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**Thursday
3 April 2025**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	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, 3 April 2025

Correction to Written Parliamentary Question [HL4991]

[HLWS574]

Baroness Merron: It has been brought to my attention by officials that a written answer which I gave to Baroness Redfern contained misleading information about registration applications to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

In my reply to written Parliamentary Question HL4991, tabled by Baroness Redfern on 12 February 2025, I stated that “the CQC is undertaking rapid changes to increase the number of assessments, provide updated ratings, and speed up its registration process for timely onboarding of new providers, with 25,230 completed since April 2024”. Unfortunately, the 25,230 figure relates to all activity regarding registration, not just the registration of new providers and so this statement was misleading. I should have been clear that this figure includes registering new providers, making changes to existing provider conditions, and updating registered manager or nominated individual’s details.

I would like to apologise on behalf of the department and CQC for this error. The department takes its responsibility for parliamentary accountability very seriously and steps have been put in place to ensure the accuracy of information provided relating to the CQC so such errors do not happen again.

Tees Valley Combined Authority: Best Value Notice

[HLWS575]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (Jim McMahon OBE MP) has today made the following statement:

Taxpayers expect and deserve well-functioning local and combined authorities which provide essential statutory services for local residents. This government’s manifesto committed to rebuilding local government and handing control back to local leaders. To achieve this, we must get the basics right and ensure local and regional government is fit, legal and decent. Government will continue to work directly with a small number of authorities in difficulty as a responsible steward for the sector, and this should be done in a way that is based on genuine partnership to secure improvements.

Today, I would like to update the House on the steps we are taking in relation to the Tees Valley Combined Authority. The people of Tees Valley must have confidence that every penny of their money is being spent appropriately and today’s announcement is about ensuring that is the case.

In May 2023, the previous government commissioned an independent review to consider the specific allegations made and Tees Valley Combined Authority’s oversight of the South Tees Development Corporation and Teesworks Joint Venture. This review was published in January 2024.

In February 2024, the Tees Valley Combined Authority mayor, Lord Houchen responded to this review. His response was published on GOV.UK. Then Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Michael Gove, requested a further update on progress in six months’ time and my department received this update in September 2024. The Authority’s auditors then published reports covering financial year 2023/24, which identified significant weaknesses in value for money arrangements, meaning auditors declined to sign off accounts.

After having carefully considered the relevant evidence, my department has today issued the Authority with a best value notice.

This notice is not a statutory intervention. It is a formal notification that the department has concerns regarding the Authority and requests that the Authority engages with the department to provide assurance of improvement. The department expects authorities that have been issued with a best value notice to continue leading their own improvement. I note that the Tees Valley Combined Authority is already supported by an independent assurance panel established with the Local Government Association. I encourage the Authority to make full use of the panel’s expertise and guidance and strengthen its role in day-to-day operations, and will be looking to the panel for updates on the Authority’s progress.

We are committed to removing barriers to growth in the region, as well as supporting the development of new industries and creating new jobs in the region. That is why this government has confirmed the allocation of up to £21.7 billion of funding over 25 years for Net Zero Clusters in Teesside and Merseyside, and why we are finalising development of the Tees Valley Investment Zone. This notice today is about rebuilding trust in the Combined Authority after a long period of uncertainty, so that it can continue its journey towards deeper devolution.

Today’s announcement offers the opportunity to provide the foundations for future investment into the area oriented towards the public good, underpinned by good governance and careful management of taxpayers’ money. I recognise that today’s decision will have implications for the Authority’s progress towards Enhanced Mayoral Strategic Authority status, and the granting of an Integrated Settlement. We are committed to working closely with the Authority to enable swift progression once improvements have been made.

The independent review also made recommendations for government. I am today publishing non-statutory guidance to address a key recommendation. This guidance clarifies the governance, oversight and legislation of Mayoral Development Corporations. It is relevant to all Mayoral Combined Authorities and Mayoral Combined County Authorities in England. In due course, I will

publish an updated version of this guidance to address the relationship between stranded liabilities and Mayoral Development Corporations.

The government remains of the view that, while the independent Tees Valley review was thorough within its terms of reference, it was by nature not designed to answer all the questions raised, instead to focus on the governance and finance elements of the Best Value regime. The residents of Tees Valley cannot afford to live under a shadow of uncertainty for any longer, and investment in the region demands full confidence from both the public and the private sector. I hope that this process will offer the opportunity for a reset, providing the foundations for future investment into the area oriented towards the public good, underpinned by good governance, transparency, and accountability. Authorities must demonstrate robust financial management, effective decision-making, and meaningful engagement with communities to uphold Best Value principles.

The focus now must be to ensure that the improvements needed are not only secured but also sustained, embedding a culture of continuous improvement and responsible stewardship in line with statutory Best Value obligations.

I will deposit in the House library copies of the documents I have referred to, which are also being published on GOV.UK today.

I will keep the House updated if any further steps are taken.

UK-US Trade

[HLWS573]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds MP) has today made the following statement:

The planned statement will be delivered orally today by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade.

Written Answers

Thursday, 3 April 2025

Access to Work Programme

Asked by **Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the average waiting time for applicants to the Access to Work scheme to receive a decision and how many applications are there currently awaiting a decision. [HL6042]

Baroness Sherlock: The average waiting time for applicants to the Access to Work scheme to receive a decision in February 2025 was 84.6 days. Between the period April 2024-February 2025, the average waiting time for a decision was 56.9 days.

In February 2025 there were 62,000 applications waiting to be processed (this includes new claims, renewals and change of circumstances).

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

Air Pollution

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the UK complies with World Health Organization air quality guidelines for PM2.5 levels. [HL6264]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines are not statutory targets. The guidelines do not consider achievability or individual countries' circumstances. We will continue to work towards reducing PM2.5 levels and the new Environmental Improvement Plan will set out the action we intend to take on air quality.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for re-classifying sexual violence in conflict offences under international law to be prosecuted under existing torture laws. [HL5685]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK Government is committed to strengthening justice for all survivors and victims of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and holding perpetrators to account. CRSV is prohibited under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law. Some forms of CRSV, such as rape, can also be

classified as torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Torture is defined and prohibited by multiple human rights treaties. We continue to work closely with partners to eradicate the use of torture and end all forms of CRSV.

Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Asked by **Lord Krebs**

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the identification of a case of avian influenza in a sheep in Yorkshire, what assessment they have made of the risk of transmission to other livestock, and the risk to human health. [HL6126]

Asked by **Lord Krebs**

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the identification of a case of avian influenza in a sheep in Yorkshire, what action they have taken to introduce additional monitoring of livestock to detect other cases of avian influenza crossing the species barrier. [HL6127]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Influenza of avian origin (H5N1) has been detected in a sheep in England, following routine surveillance of co-located livestock on a premises where highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 had been confirmed in other captive birds. To mitigate the risk of further disease spread the affected birds and the infected ewe have been humanely culled. Further official testing of the remaining flock of sheep was all negative for the presence of avian influenza virus. Surveillance in the disease control zones in force in the area surrounding these premises will be undertaken, and these zones will remain in force until all disease control and surveillance activities have been successfully completed.

While this is the first time avian influenza virus has been detected in a sheep, it is not the first time influenza of avian origin has been detected in livestock in other countries. Whilst we remain vigilant for any changes in risk, there is no evidence to suggest an increased risk to the nation's livestock population.

In response to the unprecedented global outbreak of HPAI H5N1 in recent years, the UK's avian influenza national reference laboratory has increased its surveillance for avian influenza virus in mammals and genome analysis of the virus itself. The [case definition for influenza of avian origin](#) has been updated and provides guidance for animal keepers and veterinary professionals on how and when to report suspicion in mammals. Additional information on [how we monitor influenza of avian origin in wild mammals](#) and how the public can report suspicion is available via [GOV.UK/birdflu](#).

Following this detection, the Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance group have carried out a [risk assessment](#), and assessed the probability of infection with influenza of avian origin from lactating livestock as very low for the general population and low for individuals interacting with infected lactating livestock.

While risk levels remain low, keepers are encouraged to maintain strict biosecurity in order to protect the health and welfare of their animals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

*Asked by **Baroness Helic***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to support the Office of the High Representative in their role to oversee the civilian implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement; and what assessment they have made of the use of Bonn Powers to counter destabilising actions. [HL5908]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK supports the High Representative and use of his executive powers should circumstances require it to counter destabilising actions. The UK issued a strong statement last month in support of his role and the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Minister of State for Europe, North America and the Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty MP, spoke with the High Representative on 27 March to reaffirm our position and backing for a strong High Representative response if circumstances necessitate. Dame Karen Pierce, UK Special Envoy to the Western Balkans, also spoke with the High Representative on 27 March while visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Breakfast Clubs and Childcare

*Asked by **Baroness Barran***

To ask His Majesty's Government what analysis they have carried out of the uptake of existing free breakfast club and childcare provision in primary schools in England; and what percentage of pupils attend such clubs regularly. [HL5342]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Government Social Research release 'Parent, pupil and learner panel: 22/23 March/April wave' found that as of March 2023, 36% of parents with primary aged children reported that they had used some kind of wraparound childcare for their primary aged children since the start of term, equating to around 1.6 million children. The full release is attached and can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1170040/Parent__pupil_and_learner_panel_-_2022_to_2023_-_March_and_April_wave.pdf.

Findings from the 'School and college voice: February 2024' report show that 72% of primary school leaders (excluding special schools) said their school offers childcare both before and after school, but this includes paid for childcare and clubs with only limited spaces available.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL5342_Attachment [Parent__pupil_and_learner_panel_-_2022_to_2023_-_March_and_April_wave.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-27/HL5342>

Childcare: Local Government

*Asked by **Baroness Coffey***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the legal fulfilment of the statutory duty of every local authority to provide sufficient childcare places. [HL5347]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing. No local authorities are reporting that they are unable to meet their sufficiency duty. Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the 'Early education and childcare' statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents. The full guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare>.

Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, we discuss what action they are taking to address those issues and, where needed, support the local authority with any specific requirements through our childcare sufficiency support contract.

Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

*Asked by **Lord Jamieson***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 20 March (HL5602), what representations the government of China or its representatives have made to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport 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. [HL6120]

Baroness Twycross: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has not received any representations on this matter from the Government of China or its representatives. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is the lead department on planning matters, and the final decision rests with its Secretary of State.

Chronic Wasting Disease: USA

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to restrict meat and plant imports from the United States of America to prevent the entry of chronic wasting disease. [HL6292]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The rules for the importation into Great Britain of meat and meat products are laid down in GB legislation. Consignments must be accompanied by animal and public health certification and enter GB through a Border Control Post where checks are carried out to ensure that import conditions have been met.

Fresh meat of cervids (deer meat) can only be imported from the USA if it complies with supplementary guarantees in the model health certificates that mitigate the risk of chronic wasting disease (CWD) incursion from fresh meat.

There are no restrictions in place on imports of plants from the USA in relation to CWD. A risk assessment carried out in 2023 indicates that the risk of transmission of CWD via plants is very low.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Zero Hours Contracts

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 19 March (HL5463), how many people the Department for Culture, Media and Sport employs on zero-hour contracts. [HL6181]

Baroness Twycross: Zero. DCMS does not have this type of contract.

East West Rail Line

Asked by Lord Krebs

To ask His Majesty's Government how the passenger and freight trains on East West Rail will be powered. [HL6057]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: At the recent non-statutory consultation, EWR Co confirmed their preference for discontinuous electrification to power passenger services once the full route is open from the mid-2030s. The rolling stock used for freight services will be a matter for freight operators to decide.

East West Rail Line: Passengers

Asked by Lord Krebs

To ask His Majesty's Government how many passengers they expect to travel between Oxford and Cambridge each day on East West Rail. [HL6058]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: EWR Co are continuing to model forecast passenger numbers and are working with the Government to understand overall trends.

Elections: Costs

Asked by Lord Pack

To ask His Majesty's Government how much they have spent on reimbursement to Returning Officers for (1) poll card printing, and (2) poll card distributions, in each of the past eight years. [HL6255]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The cost of poll card printing and postage for Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and UK parliamentary elections from 2015 onwards are published in detail in the corresponding reports found [here](#).

The costs for the 2021 and 2024 PCC and the 2024 UK Parliamentary general election will be available once all the relevant claims have been received, scrutinised and settled. This data will be published in due course.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Reports on the cost of UK national polls and PCC [HL6255 - Reports on the cost of UK national polls and PCC elections - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-27/HL6255>

Ethiopia: Development Aid

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will prioritise support for women and girls in Tigray when setting future levels of Official Development Assistance. [HL5998]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Women and girls are a priority focus of UK aid across Ethiopia. Detailed decisions on how the future Official Development Assistance budget will be used, including for the Tigray region, will be determined as part of the ongoing Spending Review.

Ethiopia: Internally Displaced People

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide assistance in Tigray and the surrounding areas to those displaced by conflict and persecution. [HL5999]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is providing humanitarian assistance for displaced populations in Tigray, working with partners including United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This financial year, UK assistance has provided life-saving nutrition services to over 60,000 children and 20,000 pregnant or breastfeeding women. In support of displaced women and

girls, the UK provided financial and technical support for one hospital, one health centre and six One Stop Centres, providing safe spaces and comprehensive support to those who have survived gender-based violence.

Fire and Rescue Services

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024 (CP1218), what steps they are taking to ensure that the boundaries of fire and rescue authorities are coterminous with the boundaries of newly created strategic authorities. [HL6038]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As set out in the English Devolution White Paper, where mayoral geographies align with police force and fire and rescue geographies, Mayors will be, by default, responsible for exercising Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority functions. This is the case in three of the six places being considered under the Devolution Priority Programme.

We will explore, in time for the English Devolution Bill, the possibility of a single Mayor taking on Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority responsibilities across two or more Police Force and Fire and Rescue Authorities, where boundaries align.

Where Strategic Authorities do not currently align with these boundaries, or where alignment is not appropriate for new devolution areas, we will take steps to achieve alignment over the longer term. Future new Strategic Authorities will be considered with existing Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority boundaries in mind.

Fisheries: UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Asked by **Lord Gascoigne**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to retain full UK control over all fishing rights in UK waters, as agreed in the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, from 1 July 2026. [HL6229]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Our fisheries relationship with the EU is governed by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) which provides reciprocal access to waters during a five-and-a-half-year adjustment period until 31 June 2026. After 31 June 2026, EU access to UK waters (and vice versa) becomes a matter for annual negotiation under the TCA, as is typical between coastal States.

We know that the EU want a new multi-year access agreement, and we will listen to what they have to say. We will protect the interests of our fishing communities and fulfil our commitments to protect the marine environment.

Foreign Investment in UK: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Lord Dodds of Duncairn**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much foreign direct investment into Northern Ireland from the United States of America there has been in each year since 2019. [HL5989]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

Please see the letter attached from the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority.

The Rt Hon. the Lord Dodds of Duncairn

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

21 March 2025

Dear Lord Dodds,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how much foreign direct investment into Northern Ireland from the United States of America there has been in each year since 2019 (HL5989).

Foreign direct investment positions are the value of stocks of investment at a given point in time. Flows measure the movement of funds received by Northern Ireland from the United States of America during the year. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes experimental subnational UK estimates, which currently includes data up to 2021(1).

Further information on Northern Ireland positions, flows and earnings with the United States of America can be found on the ONS website(1).

Table 1: Northern Ireland Inward Foreign Direct Investment positions and flows with the United States of America, 2019-2021(2),(3). £ million

Type	2019	2020	2021
Positions	3930	6472	7180
Flows	-167	-300	75

Source: Office for National Statistics

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

(1)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanaceofpayments/articles/foreigndirectinvestmnetexperimentaluksubnationalstatistics/2021>.

(2) A negative sign before a value indicates net disinvestment in Northern Ireland.

(3) These statistics exclude FDI related to banks, bank holding companies, property and public corporations.

Gambling: Advertising

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will develop a national definition of harmful gambling advertising. [HL6267]

Baroness Twycross: We recognised that more can be done to raise standards in gambling advertising and we have set the gambling industry a clear task to raise standards in this area to ensure that the levels of gambling advertising does not exacerbate harm and this work will be monitored closely.

Gender Dysphoria: Health Services

Asked by *Baroness Fox of Buckley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to develop a specialist NHS pathway for individuals who choose to detransition, and whether this pathway will be in place before the commencement of the NHS England puberty blocker trial. [HL5663]

Baroness Merron: The Government and NHS England are committed to implementing the recommendations of *the Cass Review* in full. This includes the recommendation for a pathway to be established for individuals who wish to detransition. The formative stages of this work will involve a process of evidence gathering in the spring of 2025, focused on individuals and clinicians with experience of detransition, and professional bodies. NHS England will engage stakeholders on a proposed service specification for the new pathway, including through public consultation.

The PATHWAYS study, which was also recommended by *the Cass Review*, has several elements, including a longitudinal observational study of children and young people attending NHS Gender Services, charting their development over time, and longitudinal qualitative interviews to explore the needs and care experiences of children, young people, and their families, and how these change over the course of time and the treatment.

House of Lords: Staff

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, following the publication on 19 March of the report by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology Review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, whether the House of Lords Administration, in collecting personal data for employment purposes, will ensure that (1) any question about sex should by default concern biological sex, and (2) the form of such questions should be "what is your sex" and the options for response are "male" or "female". [HL5996]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The House of Lords Administration collects personal data from all employees

which is recorded on the HR system and provided to HMRC. Employees must provide the sex recorded on their birth certificate or Gender Recognition Certificate (female or male).

The House of Lords Administration is not within the scope of the independent review commissioned by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). However, the absence of a single source of authoritative guidance on data collection on sex and gender and the need for attention to maintain impartiality on issues including gender noted in the review are as relevant to the Administration as they are to public bodies within the report's scope.

The way in which data about sex and gender is collected by the House of Lords Administration is subject to periodic review. Work is currently underway to consider how we approach these issues in survey and data collection undertaken by the Administration, and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology review will be a helpful contribution.

Hythe Road Station and Old Oak Common Station

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what investigations they have undertaken about the provision of a link between the new station at Old Oak Common and the proposed new Hythe Road station on the London Overground's Mildmay Line. [HL6026]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The HS2 station currently being constructed at Old Oak Common will connect HS2 services with services on the existing Great Western Main Line including an interchange with the Elizabeth line; provisional journey times are approximately 15 minutes from Old Oak Common to London's West End, 20 minutes to the City, and 25 minutes to Canary Wharf.

The local area surrounding Old Oak Common station is currently subject to proposals for development by various organisations. Whilst the HS2 Ltd design for Old Oak Common has not yet integrated designs, the urban realm area and station itself has been designed and sized to account for growth. To the east of the site, in the direction of Hythe Road, the station design provides passive provision for both pedestrian and vehicle bridge links so that these can be added later if needed, after the station ceases to operate as a terminus. Note that the proposed station at Hythe Road is a Transport for London proposal and HS2 Ltd isn't delivering any direct scope associated with this station.

HS2 Ltd continues to work closely with the Old Oak Park Royal Development Corporation, local boroughs and Transport for London to review potential pedestrian routes and ensure feasibility of proposals for development.

Livestock: Animal Welfare

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 17 March (HL5246), what steps they took when considering the International Finance Corporation's loan to Higest Mozambique (project number 41386) to ensure that (1) chickens are stocked at a density that minimises the risk of heat stress, (2) litter is provided and kept dry, (3) fresh air and natural light is able to enter the poultry houses, and (4) chickens that are caught prior to transport to the slaughterhouse are carried in a way that minimises leg injuries. [HL5997]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK Government is committed to promoting high standards of animal welfare internationally. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) have rigorous and internationally recognised standards, which align to those of other jurisdictions including the EU. The IFC assess all potential industrial livestock projects against these standards as part of its due diligence processes. This project (41386) met the IFC's thresholds for environmental and social standards and Higest is incorporating the Global Good Agricultural Practices principles to enhance its animal welfare practices. The UK has robust policies in place to oversee the work of IFC, including through our seat on the World Bank Board, and conducts regular and ongoing monitoring.

Local Government: Disclosure of Information

Asked by **Lord Storey**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of requirements for local government officers to declare and publish any direct pecuniary interests they may have, particularly in relation to planning and awarding of contracts; and what guidance they have issued regarding good practice. [HL6072]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Local authorities are independent bodies and each is responsible for setting its own policies on declaration of pecuniary interests by its officers. This includes complying with the relevant legislation and ensuring appropriate governance and due diligence procedures are in place. It is for the sector to consider what best practice guidance might be required and there is no role for central government in issuing it.

Motability: Reviews

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to review the operation of the Motability scheme, in the light of reports of increased levels of misuse of that scheme. [HL5956]

Baroness Sherlock: Motability Foundation is a registered charity regulated by the Charity Commission so is wholly responsible for the terms and the administration of the Motability Scheme. The Scheme is delivered by Motability Operations which is an independent commercial company under contract to the charity. Any misuse of a scheme vehicle is a matter for Motability, and they will take action as appropriate.

The Department takes benefit fraud extremely seriously, as has been underlined by our campaign to warn people of the consequences of trying to defraud the benefits system. People who suspect benefit fraud can ring the National Benefit Fraud Hotline number on 0800 854 4400 to report in confidence any information which would help the Department's officials in their investigations.

Nappies: Recycling

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the use of reusable nappies, and to make suppliers of single-use nappies pay the full cost of their disposal. [HL6289]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: In 2023 Defra published a Life Cycle Assessment of disposable and reusable nappies which looked at disposable and reusable nappies across 18 equally-weighted environmental impact categories ([Science Search \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk/science-search)).

The assessment showed that while disposable nappies have a slightly higher global warming potential, reusable nappies have a higher environmental impact in other ways. As there is no clear consensus on whether reusable or disposable nappies are better for the environment the Department has no plans to take policy action on nappies at this time.

Natural Disasters: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ways in which artificial intelligence technologies can be used to predict, and plan resourcing for managing, natural disasters. [HL5970]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra is the Lead Government Department in England with risk ownership for air quality, drought and flooding hazards. MHCLG lead on earthquake and wildfire hazards. The Met Office lead on storms, high temperatures, heatwaves, cold temperatures, snow and severe space weather hazards.

Defra is keen to make use of Artificial Intelligence to improve its capability to reduce harm from natural hazards. Defra is upskilling staff members to make appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence and will be examining how to strengthen its resilience capabilities.

Planning: Nature Conservation

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that local nature recovery strategies have sufficient weight in planning given their plans to tackle "blockers". [HL6002]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are intended to support local planning authorities in preparing local plans that conserve and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment. Local planning authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the relevant strategy for their area.

Prison Sentences

Asked by **Lord Wigley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the total number of people serving Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences at the latest available date; how many of these have been (1) released and recalled, or (2) never released; and how many remain in prison beyond their tariff. [HL5974]

Lord Timpson: The Ministry of Justice routinely publishes statistics on the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) population in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly (OMSQ). The latest published figures can be accessed using the links below.

As at 31 December 2024, there were a total 2,614 prisoners serving IPP sentences in custody, of which 1,045 were unreleased and 1,569 were recalled. The figures can be found in Table 1.Q.14: [prison-population-31-Dec-2024.ods](#).

As at 30 September 2024, there were 2,885 offenders serving IPP sentences in the community. Of these, 1,742 had their IPP licences automatically terminated on 1 November 2024. The figures can be found in Table 6.13: [Probation-Jul-to-Sep-2024.ods](#).

Between January and September 2024, there were 128 IPP first releases. The figures can be found in Table 3.Q.2: [prison-releases-July-to-Sept-2024.ods](#).

Between 1 January and 30 September 2024, there were 471 IPP recalls. The figures can be found in Table 5.Q.2: [licence-recalls-July-to-Sept-2024.ods](#).

Between 1 January and 30 September 2024, there were 451 IPP recall re-releases. The figures can be found in Table 5.Q.11: [licence-recalls-July-to-Sept-2024.ods](#).

As at 31 December 2024, there were a total 1,035 unreleased IPP prisoners beyond their tariff. The figures can be found in Table 1.Q.18: [prison-population-31-Dec-2024.ods](#).

It is right that the IPP sentence was abolished, and this Government is determined that those serving the sentence get all the support and opportunities they need to make further progress towards a safe and sustainable release.

On 15 November 2024, the Government published the updated IPP Action Plan, which puts a stronger emphasis

on effective frontline delivery in our prisons. It will ensure that prisoners serving IPP sentences have robust and effective sentence plans, which they can actively engaging with, and that they are in the correct prison to access the right interventions and rehabilitative services.

Prisons: Construction

Asked by **Lord German**

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date HM Prison Millsike will open, and whether it is still projected to provide capacity for approximately 1,500 prisoners. [HL5958]

Lord Timpson: HMP Millsike officially opened on 27 March 2025 and is forecast to receive its first prisoners by May. It will provide c.1,500 safe, secure, modern and decent prison places.

Private Education: Business Rates

Asked by **Lord Weir of Ballyholme**

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the additional cost of children who transfer into the state education system as a result of changes to business rates for private schools. [HL5701]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government's impact note on the removal of eligibility of private schools for business rates charitable relief estimates an extremely limited impact from the business rates policy taking effect, with any movement estimated to represent 0.03% of the total state school pupil population in England. This impact note is attached and can be found here: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0129/ImpactNote.pdf>.

Removing the eligibility for business rates charitable relief from private schools will raise approximately £140 million per year. Based on average per-pupil spending in England for the 2024/25 financial year, the government expects the revenue costs of pupils entering the state sector as a result of the business rates measure in England to steadily increase to a peak of around £20 million per annum after several years.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL5701_Attachment [Impact_Note.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-11/HL5701>

Renewable Energy

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) increase the number of data centres and (2) expand the availability of green energy to improve the infrastructure that supports artificial intelligence technology. [HL6016]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government is taking several steps to increase the number of data centres and expand the availability of green energy to support AI technology infrastructure. Policies such as AI Growth Zones are being implemented to encourage the development of AI data centres. The Government is committed to including data centres as part of its strategic energy plans and the Department is working closely with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in setting up the AI Energy Council. The Council will have senior representatives from both the energy and AI industry to ensure the growth of AI and data centres in the UK is done in a way that supports our clean power mission and longer-term decarbonisation goals.

Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will conduct a strategic review of road construction, renewal and repair to identify the most economic approach to reduce potholes and costs to road users caused by potholes. [HL6028]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: It is the responsibility of individual highway authorities to maintain and improve their networks, based upon their local knowledge, circumstances, and priorities. This includes decisions on how best to prevent road surfaces from deteriorating in the most economic way. The Government is committed to updating its guidance to local highway authorities on how to manage their networks, which will include advice on matters of this sort.

For 2025/26, the Government is providing almost £1.6 billion for local highway maintenance, an increase of £500 million compared to 2024/25. Funding is not ring-fenced, and it is a matter for local authorities to determine how the money is best spent. The Department for Transport has written to all local highway authorities asking them to demonstrate that they are complying with certain criteria aimed at driving best practice and continual improvement. The Department will assess the information provided by local highway authorities in due course.

Royal Visits Committee

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 11 March (HL5400), whether they will publish the membership of the Royal Visit Committee. [HL6029]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Royal Visits Committee is chaired by the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and consists of senior representatives from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Royal Households, No.10, Department for Business and Trade and the Cabinet Office.

Social Media: Hate Crime

Asked by Lord Young of Acton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will require social media platforms to remove content which is currently unlawful in Scotland under the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021, but is not deemed unlawful in the rest of the United Kingdom. [HL6017]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Online Safety Act 2023 requires providers to tackle illegal content. The Act defines relevant offences for the purposes of these duties. Unless designated as a priority offence, an offence created by an Act of the Scottish Parliament is not a relevant offence and the Online Safety Act does not require providers to take any action. Currently, no offences under the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 are priority offences. However, the list of priority offences includes hate crime and public order offences and providers must take action regardless of where a user is based in the UK.

Social Services: Council Tax

Asked by Lord Shipley

To ask His Majesty's Government why they removed the requirement for the adult social care precept to be shown on council tax demand notices sent out by local authorities. [HL6071]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Since 2016-17 councils with responsibility for adult social care services have been given additional flexibility to increase their council tax without a referendum, provided this revenue is spent exclusively on these services. This flexibility is known as the adult social care precept.

From 2025-26 the council tax charge of social care authorities must be displayed as a single line on council tax bills. The change provides a consistent approach between how levels are displayed for social care authorities and non-social care authorities. This will simplify bills and provide greater clarity on the total annual increases set by these councils.

Sustainable Farming Incentive

Asked by Lord Grantchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what provision they intend to make for those who were partway through the Sustainable Farming Incentive application process before its cancellation. [HL6235]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The high level of participation in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) means we have now reached the upper limit and the SFI budget has been successfully allocated. This meant as of Tuesday, 11 March we had to stop accepting new applications for the SFI.

Asked by Lord Grantchester

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend that any future reinterpretation of the Sustainable Farming Incentive would comprise distinct non-universal schemes for more targeted purposes such as small farms, hill farms and other designations. [HL6237]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: No decision has been made on exactly how the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) will be adapted.

We are evolving the SFI offer and are exploring ways to better target the money, for instance, potentially towards smaller farmers, the least productive land or delivering specific outcomes. We will provide further details about the reformed SFI offer once the Spending Review has been completed.

However, although SFI is an important offer, it is part of a wider package. We plan to launch the new Higher Tier scheme later this year; Capital Grants will re-open in summer 2025; we continue to move forward with Landscape Recovery; and we are increasing payment rates for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement holders to recognise their ongoing commitment to delivering environmental outcome.

Asked by Lord Grantchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to mitigate the impact on those subject to Basic Payment Scheme cuts who had planned to apply for the Sustainable Farming Incentive. [HL6239]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We remain committed to investing £5 billion of funding in the farming budget this year and next (£2.6 billion for 24/25 and the £2.4 billion for 25/26, as previously announced), and are on track to do so, with every penny of the reductions to delinked payments staying within the sector.

We will target investments away from Direct Payments towards improving the Environmental Land Management schemes, including to those farms least able to adapt.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive is an important offer, but it is part of a wider package. We remain committed to investing in Environmental Land Management schemes. We plan to launch the new Higher Tier scheme later this year; Capital Grants will re-open in summer 2025; we continue to move forward with Landscape Recovery; and we are increasing payment rates for Higher Level Stewardship agreement holders to recognise their ongoing commitment to delivering environmental outcome.

Tigray: Armed Conflict

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision by the United States of America to withdraw from the World Health Organization's HIV and AIDS treatment programmes

and to freeze aid funding for centres for victims of torture which support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Tigray; and of the impact of this reduction of essential services to survivors of conflict in Tigray. [HL6000]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are assessing implications of the US funding pause across development sectors and geographic regions including Ethiopia. We are gathering information and working with donor partners to share analysis of the pause and understand its impact.

Travel Requirements: EU Nationals

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to implement a scheme similar to the EU entry/exit system for EU nationals travelling to the UK. [HL6012]

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to implement a scheme similar to the European travel information and authorisation system for travellers to the UK. [HL6013]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The UK has introduced electronic travel authorisations (ETAs) to enhance our ability to screen travellers upstream, and improve the customer experience. The introduction of the ETA scheme is in line with the approach many of the UK's international partners have already taken to border security, including the European Union's forthcoming ETIAS and EES. The UK's scheme was extended to eligible European nationals on 5 March 2025, and will be a requirement for this cohort for travel from 2 April 2025. In line with international partners, we are building upon our existing ability to track arrivals in and out of the country.

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to require travellers to the UK to hold passports that (1) have been issued within ten years of their departure date, and (2) are valid for more than three months after their departure date. [HL6014]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The current requirement for travellers, as set out in the [Immigration Rules - Guidance - GOV.UK](#), is that a person must, on arrival in the United Kingdom or when seeking entry through the Channel Tunnel, produce on request by a Border Force Officer a valid national passport or, subject to eligibility, another document satisfactorily establishing their identity and nationality. The document must be valid for the duration of the proposed travel to the UK.

There are currently no plans to change these requirements.

Universal Credit: Inflation

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Sherlock on 18 March (HL Deb col 1203), whether the above-inflation increase in the standard rate of Universal Credit by the end of this Parliament represents an above-inflation increase in any year other than 2026–27. [HL6131]

Baroness Sherlock: The announced increase in the standard allowance will see an above inflation increase in every year from 2026/27 to the end of Parliament.

The proposed increases are inflation (measured by CPI), plus: 2.3% in 2026/27, 3.1% in 2027/28, 4.0% in 2028/29 and 4.8% in 2029/30.

As such, in each year, the rates will be what they would have been under CPI uprating and then increased by the relevant percentage figure.

Water Supply: Fluoride

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks of water fluoridation in causing cancer. [HL6063]

Baroness Merron: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has a duty to monitor the effects of water fluoridation schemes on health, and to publish reports at intervals no greater than four years. Health monitoring reports published in 2014, 2018, and 2022, taken alongside the existing wider research, show that there is no convincing evidence for adverse outcomes, including for bladder cancer or osteosarcoma, due to fluoridation schemes. These findings are consistent that water fluoridation, at levels recommended in the United Kingdom, is a safe and effective public health measure to reduce dental cavities. The next health monitoring report will be published in 2026.

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