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**Thursday
20 March 2025**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Statements1
Written Answers.....4

[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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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	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
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 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

Thursday, 20 March 2025

Annual European Union Finances Statement

[HLWS533]

Lord Livermore: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Darren Jones) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today laying before Parliament, “The European Union Finances Statement 2024 on the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement” (CP 1296). This is an annual publication; this year’s edition covers the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. This publication is available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-annual-statement>.

The publication sets out the Government’s updated estimate of the financial settlement on withdrawal from the EU. HM Treasury estimates that the current total net value of the financial settlement is £30.7bn since the UK ceased to be an EU Member State in February 2020. Of this, £25.0bn has been paid up to the end of December 2024, and the forecast of future outstanding net liabilities is £5.7bn.

Correction to Film Industry Statement

[HLWS537]

Baroness Twycross: On 9 October 2024, my right honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, [made an oral statement](#) in the House of Commons announcing the laying of the necessary statutory instrument, under the made negative procedure, for the independent film tax credit to take effect.

I [repeated her statement](#) the following day. Both my right honourable friend and I said “We will focus apprenticeships once more on young people to set them up to succeed and to help fill the 25,000 vacancies in the creative sector”. I further said “I repeat that at the moment we have a skills shortage and significant vacancies – a vacancy margin of about 25,000”.

It has come to our attention that this statistic referenced the number of job vacancies in the “arts, entertainment and recreation” sector. A more accurate statistic specifically for the creative industries is “We will focus apprenticeships once more on young people to set them up to succeed and to help fill the 49,000 vacancies in the creative industries”. My right honourable friend’s record has since been [corrected](#).

EWS1 Professional Indemnity Insurance Scheme: Contingent Liability Update

[HLWS534]

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

In September 2022, the EWS1 professional indemnity insurance (PII) scheme launched for competent fire safety professionals undertaking EWS1 assessments, fire safety assessments for the External Wall Systems in residential buildings. The scheme aimed to enable competent professionals to access the indemnity cover they need to undertake external wall assessments.

On 27 June 2022, the Minister of State for Housing published a Written Ministerial Statement notifying Parliament of an unlimited contingent liability, with the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) making a best estimate of expected losses as c£100m.

The scheme closed on 30 October 2023. Departmental research showed that assessors can access suitable insurance from the open market at a competitive premium and with a wider scope of coverage. The market has responded to the protection gap the government was looking to address, which removes the requirement for the government backed scheme. Continuing with the scheme would no longer be a good use of public funds.

Government action has helped to get the market moving again and address this issue. The relevance of EWS1 forms is declining as wider government interventions have taken effect that support lenders to reduce their reliance on EWS1 forms and instead use other forms of documentation to support mortgage lending decisions. The changes we have made have helped improve access to cover across the Professional Indemnity Insurance market.

Policies sold under the scheme to date will continue to be insured under the original terms. Due to improving market conditions, fewer policies were sold than anticipated. The maximum possible loss from claims arising is £70m, which may decline further should policies be cancelled. The policies have a 15-year term, meaning that claims are possible until 2038. The risk is limited by the number of buildings, and number of EWS1 assessments. To further mitigate this risk, we only offered professional indemnity insurance cover for accredited professionals who have the requisite training, expertise and knowledge to undertake the EWS1 assessment. In addition, completed EWS1 assessments are subject to an audit process to ensure they are being completed in line with the British Standards Institution PAS 9980 methodology.

The Treasury approved the proposal to launch the scheme and have been informed of its closure. My department will keep Parliament informed of any changes to this contingent liability on a regular basis.

A Departmental Minute will today be laid in Parliament providing more detail on this contingent liability.

Families First Partnership Programme

[HLWS535]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My Honourable Friend, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, The Minister for Children and Families (Janet Daby), has made the following statement:

Today, I am launching the programme guide for the Families First Partnership programme, which will begin delivery from April 2025. This represents a major milestone in the government's commitment to rebalancing the children's social care system to earlier intervention – and ensuring that we break down barriers to opportunity and provide all children with the best start in life.

The publication of the programme guide confirms our expectations of statutory safeguarding partners – children's social care, police and health – and relevant agencies, including education and childcare settings, to implement reforms to Family Help, multi-agency child protection and Family Group Decision-Making – building on a body of evidence of what we know works to support families to stay together and thrive.

The programme guide is just one aspect of the wider implementation support offer we are providing through the Programme, which includes sharing learning from the Families First for Children Pathfinder – which has been testing reforms in 10 local areas – along with the best practice and best evidence from across children's social care.

The Families First Partnership Programme is backed by over £500 million of funding in financial year 25/26, via the Local Government Finance Settlement – nearly doubling investment in preventative services. Over time, we expect this investment to safely reduce the number of looked after children.

Our ambition is for high-quality local services that place children and families at the centre of their design and provide meaningful and appropriate support and protection for families as their needs change over time. We will only achieve this if our journey of change is taken as a team – using a multi-agency approach to enact whole system reform. We envision a transformed system where practitioners from social work, police, health, education and beyond collaborate to promote the wellbeing of children and keep them safe from harm.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff across children's social care, police, health, and education for their tireless efforts in ensuring all children receive the support and protection they need.

Together, we can create a system which provides children and families with the right support at the right time, ensuring more children can grow up with the right love and support around them.

Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences: Part 1 Report

[HLWS536]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My hon Friend the Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to inform the House that the Home Office has today published Jonathan Fisher KC's Independent Review of Disclosure Report, '*Disclosure in the Digital Age*'.

The Review's findings highlight the significant challenges caused by the exponential growth of digital material in criminal investigations, particularly in serious and complex cases. This has placed significant burdens on law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and criminal courts. The growing scale of the problem now impedes the ability of the Crown to swiftly bring criminals to justice.

In response, Jonathan Fisher KC has made 45 recommendations which mirror the disclosure regime's impact on the full breadth of the criminal justice system. As published today, his key overarching recommendations for reform are:

- to modernise existing legislation and reduce administrative burdens by utilising advanced technology.
- to improve criminal court processes with consideration for an entirely new Intensive Disclosure Regime court pathway, designed for the most complex criminal cases.
- to enhance disclosure quality by designing a new national learning standard across all law enforcement agencies.

I thank Jonathan Fisher KC for his work in providing us with such a comprehensive review. The government will now carefully consider all recommendations made in the report and will work at pace to provide a Government Response later this year.

I am confident that we can work together to design a modern disclosure regime that can keep pace with the rising level of digital material, facilitate swifter justice for both victims and defendants and continue to build public confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Report has been laid before Parliament today (CP 1285) and it will also be available on the [Independent Review GOV.UK page](#).

Varying the Leveson Order

[HLWS531]

Baroness Twycross: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lisa Nandy MP:

This is a joint statement made with the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

As Ministers with joint responsibility for the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices, and ethics of the press, today under section 20(7) of the Inquiries Act 2005, we have decided to vary the restriction orders issued by Sir Brian Leveson on 2 December 2011 and 29 November 2012. This variation, at the request of Associated Newspapers Limited, will enable Associated Newspapers

Limited to fulfil its preservation and disclosure obligations in relation to documents provided to the Leveson Inquiry in its possession, obligations that come from claims brought against Associated Newspapers Limited by Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, Elizabeth Hurley, Sir Elton John, David Furnish, Sir Simon Hughes, Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex and Sadie Frost Law.

The documents were prepared by the Information Commissioner's Office and consist of spreadsheets of the materials seized from the private detective Steven Whittamore/JJ Services during the course of Operation Motorman, a 2003 investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office into allegations of offences under the Data Protection Act 1998 by the British press.

We have decided to vary the restriction orders so as to allow Associated Newspapers Limited to retain the documents (previously retained in breach of the restriction orders) and disclose them solely for the purposes of the claims. In this case, in our judgement, the paramount public interest lies in enabling Associated Newspapers Limited to meet its disclosure obligations so that justice can be done.

A variation notice has been shared with the parties to the legal proceedings, and published on gov.uk.

This decision makes no comment on the merits of the claims, which is wholly a matter for the courts to determine.

Whiplash Injury (Amendment) Regulations 2025

[HLWS532]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: My Hon Friend, the Minister of State for Justice (Sarah Sackman KC MP), has today made the following statement:

I would like to inform the House that I am laying the draft Whiplash Injury (Amendment) Regulations 2025 by way of affirmative procedure.

Subject to approval by both Houses, the Regulations will increase the fixed tariff of compensation for whiplash injuries lasting up to two years which occur on or after 31 May 2025. In doing this, the Regulations will implement the recommendations made by the Lord Chancellor in her report of the statutory review of the Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021, published on 21 November 2024.

The whiplash tariff compensation figures will be around 15% higher than the original tariff which was brought into force in 2021 by the Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021. This is to both account for the effects of inflation since 2021 (by measure of the Consumer Prices Index) and to include a buffer for expected inflation until 2027. The uplift will ensure that claimants can continue to receive appropriate compensation for whiplash injuries that occur before the next statutory review of the tariff. The original whiplash tariff from 2021 will continue to apply to relevant whiplash injuries from road traffic accidents that occur before 31 May 2025.

Written Answers

Thursday, 20 March 2025

Armed Forces Commissioner Bill

Asked by *Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what definition they use for "family members" in the Armed Forces Commissioner Bill. [HL5555]

Lord Coaker: The full definition of 'relevant family members' for the purposes of this Bill will be included in secondary legislation. This is being done to mirror the approach taken elsewhere in legislation relating to the Armed Forces.

A draft of the definition of 'relevant family members' will be shared with Peers as part of Committee Stage in the House of Lords, scheduled for 19, 24 and 26 March 2025.

Arms-length Bodies

Asked by *Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many arms-length bodies they have set up since the General Election in July 2024, and what estimate they have made of the annual cost of each of these bodies. [HL5765]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Cabinet Office maintains records and oversight of formally established arms-length bodies. There are a number of arms-length bodies currently going through the process of being established. No new ALBs have been formally established since 4 July 2024.

In a speech last week, the Prime Minister also announced that the Government is committed to cutting bureaucracy across the state, in order to focus government on the priorities of working people and shift money to the frontline. As part of this, the Prime Minister announced the abolition of the arms-length body NHS England.

The Chancellor has also announced a new approach to ensure regulators and regulation support growth, including by simplifying regulatory structures. As we approach the 2025 Spending Review, Departments will be considering where there may be benefits from merging, consolidating or rationalising the regulators they sponsor. We have already announced that we will consolidate the Payment Systems Regulator, primarily within the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and consolidate the Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate and the Director of Labour Market Enforcement into the Fair Work Agency (FWA).

Balkans: Security

Asked by *Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with American and European counterparts regarding reports of a deepening security crisis in the Western Balkans; and what assessment they have made of the implications for UK and European security. [HL5498]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Stability in the Western Balkans is important for UK and European security. Minister Doughty visited Montenegro and Serbia in January, where he discussed developments in the region with leaders. We continue to cooperate closely with our European and American partners. The UK hosted a meeting of 'Quint' (UK, US, France, Germany, Italy plus the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Commission and NATO) representatives in London on 26-27 February 2025 and discussions included the security implications of recent developments in the Western Balkans. The appointment of Dame Karen Pierce as the new Special Envoy and the UK hosting of the Berlin Process will be important opportunities to expand cooperation with our partners in the Western Balkans to help drive regional economic growth and tackle the common challenge of irregular migration.

Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

Asked by *Lord Jamieson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations the government of China or its representatives have made relating to the latest planning application for the Chinese Embassy, prior to and after the Secretary of State's call-in decision, and on what dates. [HL5602]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: MHCLG has not received any representations on this matter from the government of China or its representatives.

Representations made to the public inquiry are routinely listed at the end of the Inspector's Report.

Conservation Covenants

Asked by *Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many conservation covenant agreements under section 117(3)(b) and (c) of the Environment Act 2021 have been made since that Act came into force. [HL5840]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Conservation covenants are private, voluntary agreements between a landowner and a designated responsible body. Under section 136 of the Environment Act 2021, a designated responsible body must make an annual return to the Secretary of State. This return must include the number of conservation covenants under which an obligation was owed to the responsible

body during the reporting period, along with the area of land to which each covenant relates. The deadline for responsible bodies to submit their first annual return to Defra is 31 March 2025.

Crossrail 2 Line

Asked by *Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill on 4 March (HL5172), what is the latest status for safeguarding the revised route for Crossrail 2; and what is the timescale. [HL5738]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Although development of Crossrail 2 was paused in 2020, the route remains safeguarded to protect it from conflicting development. There are currently no plans to update the safeguarding.

Electronic Surveillance

Asked by *Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge*

To ask His Majesty's Government what safeguards are in place to prevent access to intimate images when public authorities gain access to iCloud under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. [HL5562]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office does not comment on operational matters, including for example confirming or denying the existence of any notices. This has been the longstanding position of successive UK Governments for reasons of national security.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 contains numerous safeguards including independent oversight, to ensure data is only requested on an exceptional basis and when strictly necessary and proportionate.

EU Emissions Trading Scheme: UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to discuss linking the respective emissions trading schemes of the UK and the European Union at the UK-EU leaders' summit on 19 May. [HL5742]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government has committed to improving the UK's trade and investment relationship with the EU, and tackle unnecessary barriers to trade. Under the terms of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), the UK Government and EU agreed to cooperate on carbon pricing and give serious consideration to linking respective emissions trading schemes (ETSs). Ahead of the UK-EU Summit on the 19th May, the UK Government is actively considering the case for linking ETSs. This does not prejudge the outcome of any potential discussions with the EU on ETS linking.

Falun Gong: China

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk that Falun Gong practitioners in the UK, including Shen Yen performers, are subjected to transnational repression by the government of China, and what plans they have to support Falun Gong practitioners. [HL5535]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government is committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief, including protecting the rights of Falun Gong Practitioners and their performance group, Shen Yun.

We continually assess potential threats in the UK, and take protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously. Any attempt by any foreign state to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK will not be tolerated.

We have a broad suite of powers to counter foreign interference, including those actions which amount to transnational repression. We will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to keep people safe.

On 4 March 2025, the Security Minister announced a new package of training which will allow frontline police officers and staff to increase their understanding of the threats that foreign powers present. This training will increase law enforcement's ability to detect criminal activity which may be state-directed, and strengthen public confidence in the UK's response.

Horizon IT System: Compensation

Asked by *Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many sub-postmasters wrongfully convicted because of flawed Horizon computer evidence are yet to have their convictions overturned, and to receive compensation. [HL5572]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: All convictions which met the conditions of the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024 (and that were not overturned by the Courts prior to the legislation coming into effect) were overturned at the point of Royal Assent.

As of 28 February 2025, all 111 individuals on the Overturned Convictions scheme had received an interim payment, of which 68 individuals had reached a full and final settlement. On the Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme, 407 individuals had received an interim payment, of which 273 individuals had reached a full and final settlement.[1]

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-financial-redress-data-for-2025/post-office-horizon-financial-redress-data-as-of-28-february-2025>.

Housing: Construction

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of new house building, and what plans they have to aid the development of new homes. [HL5574]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: We have recommitted in our Plan for Change to deliver 1.5m homes over this Parliament to solve the housing crisis and boost economic growth.

This government has inherited an acute housing crisis and has taken urgent action to fix this, including through bold planning reform and an £800m top up to the current Affordable Homes Programme.

Housing delivery, particularly major developments, takes time, so we expect housing supply to ramp up over the parliamentary term as our changes take effect.

Iraq: Religious Freedom

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of freedom of religion or belief in Iraq; and what steps they are taking to support freedom of religion or belief in Iraq. [HL5308]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is committed to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. We demonstrate this through our engagement, both multilaterally and bilaterally. For example, earlier this month, UK Special Envoy for FoRB, David Smith MP, attended the 58th Session of the UN Human Rights Council and met with counterparts to discuss key issues.

In Iraq, we recognise that continued insecurity is challenging for its religious and ethnic minorities. Through our diplomatic presence, we regularly raise FoRB with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. We also support civil society groups to freely advocate on behalf of minority groups.

FoRB-specific goals are also threaded throughout British Embassy Baghdad's and British Consulate General Erbil's programme work. We are careful to ensure that these focus on local cohesion and minimise the risk of inadvertently exacerbating community divisions.

Judiciary: Protection

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect the safety and security of the judiciary in the normal course of their duties in family and other court settings. [HL5727]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: Judicial security is paramount in enabling our independent judges to carry out their vital work freely and impartially. There are

robust court security and safety systems in place to protect the judiciary and all court users from individuals and groups threatening violence or aggression. HMCTS has reviewed and refreshed physical security measures over the past year in partnership with the judiciary and is participating in the Security Taskforce newly created by the Lady Chief Justice.

These include controls to detect and prevent such threats. Specific measures include CCTV, alarms and access control systems. Court users are also subject to a security search on entry to detect and confiscate potential weapons, with Court Security Officers exercising powers to exclude, restrain and remove individuals or groups threatening violence.

These arrangements are continuously reviewed to ensure security is as effective as reasonably practicable. Throughout the upcoming financial year, the Government is investing an additional £22 million to deliver a programme of measures to further strengthen court and hearing room security arrangements. These include providing additional Court Security Officers and physical security systems to further reduce risks.

Land Use

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government what definition they use for green belt land, and grey belt land. [HL5591]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Land is Green Belt if designated as such in the Local Plan. The purposes of Green Belt and the definition of grey belt are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (12 December 2024).

Livestock: Animal Housing

Asked by Baroness Gale

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to phase out the use of cages for farmed animals and to explore introducing animal welfare labelling, following the European Commission's recent announcement on these measures. [HL5723]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: 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 and other close confinement systems for farmed animals is an issue which we are currently considering very carefully.

A public consultation on fairer food labelling was undertaken between March and May 2024 by the previous Government. We are now carefully considering all responses before deciding on next steps and will respond to this consultation in due course.

Members: Correspondence

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have responded to the letter sent to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs by the Low-Welfare Act Coalition, dated 19 February, concerning the implementation of the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023; and if so, whether they will publish that correspondence. [HL5764]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government has received the Low-Welfare Act Coalition's open letter dated 19 February and a reply will be shared with representatives of the coalition shortly.

Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Asked by *Baroness Eaton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to allow local authorities to retain part of the income from vehicle tax in their area for use by highways departments. [HL5593]

Lord Livermore: The Government uses the proceeds of Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and other tax revenues to support public services and investment in infrastructure including the road network. There are no current plans to devolve or hypothecate VED revenues in part or in full to local authorities.

The Government is going well beyond its promise to fix an additional one million potholes per year, by providing a £500 million cash increase on 2024/25 local roads maintenance baseline funding. This will be enough to fix the equivalent of more than seven million extra potholes in 2025/26.

Parliament Square

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 25 February (HL5010), what plans they have to extend the Palace of Westminster controlled area created initially by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 so that the section of pavement adjoining both the Great George Street government offices and the section of the A302 that forms the north side of Parliament Square, rather than only the vehicular access points within that area, is subject to the same restrictions on amplified noise as the rest of Parliament Square. [HL5542]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government keeps its public order legislation under constant review and where gaps are identified we will seek to address them.

Political Parties: Finance

Asked by *Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the House of Lords Appointments Commission guidance on political donations, dated December 2019, was signed off by a Minister; and if so, which Minister approved it. [HL5597]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The House of Lords Appointments Commission is an independent, advisory non-departmental body of the Cabinet Office. The guidance on political donations was approved by the Commission in December 2019 as an internal document for members. It was subsequently published in January 2022 as a result of a Decision Notice by the Information Commissioner following a previous Freedom of Information request.

Prison Accommodation

Asked by *Lord Garnier*

To ask His Majesty's Government, with regard to the Annual Statement on Prison Capacity: 2024, published December 2024 (CP 1220), whether they plan to publish the underlying data behind the projections in Figures 1 and 2, which show how the measures to address the rising prison population are predicted to impact the demand on the adult prison estate and the capacity outlook. [HL5543]

Lord Timpson: The Government has committed to legislating to make laying the Annual Statement on Prison Capacity before Parliament a statutory requirement in the future, when parliamentary time allows.

Figures 1 and 2 in the Annual Statement show future demand and supply for prison places. The underlying data for the prison population projections in these figures is published annually and can be found here: [Prison Population Projections: 2024 to 2029 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-projections-2024-to-2029). The statistical tables in this publication include the data used for the prison population line in Figures 1 and 2 of the Annual Statement.

The supply projections underpinning Figures 1 and 2 were published for the first time in the Annual Statement. Further details, including a breakdown of prison place types and expected delivery dates, can be found in the 10-year capacity strategy, attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

10-year capacity strategy [2025-03-20 PQ HL5543.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-06/HL5543>

Private Education: Business Rates

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total revenue to be raised as a result of the proposed changes to business rates for private schools. [HL5699]

Lord Livermore: Business rates are devolved. At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government reconfirmed that it is removing private schools' eligibility for business rates charitable rate relief in England from April 2025. This intervention will raise around £140 million per year.

Business rates retention means that local authorities retain a proportion of all business rates revenue. As such, the increase in rates receipts due to the reduction in charitable rate relief for private schools will be shared between central and local government.

Seas and Oceans: Waste Disposal

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government when the range of contaminants assessed for disposal at sea was last reviewed, and whether there is a regular programme for review. [HL5458]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: There is no limit to which contaminants can be recommended for analysis for applications for disposal at sea. Cefas – the agency that provides contaminant sampling advice – primarily uses the OSPAR Guidelines for the Management of Dredged Material at Sea (Agreement 2014-06, Updated 2024). The testing of Primary List contaminants will be recommended for most applications, whilst Secondary List contaminants will also be recommended in some applications, where considered relevant. Ultimately recommendations are based on likelihood of adverse effects and practicality considerations. The OSPAR Expert Assessment Panel on Dredged Material last reviewed these lists for the update of the Agreement in 2024. The UK has convened several Action Level Reviews against which contaminants are assessed (in 2003, 2005, 2015 and 2020).

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will include bioassays and biotoxicity tests in assessments of samples for disposal at sea. [HL5459]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The OSPAR guidelines allow for the use of effect response analyses (such as bioassays). These are not commonly recommended by Cefas largely due to the costs and additional time implications of the analyses which would be incurred by applicants. However, if it was identified that such tests would be useful for a weight of evidence in a specific case, they could be requested or considered if an applicant

wished to provide them. Cefas is considering the use of 'Microtox' bioassay testing as a potential option for characterising dredged material, in such instances.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to align the assessment of the levels of contaminants that can be disposed of at sea with the best practices of other countries. [HL5460]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We do not have any plans to change the formal Action Levels for contaminants at this time. However, when assessing levels of contaminants that can be disposed of at sea, Defra bodies follow international OSPAR guidelines to protect the environment. Cefas use the best available evidence when providing advice on dredged contaminants, which may draw on best practice from other countries. The MMO will consider this advice when determining a dredging licence application. We will continue to work with stakeholders to improve our evidence base on the environmental and economic impacts of Action Levels, and to explore options to manage any impacts.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have a timetable for the monitoring of all marine disposal sites. [HL5461]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Marine Management Organisation, in conjunction with Cefas, run an annual Disposal Site Monitoring project and identify a list of disposal sites for monitoring each year, ensuring that no area is left without monitoring. Disposal can be redirected to a specific site if there are particular concerns regarding that site.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government when the range of contaminants monitored at sea disposal sites was last updated; and whether there is a programme to update the range of monitored contaminants. [HL5462]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The range of contaminants monitored at sea disposal sites is not a standardised list. Rather, the choice of which contaminants to monitor is based on a review of each year's licensed disposals and considering the OSPAR Guidelines for the Management of Dredged Material at Sea (Agreement 2014-06, Updated 2024). Primary List contaminants (Technical Annex I) may be analysed for at disposal sites while Secondary List contaminants can also sometimes be analysed for. Monitoring also adheres to the OSPAR Coordinated Environment Monitoring Programme Guidelines for the assessment of dumping and placement of waste and other matter at sea (Agreement 2017-04). Other analyses such as benthic infauna and bathymetry surveys may also be undertaken, as appropriate.

Small Businesses: Employers' Contributions

Asked by *Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that 300,000 small businesses are planning job cuts in response to the planned rise in employer national insurance contributions. [HL5619]

Lord Livermore: An assessment of this policy has been published by HMRC in their Tax Information and Impact Note. The Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook set out the expected economic impacts of this change.

Once the impact of all Budget measures are taken into consideration, the OBR expect the employment level to increase from 33.1 million in 2024 to 34.3 million in 2029.

Social Security Benefits: Fraud

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much they have recovered from fraudulent benefit claimants in each year since 2021 and what percentage this represents of the total amount of benefit fraud in each year. [HL5541]

Baroness Sherlock: The table below shows total volume of overpayment classified as fraud (i.e. proven by conviction or admission) by financial year.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Recovery of overpayments classified as Fraud	£46.50m	£44.33m	£42.89m

Data for what percentage this represents of the total amount of benefit fraud is not available because recoveries in a year do not represent recoveries from fraud committed that year.

The figures provided above only include recovery of overpayments from proven fraud, that is where a claimant has been successfully prosecuted or accepted an administrative penalty. Many other overpayments are likely to be fraudulent but have not specifically been designated as either fraud or error and as such are not included here.

Solitary Confinement: Mental Health

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Timpson on 3 March (HL5169), what is the difference between a prisoner being "removed from association" and being "kept in solitary confinement". [HL5563]

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Timpson on 3 March (HL5169), in the past 25 years, how many prisoners have been segregated for 42 days, and how many have been segregated for a longer period. [HL5564]

Lord Timpson: Removal from association for the purpose of segregation can occur for a number of reasons including for the maintenance of the good order and discipline of a prison; to protect the safety of those within a prison; for a prisoner's own interests (i.e. due to risk from others); pending adjudication or as a punishment of cellular confinement following adjudication.

Whilst segregated prisoners are removed from association, they are individually risk assessed to enable access to as full a regime as possible. The use of segregation is governed by Prison Service Order 1700, which provides guidance to ensure it is used appropriately, and only where necessary.

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, often known as the Mandela Rules, define solitary confinement as "the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact". Prisons in England and Wales do not have a solitary confinement procedure.

Statistics on incidents of segregation over the past 25 years could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Sudan: Development Aid

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the 2024–25 UK aid package for Sudan is allocated to Blue Nile State; and whether they will provide targeted humanitarian assistance to displaced communities in the state before the arrival of the 2025 rainy season. [HL5762]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is the most severe globally and it has generated significant levels of forced displacement within Sudan and across the region. The already dire humanitarian context will worsen with the onset of the coming rainy season. This financial year, the UK will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. Since the conflict started more than 2.5 million people have received UK funded humanitarian aid. The UK is supporting a range of humanitarian actors, including UN agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, who are delivering aid throughout the country. In 2024, the UK was the third largest donor to the UN's Sudan response plan which provided urgent support in Blue Nile State and other locations. We are unable to provide more detailed information about the extent of UK aid provided to communities in Blue Nile State. The UK is doing all it can to increase the scale and reach of life-saving aid to those in need in Sudan.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much they have spent in each year since 2020 on (1) the Trader Support Service, (2) the Movement Assistance Scheme, and (3) any other services or schemes providing support and assistance in relation to trading between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. [HL5537]

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people are employed or contracted to work by (1) the Trader Support Service, (2) the Movement Assistance Scheme, and (3) any other services or schemes providing support and assistance in relation to trading between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. [HL5538]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government is committed to supporting industry in moving goods smoothly between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Support to industry is offered through schemes such as the Movement Assistance Scheme (MAS) and the Trader Support Service (TSS). The costs of the MAS, TSS and Digital Assistance Scheme (DAS) are set out below:

	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24	FY 2024/25
MAS	£3.53 million	£9.78 million	£8.75 million	£9.64 million	£8.30 million (up to 30/01/2025)
TSS	£100.62 million	£148.80 million	£114.68 million	£105.19 million	£73.18 million (up to 30/01/2025)
DAS	£3.45 million	£13.73 million	£16.6 million	£18.4 million	£15.2 million (up to 28/02/2025)

In addition to the MAS, TSS, and DAS, the Government awarded £1.4m in grants from the Transitional Labelling Financial Assistance Scheme in FY2023/24.

The budget for the MAS currently covers the following FTE staff: 18.5 in Animal and Plant Health Agency, 2.0 in the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and 1.0 contractor. The TSS is overseen by HMRC and operated by a consortium led by a private contractor. There are currently 267 FTE staff employed by the consortium. Figures on the number of staff working on the Transitional Labelling Financial Assistance Scheme and Digital Assistance Scheme are not available, as these cannot be disaggregated from the wider teams in which they worked.

Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 30 January (HL3712), what progress has been made in releasing funds from the sale of Chelsea Football Club for humanitarian purposes in Ukraine, and what consideration they have given to using such funds for the needs of children who have been abducted by Russia. [HL5444]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Government is working hard to ensure the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea Football Club reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible, in line with the UK's unilateral declaration; UK officials continue to hold discussions with Mr Abramovich's representatives, experts and international partners, and we are doubling down on our efforts to reach a resolution. Separately, supporting Ukrainian children who have been forcibly deported remains a priority for this government. We have raised this issue at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the UN and the Human Rights Council. The UK participated in the most recent meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children and continues to work closely with the Ukrainian government. In November, we announced a third round of sanctions targeting those attempting to forcibly deport and indoctrinate Ukrainian children.

Veterinary Service: Staff

Asked by *Lord Roborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of qualified and practising vets in the UK required to ensure that biosecurity regulations can be fully enforced. [HL5749]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Biosecurity can be deployed in multiple settings, it could be by Government vets in a field/lab setting, farm animal vets, or even an expectation for risk mitigation via biosecurity for all vets.

Defra appreciates the incredibly valuable work completed by veterinarians and recognise their essential role in achieving our ambitious goals of upholding high standards of animal welfare, supporting trade, and safeguarding public health and food security. The Government acknowledges the high demand for veterinary services and is working collaboratively across departments and with the profession to explore additional measures that will ensure sufficient staffing levels to support and sustain the sector effectively.

Water Companies: Fines

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to remarks by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 29 January (HL Deb col 251), what is the breakdown of the £150 million in fines issued to water companies since 2015. [[HL5524](#)]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Environment Agency prosecutes Water and Sewerage Companies (and the courts hand down fines) for environmental offences under the Environmental Permitting Regulations and other offences including polluting discharges to water and land, breaches of environmental permit conditions and obstruction of investigations.

Below is a breakdown of the 150 million in fines issued to water companies since 2015, as mentioned in Baroness Hayman of Ullock's remarks on 29 January.

<i>Water and Sewerage Company</i>	<i>Sum of Total Fine (£)</i>
Anglian Water	£5,475,000.00
Northumbrian Water	£807,000.00
Severn Trent Water	£4,056,000.00
South West Water	£3,406,834.00
Southern Water	£92,024,000.00
Thames Water	£37,721,000.00
United Utilities Water	£2,816,000.00
Yorkshire Water	£4,678,750.00
Grand Total	£150,984,584.00

Index to Statements and Answers

Written Statements.....1	Solitary Confinement: Mental Health..... 9
Annual European Union Finances Statement.....1	Sudan: Development Aid..... 9
Correction to Film Industry Statement1	UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland..... 10
EWS1 Professional Indemnity Insurance Scheme: Contingent Liability Update1	Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid 10
Families First Partnership Programme1	Veterinary Service: Staff 10
Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences: Part 1 Report2	Water Companies: Fines..... 11
Varying the Leveson Order2	
Whiplash Injury (Amendment) Regulations 20253	
Written Answers.....4	
Armed Forces Commissioner Bill4	
Arms-length Bodies.....4	
Balkans: Security.....4	
Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission.....4	
Conservation Covenants4	
Crossrail 2 Line5	
Electronic Surveillance.....5	
EU Emissions Trading Scheme: UK Emissions Trading Scheme.....5	
Falun Gong: China5	
Horizon IT System: Compensation5	
Housing: Construction.....6	
Iraq: Religious Freedom6	
Judiciary: Protection.....6	
Land Use.....6	
Livestock: Animal Housing.....6	
Members: Correspondence.....7	
Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties7	
Parliament Square.....7	
Political Parties: Finance7	
Prison Accommodation7	
Private Education: Business Rates8	
Seas and Oceans: Waste Disposal8	
Small Businesses: Employers' Contributions.....9	
Social Security Benefits: Fraud.....9	