacity will remain tight until the new capacity is fully operational. Given the recent increase in demand, it is necessary, and prudent, for me to temporarily reactivate Operation Safeguard to better manage the flow of offenders into the prison estate. This is an established protocol that will ensure that HMPPS and police forces can jointly plan which police cells may be required to hold offenders on any particular day. The previous government last activated Operation Safeguard in February 2023; it ran until it was formally deactivated in October 2024 by this government. This time we have a clear plan to improve capacity and minimise the use of Safeguard.

Safeguard will help ensure temporary pressures on the prison estate are managed effectively with partners in the police. We will keep its use under constant review and work closely with police colleagues to ensure we can stand down cells as soon as they are not required.

I am incredibly grateful for the support of police colleagues and want to pay tribute to the continued extraordinary work of our frontline staff in police, courts, prisons and probation whose daily efforts keep the public safe.

School Funding: National Insurance Contributions Grant and Pupil Premium

[HLWS529]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My Right Honourable Friend, Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson) has made the following statement:

Today the Department for Education has confirmed National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant funding rates and schools' pupil premium funding rates for the financial year 2025-26.

The NICs Grant will provide schools, colleges, and high needs settings with over £1 billion to support them with the increases to employer National Insurance contributions from April 2025, broken down as set out in the table below.

Setting/phase	NICs Grant funding in 2025-26
Mainstream (5-16) schools and academies	£786 million
High needs settings	£125 million
Local authority centrally employed teachers	£22 million
Post-16 providers	£155 million
Early years providers	£25 million

Despite the challenging economic context, core funding for schools was prioritised in the Budget, and the NICs support is additional to the £2.3 billion increase announced in October. This means that the core schools budget will total over £64.8 billion in 2025-26.

Further information can be found on: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-insurance-contributions-nics-grant-and-early-years-national-insurance-contributions-ey-nics-grant-for-2025-to-2026>

The pupil premium grant provides additional funding to schools to support disadvantaged pupils so that they achieve and thrive in education. Total pupil premium funding will rise to over £3 billion in 2025-26, an increase of almost 5% from 2024-25.

The pupil premium funding rates are increasing by 2.39% (and then rounded) compared to 2024-25 rates, in line with the forecast GDP deflator measure of inflation.

The table below sets out the new pupil premium rates that will take effect from 1 April 2025.

	2025-26 pupil premium rate
Primary pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have been eligible in the past 6 years	£1,515
Secondary pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have been eligible in the past 6 years	£1,075
Children who are looked after by the local authority	£2,630
Pupils previously looked after by a local authority or other state care	£2,630

The grant also provides support for children and young people of service families, referred to as service pupil premium. The service pupil premium rate is also increasing by 2.39% (and then rounded) in 2025-26, to £350 per eligible pupil from 1 April 2025.

Further information can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

World Health Organization Pandemic Accord Negotiations

[HLWS527]

Baroness Merron: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Ashley Dalton MP) made the following statement today:

I would like to update the House regarding the latest round of negotiations on a legally binding international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response – the Pandemic Accord – at the World Health Organization (WHO).

In March 2021, the UK joined other WHO Member States in calling for a Pandemic Accord that would ensure the world is better prepared for any future pandemic. Negotiations on the Pandemic Accord have been ongoing since 2022, and Member States have until the World Health Assembly in May 2025 to reach an agreement.

The Pandemic Accord aims to enable a better coordinated, global response to pandemic threats and facilitate more equitable and timely access to pandemic-related vaccines, treatments, and tests. With a future pandemic a certainty, the Pandemic Accord is an opportunity to better protect the UK against this threat and to deliver on the Government's health and growth missions, including through improving pandemic prevention, promoting innovation in pandemic related research and development (R&D), and putting in place systems that can promptly respond to pandemic threats when they emerge. The UK will only sign up to a Pandemic Accord which is both in the national interest and protects the health of people in the UK and around the world.

Member States have reached provisional agreement on around 75% of the text, while negotiating on the principle that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. Since the House was last updated in November, provisional agreement has been reached on Articles covering sustainable financing for the implementation of the agreement, and R&D. During the latest round of negotiations, between 17-21 February, some progress was made on portions of the text covering pandemic prevention, the opening chapter of the Accord (covering

definitions, objectives, and principles), and pathogen access and benefit sharing (PABS). However, there is still some way to go on several issues, including on technology transfer and further areas within the pandemic prevention and PABS Articles, with limited time remaining to negotiate the text. The UK Government remains committed to working with Member States to reach an effective agreement.

I will continue to update the House as negotiations near conclusion.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Artificial Intelligence: Regulation

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the regulation of artificial intelligence use; and what plans they have, if any, to introduce a regulatory body for artificial intelligence. [HL5485]

Lord Vallance of Balham: Most AI systems should be regulated at point of use, and our expert regulators are best placed to do this. 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.

The Government is also developing legislative proposals which will allow us to safely realise the enormous benefits of the most powerful AI systems.

We look forward to engaging further with the full range of stakeholders on our legislative proposals in due course including how we can best establish appropriate oversight where regulatory requirements apply.

Asthma

Asked by *Earl Howe*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to monitor the implementation of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, British Thoracic Society and Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network asthma guidelines, published in November 2024, and if so, whether they plan to make the data publicly available. [HL5502]

Baroness Merron: The Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership (HQIP), on behalf of NHS England, commissions a national audit across respiratory care, which includes asthma. All data from the audit is published and available at the HQIP's website, in an online only format.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), the British Thoracic Society (BTS), and the Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network (SIGN) published a new collaborative guideline for asthma in November 2024. The NICE is working with the BTS, the SIGN, NHS England, and others to review the resources available to support implementation of the guideline, and plans to publish a respiratory toolkit.

Bus Services: Fares

Asked by *Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide financial support to local authorities to

ensure the continuation of concessionary transport fares. [HL5565]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025-26 makes available over £69 billion for local government, which is a 6.8% cash terms increase in councils' Core Spending Power on 2024-25. The majority of funding in the Local Government Finance Settlement is unringfenced, recognising that local leaders are best placed to identify local priorities. Spending decisions beyond 2025-26, including on local transport, are a matter for the upcoming Spending Review.

Common Travel Area

Asked by *Lord Murphy of Torfaen*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, under the Common Travel Area arrangements, British citizens are required to present passports when entering the Republic of Ireland, including when arriving at Irish airports. [HL5561]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The operation of the Common Travel Area arrangements for British Citizens travelling to Ireland from the UK, is a matter for the Irish Government.

When travelling from Ireland to the UK, an Irish citizen is not required to present their passport, but may be asked to show a document that confirms their identity and nationality.

Department of Health and Social Care: Public Expenditure

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the budget of the Department of Health and Social Care as a percentage of total government expenditure in each year since 2021. [HL5656]

Baroness Merron: The Department has averaged 19% of total Government expenditure in each financial year since 2020/21: 20% in 2020/21, 26% in 2021/22, 14% in 2022/23, and 16% in 2023/24.

Energy: Cybersecurity

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the protection of the energy sector from cyber attacks. [HL5483]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero collaborates with regulators, the National Cyber Security Centre, and operators to strengthen energy infrastructure security. This includes threat intelligence sharing and alerts to the sector, ensuring incident management plans are in place and setting clear and robust regulatory standards through the Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018.

The forthcoming Cyber Security and Resilience Bill will strengthen our defences against current and future cyber threats by ensuring that more essential digital services are protected, expanding the remit of the existing regulations to protect supply chains and putting regulators on a stronger footing to ensure essential cyber safety measures are being implemented efficiently and effectively.

Housing: Construction

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that new housing developments meet sustainability and energy efficiency standards set in the Environment Act 2021. [HL5474]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Environment Act introduced a new mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement of 10% for new housing developments last year. This means new housing developments will result in more high-quality natural habitat than there was before the development. The government is working closely with the sector to make BNG work effectively.

The government is also taking steps to ensure new housing developments meet ambitious energy efficiency standards through the Building Regulations. The Future Homes Standard is due to be implemented later this year, which will ensure that new homes are highly energy efficient and that they are “zero carbon ready”, meaning that they will become zero carbon over time as the electricity grid decarbonises, without the need for any retrofit work.

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to streamline planning regulations to expedite house building. [HL5475]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government is delivering on our Plan for Change commitment to deliver a pro-growth planning system. In December 2024 we published a revised national planning policy framework, which strengthened housing targets and allowed for development on poor quality ‘grey belt’ land. The government’s Planning and Infrastructure Bill will also speed up and streamline the planning process to build more homes of all tenures and accelerate the delivery of major infrastructure projects, aligning with our industrial, energy and transport strategies.

Housing: Infrastructure

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve infrastructure around new housing developments to support growing populations. [HL5478]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: I refer the noble Lord to the answer to Question UIN 26106 on 5 February 2025.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

PQ 26106 [PQ 26106.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-04/HL5478>

Housing: Rural Areas

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the housing needs of rural communities, particularly in regard to land availability and infrastructure. [HL5477]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: It is for local planning authorities, including those in rural areas, to assess the housing need of their communities. This should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the government’s revised standard method.

Local authorities should also make an assessment of the amount of new homes that can be provided in an area, which should be justified by evidence on land availability, constraints on development, and any other relevant matters.

The revised NPPF is clear that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances. This includes ensuring that housing is located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and support local services.

In relation to infrastructure provision to support housing, I refer the noble Lord to the answer to Question UIN 26106 on 5 February 2025.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

PQ 26106 [PQ 26106.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-04/HL5477>

Investment: Argentina and Nigeria

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the criteria for UK Export Finance to increase the provision of financial support for investment in Nigeria. [HL5487]

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the criteria for UK Export Finance to increase the provision of financial support for investment in Argentina. [HL5488]

Baroness Gustafsson: UK Export Finance (UKEF) maintains a rigorous credit due diligence framework, to

ensure that it abides by its mandate to operate at no net cost to the taxpayer over time.

UKEF assesses each country in which it has an actual or potential credit exposure, using methodologies that are widely used in the commercial sector and draw on a range of external factors, and assigns a credit rating.

As a result of this assessment, UKEF's business in Argentina and Nigeria is currently limited to medium or long-term projects that are foreign exchange earning (i.e. projects that generate revenue in currencies other than that of the destination country itself, and are structured in a way that reduces the credit risks to UKEF), and short term insurance and guarantees (again, subject to robust credit risk mitigants being in place). We regularly refresh our credit risk due diligence, and should the circumstances, change, UKEF would be able to offer a wider set of products in support of exports to Nigeria and Argentina.

Long Covid

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the level of functional impairment endured by patients suffering from long Covid. [HL5427]

Baroness Merron: The Government recognises that long COVID is a complex condition, with a wide range of symptoms, which, in the worst case, can be substantially incapacitating. The term 'long COVID' is an umbrella term, coined by patients and widely used to describe a wide range of symptoms or clusters of symptoms, of differing duration and severity, and potentially a number of distinct syndromes. The clinical case definition produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence identifies three phases of post-COVID-19 infection, the latter two of which are commonly described as long COVID, which are as follows:

- acute COVID-19, with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 for up to four weeks;
- ongoing symptomatic COVID-19, with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 for between four and 12 weeks; and
- post-COVID-19 syndrome, with signs and symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with COVID-19, which continue for more than 12 weeks, and which are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. It usually presents with clusters of symptoms, often overlapping, which can fluctuate and change over time and can affect any system in the body. Post-COVID-19 syndrome may be considered before 12 weeks while the possibility of an alternative underlying disease is also being assessed.

The most common symptoms of long COVID are extreme tiredness or fatigue, feeling short of breath, problems with your memory and concentration, sometimes referred to as brain fog, heart palpitations, dizziness, joint pain, and muscle aches.

Music and Dance Scheme

Asked by Baroness Bull

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relationship between government support for dance students on the Music and Dance Scheme and (1) the success of UK-trained dance students in international dance competitions, and (2) the continuing prominence of UK-trained dancers on the international stage. [HL5076]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department regularly reviews information from Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) providers about the post-MDS activities of their students in relation to education and employment.

Providers do not share information with the department relating to MDS alumni involved in international dance competitions or their prominence on the international stage.

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Asked by Lord Inglewood

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Khan of Burnley on 4 March (HL Deb cols 62GC–68GC), what is their estimate of the total cost of the construction of the Holocaust memorial; on exactly what basis was that estimate calculated; when was that estimate calculated; by how much they expect that estimate to have changed since it was calculated; and whether that estimate includes running costs. [HL5549]

Lord Khan of Burnley: Forecast costs of £138.8m for completion of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre were published on 28 June 2023 in a Written Ministerial Statement UIN HLWS875. Within that total figure, as the Statement makes clear, £91.3m relates to construction costs.

The construction and exhibition cost estimates, including inflation rates in those sectors, are based on advice from cost consultants Aecom (construction) and Greenways (exhibition). The forecast also includes programme staff and contractors, design and operational set-up costs and the cost of the planning inquiry.

A revised estimate of construction costs will be prepared following the receipt of tenders for the Main Works contract.

Operating costs, which will be incurred after the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is built, are currently estimated to be between £6.5m and £8.5m per year.

NHS: Finance

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government what analysis they have conducted on the impact of the proposed NHS

England 2025–26 Payment Scheme and Standard Contract on patient choice and the Government's ambitions to reduce waiting lists. [HL5406]

Baroness Merron: As part of its annual planning round for 2025/26, NHS England consulted on proposals for the NHS Payment Scheme (NHSPS), a set of rules, prices, and guidance that governs transactions between providers and commissioners of National Health Service funded secondary care. It is not a change to the Right to Choose.

As set out in the Elective Reform Plan, integrated care boards will be allocated the funding needed to deliver improvements to the 18-week referral-to-treatment performance standard for consultant-led care.

NHS England has conducted an assessment of the impact of the proposed NHSPS, as required by law, which is attached. This impact assessment includes consideration of the impact on patient choice.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL5406 - Additional Document [25-26-NHSPS-Consultation-notice-C-impact-assessment.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-03/HL5406>

Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the compelling reasons for dealing with the consequences of the Dillon case in High Court and Court of Appeal on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 by way of remedial order under section 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998; and whether they will now consider responding to the judgments by primary legislation only. [HL5455]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: On 4 December, the Government laid a Draft Remedial Order under section 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 to address all of the incompatibilities identified by the High Court in Northern Ireland and one of the incompatibilities found by the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland in the *Dillon* case.

The Government considers a Remedial Order to be the most suitable legislative approach to swiftly address issues that were deemed by the Courts to be incompatible with Human Rights. The government is also committed to introducing legislation which addresses other issues which could not be included in the Remedial Order, when Parliamentary time allows.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights has now published its report into the Remedial Order, and the Government will carefully consider the recommendations and respond in due course.

Peripheral Arterial Disease: Health Education

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Merron on 27 January (HL4224 and HL4225), whether they plan to launch a national public awareness campaign to raise awareness of peripheral arterial disease, its symptoms, and its risk factors. [HL5480]

Baroness Merron: In 2022, NHS England commissioned the two-year Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) scheme, which incentivised the adoption of the *Vascular Peripheral Arterial Disease Quality Improvement Framework*, to support timely interventions for revascularisation. This measures the proportion of patients who have a diagnosis of chronic limb threatening ischaemia (CLTI) and who undergo revascularisation within five days of a non-elective admission to vascular providers.

NHS England commissions the National Vascular Registry (NVR) to provide information on the quality and outcomes of care for adults who have major vascular procedures. The NVR provides annual and quarterly reports for emergency and elective vascular procedures, including for those people with peripheral arterial disease who undergo either a lower limb angioplasty/stent, lower limb bypass surgery, or major lower limb amputation. From quarter one of 2022 to quarter four of 2024, NVR data demonstrated that vascular providers achieving the CQUIN standards had increased from 47% to 55%. During this period, the number of providers submitting data to the NVR had increased by approximately 14%, and every National Health Service region showed an improvement in CLTI revascularisation quality.

Furthermore, NHS England has commissioned the NVR to facilitate an 'outliers' process in which vascular providers are monitored on several key performance metrics, including CLTI revascularisation. NHS England continues to monitor all specialised vascular disease services via the NVR, working in collaboration with NHS England regional teams and integrated care boards.

There are no plans to launch a national public awareness campaign about peripheral arterial disease.

Public Sector: Procurement

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 18 February (HL4855), given that the deed of variation amends Clause 1.1 of contract 2887470\5 to remove the UK-only restriction on training services, on what basis they consider that this modification does not materially change the contract's scope; and if international training was already covered in the original tender, why it was necessary to amend Clause 1.1 to permit it. [HL5440]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The original Emergency Planning College Bidders' Brief makes multiple references to international training and overseas markets and was subsequently covered within the initial contract.

The change within the deed of variation to amend the UK-only constraint was necessary to clarify that international training may require the delivery of face-to-face training at overseas locations, in order to fully meet the contractual requirements for international training.

The UK-only constraint continues to apply to services provided to the Authority under the contract.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 18 February (HL4855), on what grounds they determined that the removal of the non-compete clause (Clause 65) from contract 2887470\5 did not constitute a material modification under regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, and whether an assessment was conducted to ensure that this change did not distort competition or provide the incumbent contractor with an unfair advantage. [HL5441]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Cabinet Office concluded that the removal of the non-compete clause (Clause 65) from contract 2887470\5 did not constitute a material modification under regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations because it did not materially alter the nature of the contract or the obligations thereunder.

The Government recognises the value of competition in marketplaces and believes that removing the clause ensures that there is fair competition and supports equal treatment of market participants.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether individual subcontract awards made under 'neutral vendor frameworks', 'managed service provider frameworks', 'prime contractor procurement models' or similar intermediary procurement models are subject to the same transparency and reporting requirements as contracts directly procured by public bodies. [HL5442]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Many intermediary procurement models are straightforward public contracts where there is no requirement to publish subcontracts under either the Procurement Act 2023 or the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

Where contracting authorities are awarding contracts using frameworks awarded under the Procurement Act 2023, they will need to follow the Act's noticing provisions. In the case of most Public Contracts this will normally include publication of both a Contract Award and then a Contract Details Notice on the Find a Tender platform, which is the publicly available portal for all transparency information on procurement. Furthermore, notices contain linking information that allows notices to

be connected- enabling detailed data analysis on how frameworks are being used. All this information on public procurement is in the public domain and can be searched by the citizen, free of charge in an accessible way.

Where contracting authorities are awarding contracts using framework agreements awarded under the previous procurement regime, they are required to publish an Awarded Opportunity Notice on the Contracts Finder platform.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the remit of the Procurement Review Unit includes oversight of subcontract awards under 'neutral vendor frameworks', 'managed service provider frameworks' and similar intermediary procurement models. [HL5443]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: In accordance with section 10 of the Procurement Act 2023 ("the Act"), the Procurement Review Unit ("PRU") only has oversight of the activities of contracting authorities under the Act.

Any procurement carried out under framework agreements managed under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 does not fall within the remit of the PRU.

Seized Articles: Mobile Phones

Asked by Viscount Hanworth

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to ensure that the police return confiscated phones to individuals who have not been charged with any crime. [HL5453]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Sections 21 and 22 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and associated Codes of Practice, in particular, PACE Code B 2023, stipulate how the police should deal with the retention and return of seized property. Property seized as evidence may only be retained for so long as is necessary and the officer in charge is responsible for ensuring that the property is returned as soon as practicable.

A person who wishes to claim property seized by the police may also apply to a Magistrate's court under the Police (Property) Act 1897.

Trade Agreements: Colombia

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the outcome of their recent discussions with the government of Columbia on the future of the bilateral investment strategy which has reached the end of its initial ten year term. [HL5466]

Asked by Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Columbia on removing the investor state dispute settlement

provisions from any renewed bilateral investment strategy. [HL5467]

Baroness Gustafsson: Following the UK-Colombia Bilateral Investment Treaty's (BIT) initial ten-year term, in accordance with the treaty's provisions, it shall remain in force indefinitely unless it is terminated by either Party. The Government has not been formally approached by the Colombian Government regarding proposals to amend the BIT.

The Government regards the UK-Colombia BIT as playing an important role in the investment relationship between our two countries. The stock of total investment between the UK and Colombia was £6.8 billion in 2023.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish the names of the members of the Independent Monitoring Panel for the UK internal market guarantee. [HL5501]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: I refer the Noble Lady to the Written Ministerial Statement (UIN HCWS463) from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 24 February 2025.

Veterinary Services: UK Trade with EU

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to include an exemption in a UK-EU veterinary agreement to allow restrictions of imports on animal welfare grounds, such as fur products. [HL5510]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is committed to resetting our EU relationship, including by seeking to negotiate an SPS agreement. We have been clear that an SPS agreement could boost trade and deliver significant benefits on both sides. We will not be providing a running commentary on discussions with the EU.

Wales Office: Public Consultation

Asked by Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist

To ask His Majesty's Government how many policy reviews and consultations the Wales Office has launched since the General Election on 4 July 2024; what the subject of each review is; and what the anticipated timescales are for their completion. [HL5641]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Wales Office has not launched any policy reviews or consultations since the General Election on 4 July 2024.

Water Companies: Nationalisation

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of acquiring control of England's water companies. [HL5528]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government has no intention to nationalise water companies.

Nationalisation would put a huge burden on the public purse at a time when public finances are already stretched and would not fix the root of the problem.

If the whole industry was nationalised, shareholders and debt holders would need to be compensated, which could cost over an estimated £90 billion [*this is based on Ofwat's Regulatory Capital Value 2024 estimates*].

Instead, this government is focused on tackling the public's immediate concerns to clean up the nation's polluted waterways and turn around the sector's performance, focusing on improving the privatised regulated model.

Welsh National Opera

Asked by Lord Murphy of Torfaen

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Wales intends to meet Welsh Ministers to discuss the future of the Welsh National Opera. [HL5559]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: My colleagues, the Secretary of State for Wales Jo Stevens MP and the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Wales Dame Nia Griffith MP, meet with Welsh Government colleagues frequently on a range of issues including culture. Our two governments are working in close partnership to deliver for the people of Wales.

In October, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Wales Dame Nia Griffith MP and DCMS Minister Sir Chris Bryant MP met with Welsh Government Minister for Culture Jack Sargeant MS to discuss the Welsh National Opera and to recognise the value of its work, not just for the people of Wales but also for the people of England.

Minister Bryant then held a series of meetings with Welsh National Opera and Arts Council England to understand the issue in more detail. This series of meetings was able to reassure everyone that all partners wanted to see a positive long-term future for Welsh National Opera.

My colleague, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Wales Dame Nia Griffith MP, looks forward to meeting with you at the end of this month to discuss this further.

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