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**Saturday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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<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

Saturday, 12 April 2025

Equality Law: Call for Evidence

[HLWS577]

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

I am pleased to announce the launch of a Call for Evidence on Equality Law, an important step in this Government's missions to break down barriers and make work pay. This Call for Evidence aims to gather comprehensive insights from expert stakeholders in order to shape future policy development and potential legislative reform.

Equality is a key factor in delivering long-term and sustainable growth across the UK economy. It is essential that individuals can achieve according to their talents, irrespective of their background. This not only maximises individual opportunity but enables businesses to employ the best person for the job, leading to increased productivity, innovation, and economic resilience, driving up household incomes and putting more money in working people's pockets.

Our goal is to understand how we can better remove barriers to ambition and success for everyone, to improve the lives of working people and strengthen our country as part of our Plan for Change.

We are seeking evidence and views on the following areas:

- the prevalence of pay discrimination on the basis of race and disability
- making the right to equal pay effective for ethnic minority and disabled people
- measures to ensure that outsourcing of services can no longer be used by employers to avoid paying equal pay
- improving the enforcement of equal pay rights by establishing an Equal Pay Regulatory and Enforcement Unit, with the involvement of trade unions
- improving pay transparency
- strengthening protections against combined discrimination
- ensuring the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is met by all parties exercising public functions
- creating and maintaining workplaces and working conditions free from sexual harassment
- commencing the socio-economic duty.

We invite responses from anyone with evidence in these areas. Contributions will be crucial in shaping the steps we take towards achieving a fair, prosperous and equitable society for all. A copy of the Call for Evidence on Equality Law has been placed in the library of both Houses and will be available on Gov.UK

Horizon: Redress

[HLWS583]

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

The planned statement will be delivered orally today by the Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports.

Oil and Gas Decommissioning Relief Deeds

[HLWS582]

Lord Livermore: My honourable friend the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray), has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The government's fiscal approach for oil and gas aims to balance encouraging investment with ensuring a fair return for the nation in exchange for the use of its resources. Currently, inclusive of the temporary Energy (Oil and Gas) Profits Levy, companies engaged in the production of oil and gas in the UK and on the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) are subject to a 78% headline tax rate on their profits.

At Budget 2013, the government announced it would begin signing decommissioning relief deeds. These deeds represented a new contractual approach to provide oil and gas companies with certainty on the level of tax relief they will receive on future decommissioning costs.

Since October 2013, the government has entered into 109 decommissioning relief deeds. Offshore Energies UK estimate that these deeds have so far unlocked approximately £14.7bn of capital, which can now be invested elsewhere.

The government committed to report to Parliament annually on progress with the decommissioning relief deeds. The report for financial year 2023-24 is provided below.

- Number of decommissioning relief agreements entered into: the government entered into 3 decommissioning relief agreements in 2023-24.
- Total number of decommissioning relief agreements in force at the end of that year: 108 decommissioning relief agreements were in force at the end of the year.
- Number of payments made under any decommissioning relief agreements during that year, and the amount of each payment: 3 payments were made under a decommissioning relief agreement in 2023-24, for £87m in total. These were made in relation to the provisions recognised by HM Treasury from 2015 onwards as a result of companies defaulting on their decommissioning obligations.
- Total number of payments that have been made under any decommissioning relief agreements as at the end of that year, and the total amount of those payments: 19 payments have been made under any decommissioning relief agreement as at the end of the 2023-24 financial year, totalling around £347m.

• Estimate of the maximum amount liable to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements: the government has not made any changes to the tax regime that would generate a liability to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements. HM Treasury's 2024-25 accounts will recognise a provision currently estimated to be £123m in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred as a result of companies defaulting on their decommissioning obligations[1]. The majority of this is currently expected to be realised over the next several years.

[1] This figure which is an estimate at the last interim reporting period is unaudited and takes into account payments made subsequent to the financial year covered by this Written Ministerial Statement. The estimate is under review ahead of the year end reporting period and may be updated to reflect newer information.

Package Travel Regulations: Consultation

[HLWS578]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Honourable Friend the Minister for Employment Rights and Competition Markets (Justin Madders MP) has today made the following statement:

The current Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 set a series of requirements for organisers of package holidays and Linked Travel Arrangements and provide bespoke protections for travellers. As the way we book holidays evolves, it's important that these Regulations remain fit for purpose- for both consumers and travel providers.

The Government's previous 12-week call for evidence (18th September - 13th December 2023), targeted stakeholder engagement, and externally commissioned consumer research highlighted a number of areas within the Regulations that may benefit from revision and reform. This is why we are launching this consultation.

We propose to retain the principle behind the Regulations – that consumers should be offered protection when purchasing package holidays. However, there is room to improve the framework to achieve economic growth and regulatory simplification. The proposed changes to the Regulations aim to facilitate growth, increase consumer choice, and simplify the existing regulations, making them easier for business to comply with and for consumers to understand.

We intend to look at the following areas as part of the consultation:

- Reforming the domestic package market to exempt domestic (UK) holidays that do not contain a booked travel element from the regulations. Other existing consumer protections will still apply.
- Reform Linked Travel Arrangements (LTAs) by either removing or simplifying the definition of LTAs.
- Examine the case for setting a time limit for third parties to provide redress to organisers where the third party has contributed to the event but has not already

provided redress directly to the consumer. This is to respond to difficulties some package organisers have in exercising their right to recoup refund monies from suppliers.

- Further technical changes to make clearer what services are within the scope of the regulations, and to reform measures around insolvency protection.

Next steps

To support these objectives, the Department for Business and Trade have published a consultation on the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018, which is available on GOV.UK.

The consultation will be open for 12 weeks. We encourage all interested stakeholders to respond. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the Government will then make a final decision on whether and how to change the Regulations.

I am placing a copy of the consultation in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rebel Energy: Supplier of Last Resort

[HLWS579]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy Consumers (Miatta Fahnbulleh MP) made the following Statement today:

On 1 April, Rebel Energy announced that it planned to cease trading. Following this announcement, Ofgem confirmed that it would seek to appoint a Supplier of Last Resort (SoLR) to protect Rebel Energy's customers, ensuring no disruption and continuity of service for all customers.

Following a competitive process to get the best deal possible for consumers, Ofgem has appointed British Gas as the SoLR for Rebel Energy customers. British Gas will take on supplying Rebel Energy's 84,000 domestic customers and 6,000 non-domestic customers.

Customers of Rebel Energy do not need to take any action for now. There will be no disruption in energy supply, which will continue as normal following the switch over to British Gas on Sunday 6 April 2025. Funds that current and former domestic customers of the supplier have paid into their accounts will be protected and transferred, where they are in credit. Domestic customers will also be protected by the energy price cap with their new supplier.

Customers of Rebel Energy will be contacted over the coming days about the changes. Once the SoLR process is complete, customers will be able to switch providers or sign up for a new fixed tariff in the usual way, although Ofgem advises them to wait until the SoLR process has been completed. Customers will not be charged exit fees if they decide to switch to another supplier.

Since its introduction, Ofgem's SoLR process has ensured supplier exits are orderly, costs are minimised and customers experience no disruption to their energy supply as they are transferred to a new supplier. Most recently, it was successfully used to protect approximately

1.8 million customers of the 28 domestic suppliers which exited the market between August 2021 and July 2022.

Republic of Korea: Upgraded Free Trade Agreement

[HLWS581]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security (Douglas Alexander MP) has today made the following statement:

The fourth round of negotiations on an upgraded Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Republic of Korea (RoK) took place in London between 10 and 21 March 2025.

Total trade between the UK and RoK was worth £15.3 billion in the 12 months ending September 2024. An upgraded FTA is intended to support growth in this trade and strengthen our broader relationship with the RoK.

Specifically, an upgraded UK-RoK FTA will help secure and future proof current goods market access. Negotiators are also seeking to update the agreement in key areas where trade policy has progressed in recent years, including digital and services trade. Discussion is also progressing on a range of areas where increased cooperation will futureproof our UK-RoK strategic relationship, such as commitments on supply chains.

Negotiators made good progress on a number of areas, including but not limited to:

Rules of Origin

Sides continue to make good progress on a new chapter, building on constructive discussions held virtually in February. Discussions covered both the chapter's main text and product specific rules (PSRs) for a range of sectors, including automotives, textiles and apparel, and food and drink. Sides are seeking to ensure the chapter accounts for current and future supply chains.

Digital trade

Further positive discussions were held on an ambitious digital chapter, including on commitments such as data, trade digitalisation and business safeguards. Additionally, the UK is seeking digital commitments that will help foster UK-RoK cooperation on a range of areas, such as emerging technologies.

Services and Business Mobility

The UK is seeking upgraded commitments to boost UK services exports to the RoK. This round included discussions on commitments to provide improved certainty and access for the mobility of business persons. Further discussions were also held on professional and business services and domestic regulation.

Trade and Gender Equality (TGE)

Negotiators made significant progress before the round towards agreeing ambitious TGE commitments. Commitments being sought here will help foster UK-RoK cooperation on specific areas, including improving women's access to global markets, financial resources and

business networks, so that they can further benefit from trade.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Notable progress was made towards agreeing a new SMEs chapter. The outcomes being sought here will help SMEs access important information on the UK-RoK trading arrangement online and encourage cooperation between Parties to reduce trade barriers for SMEs.

Supply Chains and Customs and Trade Facilitation (CTF)

Good progress was made prior to the round to upgrade the existing CTF chapter. Good progress was made during the round towards agreeing new supply chains commitments. These will help cement ongoing UK-RoK cooperation on critical supply chains through mechanisms that facilitate government to government dialogue during supply chain disruptions.

Other Areas

Positive discussions were held across a range of further areas of the FTA including Anti-Corruption and the environment.

The Government will only ever sign a trade agreement which aligns with the UK's national interests, upholding our high standards across a range of sectors, including protections for the National Health Service.

The fifth round of negotiations is currently expected to take place in Seoul in the Summer of 2025. The Government will continue to work towards delivering outcomes in the FTA that secure economic growth for the UK and will update Parliament on the progress of discussions with the RoK as they continue to develop.

Southport Inquiry

[HLWS576]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On 29 July 2024, a brutal attack took place at a children's dance club in Southport. Tragically, the perpetrator murdered three young girls, Elsie Dot Stancombe, Alice da Silva Aguiar and Bebe King, and injured ten other people. My thoughts remain with their families as they come to terms with this devastating loss as well as with those injured and with all those who were present that day who survived the attack but live with the serious emotional consequences.

Nothing will ever take away their trauma and loss and we will ensure they receive the support and care they need in the years to come.

It is of vital importance that there is a clear understanding of how this terrible attack was able to happen, and the lessons learnt, so that we can take all necessary steps to minimise the risk of a future tragedy. That is why I announced in my statement to the House on 21 January that the Government would establish an independent public Inquiry to do this.

Today I am formally announcing the establishment of an Inquiry, under the Inquiries Act 2005. It will need to be able to swiftly receive evidence from the full range of relevant organisations. After careful consideration, including the representations made by some of the families and victims of the attack, I have decided to set the Inquiry up on a statutory basis from the beginning. The formal date of establishment of the Inquiry is today and the Inquiry will begin its work immediately.

The Inquiry will be chaired by The Right Honourable Sir Adrian Fulford. Sir Adrian will bring an impartial and extensive legal background to the Inquiry, particularly on issues related to policing, the criminal justice system and multi-agency working. In accordance with the provision of Section 3(1)(a) of the Inquiries Act 2005, Sir Adrian will sit alone as Chair.

The Inquiry will take place in two phases. The first phase will thoroughly investigate the circumstances surrounding the attack, as well as the events leading up to it – including the perpetrator’s interactions with different public bodies. I am today publishing the terms of reference for this first phase, and I will place a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

A later, second phase will examine the wider issue of young people being drawn into extreme violence and will be informed by the first phase.

The direction of the Inquiry’s investigation will be a matter for the Chair. The Government will provide support and ensure that the Inquiry has the resources needed to fulfil its terms of reference.

I had the privilege to meet with some of the victims and families last month. I would like to put on record my thanks to them for taking the time to meet with me and the Safeguarding Minister and sharing their deeply personal experiences. Their courage and strength in recounting these painful memories is greatly appreciated. I know Sir Adrian is planning to travel to meet with them soon, as his first priority.

I also had the opportunity to discuss the public Inquiry and how it could be approached to support victims and their families, to ensure they get answers they need and to

minimise further distress from this terrible attack. I am grateful for their willingness to engage so constructively in this important conversation. Their input will be crucial in shaping the Inquiry’s approach and ensuring the voices of all victims are heard during the process.

Victim Information and Counselling Services: Public Consultation

[HLWS580]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls (Jess Phillips) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 introduces duties mandating that police and other authorised persons may only request victim information such as medical records when it is necessary and proportionate, and in pursuit of a reasonable line of enquiry. These duties also create special protections for victims’ counselling records, reflecting the highly sensitive nature of these records.

I am confident these new duties, once in force, will help protect the privacy and dignity of victims within the criminal justice system and help the Government deliver on our ambitious aim to halve violence against women and girls over the next decade.

However, before we can bring in these essential reforms it is first necessary to define counselling services and issue a Code of Practice to which authorised persons such as police must adhere.

That is why I am pleased to announce the Government is today publishing a public consultation on both a draft Code of Practice for Third Party Material Requests and a definition of counselling services.

The consultation will run for a 12-week period and provides a valuable opportunity for the public to have their say.

A copy of the consultation and draft Code of Practice will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.uk.

Written Answers

Saturday, 12 April 2025

A69

Asked by *Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 19 February of Current PFI and PF2 projects as at 31 March 2024, why the A69 Carlisle to Newcastle project (project ID 245) incurred payments in 2023–24 of £14 million on a capital value of £9 million, and what proportion of those payments was for (1) lifecycle maintenance, and (2) capital repayment. [HL6463]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The A69 Carlisle to Newcastle Project is a 30-year PFI project expiring in March 2026. At financial close in 1996, the project comprised of the design and build of Haltwhistle Bypass, a 2-mile section of the A69, and the maintenance and renewal of the 52-mile route between Carlisle and Newcastle for the 30-year contract period. The capital value in the 19 February published data refers to the cost of the design and construction of the Haltwhistle Bypass.

The unitary payments to the PFI company (Road Link (A69) Limited) are an all-in payment that covers the overall services provided. This effectively includes amounts related to the original design and construction of the Bypass, as well as both the maintenance (routine and lifecycle) and operation of the longer stretch of road. However, the payment is not structured such that there are defined parts for each of the different elements within the services provided.

Road Link (A69) Limited will continue to incur maintenance, renewal and operating costs on the 52-mile route until the expiry next year. They will also incur costs related to their hand back obligations to National Highways, which include extensive, independent surveys to confirm asset condition, and any costs to bring it up to the required condition, before the road is handed back to National Highways when the PFI expires.

Administration of Justice: Public Opinion

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the new guidance published by the Sentencing Council on public confidence in the criminal justice system. [HL5815]

Lord Timpson: This Government's position is clear – we are seeking to remove the unequal treatment before the law in these guidelines.

We asked the Council to reconsider their guidelines in the first instance – and they have now agreed to put these guidelines on pause. We are grateful for their constructive engagement on this issue.

On 01 April, we introduced legislation to address the specific issue with these guidelines and we will work with the House to fast-track it.

We will also consider a broader review of the Sentencing Council's role and powers over the coming months. It is right that we take time to consider more fundamental reforms such as this.

African Union: Conflict Resolution

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the African Union in its role as a guarantor of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. [HL6533]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK continues to support the African Union-led Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Ethiopia. The UK has provided over £155,000 to the second phase of the African Union Monitoring Verification and Compliance Mechanism, which monitors the implementation of the agreement.

We also support the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, a key part of the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement, as backed by the African Union (AU). We will continue to support the AU in its efforts to ensure lasting peace prevails.

Agriculture: Environment Protection and Food Security

Asked by *Lord Grantchester*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the role of all farms in hitting the Government's targets for (1) the environment, (2) the climate, and (3) food security. [HL6238]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Farms have a key role to play in achieving our environment and climate targets and food security, and Defra is working closely with farmers and the wider food industry. The transition to more climate-friendly agricultural practices goes hand in hand with food security and farm productivity as well as supporting many of our environment targets. We need to support farmers to adopt low carbon farming practices, increasing the carbon stored on their land while boosting profitability. This is vital in achieving a resilient, secure and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British farmers.

Food security is national security. We need a resilient and healthy food system, that works with nature and supports British farmers, fishers and food producers. That is why this Government will introduce a new deal for farmers to boost rural economic growth and strengthen Britain's food security.

The UK has a resilient food supply chain and is equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. We produce 62% of all the food we

need, and 75% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year.

Airports: Visual Impairment

Asked by *Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to work with partners to reintroduce flight announcements for visually impaired travellers at UK airports. [HL6241]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Aviation must be accessible to all. The Department for Transport launched the Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group, bringing together industry and consumer advocates with first-hand experience, to consider the barriers to air travel for disabled passengers and to develop practical and achievable actions to improve aviation accessibility across the consumer journey. Two key areas the Group is considering are around communication with passengers so that they have the right information, and ensuring passengers receive a tailored service that meets their needs. The Group is set to report to the Transport Secretary with their agreed recommended actions by Summer 2025.

Antibiotics: Prescriptions

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they have taken towards achieving no antibiotic prescription without diagnostic confirmation by 2027, as recommended by the World Innovation Summit for Health, and what future plans they have towards that aim. [HL6471]

Baroness Merron: Reducing unnecessary antimicrobial prescriptions by supporting clinicians to prescribe the right antimicrobials only to those who need them is a core undertaking of the Government's 2024 to 2029 antimicrobial resistance (AMR) national action plan (NAP). The NAP highlights the importance of accurate diagnostic testing to guide effective antibiotic use to help tackle AMR. Specifically, outcome four of the NAP commits to strengthening antimicrobial and diagnostic stewardship by improved targeting of antimicrobials and diagnostic tools. Furthermore, outcome six relates to supporting the development of diagnostics for infection.

The NAP includes targets to achieve a 5% reduction in total antibiotic use in human populations by 2029 from the 2019 baseline, and to ensure 70% of antibiotics used across the human healthcare system are from the 'Access' category, a new United Kingdom category, by 2029. The Department continues to work with cross Government bodies, including NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency, to deliver the outcomes and commitments outlined in the NAP.

Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group

Asked by *Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to place in the Library of the House a summary of (1) each meeting between the Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement the chair of the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, and (2) any advice received from the working group; and if they do not plan to do so, why not. [HL6343]

Asked by *Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure advice provided to ministers by the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group is open to scrutiny by Parliament. [HL6344]

Lord Khan of Burnley: The Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Working Group's terms of reference have been [published](#) on GOV.UK.

The Terms of Reference note that the advice the Group produces will be private initially, giving the Government the time and space to consider recommendations, including what a proposed definition/s should be and the merits for adopting a definition.

It is important that government is transparent in the actions it takes to address all forms of hatred, however any independent work should also have the space to consider sensitive and complex issues in private. This is the approach the Working Group will take when considering the appropriate and sensitive language to describe, understand and define unacceptable treatment, prejudice, discrimination and hate targeting Muslims or anyone who is perceived to be Muslim.

Once the Government has had time to review the advice, it will consider its next steps.

Apprentices

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how apprenticeship schemes can stimulate economic growth by attracting more young people into the workforce. [HL6082]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is committed to spreading opportunities and economic growth with the support of a strong skills system, including apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships for young people generate significant economic value. The department estimates that £56,000 and £104,000 of economic value is created per 16 to 18-year-old who start an apprenticeship at level 2 or level 3 respectively. More information can be found in 'The net present value of further education in England 2021 to 2022', which is attached and can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67adc0ba69d39abb04adce22/The_net_present_value_of_further_education_in_England_2021_to_2022_.pdf.

Too many young people are struggling to access high-quality opportunities and this government wants to ensure that more young people can undertake apprenticeships. We are developing new foundation apprenticeships, which will be a work-based training offer that will provide young people with clear progression pathways into further work-based training and employment. The department is working closely with employers and providers to design foundation apprenticeships that give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working lives, whilst supporting the pipeline of new talent that employers will need to drive economic growth.

Construction will be one of the key sectors that will benefit from new foundation apprenticeships, which will be launching in August 2025. This will inspire more young people into the construction industry and allow them to progress and specialise in advanced apprenticeships, giving them the tools they need for a sustained and rewarding career. As part of this new offer, employers will be provided with £2,000 for every foundation apprentice they take on and retain in the construction industry, on top of fully funding the training costs through the new growth and skills levy.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL6082_The_net_present_value_of_further_education
[HL6082_The_net_present_value_of_further_education_in_England_2021_to_2022_.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-24/HL6082>

*Asked by **Baroness Barran***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce differentiated funding bands to incentivise employers to take on younger apprentices. [HL6206]

*Asked by **Baroness Barran***

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to expand the number of high-quality apprenticeship opportunities for young people, particularly in sectors facing skill shortages. [HL6207]

*Asked by **Baroness Barran***

To ask His Majesty's Government how they will ensure that the apprenticeship levy is used to create apprenticeship opportunities for young people, rather than the upskilling of existing employees. [HL6209]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government has set out plans for a more flexible growth and skills levy. It will create opportunities for learners of all ages and give employers greater flexibility to address critical skill shortages in their workforces, whilst driving economic growth. This will include introducing new foundation apprenticeships for young people, as well as shorter-duration apprenticeships.

Foundation apprenticeships will be a work-based training offer that will provide young people with clear progression pathways into further work-based training and employment. Construction will be one of the key sectors that will benefit from new foundation apprenticeships, which will be launching in August 2025. This will inspire more young people into the construction industry and give them the tools they need for a sustained and rewarding career. As part of this new offer, employers will be provided with £2,000 for every foundation apprentice they take on and retain in construction.

To support employers to access apprenticeships, the government pays £1,000 to employers when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18, and for apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care. Non-levy paying employers can also benefit from the government paying the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21, and for apprentices aged 22 to 24 who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care. Additionally, employers are not required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to age 25 where they earn less than £967 a week, £50,270 a year.

Apprentices: Assessments

*Asked by **Baroness Barran***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to allow adults with relevant occupational knowledge and experience to directly undertake apprenticeship end-point assessments without completing a full apprenticeship. [HL6205]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Apprentices are not able to directly undertake apprenticeship end point assessments without having completed the required training as set out in the apprenticeship standard and agreed with their employer and training provider at the start of their apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships are jobs which contain substantial and sustained on and off-the-job training that allow the apprentice to learn new skills. In order for an employer and training provider to receive government funding for an apprentice, the apprentice must be employed and the apprenticeship must comply with the minimum duration and off-the-job training requirements, as set out in legislation and the apprenticeship funding rules.

Apprentices: Small Businesses

*Asked by **Baroness Barran***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support small and medium sized enterprises to offer apprenticeships, particularly with cost and administration. [HL6208]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: I refer the noble Lady to the answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 37179.

Architecture: Professions

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government why membership of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists is not a recognised Property Professional Accreditation within the Government Property Profession Career Framework. [HL6401]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Property and Built Environment has a large number of professional bodies and routes to qualification. The [Government Property Profession Career Framework](#), which was introduced in 2020, sets the standard for accreditation across roles in the government property profession.

Departments are still able to set their own accreditation requirement where a role is particularly specialist or does not fit well in the Government Property Profession Career Framework. This means that if a department needs to recruit an Architectural Technologist, they would be able to do so.

In addition, in 2025/26 we will be reviewing the framework to ensure roles, skills and required accreditations reflect the current civil service workforce and future industry demands. We will engage with the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists as part of this process.

Armed Forces: Housing

Asked by *Baroness Goldie*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether houses built on land surrounding military bases will be owned by the Ministry of Defence, and whether those houses will be used as service accommodation. [HL6345]

Lord Coaker: If land surrounding military bases is owned by the Department, and if a requirement for Service Family Accommodation (SFA) exists in that area, then properties built by the Ministry of Defence on that land would be utilised as SFA. However, if the land surrounding the military base is privately owned, then the use of any houses built on that site would be a matter for the developer.

Arm's-length Bodies

Asked by *Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 20 March (HL5765), which arm's-length bodies are in the process of being set up, and what estimate they have made of the annual cost of each. [HL6032]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Cabinet Office considers an ALB to be in the process of being set up when we have either received a business case for a proposed new body, or the proposal has been allowed to seek approval retrospectively. We then conduct a detailed

process to ensure there is sufficient due diligence to establish a clear rationale for a proposed new body. The following bodies are in the process of being set up: There are currently 26 proposed public bodies, which are as follows:

- Skills England
- Armed Forces Commissioner
- Infected Blood Compensation Authority
- NISTA
- Fair Work Agency
- Industrial Strategy Council
- Independent Football Regulator
- Great British Energy - NDPB
- School Support Staff Negotiating Body
- National Data Library
- Regulatory Innovation Office
- National Wealth Fund - NMD
- Anti-Money Laundering Supervision Reform Body
- Technical Advisory Panel
- "Project Seahorse"
- Border Security Command
- Passenger Standards Authority
- National Care Service
- National Centre of Policing
- Ethics and Integrity Commission
- Building Standards Regulatory Body
- AI Regulation Body
- Adult Social Care Negotiating Body
- Local Audit Office
- Office of Product Standards and Safety
- Tax Advisory Body - Advisory NDPB
- Animal Welfare Advisory Body
- Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS)
- Ploughshare.

Artificial Intelligence: Data Centres

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to attract more private investment into the UK for the construction of new AI data centres. [HL6203]

Lord Vallance of Balham: This Government is committed to supporting data centre builds in the UK and removing barriers to sustainable development, including reviewing and improving grid connections and exploring other ways to provide capacity.

Since last July, over £40 billion has been announced in private investment in new data centres in the UK. In January, the Prime Minister launched the AI Opportunities Action Plan, which included plans to develop AI Growth Zones, dedicated hubs designed to

fast-track AI infrastructure development, support planning approvals, and unlock energy access.

More widely, we are streamlining planning rules to accelerate buildout, have designated the sector as Critical National Infrastructure, and are introducing a stable regulatory environment to improve security and resilience.

Artificial Intelligence: Ethics

Asked by **Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to develop and implement an ethical framework for artificial intelligence. [[HL6242](#)]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government recognises the importance of responsible and ethical AI to provide business and consumer confidence in this technology and support its adoption across the economy.

AI assurance is crucial to ensuring that AI systems are developed and deployed ethically, responsibly and safely. That is why we have designated AI assurance as a key pillar of support for meeting the commitments made in the government's response to the AI Opportunities Action Plan.

To drive demand for AI assurance, DSIT has developed and consulted on AI Management Essentials, a self-assessment framework designed to help businesses establish responsible management practices for the development and use of AI systems.

Artificial Intelligence: Productivity

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the need to invest in emerging artificial intelligence technologies to help boost productivity in the UK. [[HL6273](#)]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that while the exact economic impact hinges on the wider development and adoption of AI, the UK could see productivity gains of up to 1.5 percent annually. By investing in AI now, we're ensuring that the UK is prepared to harness its transformative potential.

To encourage widespread adoption, we are targeting high-growth Industrial Strategy sectors and supporting diffusion across the whole economy by appointing AI Sector champions. The Technology Adoption Review will also set out recommendations for how government should work with industry to support businesses to adopt AI.

This builds on Innovate UK's £100 million BridgeAI programme, which has so far provided £68 million in funding to nearly 800 businesses to boost AI-enabled productivity.

Arts: Higher Education

Asked by **The Earl of Clancarty**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to support universities and other higher education institutions offering foundation courses in creative subjects, including fine art. [[HL5449](#)]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is committed to supporting creative subjects such as fine art in higher education.

In the 2024/25 academic year, more than two thirds of the £1,402 million Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) recurrent funding to higher education providers is allocated to support the provision of high-cost subjects within price group A to C1.2, including various creative arts courses. This funding is in recognition of the higher costs of teaching those subjects.

For this academic year (2024/25), funding from the SPG for world-leading small and specialist providers was maintained at £58 million. Of the 20 providers recognised in this way, 12 are creative and performing arts providers.

Assistive Technology

Asked by **Lord Addington**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they analyse the use of assistive technology to ensure there is a continuity of supply offered to students and workers throughout their lifetimes, and if so, which department is responsible for the analysis. [[HL6283](#)]

Baroness Sherlock: In 2022 the Disability Unit within the Cabinet Office contracted the Global Disability Innovation Hub to complete a needs and capacity assessment of Assistive and Accessible Technology (ATech).

This research sought to improve our understanding of the country's capacity to finance, procure and provide ATech; identifying system inefficiencies and maximising the greatest positive impact on the life outcomes for individual ATech users.

The research, "[Assistive Technology Changes Lives: an assessment of AT need and capacity in England](#)" was published in 2023.

This research, alongside our engagement with disability stakeholders and Atech experts, has enabled us to understand some of the biggest barriers that disabled people face in accessing Atech to support them into employment and wider society.

Insights from this research have recently fed into the DWP Pathways to Work Spring Green Paper, which announced that the government is going to develop and deliver a digital resource that will help raise awareness of existing Atech and provide guidance on how it can be used to support disabled people. We will also set up an Atech expert working group to identify and, where possible, develop solutions to the barriers disabled people face when trying to use and access Atech.

Asylum: Applications

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Hanson of Flint on 13 December 2024 (HL Deb cols 2010–12), whether the pilot will involve newly recognised refugees with lived experience of the moving on period; what the criteria will be to evaluate success; who is undertaking the pilot; and whether the interim findings will be published, and if so when. [HL6130]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) & RSM have been contracted to undertake an evaluation of the changes to the move on period on behalf of the Home Office. This evaluation will cover the extension of the move on period to 56 days, the provision of liaison officers to support those granted asylum, and the provision of £2.8m recognition payment for select local authorities. It will assess the implementation, early outcomes and value for money of these initiatives. It will also assess the early impact of the rollout of eVisas and how this interacts with the above initiatives.

The following outcomes are of interest, and the evaluation will assess how/whether the changes to the move on period have:

- Reduced the length of stay in asylum accommodation from decision to exit.
- Reduced homelessness amongst newly granted refugees.
- Improved early engagement by local authorities and partners in the move on process.
- Improved signposting to support.
- Improved move on outcomes, e.g. smoother transitions into secured housing, with access to bank account, Universal Credit/work.

Evaluation methods include interviews with newly granted refugees to capture insights from those with lived experience of the move on process.

Interim evaluation findings are due to be delivered shortly, with final evaluation findings delivered this summer.

Asylum: Hotels

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, before selecting hotels as accommodation for asylum seekers, it is their policy to consult the chief executives and leaders of affected local authorities. [HL6039]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This Government inherited an asylum system under exceptional strain, with tens of thousands of people stuck in limbo without any prospect of having their claims processed. At their peak use under the previous Government, in the autumn of 2023, more than 400 asylum hotels were being leased by the Home Office, at a cost of almost £9 million a day.

Inevitably, due to the size of the backlog we inherited, the Government has been forced to continue with the use of hotels for the time being. It remains our absolute commitment to end the use of hotels over time, as part of our reduction in overall asylum accommodation costs.

When a hotel has been identified for use as contingency accommodation, Home Office officials will write to the local authority Chief Executive and the constituency MP to inform them of plans to accommodate asylum seekers there.

The Home Office continues to work closely with local authorities to manage all the pressures arising from the provision of asylum accommodation including the impact on wider local authority obligations and plans.

Attorney General: 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 Attorney General's Office employs on zero-hour contracts. [HL6180]

Lord Hermer: The Attorney General's Office (AGO) does not employ any staff on a zero-hour contract. The AGO has a mix of permanent and fixed term contracts.

Azerbaijan: International Red Cross

Asked by **The Lord Archbishop of York**

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan advocating for the continued operation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the country. [HL6092]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is concerned at reports about the potential closure of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Azerbaijan. The ICRC must remain unimpeded in its work to provide humanitarian assistance, protect lives, and uphold rights worldwide, including in Azerbaijan. The Minister of State, Stephen Doughty MP raised this issue in a meeting with Azerbaijan's Principal Presidential Advisor, Hikmet Hajiyev, on 10 March.

Bank of England: Monetary Policy

Asked by **Lord Kinnock**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much quantitative tightening has cost the Treasury since it began in 2022; and what they estimate the cost will be by 2029. [HL6354]

Asked by **Lord Kinnock**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relative merits of selling bonds as part of quantitative tightening, verses disposing of them at maturity. [HL6355]

Asked by Lord Kinnock

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Bank of England's policy to sell bonds, in the light of the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank practice of disposing of bonds through maturation. [HL6356]

Lord Livermore: The Bank of England has operational independence from the Government to carry out its statutory responsibilities for monetary policy and financial stability. Monetary policy, including quantitative easing, is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee at the Bank of England.

In a letter to the Chancellor (12 November 2024), the Governor of the Bank of England said:

“Whilst different unwind strategies might affect the timing of cash flows between HMT and the APF, they are expected to have little effect on total cost in present value terms. For example, active sales incur upfront costs, but they also reduce lifetime net interest costs from carrying gilts on the APF’s portfolio when Bank Rate is higher than coupon payments.” [1]

Since October 2022, HM Treasury has transferred £85.9bn to the Bank of England to cover losses arising from the indemnity of the Asset Purchase Facility, the vehicle used to implement quantitative easing. This covers losses incurred from net interest costs and the sale and redemption of bonds as the portfolio is unwound.

Between 2012 and 2022, the APF transferred £124bn in excess cash to HMT under the terms of the indemnity from net interest payments on purchased assets.

Data on these cash transfers between HM Treasury and the Bank of England are made publicly available by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in its monthly Public Sector Finances publication. The data are available in the ONS data series ID MF7A in worksheet PSA9B.

The independent OBR provides detailed projections of the underlying losses from the APF and the impact on different fiscal metrics. As per the OBR’s Economic and Fiscal Outlook for the Spring Forecast 2025, the lifetime cost of the APF is forecast to be £133.7bn.

[1] [Letter from the Governor of the Bank of England to the Chancellor of the Exchequer 12 November 2024](#)

Biodiversity and Nature Restoration Fund

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government what the relationship will be between the biodiversity net gain rules and the future Nature Restoration Fund. [HL6084]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Last year the Environment Act introduced a new mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement of 10% for new developments, subject to some exceptions.

The Nature Restoration Fund will be in addition to BNG and will run concurrently, focusing on enabling development in areas where that has stalled due to specific environmental obligations relating to impacts on protected sites or species in those areas.

We will ensure that developers receive a user-friendly experience and that BNG credit and the Nature Restoration Fund revenue is deployed in a joined-up manner to maximise environmental outcomes.

Blood Cancer: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the impact of announced 50 per cent cuts to the running costs of integrated care boards on the provision of support to blood cancer patients, particularly in relation to patient experience and shared decision-making initiatives. [HL6068]

Baroness Merron: As part of the necessary changes to support the National Health Service to recover, NHS England has indicated that integrated care boards (ICBs) should reduce in size. The Government is supportive of NHS England’s decision and will work with NHS England to make the tough choices that are needed to get the NHS back on its feet. We expect ICBs to deliver on all of their commissioning responsibilities, including the provision of support for blood cancer patients. The Department has not carried out an assessment in regard to this area.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to engage stakeholders in local health services in adopting shared decision-making practices to improve patient choice and care outcomes for blood cancer. [HL6069]

Baroness Merron: As part of the National Cancer Plan, we are committed to working closely with partners and patient groups to shape the long-term vision for cancer, including for blood cancer. The National Cancer Plan will have patients at its heart and will cover the entirety of the cancer pathway, from referral and diagnosis to treatment and ongoing care. It will seek to improve every aspect of cancer care, including the design of services and the experience and outcomes for people with cancer. The Department does not currently have plans to engage in shared decision-making for blood cancer services specifically.

The Department is planning to engage blood cancer partners, charities, and those within the cancer community, seeking the views of individuals, professionals, and organisations to understand how we can do more to achieve this ambition. You may wish to share your views on the new online platform, which can be done via an online only format.

British Council

Asked by *Baroness Bakewell*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to the funding of the British Council, and to the scope and geographic coverage of its future activities. [HL6168]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: These issues are being considered in the round as part of the Spending Review process, which will allocate departmental budgets between FY 2026-27 and 2028-29.

In an increasingly digital age, the British Council's impact should be judged by the outcomes it delivers through its programmes and operations, rather than its physical presence.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 28 March (HL5890 and HL5892), what assessment they have made of the impact of physical presence of the British Council in the countries in which it operates on the outcomes it delivers. [HL6448]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) works with the British Council to ensure strategic alignment between HMG/FCDO objectives and British Council activity, and is considering these issues in the round as part of the Spending Review process, which will allocate departmental budgets between the financial years 2026-27 and 2028-29. Decisions relating to the size and footprint of the British Council's overseas network are operational matters for British Council.

In an increasingly digital age, the British Council's impact should be judged by the outcomes it delivers through its programmes and operations, rather than its physical presence alone.

BRIXMIS: General Service Medal

Asked by *Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton*

To ask His Majesty's Government under what circumstances they would reconsider the decision not to award a clasp to the General Service Medal for service in BRIXMIS. [HL6253]

Lord Coaker: As the noble Lord was advised in 2023, cases regarding historic medallic recognition are a matter for the independent Advisory Military Sub-Committee (AMSC) to consider, rather than the Ministry of Defence. In 2020, the AMSC considered the issue of awarding a clasp to the General Service Medal for service on BRIXMIS, and the recommendation of the Sub-Committee was that BRIXMIS did not meet the criteria for medallic recognition. This recommendation was accepted by the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (HD Committee).

Any further review of this issue would be for the AMSC to consider, should additional evidence be submitted, which fulfils at least one of the following criteria: significant new evidence has become available that had not been considered previously; facts relied upon during the original decision-making process are shown to be unsound; the original decision appears to be manifestly inconsistent with those for other similar campaigns; or the decision appears to have been taken for reasons which have nothing to do with risk and rigour.

Should the AMSC agree that any such new evidence was sufficient to alter their original decision, they would make a recommendation to the HD Committee for further consideration and, if agreed, submission to His Majesty The King for His Majesty's final approval.

Cabinet Office: 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 Cabinet Office employs on zero-hour contracts. [HL6179]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: There are no civil servants employed by the Cabinet Office on zero hour contracts.

Carbon Emissions: South Yorkshire

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Sheffield*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of jobs in South Yorkshire that are linked to the net-zero transition. [HL6373]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Reaching Net Zero requires a wide-reaching transformation of the UK economy but will be an incredible opportunity—supporting hundreds of thousands of good quality jobs across the UK, including in South Yorkshire. The UK has made significant progress in attracting investment into green sectors. According to analysis by the CBI, the net zero sector is growing three times faster than the overall UK economy and the GVA of the net zero economy grew by 10% in 2024. Government also supports local areas to attract investment – including funding the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub.

Cardiovascular Diseases: Death

Asked by *Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many deaths of working age people there have been as a result of cardiovascular disease in each of the past three years. [HL6089]

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 Lord Weir of Ballyholme

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

26 March 2025

Dear Lord Weir of Ballyholme,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how many deaths of working age people there have been as a result of cardiovascular disease in each of the past three years (HL6089).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish regular statistics on deaths in England and Wales. These statistics are based on information recorded when deaths are certified and registered. They are based on when the death was registered rather than when it occurred. The number of deaths registered in England and Wales over 2021 to 2023 where the underlying cause was cardiovascular disease, and the deceased was aged 16-64, can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of deaths where the underlying cause was cardiovascular disease in England and Wales, aged 16 to 64, deaths registered 2021 to 2023.

Year	Deaths
2021	18,554
2022	18,869
2023	19,094

Source: Office for National Statistics

Any death assigned an underlying cause of death using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes I00-I99 was included. This will include deaths where the underlying cause was ischaemic heart disease, heart failure and cerebrovascular diseases. Further information on the definition can be found on the World Health Organisation (WHO) website(1).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

(1) <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en#/IX>

Cardiovascular Diseases: Health Services

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards the aim set out in the NHS 10 Year Plan to reduce the number of hospital admissions for heart attacks and strokes. [HL5944]

Baroness Merron: Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the second highest cause of premature death in England. It

affects 7 million people, causes one in four premature deaths and 1.6 million disability adjusted life years.

Whilst it is not possible to categorise whether a person's CVD was preventable, almost 40% of the disease burden in England is due to preventable risk factors, such as tobacco, alcohol, obesity and high blood pressure. Over 75% of deaths from CVD are linked to preventable risk factors.

The 10-Year Health Plan will deliver the three big shifts the National Health Service needs to be fit for the future: from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. All three shifts are relevant to improving outcomes for those experiencing heart attacks or strokes. More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their conditions closer to home and help to reduce hospital admissions.

We are engaging with stakeholders to put the best available evidence and expert opinion at the heart of this ambition and to gather a diverse range of views. This includes from the British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK, Stroke Association, Heart UK, UCL Partners, Association of Directors of Public Health and Local Government.

Care Homes and Hospitals: Carbon Monoxide

Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures are (1) currently in place and (2) planned in future, to protect staff and patients in hospitals, care homes and hospices from carbon monoxide poisoning. [HL6340]

Baroness Merron: The Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations 1998 require hospitals, care homes, and hospice owners to ensure gas appliances are installed and maintained properly by a competent gas safe registered engineer. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advises that this is the most effective way to reduce the risk from carbon monoxide. We have no current plans to change the regulations in place for hospitals, care homes, and hospices, unless experts at HSE revise their advice.

Chemicals: Hazardous Substances

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to achieve the COP15 pledge to reduce the overall risks from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half by 2030; and what assessment have they made of the likelihood of achieving this target. [HL6537]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The UK has published a full [National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan \(NBSAP\)](#) and [UK National Targets](#) that commit us to achieving all 23 targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) at home, including Target 7 which features a pledge to reduce the overall risks from

pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half by 2030.

In addition, the revised Environment Improvement Plan (EIP), which will be published in 2025, will set out the Government's approach to managing chemicals. The [UK Pesticides National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#), launched in March 2025, also sets out the Government's strategy for managing pesticide use and minimising risks to the environment and health whilst maintaining food security.

An assessment of progress toward achieving the UK National Targets and implementation of the GBF will be set out in the UK 7th National Report, due to be published in February 2026.

China: Capital Punishment

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, following reports that China has used the death penalty on four Canadian citizens this year, whether they will direct the Great Britain–China Centre to suspend its training and cooperation with members of China's judiciary until executions cease. [\[HL6021\]](#)

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. This Government believes that the death penalty's use undermines human dignity, that there is no conclusive evidence of its deterrent value, and that any miscarriage of justice leading to its imposition is irreversible and irreparable.

Great Britain-China Centre (GBCC) has for many years worked to reduce the application of the death penalty in China, with the ultimate goal of abolition, by providing technical legal training to defence lawyers and support to legislative reforms that restrict the use of the death penalty. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office does not provide funding to this work within GBCC's Grant-in-Aid.

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 Cabinet Office 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. [\[HL6119\]](#)

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and she will make this decision independent from the rest of Government corresponding to her quasi-judicial role.

Cabinet Office officials speak regularly with the Chinese Government about a range of issues.

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 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office 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. [\[HL6121\]](#)

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and she will make this decision independent from the rest of Government corresponding to her quasi-judicial role. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials speak regularly with the Chinese Government about a range of issues.

Cholesterol: Screening

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards introducing guidelines for routine lipoprotein(a) testing. [\[HL6163\]](#)

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to benefit from evidence-based health care. Routine lipoprotein(a) (Lp(a)) measurement is not currently recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

The Department, and NHS England, will continue to look to the NICE for guidance on the role of Lp(a) testing. Should the NICE's guidance change regarding the role of Lp(a) testing, the Department will assess any recommendations to inform future cardiovascular disease prevention policy.

Chronic Illnesses

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the NHS 10 Year Health Plan will include a long-term strategic approach to managing long-term conditions. [\[HL6317\]](#)

Baroness Merron: We have committed to developing a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future. While it's too soon to say exactly what will be in the plan, it will set the vision for what good joined-up care looks like for people with long-term complex health needs.

The 10-Year Health Plan will deliver the three big shifts, from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions closer to home. Earlier diagnosis of conditions will help prevent deterioration and improve survival rates.

All of these are relevant to managing and improving long-term conditions in all parts of the county.

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that care for people living with long-term conditions is provided in their local area. [HL6318]

Baroness Merron: Most services for long-term conditions are commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs). ICBs have a statutory responsibility to commission services which meet the needs of their local population. It is the responsibility of ICBs, working with clinicians, service users, and patient groups, to develop services and care pathways that are convenient and meet patients' needs.

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver an NHS fit for the future. While it's too soon to say exactly what will be in the plan, it will set the vision for what good joined-up care looks like for people with long-term complex health needs.

The 10-Year Health Plan will deliver three big shifts, from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions closer to home.

As of December 2024, community diagnostic centres (CDCs) are now delivering additional tests and checks at 168 sites across the country. Since July 2021, CDCs have delivered over 12.2 million additional tests.

Civil Servants: Neurodiversity

*Asked by **Lord Patten***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 26 March (HL5733), whether it is their policy that civil servants may self-identify as having a neurodivergent condition. [HL6309]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: All of the demographic questions asked on HR systems are dependent on self-identification. There may be situations where additional information is required about a condition for example to support the provision of reasonable adjustments.

This will depend on the condition, but also the nature of requested adjustments.

Civil Service: Artificial Intelligence

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to obtain usable data from legacy systems to enable the Civil Service to incorporate more artificial

intelligence technology into its operating procedures. [HL6274]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: HMG is committed to adopting AI to increase efficiency and quality of services. All departments are promoted to explore all of their existing data sets from all sources to find opportunities for innovation as part of the 'Scan, Pilot, Scale' approach set out in the AI Opportunities Plan. Further work is being scoped to look into data quality from both cloud and legacy services as part of the 'Lay the foundations of AI' mission also set out in the AI Opportunities Plan.

Companies: Ownership

*Asked by **Lord Sikka***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many registered companies have failed to declare their persons with significant control. [HL6146]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: 49,521 companies have not provided details of any current persons of significant control ("PSC") or any PSC statements giving us information about their current PSC status.

764 companies that have not provided details of any current PSCs, have submitted a statement showing that they believe they have at least one, for which they are not yet able to provide the full details.

919 companies that have provided details of at least one current PSC, have also submitted a statement showing that they believe they have at least one, for which they are not yet able to provide the full details.

Companies: Registration

*Asked by **Baroness Freeman of Steventon***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to prevent companies from wrongly listing a foreign company as a person of significant control in the Companies House register, and (2) to ensure that those identified as having done so either correct their entry or are prosecuted for not doing so. [HL6043]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: In limited cases, a foreign company can be a relevant legal entity (RLE) and can be legitimately recorded as a UK company's person with significant control ("PSC"). The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 will introduce new requirements which will allow Companies House to collect and display more information about RLEs. If the RLE is a listed company, the UK company must say which market the RLE is listed on. This will give assurance that the RLE meets the conditions as claimed. Where the Registrar identifies or receives complaints about gaps or inaccuracies in a company's PSC register, she will take the action required to achieve compliance.

Conflict Resolution: Women

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to implement the strategy in the UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027 which sets out how they propose to deliver on their global commitment to women, peace and security. [HL6243]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK remains resolute in its commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The government intends to build on the approach and ambition displayed in the UK's fifth WPS National Action Plan, during this 25th anniversary year of UN Security Council resolution 1325. We will prioritise advocating for women's full, meaningful and safe participation, engaging with Women's Rights Organisations and tackling violence against women, including Conflict Related Sexual Violence.

We look forward to providing a written update to Parliament on the progress the UK has made towards the National Action Plan's five strategic objectives in due course.

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to make changes to the UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027, and if so, how they plan to make those changes, who they will consult, and when they plan to make the changes. [HL6306]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK's fifth Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan was published in February 2023. The Government intends to build on the approach and ambition displayed in the UK's fifth Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan during this 25th anniversary year of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.

The Government looks forward to setting out its priorities for the 25th anniversary year to the Women, Peace and Security All-Party Parliamentary Group and civil society in due course.

Construction: Employers' Contributions

Asked by **Baroness Stedman-Scott**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions on the construction sector. [HL6590]

Lord Livermore: A Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) was published alongside the introduction of the Bill containing the changes to employer NICs. The TIIN sets out the impact of the policy on the exchequer, the economic impacts of the policy, and the impacts on individuals, businesses, and civil society organisations, as well as an overview of the equality impacts.

Construction: Investment

Asked by **Lord Blunkett**

To ask His Majesty's Government which elements of the £600 million investment in construction skills they announced on 23 March have previously been announced or committed to, and which are new and in addition to previous commitments. [HL6097]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has announced an additional £625 million of funding to support construction skills training, with the detail set out in the Spring Statement 2025. This additional support had not previously been announced or committed. This is expected to deliver up to 60,000 additional skilled construction workers this Parliament.

The measures will support the expansion of existing skills programmes, including Skills Bootcamps and apprenticeships, as well as help deliver new initiatives such as establishing ten Technical Excellence Colleges specialised in construction in every region in England.

Additional detail on these measures is available from page 29 of the Spring Statement 2025 document, which is attached and can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e3ecff55239fa04d411fc3/E03274109_HMT_Spring_Statement_Mar_25_Text_PRINT_.pdf.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL6097_HMT_Spring_Statement_Mar_25_Text
[HL6097_HMT_Spring_Statement_Mar_25_Text_.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-25/HL6097>

Coronavirus: Monuments

Asked by **Lord Katz**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to designate the National Covid Memorial Wall as a national monument to commemorate those who died during the pandemic. [HL6251]

Asked by **Lord Katz**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Lambeth Council, Friends of the Wall, and other volunteer groups about the ongoing maintenance of the National Covid Memorial Wall, and what assessment they have made of ongoing maintenance costs. [HL6252]

Baroness Twycross: The Government recognises the significance of the National Covid Memorial Wall in London and its special role in supporting bereaved families to remember their loved ones. Its preservation was specifically recommended by the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration.

The Government is working closely with local partners including the Friends of the Wall and Lambeth Council, and other key partners to consider options, including the likely costs, for the longer-term preservation of the Wall. We will respond to the report by the UK Commission in due course.

Coroners: Isle of Wight

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede on 1 April (HL6113), what is the longest outstanding inquest in the Isle of Wight. [HL6494]

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede on 1 April (HL6113), what steps they are taking to support families of the deceased during the wait for an inquest. [HL6495]

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede on 1 April (HL6113), what plans they have to appoint deputy coroners to help to process incomplete inquests in the Isle of Wight. [HL6496]

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede on 1 April (HL6113), what assessment they have made of why the average time to complete coroner inquests in the Isle of Wight is more than double the average time across all of England and Wales. [HL6497]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Government is committed to supporting an inquest process which is as swift as possible and which puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. We recognise the impact of delays on bereaved families and wider systems.

However, while the Ministry of Justice is responsible for coroner law and policy, operational responsibility for coroner services lies with individual local authorities (known as “relevant authorities”) which are responsible for funding, administration and coroner appointments for each of the 77 coroner areas in England and Wales. For the Isle of Wight coroner area, the relevant authority is the Isle of Wight Council.

For this reason, the Ministry of Justice does not hold information on the longest running inquest in the Isle of Wight coroner area. More generally, however, the Coroner Statistics for 2023 (the most recent year for which data is available) indicate that 46 inquests had been open for more than two years in the area at 31 December 2023. The Statistics are available at [Coroners and burials statistics - GOV.UK](#). Statistics for 2024 will be published on 8 May 2025.

I understand there has been significant pressure on accommodation for inquest hearings, and in terms of staffing and coroner resources, in the Isle of Wight coroner area. To address this, the refurbishment of a court is now nearing completion; and the Isle of Wight Council is currently recruiting for two additional Assistant Coroners. It is anticipated that, once in place, these measures will help address the issue of inquest backlog.

We will continue to work closely with the Chief Coroner, local authorities and other key partners to reform and deliver a framework for the future development of coroner services across England and Wales.

Crown Court: Trials

Asked by *Lord Mohammed of Tinsley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Crown court trials have (1) collapsed, or (2) returned not guilty verdicts, because of a lack of evidence; how many of these instances may be attributed to the delays in Crown court hearings; and how many of these instances related to trials concerning violence against women and girls. [HL6066]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Ministry of Justice publishes data on Crown Court trial sentencing outcomes in England and Wales in the Crown Court data tool published here: [Crown Court data tool](#).

This includes details of those acquitted and where the case was discontinued. Crown Court trials may be discontinued for a wide variety of reasons. Data on where Crown Court trials collapsed or returned not guilty verdicts specifically “because of a lack of evidence” and/or “attributed to the delays in Crown court hearings” are not identifiable in the published data. This information may be held in court records but to examine all individual court records would be a disproportionate use of costs.

This Government inherited a record and rising crown court backlog, which has meant that victims have been left waiting years for justice. This is unacceptable and we are working hard to drive down the backlog and cut delays. We have already funded a record number of sitting days in the crown court and have increased magistrates’ courts sentencing powers. We have asked Sir Brian Leveson to lead an Independent Review of the Criminal Courts which will guide the Government on the long-term structural reforms required to bear down on the backlog and restore a sustainable criminal justice system in which there are fewer ineffective trials.

Cryptocurrencies: Regulation

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce further legislation to regulate the cryptocurrency market. [HL6202]

Lord Livermore: The Government has confirmed that it will proceed with introducing a new financial services regulatory regime for cryptoassets in the UK. The

Government is seeking to bring forward legislation to create this regime as early as possible this year.

Cycling: Crown Estate

Asked by Lord Moylan

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have received representations from ambassadors or High Commissioners resident in Palace Green and Kensington Palace Gardens about the temporary obstacles erected there by the Crown Estate to manage the behaviour of bicyclists. [HL6506]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Government has received no such representations.

Dangerous Dogs

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that the ban on keeping XL Bullies is enforced effectively. [HL6407]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to ensuring that the ban on XL Bully dogs is fully implemented and enforced to ensure our communities are protected from dangerous dogs. Defra have supported the police to deliver additional training to Dog Legislation Officers to make sure the ban is effectively enforced, and we are continuing to engage closely with the Police to monitor the impacts of the XL Bully dog ban.

Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to implement the recommendations in the report published on 19 March, Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, by Professor Alice Sullivan. [HL6247]

Lord Vallance of Balham: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave to Question UIN HL5960 on 2 April 2025.

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the data collection in the independent report published on 19 March, Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, by Professor Alice Sullivan. [HL6249]

Lord Vallance of Balham: This was an independent review by a leading academic. As such, the Government has not made an assessment of the approach to data collection.

Defence

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government how they define the difference between the right to defend and an offensive action by a state. [HL6260]

Lord Coaker: As recognised in Article 51 of the UN Charter, States have the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence against armed attack. Self-defence permits States to use necessary and proportionate force to repel such armed attacks. States' uses of force outside of self-defence or absent some other legal basis such as a Chapter 7 UN Security Council Resolution, consent or humanitarian intervention would be unlawful as a matter of international law.

Defence Infrastructure Organisation: Public Appointments

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government, with regard to the advertisement of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation Head of People Development and Culture, what is the business justification for the salary, and how recruitment into that job role will benefit the Ministry of Defence. [HL6173]

Lord Coaker: The salary for the role of Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Head of People Development and Culture is determined by the established banding within Defence. The grade is defined by the responsibilities of the position and level of experience needed to successfully deliver in role.

This role is aligned with Defence Reform initiatives, particularly in transforming culture across the organisation, with DIO playing a key role. Attracting the right leaders into the right positions is essential for building capability within Defence. In doing so, we foster the right culture and behaviours ensuring we develop a workforce equipped with the professional expertise needed for the future.

Defence: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the announced increase in defence spending, what steps they are taking to research artificial intelligence technologies and encourage their implementation in defence programmes. [HL6204]

Lord Coaker: AI (and the autonomy it enables) has potential to transform every aspect of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Armed Forces. Rapid and scaled adoption of these technologies is a key Defence priority and significant work is underway across the Department, including over 400 AI-related projects and programmes.

MOD's efforts to harness AI are cohered through the Defence AI Centre - a partnership between Defence Digital, Defence Equipment and Support and Dstl. Dstl's Science and Technology research capabilities therefore underpin our approach to AI, helping to ensure that the MOD understand key technological developments while also developing the standards, tooling and Test and Evaluation capabilities to adopt and use AI-enabled systems safely and responsibly.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Religious Freedom

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of ongoing human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in North and South Kivu, on freedom of religion or belief; and what representations they have made to international partners regarding the protection of religious minorities in areas affected by violence from M23 and other armed groups. [HL6070]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including promoting respect between different religious and non-religious groups, are a priority for the UK. We work with the United Nations and other multilateral bodies to promote and protect them. Our Ambassador in Kinshasa and Ministers regularly raise protection of human rights with the government of DRC. We are alarmed and saddened by the attacks by IS-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces on Christian communities and the resulting loss of life. There is no evidence so far that churches have been specifically targeted by M23 rebels. The UK continues to remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law and make clear that all those who have committed human rights violations and abuses must be held accountable.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Armed Conflict

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to facilitate safe humanitarian access and protection of civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL6279]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is deeply concerned by the limited ability of humanitarian actors to get help to civilians. On 25 February, the UK issued a statement following the Foreign Secretary's visits to Kinshasa and Kigali to announce measures against Rwanda and call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access, respect for international humanitarian law, meaningful engagement with African-led peace processes, and the withdrawal of all Rwanda Defence Forces from Congolese territory. The UK has committed £20 million to International Committee of the

Red Cross for their 2025 appeal, a proportion of which will support a programme that includes mediating safe passage. The UK condemns human rights abuses by all armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on all parties to uphold International Humanitarian Law, protect women and girls and combat impunity.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Qatar about the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and support by Rwanda for M23 rebels. [HL6357]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is deeply alarming. We have been clear that there can be no military solution and call for meaningful engagement in peace processes. We are in close contact with a range of partners globally on eastern DRC, including Qatar. Ministers and senior officials hold regular meetings to discuss foreign policy issues with their Qatari counterparts.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Conflict Resolution

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to engage private finance and the private sector in efforts to support a lasting peace within eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the surrounding region. [HL6389]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is committed to supporting a thriving private sector in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) - recognising the enormous potential for climate-smart growth and that a more resilient economy will mean a more resilient DRC. UK officials regularly engage with the private sector on the conflict in eastern DRC, including on how we can best support sustainable peace. British Embassy Kinshasa has also offered support to British companies affected by the conflict. The UK also supports improved transparency and governance in the mining sector, in support of sustainable peace in the region. Exploitation of natural resources fuels the business models of armed groups and we are clear that this must stop. The UK therefore supports the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Minerals

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance they have issued to UK companies that operate in industries at risk of exposure to illicit minerals originating from territory occupied by M23 rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL6391]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK has sanctioned M23 and other armed groups through the Sanctions and

Anti-Money Laundering Act. We support the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which aims to improve transparency and governance in the mining sector. The UK works through international mechanisms that enable businesses to operate responsibly in conflict affected and high-risk areas. The UK is also a member of the Voluntary Principles for Security and Human Rights, which promote a set of principles to guide companies in the extractives sector to maintain the safety and security of their operations to reduce the risk of human rights abuses. We expect all UK businesses to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Implementation of these frameworks supports access to justice and remedy for victims of business-related human rights abuses.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Peace Negotiations

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support regional and sub-regional peace processes to end the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the Nairobi and Luanda peace processes. [HL6280]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK has been active in supporting regionally led peace efforts. My first visits to Africa as Minister for Africa were to Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, to meet with heads of state and encourage engagement in good faith African-led peace processes. I also spoke to the Ugandan Foreign Minister to discuss the importance of an African led solution to the conflict. The Foreign Secretary met with President Tshisekedi in Kinshasa and President Kagame in Kigali on 21 and 22 February to urge them to meaningfully engage in African-led peace processes and honour their commitments from the Southern African Development Community-East African Community Summit. The Foreign Secretary has also spoken to South African and Kenyan Foreign Ministers. The UK remain in close contact with key partners across Africa, North America and Europe in support of regional peace processes to end the conflict in DRC.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Rwanda

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the flow of minerals and other natural resources to Rwanda from territory occupied by M23 rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL6390]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The exploitation of natural resources fuels the business models of armed groups. We are clear that this must stop. Everyone in the region stands

to benefit from peace. That is why we announced in February a set of actions, alongside action from other international partners, to encourage all parties to return to the negotiating table. We will not let this conflict be forgotten. The UK also supports the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which aims to improve transparency and governance in the mining sector.

Department for Education: 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 Education employs on zero-hour contracts. [HL6182]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department does not have any employees on zero-hour contracts.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: 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 Energy Security and Net Zero employs on zero-hour contracts. [HL6183]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) does not employ people on 0 hour contracts.

Departmental Responsibilities: Infrastructure

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government which Ministers are responsible for ensuring the resilience of critical national infrastructure; and if those responsibilities are split, which ministers are responsible for resilience in each sector. [HL6056]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The UK currently has 13 Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) sectors. Each sector has a Lead Government Department (LGD) that is responsible for sectoral resilience, including risk assessments, policy and guidance and industry engagement. The LGD Minister or Secretary of State for each CNI sector holds overall accountability for their CNI sectoral approach.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for the overarching CNI policy for the UK government, setting strategic cross-cutting priorities and providing assurance to Ministers that LGDs are fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure the security and resilience of their sectors. The

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (CDL) is the Cabinet Office Minister with overall responsibility for Resilience. CDL chairs the National Security Council on Resilience, at which CNI topics are routinely discussed and relevant LGDs are represented.

Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they still intend to convert Derwentside immigration removal centre to a male-only facility. [HL6169]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Plans for Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) are still being considered. Currently the centre remains a functioning female IRC, and we remain focused on the specific needs for women in our care.

Detainees: Women

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide alternatives to immigration detention for women. [HL6170]

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of violence against women and girls in immigration detention. [HL6233]

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the report published on 17 March by Women for Refugee Women, A Decade of Harm: Survivors of gender-based violence locked up in immigration detention, what action they will take regarding the finding that women under constant supervision are being watched by male staff. [HL6234]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government keeps all aspects of the immigration system under regular review, in consultation with a range of experts and stakeholders.

There is detailed published guidance for all staff working in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs). Detention Services Order 06/2016 'Women in the immigration removal estate', which sets out the processes that are undertaken in IRCs to ensure that the needs of women are identified and appropriately met and their rights to dignity and privacy are upheld.

The constant supervision of women who are subject to an Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork (ACDT) plan, should wherever possible, be undertaken by a female detainee custody officer (DCO). In the unlikely event that this is not operationally possible for reasons of safety and security, the details for this decision must be fully documented by the duty manager on the ACDT plan.

Development Aid

Asked by Lord Mohammed of Tinsley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the reduction of Official Development Assistance on (1) levels of infant mortality, and (2) the effectiveness of programmes seeking to reduce female genital mutilation, in the Global South. [HL6065]

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

Development Aid: Defence

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government how much of the funds transferred from overseas development assistance expenditure to defence may be used by the armed forces on revenue expenditure rather than capital expenditure, in (1) real terms, and (2) as a percentage; and whether this was discussed with Service Chiefs in advance. [HL6324]

Lord Livermore: The Prime Minister announced on 25 February 2025 that NATO qualifying defence spending would increase to 2.5% GDP in 2027-28. This would be fully funded by a reduction in ODA spending from 0.5% to 0.3% GNI.

The Spring Statement document, published on 26 March, set out the Resource DEL and Capital DEL uplifts to defence spending over the scorecard period.

The proportion of this uplift that will be allocated to the MOD budget is to be determined as part of the Spending Review 2025, which will conclude on 11 June 2025.

The Defence Secretary will continue to work with the Service Chiefs in the usual way.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether fiscal rules or defence priorities determined that more than 90 per cent of the expenditure transferred to defence from overseas development assistance is allocated to capital expenditure; and how this allocation correlates to the 35 per cent of defence expenditure currently allocated to capital spending. [HL6325]

Lord Livermore: The Chancellor's Spring Statement document, published on 26 March, set out the Resource DEL and Capital DEL uplifts to defence spending over the scorecard period.

A greater proportion of the uplift will be Capital DEL funding. This reflects the needs of defence, and will enable the accelerated adoption of cutting-edge capabilities, and rebuild stockpiles, munitions, and other

essentials depleted after a period focussed on international terrorism and global crises. This Capital DEL focus also supports the Chancellor's mission to boost growth, enabling greater spending on novel and innovative technologies.

The allocation of this uplift and the MOD budget will be confirmed as part of the Spending Review 2025, which will conclude on 11 June 2025.

Development Aid: Disability

Asked by Baroness Curran

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the announcement to reduce Official Development Assistance and ahead of the Third Global Disability Summit, what steps they are taking to protect disability inclusion in giving development aid both now and in the future. [HL6294]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK remains committed to investing internationally to build a safer world. As the Prime Minister has made clear we must increase our security and defence spending now. We remain committed to spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance (ODA) when the fiscal circumstances allow.

At 16 per cent of the global population, people with disabilities are among the world's most vulnerable, including in times of crisis, climate and humanitarian emergencies. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is committed to mainstreaming a disability inclusion and rights approach across our work and we will also drive stronger international coordination to advance global disability inclusion progress. We will set out our spending plans following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes. Equality impact assessments, which consider impacts on disability inclusion, are an essential part of how we make decisions, including on ODA allocations.

Development Aid: Education

Asked by Lord Mohammed of Tinsley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the reduction of Official Development Assistance on women and girls' education (1) globally, and (2) in Afghanistan. [HL6064]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is committed to empowering women and girls around the world through our international work. Education, especially for girls and women, has wide-ranging benefits. It can unlock the potential of women and girls to tackle inter-generational poverty and create economic growth. In Afghanistan, we have repeatedly condemned

the Taliban's edicts that restrict the rights of women and girls, including on girls' education. Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review process. We intend to publish final 2025/26 ODA programme allocations in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts this summer. The FCDO is focused on ensuring that every pound is spent in the most impactful way. Equality Impact Assessments - which consider impacts on women and girls - are an essential part of how we make decisions, including on ODA allocations. The UK remains committed to playing a significant role in international development.

Disabled Students' Allowances: Assistive Technology

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of withdrawing funding for spelling and grammar software from the Disabled Students Allowance on students. [HL6281]

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask His Majesty's Government what criteria they have for provision of paid-for software packages from free or built-in technology systems in the Disabled Students Allowance, and whether these criteria take into account capacity to train students to use new systems. [HL6282]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment on this policy change and has identified the risk that this decision may have a negative impact on some disabled students who might prefer paid-for spelling and grammar software is mitigated by the availability of free versions of spelling and grammar software that provide equivalent functionality for the types of support that are in scope of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). The DSA will still fund spelling and grammar software in exceptional circumstances where there is specific need and a robust disability-related justification is provided.

The department conducted a detailed review of the spelling and grammar functionality available in Microsoft Office, computer operating systems, free software products and paid-for software products. This review concluded that the spelling and grammar functionality available in products that students can access for free was similar to that available in paid-for products. While some of the paid-for products had additional features such as plagiarism checkers, these are not in scope for DSA funding, given they are of potential benefit to all students.

Assistive technology training and aftercare support for any non-specialist basic spelling and grammar software agreed in a student's needs assessment report will continue to be funded through DSA.

Disinformation: Relationships and Sex Education

Asked by *Baroness Sugg*

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they are taking in their international development strategies to counter misinformation campaigns that target comprehensive sexuality and family planning education. [HL6073]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is proud to support universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. This includes support to address the additional barriers faced by adolescents and young people to ensure they can access the information, services and advice they need. The UK works in partnership with governments, civil society and community groups to do so. For example, in December 2024 the Prime Minister announced the Grassroots and Counter Rollback programme which aims to strengthen civil society organisations and movements to counter misinformation and expand access to SRHR.

The UK continues to provide strong political leadership in multilateral fora. We work to protect and progress language relating to adolescents' SRHR, including comprehensive sexuality education and family planning education. Meaningful engagement of young people is also a priority, and this year we will again include a young person as part of the UK delegation to the United Nations Commission on Population and Development.

Domestic Abuse: Suicide

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the link between domestic abuse and victim suicide. [HL6195]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office is working to develop the evidence base on suicides that follow domestic abuse through funding the Domestic Homicide and Suspect Victim Suicides Project, which captures information on suicides with a known history of domestic abuse from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

In the latest published data capturing deaths from April 2023 to March 2024, 262 deaths were counted, with 98 deaths (37%) classified as suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse. The full report can be found online: <https://www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/>

The Home Office also funds the organisation Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse to support families bereaved by suicide and unexplained deaths following domestic abuse. However, we recognise that more needs to be done to understand the link between domestic abuse and suicide and ultimately prevent future deaths. Our upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy will outline the Government's work going forward to better understand and prevent all domestic abuse related deaths.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

4 Year Report [Year-4-Report_publication.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-26/HL6195>

Doncaster Sheffield Airport

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the use of £105 million of public money being made available to reopen Sheffield Doncaster Airport, and what assessment they have made of the value for money of that project. [HL6272]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Regional airports like Doncaster Sheffield Airport serve our local communities and businesses, support thousands of jobs and act as a gateway to international opportunities. They also help to maintain social and family ties and strengthen the bonds between our four nations.

Assessing the value for money case for public money being used to support the airport reopening is the responsibility of the relevant local authorities providing the funding. The City of Doncaster Council's business case suggests the re-establishment of aviation within the region could support over 5,000 direct jobs and 6,500 indirect jobs and boost the economy by £6.6bn when fully operational.

Driverless Vehicles

Asked by *Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government which unit or team in the Department for Transport is responsible for policy relating to self-driving delivery robots that operate primarily on pavements. [HL6137]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Department has a team that is responsible for micromobility policy which includes self-driving delivery robots. That team works with a wide range of other teams on the opportunities and risks they present, including the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles.

Driverless Vehicles and Unmanned Air Systems: Regulation

Asked by *Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans the Regulatory Innovation Office has for regulating self-driving delivery robots that operate primarily on pavements, alongside regulation of airborne drones. [HL6136]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO) is not a regulator. Responsibility for regulating pavement robots and drones lies with the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation

Authority, respectively. One of the RIO's current focuses is 'drones & other autonomous technology', which includes pavement robots, a promising technology for the UK. The RIO is working with the Department for Transport to understand the regulatory interventions the government could take to stimulate their rollout in the UK.

Driving: Disqualification

Asked by Lord Frost

To ask His Majesty's Government how many drivers were disqualified from driving in (1) 2022, (2) 2023 and (3) 2024 in the United Kingdom. [HL6557]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The table below shows the number of disqualifications from driving for each of the years requested. The figures also include disqualifications imposed in the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland that apply in Great Britain, under arrangements for the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications.

2022	134,078
2023	127,557
2024	131,628

These figures are for Great Britain only. Driver licensing is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland.

Duchy of Cornwall: Corporation Tax and Capital Gains Tax

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government which piece of legislation originally granted exemptions to the Duchy of Cornwall from paying corporation tax and capital gains tax; and what is the monetary value of these exemptions for the last 10 years. [HL6581]

Lord Livermore: The Duchy of Cornwall is not liable to pay corporation tax as it is a Crown body subject to Crown exemption. This is a matter of common law.

The Prince of Wales receives the annual income generated by the Duchy of Cornwall, but is not entitled to the capital of the Duchy. While the Crown exemption applies to income received from the Duchy, the Prince of Wales pays tax voluntarily on his income received from the Duchy of Cornwall to the extent that is not used to meet official expenditure. The Prince of Wales is otherwise subject to taxation in the normal way. These arrangements are set out in The Memorandum of Understanding on Royal Taxation, which is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/memorandum-of-understanding-on-royal-taxation-2023.

East West Rail Line: Freight

Asked by Lord Krebs

To ask His Majesty's Government how many freight trains they expect to use East West Rail per day. [HL6059]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The current scope of EWR enables up to two new freight train paths per day per direction from Felixstowe, routed via Cambridge, through to Oxford and beyond, and around two new freight train paths per day from Southampton, routed via Oxford, Bletchley and onto the West Coast Main Line. Other enhancements on the network would be required for freight to exceed these levels.

Economic Situation

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication in Environmental Research Letters on 31 March of Reconsidering the macroeconomic damage of severe warming, what assessment they have made of the finding that global warming will have a significant negative impact on the size of the global economy. [HL6576]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The latest Synthesis Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that it is unequivocal that human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land, and that widespread and rapid changes to the climate have occurred. The IPCC also found that projected net economic damages generally increase non-linearly with global warming levels and that economic impacts could be higher than previous estimates.

Economics of Biodiversity Review

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations set out in the report The nature of our economy: Implementing the Dasgupta Review, published by the Green Alliance on 18 March. [HL6371]

Lord Livermore: The Government agrees with the central conclusion of the Dasgupta Review that nature, and the biodiversity that underpins it, sustains our economies, livelihoods and wellbeing. It is therefore committed to integrating nature into economic and financial decision-making, and the institutions and systems that underpin it.

The Treasury continues to make progress and explore ways to strengthen processes for assessing the climate and environmental impacts of fiscal decisions and improve the Green Book in line with emerging evidence and best practice. For example, building on the extensive guidance already provided for evaluating and monetising natural capital impacts, the Government has published updated supplementary guidance to the Green Book on Enabling a Natural Capital Approach, including additional guidance on valuing biodiversity.

The UK was one of the first countries to publish natural capital accounts as part of its National Accounts, and the Office for National Statistics will continue to implement

its roadmap to ensure the further development of the natural capital accounts through to 2026.

As set out in the Budget last October, the Government is continuing to invest in the natural environment, confirming £5 billion over two years to support the transition to a more productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector in England, and at least £400 million for tree planting and peatland restoration to protect soils, rivers and biodiversity. To help deliver its environmental ambitions, the Government is also seeking to create the conditions to mobilise additional private finance into nature, including by driving the development of high-integrity nature markets for the UK.

Educational Institutions: Social Media

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they issue guidance to schools and colleges regarding their use of social media channels, particularly the use of these to mark religious occasions and festivals. [HL6276]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department has not issued specific guidance for schools on the use of social media channels, although the department's 'Political impartiality in schools' guidance makes the point that school-branded social media channels should not be partisan and should present a balanced presentation of political issues. However, this guidance is clear that the principles or views in line with the tenets of a particular faith are not considered to be political, so are not covered by statutory requirements on political impartiality. The full guidance is attached and can also be read at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools/political-impartiality-in-schools>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL6276 attachment [Political impartiality in schools.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-27/HL6276>

Egypt: Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the religious freedoms in Egypt of (1) Copts, and (2) Roman Catholics. [HL6445]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Egyptian Government has stated a firm commitment to protect the rights of Coptic Christians and Roman Catholics and their freedom of worship, and protections for freedom of religion are enshrined in the Egyptian constitution. There have been positive steps in recent years, including President Sisi's public commitments to uphold minority rights and freedom of religion or belief. The UK champions freedom of religion or belief for all and will continue to make clear to the Egyptian authorities the importance we attach to

these issues. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in.

Elections: Young People

Asked by Lord Jamieson

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the evidential or methodological basis for having a higher candidacy age than voting age under their plans to lower the latter to 16; and what assessment they have made of the capacity of 16 and 17 year-olds in the holding of elected office. [HL6431]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Pursuant to previous debate [[Column 569 Volume 844](#)] where this issue was raised, the Government was elected on a manifesto promising to give 16 and 17 year-olds the right to vote in all UK elections, strengthening our democracy and increasing the engagement of young people. This commitment does not extend to lowering the age at which an individual can hold elected office. The Government has no plans to change the candidacy age for any elections. We are therefore rightly focusing our efforts on delivering our manifesto commitment.

Electric Vehicles: Batteries

Asked by Baroness Pidgeon

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made on the introduction of a standardised battery health certification scheme for used electric vehicles. [HL6138]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Department for Transport has worked with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to develop a Global Technical Regulation on electric vehicle batteries (GTR 22). If implemented, the regulation would set standards for the lifespan of a battery and its minimum durability. It will also ensure that information about electric vehicle batteries is easily accessible, accurate and comparable. The Government is currently considering options for the implementation of GTR 22 battery regulations in the UK.

In the meantime, the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate requires all new electric vehicles to be sold with a warranty that includes battery replacement if capacity falls below 70% in the first 8 years or 100,000 miles, whichever is sooner.

Electrical Substations: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelpington

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to maintain or replace ageing electrical substation infrastructure, following the recent incident in Hayes. [HL6201]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government regularly engages with the electricity network companies,

who are responsible for maintaining and upgrading electrical infrastructure, including substations. Through a price control process, Ofgem regulate the network companies to ensure they are investing to operate, maintain and upgrade electricity infrastructure effectively.

Following the recent incident in Hayes, working with Ofgem, the Energy Secretary has commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to investigate the power outage impacting Heathrow and the surrounding area, and to understand any wider lessons to be learned on energy resilience for critical national infrastructure.

Electronic Government: Reviews

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 21 January of the State of digital government review, whether the estimated £45 billion in annual savings and productivity benefits from full digitisation of public sector services was included in the scoring of (1) the Spring Statement 2025, or (2) the Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in March by the Office for Budget Responsibility; and if not, whether they intend to revise fiscal projections to reflect those savings. [HL6462]

Lord Livermore: The figure of £45 billion in annual savings and productivity gains represents the long-term potential benefits of the digital transformation of the public sector. The 'Blueprint for modern digital government' sets out the vision for modern digital government in the UK, and Spending Review 2025 will set out the next steps to reforming the public services. Judgements on the economic and fiscal impacts of government policy are for the independent Office for Budget Responsibility.

Employers' Contributions: Employment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that increased employer National Insurance contributions will lead to fewer jobs being available; and how this will affect individuals seeking employment. [HL6083]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2025 Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO) forecasts that, with all policies considered, the employment level will increase from 33.6 million in 2024 to 34.8 million in 2029.

Employers' Contributions: Rugby

Asked by Lord Caine

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of increased employer National Insurance contributions on professional rugby

league clubs competing in the Super League and the Championship. [HL6333]

Lord Livermore: A Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) was published alongside the introduction of the Bill containing the changes to employer NICs. The TIIN sets out the impact of the policy on the exchequer, the economic impacts of the policy, and the impacts on individuals, businesses, and civil society organisations, as well as an overview of the equality impacts.

Employment

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the latest employee activity rates for (1) England and each of the regions of England, (2) Northern Ireland, (3) Scotland, (4) Wales, and (5) the United Kingdom as a whole. [HL6457]

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of HL6457 is attached.

The Rt Hon. the Lord Wigley

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

8 April 2025

Dear Lord Wigley,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what are the latest employee activity rates for (1) England and each of the regions of England, (2) Northern Ireland, (3) Scotland, (4) Wales, and (5) the United Kingdom as a whole (HL6457).

An employee activity rate measures the amount of time employees spend engaged in productive billable work, versus non-billable activities. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) does not collect any information from businesses on their estimated employee activity rates.

We can estimate the proportion of the population aged from 16 to 64 years, that are employed as employees, which may be interpreted as an employee activity rate.

The ONS uses the Annual Population Survey (APS), which is a survey of people resident in households in the UK, to estimate of the number of employees in the regions and countries of the UK and the proportion of the population aged from 16 to 64 years that this represents.

Table 1 contains APS estimates of the number of employees aged 16 to 64 years and the proportion of the population of that age this represents, for the regions and countries of the UK, for the period October 2023 to September 2024, the latest data currently available. Table 1 should be read in conjunction with the advice on quality contained in the footnotes of this response.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Table 1: Number of employees aged 16 to 64 years and the proportion of the population of that age that represents, for the regions and countries of the UK, October 2023 to September 2024[1].

	<i>Number of employees aged 16 to 64 years (thousands)</i>	<i>Proportion of population aged 16 to 64 years (%)</i>
North East	1,050	64.1
North West	2,962	65.4
Yorkshire and The Humber	2,214	65.1
East Midlands	2,007	67.4
West Midlands	2,402	65.7
East of England	2,555	66.8
London	3,975	64.2
South East	3,894	69.0
South West	2,258	67.0
England	23,316	66.2
Wales	1,242	64.5
Scotland	2,270	65.5
Northern Ireland	760	64.6
United Kingdom	24,558	66.1

Source: Annual Population Survey

[1] The ongoing challenges with response rates, response levels and weighting approach mean that labour market statistics based on both the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the APS are considered 'official statistics in development' until further review. Because of increased volatility of LFS and APS estimates, estimates of change should be treated with additional caution. The APS estimates have not been weighted to the same populations as the LFS. Therefore, all APS tables will be inconsistent with those used for LFS in the latest periods.

Energy: Housing

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) improve energy efficiency in rural homes, and (2) improve access to advanced energy solutions. [HL6450]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Our ambitious Warm Homes Plan will support investment in households, including rural homes, to install energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating to save families money on their bills.

The Government has committed £3.4 billion over the next 3 years towards heat decarbonisation and household

energy efficiency. This includes the new Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG), which will provide support for low-income households living in privately owned EPC band D-G homes both on and off the gas grid in England.

We are taking steps to make heat pumps more efficient and easier to install which includes increasing funding for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme to £295 million next financial year, removing outdated planning rules and consulting on product efficiency standards.

Energy: Standing Charges

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proposal by Ofgem to reduce the standing charges on energy bills. [HL6185]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government recognises that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on standing charges.

In February, Ofgem launched a consultation which sought views on introducing a zero standing charge energy price cap variant, providing households with more choice over how they pay for their energy. The consultation closed on 20 March.

The Government is committed to lowering standing charges and will continue working constructively with Ofgem on this issue.

Environment Protection: Forced Labour

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero raised the use of Congolese child labour in the mining of minerals used in green technologies exported to the United Kingdom during his recent visit to China, and if so, what response he received. [HL6024]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My department is committed to working closely across Government and industry stakeholders to take forward the actions needed to develop supply chains that are resilient, sustainable, innovative and free from forced labour.

The Secretary of State's recent visit to China gave the opportunity to discuss issues that matter to the UK with senior levels of the Chinese government, including areas where we disagree.

Equality Advisory and Support Service

Asked by Baroness Gohir

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 2 December 2024 (HL2825), which organisation was awarded the contract to operate the Equality Advisory and Support Service in the most recent competitive tendering process; how much funding they have

allocated to this organisation each year since 2022; and what the timeline is for the review and reopening of the next competitive tendering process. [[HL6046](#)]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) is a government-commissioned helpline that provides free advice and support to individuals in England, Scotland, and Wales on issues relating to equality and human rights. The last competitive tendering process was run in 2022, the resulting contract is still in place.

G4S was awarded the EASS contract in the last competitive tender process. The spend amount of the contract to date is £1,054,680 excl. VAT in the 2022/23 contract year, £1,104,180 excl. VAT in the 2023/24 contract year and £769,868 excl. VAT in the 2024/25 contract year. The reopening of the competitive tendering process will be ahead of the next contract juncture in June 2026.

*Asked by **Baroness Gohir***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 2 December 2024 (HL2826), what steps they will take to increase the number of cases related to religion and belief handled by the Equality Advisory and Support Service. [[HL6107](#)]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) is a government-commissioned helpline that provides free advice and support to individuals in England, Scotland, and Wales on issues relating to equality and human rights.

The service provides advice in relation to all the protected characteristics covered in the Equality Act 2010. EASS has a dedicated Stakeholder Engagement Manager who undertakes engagement with organisations that represent the interests of those with protected characteristics that have contacted the service and with organisations that wish to establish links with the service in the future.

*Asked by **Baroness Gohir***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 2 December 2024 (HL2826), whether they collect data on the number of Muslims who contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service; and if not, what plans they have to do so. [[HL6108](#)]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) is a government-commissioned helpline that provides free advice and support to individuals in England, Scotland, and Wales on issues relating to equality and human rights.

The EASS collects statistics on the protected characteristics related to the issue raised with the service, this includes if the issue relates to religion or belief. The statistics for the percentage of the cases related to religion and belief that were received from those who identified as

Muslim is not collected. Individual characteristics are recorded if disclosed during the conversation.

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Administration of Justice

*Asked by **Baroness Coffey***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many legal proceedings, other than judicial review or as an intervener, have been initiated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission under section 30 of the Equality Act 2006 since the legislation was enacted. [[HL6484](#)]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) intervention and enforcement decisions are independent of government. This question has been passed to the EHRC who will be providing a written response to Baroness Coffey.

Ethiopia: Eritrea

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 1 April (HL5876), what action they are taking in addition to issuing joint statements to prevent renewed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. [[HL6532](#)]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are concerned at heightened tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea and are engaging both sides at senior levels to encourage channels of communication and dialogue. This includes recent engagements by the Deputy Prime Minister during her recent visit to Ethiopia, and by myself as part of discussions on regional security with Ethiopian Ministers in recent weeks. Additionally, this week the UK's Special Envoy for the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa is visiting Asmara to meet with Eritrean Ministers and reinforce the need for calm and de-escalation.

Euthanasia

*Asked by **Baroness Coffey***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have started preparing a shadow body of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Commissioner. [[HL6224](#)]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Government has not started preparing a shadow body of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Commissioner. This is a provision of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, on which the Government remains neutral and which is still under consideration by Parliament.

Farms: Fly-tipping and Theft

*Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of (1) theft from farms and

(2) flytipping in each of the last three years, and what steps they are taking to reduce these. [HL5558]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Data on overall levels of farming theft has been collected by stakeholders. In 2023, National Farmers Union Mutual estimated the cost of specific crimes that victimise farmers:

- GPS theft: £4.2 million.
- Quad bike/All-Terrain vehicle theft: £3.2 million.
- Agricultural vehicle theft: £10.7 million.

We recognise the importance of tackling rural crime and are committed to safeguarding rural communities. The Home Office and Defra are working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council to deliver the updated Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy.

The Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 requires secondary legislation before it can come into effect. We are currently considering the views of those who may be affected by the legislation and its regulations, to understand the potential implications and determine the scope of the legislation. We will publish the Government's response to the Call for Evidence on the scope of the legislation soon and intend to have the necessary regulations in place later this year.

Local authorities are required to report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions to Defra, which we publish annually at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fly-tipping-in-england>. This excludes the majority of private-land incidents.

Local authorities have enforcement powers to help them tackle fly-tipping, including fixed penalty notices and prosecution action which can lead to a significant fine or imprisonment. We intend to seek powers in the Crime and Policing Bill to enable the Secretary of State to issue statutory enforcement guidance to support local authorities to appropriately and consistently exercise their enforcement powers.

We have committed in our manifesto to forcing fly-tippers and vandals to clean up their mess. We will provide an update on this in due course.

We will continue to work with stakeholders through the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group, such as the National Farmers Union, local authorities and police, to promote and disseminate good practice on tackling fly-tipping.

Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will publish the feasibility study on the possibility of developing prevalence estimates of female genital mutilation and forced marriage, and their response to that study. [HL6265]

Lord Hanson of Flint: To prevent and respond effectively to forced marriage and FGM it is essential that we understand the prevalence of these crimes.

As such, the Home Office commissioned a feasibility study in 2023 to examine whether it is possible to produce robust prevalence estimates for FGM and forced marriage. We are currently considering the next steps in this area, and will set these out in due course.

While not markers of prevalence, the Government monitors other indicators of forced marriage and FGM to inform its understanding. These indicators include police recorded crime, contacts to the joint Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and Home Office Forced Marriage Unit, and data from the National Health Service in England and the courts.

Fires

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government what data they collect on wildfires. [HL6151]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office collects data on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), including outdoor fires. However, "wildfires" is not a category recognised in the current system.

We are reviewing the incident records system, and the data it collects, and considering which categories to record in the future. Adding new categories, including wildfires, will be considered as part of this work.

First Time Buyers

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of housing affordability for first-time buyers. [HL6150]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The ONS publishes monthly indicators on house prices in Great Britain, including the average price and average percentage change for first-time buyers (at Worksheet 4): [UK House Price Index: monthly price statistics - Office for National Statistics](#). In January 2025, (the most recent data from ONS) the average house price for a first-time buyer in Great Britain was £227,000, an annual percentage increase of 5.3%. The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people are now locked out of homeownership. As well as committing to building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in England in this Parliament, we are introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme to support first-time buyers who struggle to save for a large deposit, with lower mortgage costs.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UK House price index [HL6150 - UK House Price Index_ monthly price statistics - Office for National Statistics.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-25/HL6150>

Fishing Catches

Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether inshore fishers are able to use their full fishing quota without being subject to a cap based on size of vessel or other factors; how this situation has changed since the UK left the European Union; and when the quota was last revised. [HL6360]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The 350kg licence cap on some English 10 metre and under vessels was removed in December 2024 enabling them to fully utilise their fishing opportunities. The capping of UK fishing licences is a domestic decision and has not been affected by the UK leaving the EU. The measures used to manage the UK fleet, including quota allocation, are reviewed regularly with the most recent change being the decision to remove the cap in December 2024.

Flats: Fire Prevention

Asked by **Baroness Pinnock**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will amend the PAS 9980 Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls and Cladding of Flats code of practice to require compliance with building regulations and statutory guidance in force at the time of construction. [HL6139]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The British Standards Institution (BSI) developed and published PAS 9980 and Government has sponsored BSI to review it to make sure it captures best practices, meets market needs, and identifies any necessary revisions. BSI has commenced the review, which will include a six-week public consultation, and BSI anticipates publishing the updated guidance in early 2026. The consultation will provide the opportunity for industry and the public to participate in the review of PAS 9980.

Food Strategy Advisory Board: Public Appointments

Asked by **Baroness Freeman of Steventon**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to appoint an expert in biodiversity and nature conservation to the Food Strategy Advisory Board to support the priority of reducing the impact of farming and food production on nature, biodiversity and climate. [HL6341]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The membership of the Food Strategy Advisory Board was published on GOV.UK on 21 March 2025. A range of representatives from the food sector and NGOs were invited to sit on the Food Strategy Advisory Board. We kept it deliberately

small, whilst reflecting the scope of the food supply chain.

While the membership of the FSAB has been announced, we are developing a plan for much wider stakeholder engagement over the coming months. That needs to include representatives from the length and breadth of food chain sectors as well as environmental NGOs, civil society organisations, academics and citizen engagement. We'll be able to say more on this soon.

The food strategy will work to provide healthier, more easily accessible food to help people live longer, healthier lives and support the Farming Roadmap to reduce the impact of farming on nature and biodiversity.

Fordstam

Asked by **Lord Swire**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to release funds currently held by Roman Abramovich's company Fordstam to Ukraine. [HL6080]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: We are determined to see the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as soon as possible. We are doing everything we can to bring that about quickly. This is a complex legal issue, but the UK is working with international partners, has engaged with Abramovich's team, and is exploring all options to ensure the proceeds reach vulnerable people in Ukraine.

Foreign Exchange

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the possibility of, and (2) dangers from, a 'liquidity mirage' in foreign exchange markets. [HL6472]

Lord Livermore: The Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee is responsible for identifying, monitoring and addressing any risks that threaten the resilience of the UK financial system, including foreign exchange markets.

UK regulators, and the Bank of England, in conjunction with their counterparts in other jurisdictions, monitor markets, including foreign exchange markets so as to ensure that they support the UK financial system and economy.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Dismissal

Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to determine the number and identity of people who were dismissed from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as a result of the ban on homosexuality for serving officers in the

Diplomatic Service; and whether they will apologise to those who were dismissed on these grounds. [HL5959]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) officials have continued looking into this and I am eager to bring this to a resolution further to the apology for the ban from Sir Philip Barton (then Permanent Under-Secretary) in 2021. We continue to learn the lessons of the MOD's Etherton Review but it has become apparent how different the circumstances of the ban were, therefore requiring a different response. The FCDO are currently looking at the best way to address this, engaging with Cabinet Office and other relevant Government departments to find the best solution. Specifically, the new Permanent Under-Secretary is engaged on this issue and we are talking to officials and Ministers across Government to find the most appropriate solution.

Fuel Poverty: Rural Areas

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the finding published on 27 March in Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England, 2025 (2024 data) that rural households have a higher rate of fuel poverty, what steps they are taking to tackle fuel poverty in rural areas. [HL6449]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government is currently consulting on a new fuel poverty strategy for England and has kickstarted delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, including an initial £1.8 billion to support fuel poverty schemes over the next three years. Multiple energy efficiency schemes support fuel poor households including in rural areas. The Warm Home Discount supported around 3 million eligible low-income households last winter and we recently consulted on expanding the scheme to more low income households next winter.

Our mission to deliver clean power by 2030 is the best way to break our dependence on global fossil fuel markets and protect billpayers permanently.

Gambling: Mental Health Services

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government how many young people in England aged between 13 and 18 have been treated by the NHS for problem gambling in the past year. [HL6512]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government how many referrals were made to NHS gambling clinics in England in the first two quarters of the 2024–25 financial year. [HL6513]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government how much the treatment of patients with gambling disorders cost the NHS in 2024–25. [HL6575]

Baroness Merron: In the 12 months between 1 October 2023 and 30 September 2024, 24 of the referrals to National Health Service gambling services in England were of young people aged between 13 and 18 years old, according to the most recent 12 months of data available nationally.

In terms of referrals made to NHS gambling clinics in England, in quarter one of 2024/25, 876 referrals were made, and in quarter two of 2024/25, 1,038 referrals were made. This totals 1,914 referrals in the first half of 2024/25. This data is published on NHS England's website, and is available in an online only format.

In relation to the cost of the treatment of patients with gambling disorders to the NHS, NHS England is not able to provide this information for 2024/25, as individual integrated care boards hold this data.

Gender Dysphoria: Children

Asked by Baroness Fox of Buckley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the final findings of the longitudinal outcomes of gender identity in children study will be published before the commencement of the NHS England puberty blocker trial. [HL5664]

Baroness Merron: The Outcomes and Predictors of Outcome for Children and Young People Referred to UK Gender Identity Development Services: A longitudinal Investigation (LOGIC) and the Puberty Suppression and Transitional Healthcare with Adaptive Youth Services (PATHWAYS) study are independent investigations and will run to their own timescales. The PATHWAYS study, which was 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.

Gov Facility Services: Contracts

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent analysis has been undertaken of additional costs or savings arising from the decision to outsource Gov Facilities Services Limited, and what steps have been taken to revisit this decision since July 2024. [HL6405]

Lord Timpson: The Government has initiated a programme of work to secure new, competitively tendered contracts for the provision of maintenance services for prisons. As the procurement process is

currently live, information regarding costs and savings is commercially and market sensitive and therefore not able to be disclosed at the current time. In November 2024, I approved plans to proceed with re-procuring the delivery of facilities management services through the private sector, with a focus on ensuring that future contracts incentivise suppliers' performance and maintain a focus on delivery outcomes. This approach is kept under constant review to ensure we get the best value for taxpayers' money.

Government Bills: Braille

Asked by *Baroness Anelay of St Johns*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker whether the House of Lords Administration will publish marshalled lists of amendments to bills and related documents in braille format to ensure that documents are accessible to the public and members and staff of both Houses. [[HL6286](#)]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Public Bill Office has not previously explored providing amendment documents in braille and there are currently no provisions in the House of Lords for braille documents for bills or amendments.

The House of Lords Communications Office have previously produced non-legislative braille documents for members of the House on request, most recently in 2019. They have not had any requests for braille documents since 2019.

The amendment documents from the Public Bill Office are produced at pace with regular addition of new content, meaning that accessible electronic documents may offer the most reliable way for users to keep up with the pace of production. The Public Bill Office, in collaboration with the Parliamentary Digital Service, has prioritised work to improve the accessibility of the Bills Webpages. Specific actions have been focused on improving accessibility for those who use screen readers and other assistive technologies.

The House of Lords Administration will continue to review the accessibility of its documents more generally and will keep the provision of braille documents under review.

Government Departments: Catering

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the speech by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the National Farmers Union on 25 February, when the requirements to favour high-welfare products in government catering contracts will come into effect, and what sectors other than hospitals and schools are being targeted. [[HL5470](#)]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: As announced at the National Farmers Union Conference, the National

Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS), which sets out the Government's strategic priorities for public procurement, came into effect alongside the Procurement Act on 24 February. The NPPS underscores the Government's commitment to increasing the procurement of food that meets higher environmental standards, supporting local suppliers and upholding ethical sourcing practises across public sector contracts, including catering contracts. Defra officials are currently exploring the options for any future changes to public sector food and catering policy.

Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness

Asked by *Lord Blunkett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of their announcement of a 15 per cent reduction in Civil Service running costs over the next four years, what plans they have to monitor a similar cost reduction in government activities carried out under outsourcing arrangements. [[HL6031](#)]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: As the Chancellor announced in the Spring Statement, Government departments will aim to reduce their administrative budgets by 15% by the end of the decade. Savings on back-office functions are expected to total £2.2 billion in 2029-30 whilst ensuring that front line services are prioritised. Individual departments are responsible for delivering these reductions in administrative budgets, which can include savings relating to outsourced providers.

More generally, as part of ongoing contract and commercial management of the suppliers providing services into Government buildings, costs are consistently reviewed and where changes to services or efficiencies are identified, these are implemented.

Government Departments: Ethics

Asked by *Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how ethical concerns raised by civil servants are escalated (1) within departments, and (2) to the Cabinet Office; and what factors determine when the Propriety and Ethics Team or the Cabinet Secretary are involved. [[HL6398](#)]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Concerns regarding the Civil Service, Ministerial or Special Adviser Codes should be escalated via line management chains, and to the Permanent Secretary's (or Head of Department's) office where necessary. Concerns can then be escalated to the Cabinet Office where the Department considers it necessary.

As set out in the Civil Service Code, concerns in relation to that Code can also be raised with the relevant department's nominated officers who have been appointed to advise staff on the code.

Government Departments: Public Expenditure

Asked by *Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government on which date each department submitted their final costings for new policy measures included in the Spring Statement 2025, and how many were submitted after the certification deadline set by the Office for Budget Responsibility. [HL6397]

Lord Livermore: The OBR certification deadline refers to Policy Costing Notes. These documents outline the methodology used for costing policies. The OBR scrutinise them to determine that the costing is reasonable and central.

HM Treasury submitted notes for all policies to the OBR in advance of the certification deadline and an initial policy package was certified by the OBR.

The OBR noted in their March 2025 Economic and Fiscal Outlook that 'relatively small changes were made to the policy parameters of two welfare measures following the costings certification deadline', the changes to the Universal Credit Health Element, and the Universal Credit Standard Allowance.

The OBR did not certify the costings for the final policy design for these measures, although they noted that the relatively small size of the changes means they 'do not expect this will have a material impact on the costings'.

Government Securities

Asked by *Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government what losses or profits have been made from the sale of government gilts and corporate bonds originally acquired through the quantitative easing programme. [HL6145]

Lord Livermore: The Bank of England has operational independence from the government to carry out its statutory responsibilities for monetary policy and financial stability. Monetary policy, including quantitative easing, is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee at the Bank of England.

The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, it is in line with international standards and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy, so the government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

Since October 2022, HM Treasury has transferred £85.9bn to the Bank of England to cover losses arising from the indemnity of the Asset Purchase Facility, the vehicle used to implement quantitative easing. This covers losses incurred from net interest costs and the sale and redemption of bonds as the portfolio is unwound.

Data on these cash transfers between HM Treasury and the Bank of England are made publicly available by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in its monthly Public

Sector Finances publication. The data are available in the ONS data series ID MF7A in worksheet PSA9B [1].

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/datasets/publicsectorfinancesappendixatables110>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

worksheet PSA9B [Worksheet PSA9B.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-25/HL6145>

Great Western Railway: Franchises

Asked by *Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to exercise their option to extend the current Great Western Railway franchise. [HL6376]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: There are no plans to extend the Great Western Railway franchise. Under the provisions of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024, services operated under contract with the Department will transfer into public ownership as existing contracts expire, and will be kept there, rather than public ownership merely being a temporary 'last resort'. This delivers the Government's manifesto commitment to bring passenger services into public ownership as a first step towards wider rail reform.

Great Western Railway: Ticket Offices

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report published by the Association of British Commuters on 7 March which found that Great Western Rail cut ticket office staffing by 344 hours each week across 39 stations between 2022 and 2024. [HL6435]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Any changes to ticket office opening hours in relation to regulated stations covered by Schedule 17 of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement must be made following the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement process and Secretary of State guidance. Ticket office changes made by Great Western Railway in 2022 followed that process and guidance.

Health Services

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to raise awareness among patients of patient-initiated follow-up appointments and how the system works. [HL6320]

Baroness Merron: The Government is expanding the use of Patient Initiated Follow Up (PIFU) as part of our broad package of elective reform, to ensure patients have

greater choice and control, with more responsive and accessible follow up care. We have committed to offering PIFU to patients with long-term conditions as standard in all appropriate pathways by March 2026, and to increasing PIFU to at least 5% of all outpatient appointments by March 2029.

Shared decision-making is at the heart of our PIFU approach. To ensure that patients are empowered to make an informed decision, clinicians will discuss patients' suitability and willingness to sit on a PIFU pathway. To help patients understand the process of PIFU and its aims, NHS England's national guidance for trusts includes examples of quality communication resources to share with patients, including patient information leaflets and videos. Trusts are expected to include PIFU service details and contact information on their websites, and they should inform the patient's general practitioner when they choose PIFU. Along with our broader reforms to enhance two-way communication between patients and their healthcare teams, we will ensure all patients can readily access information on PIFU and feel thoroughly supported to use it.

Health Services: Migrants

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the long-term impact on the National Health Service of prospective successful applications for indefinite leave to remain until 2029. [HL6177]

Baroness Merron: No assessment has been made of the potential impact of changes in the levels of grants of Indefinite Leave to Remain on the National Health Service, and there are no current plans to undertake such an assessment.

Internationally educated staff remain an important part of the workforce, and our Code of Practice for International Recruitment ensures stringent ethical standards when recruiting health and social care staff from overseas. The Government remains committed to growing homegrown talent and giving opportunities to more people across the country to join our NHS.

We will publish a refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade, and treat patients on time again.

Health Services: Standards

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that guidance published by the 'Getting It Right First Time' programme is implemented across England. [HL6319]

Baroness Merron: The Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme is a national NHS England programme designed to improve the treatment and care of patients through an in-depth review of services, benchmarking, and presenting a data-driven evidence

base to support change and remove variation in health services across England. It is a non-mandatory programme, approved by the royal colleges and professional bodies.

The GIRFT team is working with systems and regions to help the National Health Service embed best practice in elective care, to reduce waiting times, improve patient outcomes and, ultimately, to support delivery of the commitment that 92% of all patients will wait no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment by March 2029.

Guidance is delivered to teams all over England via national reports and best practice guidance products. While guidance is not mandatory, GIRFT tracks the audiences, downloads, and uptake of best practice guidance at a national level, ensuring that reports are driving change across the health landscape.

High Rise Flats: Insulation

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government by what date they expect the work to remove dangerous cladding from high rise residential buildings in England to have been completed. [HL6165]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: No leaseholder in a high-rise residential building should wait a day longer for remediation than necessary. The Remediation Acceleration Plan published last December states that by the end of 2029 all high-rise buildings (18 metres and over) with unsafe cladding in a government funded scheme will have been remediated. The joint plan with developers published alongside the Remediation Acceleration Plan established targets for developers to start or complete remedial works on all their buildings by the end of July 2027.

Higher Education

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many colleges and institutions are registered as higher education providers with the Office for Students. [HL6244]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: There are currently 426 higher education providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) as of 28 March 2025. The full OfS register of providers is publicly available and can be found on the OfS website.

Higher Education: Franchises

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the future viability of franchised higher education. [HL6194]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is deeply concerned about the abuse of public money in the franchised higher education system. Franchising grew

significantly under the previous government against a backdrop of growing financial instability within higher education.

In 2023 and 2024, the Government Internal Audit Agency, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee all raised concerns about abuse, unethical behaviour and fraud. Recent media reports have highlighted these issues further, focusing on taxpayer money being misspent on loans for students who do not engage with or complete their studies, and those who intentionally exploit the system.

This government, along with the Office for Students (OfS) and the Student Loans Company, has already taken measures to clamp down on abuse of the student finance system. My right hon. Friend, The Secretary of State for Education set out these, and further steps, on 25 March in a ministerial statement, which can be found here:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-03-25/hcws547>.

This statement makes clear that when done well, franchising can be an important driver of inclusion and can break down barriers to students who may otherwise not be able to study higher education. Our package of plans aims to protect the best franchised provision but eliminate poor quality provision and put an end to abuse and fraud.

The department is currently consulting on proposals to bring the larger franchised providers under the OfS' direct regulatory oversight. This consultation and the impact assessment which was published alongside it are attached can also be found here:

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/higher-education-quality-and-regulation/franchising-in-higher-education/>.

It would not be appropriate for us to pre-empt the outcomes of that consultation by making judgements about what the future of franchising will be. However, the government is clear that if we do not see changes that address the issues of concern, further action will be taken.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL6194 attachment 1 - Impact assessment [Impact assessment - strengthening oversight of partnership delivery in higher education.pdf]

HL6194 attachment 2 - Equalities impact assessment [Equalities impact assessment - strengthening oversight of partnership delivery in higher education.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-26/HL6194>

Honour Based Violence

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to define the charity Karma Nirvana's definition of honour-based abuse in statute. [HL6074]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Ensuring that 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) is well understood by frontline professionals, Government agencies, and impacted communities, is essential to preventing abuse, supporting victims and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Currently there is a definition of HBA used by the Criminal Justice System, but we recognise there is more that can be done to raise the level of consistency of understanding regarding HBA in Government and beyond and we are aware of the proposals for a statutory definition of HBA.

On 6 February 2025, the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls hosted a roundtable on HBA which was attended by multiple Government departments and specialist sector organisations, including Karma Nirvana. The question of what a statutory definition could look like was discussed at length. Home Office officials are working through the next steps following that discussion.

Horizon IT System: Compensation

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what has, so far, been (1) the highest, and (2) the lowest, amounts of compensation actually paid to sub-postmasters wrongly prosecuted by the Post Office as a result of the Horizon software. [HL5569]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: As of 31 March 2025, the total amount of redress paid to victims across all schemes has increased by more than three and a half times since the General Election, nine months ago, with £892 million having now been paid to over 6,200 claimants across all schemes. During this same time period, more than 3,300 victims have received compensation for the first time.

We are unable to share details of individual claims. Releasing this type of information risks the identification of vulnerable individuals if combined with other information that may become available via other means outside of our control.

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government by what date they anticipate that all compensation payments arising from the Post Office Horizon issue will be fully paid. [HL5977]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Horizon redress applications continue to be received and no deadlines have yet been set for them. However the Department's target for the schemes which it administers is to respond to 90% of full claims within 40 working days. We hope, for example, to have settled nearly all cases in the GLO scheme by the end of 2025.

The Government remains committed to providing fair redress to all victims affected by this scandal as quickly as possible. We continue to encourage those victims who have not yet submitted a claim for redress to come

forward. As of 31 March 2025, the total amount of redress paid to victims across all schemes has increased by more than three and a half times with £892 million having now been paid to over 6,200 claimants across all schemes.

Horizon IT System: Criminal Investigation

Asked by Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom

To ask His Majesty's Government how many police officers are currently assigned to the Operation Olympos investigation into the Post Office Horizon case; what ranks they hold; whether they are full time or part time; and where they are based. [HL6025]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office does not hold the requested information. The resourcing of individual police investigations are operational matters for the force responsible.

Horticulture: Pesticides

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made to develop a Pesticide Load Indicator for horticultural use of such chemicals, such as in orchards, and when they expect the work to be completed. [HL6538]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The [UK Pesticides National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#), launched in March 2025 introduces a UK domestic target to reduce the potential harm from pesticides to the environment by 10% by 2030, monitored using the UK Pesticide Load Indicator (PLI). The PLI is a UK-specific indicator designed to show the potential harm to the environment and wildlife from pesticides. The UK PLI currently covers pesticide use in the arable sector only, which accounts for around 90% of overall pesticide use in UK agriculture.

Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of those affected by the under-occupancy charge, particularly where no alternative accommodation is offered, and what assessment they have made of the impact of that charge on regional poverty disparities, including child poverty. [HL6288]

Baroness Sherlock: No specific assessment has been made of households in the social rented sector affected by the Removal of Spare Room Subsidy (RSRS) where alternative accommodation has not been offered, nor of the impact of the RSRS has on regional poverty disparities. The RSRS policy, sometimes known as the under-occupancy charge or bedroom tax, applies where the household is living in a social rented property with more bedrooms than the household's bedroom entitlement.

Easements to the policy are available to support disabled people and carers, families of disabled children,

foster carers, parents who adopt, parents of service personnel and people who have suffered a bereavement. Those unable to meet a shortfall in their rent due to a RSRS deduction can seek a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) from their local authority. DHPs can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

Housing: Floods

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of homes at risk of surface flooding, broken down by (1) those built, (2) those under construction, and (3) those with planning permission awaiting construction. [HL6366]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government has committed £2.65 billion over the next two years to maintain, repair and build flood defences to protect communities across the country.

The Environment Agency's National Assessment of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk was published in December 2024. The [report](#) estimates that 4.6 million properties are in areas at risk of surface water flooding. This report enables 8.4 million people in more than 3.1 million residential properties to access more detailed information on their local surface water flood risk.

The number of properties at risk relate to properties that are already built, not properties that are under construction or those awaiting construction. The Environment Agency does publish a list of initial objections made, on the basis of flood risk, to planning applications. This is available here: [Environment Agency objections to planning applications based on flood risk and water quality - GOV.UK](#).

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of homes at risk of coastal flooding, broken down by (1) those built, (2) those under construction, and (3) those with planning permission awaiting construction. [HL6367]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Environment Agency's (EA) new national assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England report estimates that 2.4 million properties are in areas at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. The EA also estimates that 4.6 million properties are in areas at risk of surface water flooding.

The number of properties at risk relate to properties that are already built, not properties that are under construction or those awaiting construction. The EA does, however, have a list of planning applications where the EA made an initial objection based on flood risk. This can be found at the [gov.uk](#) page 'Environment Agency objections to planning applications based on flood risk and water quality'.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of

flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, including areas at risk of coastal flooding.

Where development is necessary, and where there are no suitable sites available in areas with a lower risk of flooding, local planning authorities and developers should ensure development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant, safe for its users for the development's lifetime, will not increase flood risk overall and will provide wider sustainability benefits.

Housing: VAT Exemptions

Asked by Lord Mackinlay of Richborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of VAT relief on new build properties on increasing house building, and what plans they have to extend VAT relief to the refurbishment of listed buildings. [HL6186]

Lord Livermore: To support the construction of new homes, the Government maintains a zero rate of VAT on new-build residential buildings and a reduced rate of VAT of five per cent for residential renovations that meet certain conditions.

To preserve heritage, restorative work carried out on listed buildings previously benefited from a zero rate of VAT. However, this relief was abolished in 2012, as it was primarily used to carry out extension work unnecessary for heritage purposes. The Government has no current plans to reduce the VAT charged on work to maintain and repair listed properties, but keeps all taxes under review.

Immigration

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the trends in net immigration to the UK since 2021. [HL6116]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Under the previous Government, between 2019 and 2023, net migration more than quadrupled, driven by a big increase in overseas recruitment.

This Government has set out a new approach to end the over reliance on international recruitment and boost economic growth by linking the UK's immigration, labour market, and skills systems and by training up our domestic workforce.

We have also commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee to review key sectors, and our long-term plan will see departments working together across government, partnering with agencies and experts, to build our skills base and reduce our reliance on migration.

Building on the Prime Minister's speech on migration on 28 November 2024 - the Government will publish a White Paper later this year setting out measures to reduce

net migration and link the points-based system with requirements for training in the UK.

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the prospective cost to the taxpayer of successful applications for indefinite leave to remain until 2029. [HL6176]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Obtaining the specific information requested relating to the cost or contribution to the taxpayer would involve collating and verifying information from multiple systems owned by multiple teams across different Departments and, therefore, could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Immigration: Deportation

Asked by Lord Kempell

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 21 October 2024 (HL1252), whether they have established a returns and enforcement unit, and how many of the additional 1,000 staff allocated to the unit have been recruited. [HL6436]

Lord Hanson of Flint: I refer the Noble Lord to the answer I gave him on 21 October 2024 in response to Question HL1252.

Import Duties: USA

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the introduction of 25 per cent tariffs on European car imports to the United States, and (2) the impact of those tariffs on UK car exports. [HL6275]

Baroness Gustafsson: We're disappointed by the decision to impose global tariffs of 25% on the auto imports and know this will be deeply concerning for our automotive sector. We support our automotive industry, and in the first instance we will continue to pursue a deal that works for both us and the US.

We have backed the auto sector with £2 billion to support the transition of domestic manufacturing and £300 million announced in the Budget to drive uptake of electric vehicles. We will also use our Industrial Strategy to strengthen UK automotive competitiveness.

This government is clear that we will always do what is necessary to defend the UK's national interest. This is why the government has launched a request for input from businesses to help shape our response to US tariffs.

Income Tax: Tax Allowances

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government how many UK adults are not liable to pay income tax because their

total income is less than the tax-free personal allowance. [HL6516]

Lord Livermore: Data on the number of UK adults who are not liable to pay income tax are not currently held or published.

HMRC publishes projections for the total number of Income taxpayers per year in table 2.1 of the Income Tax liability statistics. Current projections show there to be 37.4 million Income taxpayers in the UK in 2024-25.

The Office for National Statistics publishes projections for the total number of adults in the UK by age in their population projections. They currently estimate there to be 55.2 million individuals aged over 18 in the UK in 2024-25.

Infrastructure: Planning

Asked by Lord Jamieson

To ask His Majesty's Government which individual infrastructure planning National Policy Statements will be updated by summer 2025, and which will be updated on a slower timetable. [HL6428]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government intends to consult shortly on draft amended Energy National Policy Statements (NPSs) ENs-1, 3 and 5, and the NPS for Ports. These draft amended NPSs will also be laid in Parliament for consideration as prescribed by the Planning Act 2008. Completion of the update processes is subject to the outcome and timings of the consultation and Parliamentary timings.

Consultation on the draft new nuclear NPS EN-7, which will be applicable to nuclear power stations expected to deploy beyond 2025, closed on 3 April. Parliamentary scrutiny of the draft NPS is expected to be completed by 23 June. Depending on the completion and outcome of these processes, the Government aims to designate this new NPS before the end of the year.

Further to this, we are introducing legislation through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to make at least five-yearly reviews of all NPSs a legal requirement. This would include a transitional period in which NPSs that are currently out of date (i.e. more than 5 years old at the time of Royal Assent) will have 2 years from the bill being enacted to update their NPSs in line with the legislation.

Inland Waterways: Litter

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of current bin provision beside waterways in urban areas. [HL6571]

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle litter in and beside waterways in urban areas. [HL6572]

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have considered placing a statutory duty to maintain an adequate level of bin provision on the Canal and Rivers Trust. [HL6573]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We have not made an assessment of the adequacy of bin provision beside waterways in urban areas.

Under section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, The Canal and River Trust has a duty to keep the land they are responsible for clear of litter and refuse. It would be for them to work out how they can best comply with the duty, considering the standards set out in statutory Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse.

An adequate cleansing regime alongside the provision of public litter bins can help to maintain acceptable standards of cleanliness on land managed by a duty body. WRAP have previously provided guidance on the provision of litter bins which is available at <https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/guide/binfrastructure-right-bin-right-place>.

The Canal and River Trust also has a responsibility to remove litter and fly-tipping in canals where it would interfere with navigation.

This Government is committed to reducing waste by transitioning to a circular economy. As part of this we remain focused on delivering the Collection and Packaging Reforms including the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). The DRS will go live in October 2027. It will introduce a redeemable deposit on single-use in-scope drinks containers which can be claimed back by customers when the empty container is returned. This will reduce litter alongside canals, increase recycling rates, create high quality recyclate for producers, and promote a circular economy.

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of funding they have provided to the Canal and Rivers Trust is intended to be used to keep urban waterways and towpaths clean. [HL6574]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The current grant agreement between Defra and the Canal and River Trust provides for the grant to be used in pursuit of the charitable objects of the Trust, including a range of permitted activities set out in the agreement. The activities include litter management. The agreement, however, does not stipulate what proportion of the grant should be spent on any of the activities, which is for the Trust to decide on the basis of need at any given time.

Interest Rates

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of quantitative tightening on the interest rate yield curve. [HL6144]

Lord Livermore: The Bank of England has operational independence from the government to carry out its statutory responsibilities for monetary policy and financial stability. Monetary policy, including quantitative easing, is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee at the Bank of England.

The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, it is in line with international standards and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy, so the government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

Since October 2022, HM Treasury has transferred £85.9bn to the Bank of England to cover losses arising from the indemnity of the Asset Purchase Facility, the vehicle used to implement quantitative easing. This covers losses incurred from net interest costs and the sale and redemption of bonds as the portfolio is unwound.

Data on these cash transfers between HM Treasury and the Bank of England are made publicly available by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in its monthly Public Sector Finances publication. The data are available in the ONS data series ID MF7A in worksheet PSA9B [1].

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/datasets/publicsectorfinancesappendixatables110>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

worksheet PSA9B [Worksheet PSA9B.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-25/HL6144>

International Assistance: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that bilateral and multilateral health aid remain condition-free, particularly in regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes; and what plans they have to collaborate with other donor nations to maintain consistent funding flows to key agencies, such as the United National Population Fund and the World Health Organization. [HL6075]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is committed to promoting and defending universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) including safe abortion. The UK firmly believes that supporting comprehensive SRHR through proven evidence based public health interventions saves lives and supports prosperity. We will continue to work with our partners, including UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organization (WHO), governments and civil society partners to deliver this and to ensure UK Aid programmes remain free of conditions that would restrict the freedom, rights and choices of women and girls.

The UK will continue to engage with other donor nations to progress and promote SRHR and work to diversify funding for key agencies.

In April, we will be holding a UK-UNFPA Strategic Dialogue as part of which we will discuss how we can best support their efforts towards long-term sustainable financing. This is also something we prioritise through our ODA investments, for example, through UK support to the UNFPA Supplies Partnership, we promote the mobilisation of countries' own domestic resources for reproductive health. The UK was also a key supporter of WHO's recent Investment Round pledging up to £310 million in flexible core voluntary contributions to support the WHO's work for the next 4 years (2024-2028). Flexible funding enables WHO to respond effectively to emerging health threats and priorities, by allocating resources where they are needed most and we encourage other donors to also provide predictable, flexible multi-year support.

Internet: Safety

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threat posed by online communities known as Com networks. [HL6262]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle the risks posed by online communities to teenage boys, and what assessment they have made of the role these play in encouraging sexual and physical abuse, violence and extremism. [HL6263]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: We are aware that harmful content exists online including the risk it poses to boys and children. The Online Safety Act requires in-scope services to tackle illegal abuse and protect users from illegal content. This includes content which incites hatred, abuse, harassment and sexual exploitation content.

In addition, in-scope services likely to be accessed by children need to put in place measures to protect children from harmful content, including providing age-appropriate access for content which encourages violence.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator, has enforcement powers where platforms fail to fulfil their duties.

Intimate Image Abuse

Asked by Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch on 27 March (HL5777), whether they will now answer the question put; namely, how many (1) charities, (2) campaign organisations, and (3) survivors, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology has met regarding adult non-consensual intimate image abuse since 5 July 2024; and how many

such meetings they have held in total and on which dates they have taken place. [HL6308]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a range of stakeholders about issues related to online harms, including adult non-consensual intimate image abuse.

Ministerial meetings and engagements are published through quarterly transparency reports on GOV.UK.

IRA

Asked by Lord Elliott of Ballinamallard

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of declassified files stating that the Government "turned a blind eye" to IRA criminality, including murder; and whether they have plans to make a statement in response. [HL6550]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government does not comment on National Archives releases or releases relating to previous Governments.

Iran: Minority Groups

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the causes of marginalisation of minority communities in Iran. [HL6022]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK remains committed to holding Iran accountable for its systemic targeting and repression of religious and ethnic minorities. We were integral to the delivery of the Iran human rights resolution, adopted by the United Nations Third Committee in November 2024, which called on Iran to cease monitoring individuals on account of their religious identity and to ensure rights are upheld, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination and human rights violations against ethnic minorities, including but not limited to, Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis and Kurds. In January, the Foreign Secretary raised human rights directly with his Iranian counterpart.

Iron and Steel: Electricity

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the steel industry by reducing their electricity costs. [HL6190]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Government is committed to tackling high industrial electricity prices in the UK. This is why Government has taken action to mitigate high electricity costs for energy intensive industries by continuing the Energy Intensive Industries compensation scheme and implementing the British Industry Supercharger.

The Plan for Steel, which will be published in Spring, will address electricity prices for steelmakers. We are committed to providing up to £2.5bn to rebuild steel

industry which will be available through the National Wealth Fund and other routes.

Islamophobia

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government how many non-Muslims have been recorded as victims of Islamophobic hate crimes in the last five years. [HL6299]

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Christians have been recorded as victims of Islamophobic hate crimes in the last five years. [HL6300]

Lord Khan of Burnley: MHCLG has policy responsibility for racial and religiously motivated hate crime, but all hate crime data recorded by the police is collected by the Home Office.

In the year ending March 2024, there were 140,561 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales. There was a 5% decrease compared with the previous year on total hate crimes recorded, but there was a 25% increase in religious hate crimes compared with the previous year. 38% of religious hate crimes were targeted against Muslims, a 13% rise on the previous year.

The Home Office collects and publishes official statistics on religious hate crimes which is recorded by the police in England and Wales. This is broken down by the perceived religion of the victim, but information is not collected on the actual religion/identity of the victim, so it is not possible to disaggregate the number of victims of Islamophobic hate crimes who were not Muslims.

Israel: Gaza

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of the resumed fighting in Gaza, what plans they have to ensure access to humanitarian aid and a return to a ceasefire. [HL6044]

Lord Collins of Highbury: As the Foreign Secretary said to the House on 20 March, we strongly oppose Israel's resumption of hostilities and urgently want to see a return to a ceasefire. We have been clear that Hamas must release all the hostages, negotiations must resume and in all scenarios Israel must allow the entry of humanitarian aid. We are appalled by recent attacks on aid workers and their premises - they must be protected and never targeted. The Government of Israel must urgently ensure that effective deconfliction mechanisms are in place to enable them to conduct their lifesaving work safely. We've repeatedly called on Israel at the UN and elsewhere to immediately allow urgently needed aid back into Gaza. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs, Ron Dermer on 20 March and to Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar on 21 March and

pressed them to reopen humanitarian access, restore a ceasefire and work for a negotiated path forward, and has discussed the situation with UN leadership.

Israel: Occupied Territories

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to make a further response to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the subsequent UN General Assembly resolution of 13 September 2024; and what steps they are taking to ensure an end of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory. [HL6045]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is fully committed to international law and respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. We continue to consider the Court's Advisory Opinion carefully, with the seriousness and rigour it deserves.

We are of the clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) as rapidly as possible - but this must be done in a way that creates the conditions for negotiations towards a two-state solution. On settlements, we said in the UN Security Council on 21 March that 'Israel must halt settlements which are illegal and undermine the viability of a Palestinian state and the security of both Israelis and Palestinians. Violent settlers must be held to account. The UK has introduced three rounds of sanctions on violent settlers and their supporters to bring accountability for abuses of human rights, in the absence of sufficient Israeli action. We will consider all further options.

Land Mines: Bomb Disposal

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are committed to maintaining the Global Mine Action Programme. [HL6067]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Global Mine Action Programme is being maintained through the financial year 25/26. Beyond this, Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations and the impact on programmes are being worked through following the decision to reduce UK ODA from 0.5 per cent of GNI to 0.3 per cent in 2027. We will be taking a rigorous approach to ensure all ODA delivers value for money. We will set out our spending plans following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes.

Large Goods Vehicles: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government how many lorries have been prevented from entering Northern Ireland

and returned to Great Britain as a result of internal UK market checks in the past 12 months. [HL6381]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: In line with the commitments we have made, as we move to our new UK internal market system, we will ensure that the only checks when goods move within the UK internal market system are those conducted by UK authorities as part of a risk-based or intelligence-led approach to tackle criminality, abuse of the scheme, smuggling and disease risks. But in order not to undermine that approach, as is the case across the UK we do not disclose the specific number or nature of interventions made by UK authorities.

Leasehold: Insurance

Asked by Baroness Pinnoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 24 March (HL Deb cols 1447–9), whether they have met insurance companies about the rising insurance costs of leaseholders due to the lower remediation required by PAS 9980. [HL6140]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Officials in my department engage regularly with the insurance industry and Minister Norris met representatives earlier in the year. PAS9980:2022 sets out steps that can be taken to identify and assess risk factors as well as mitigation steps that might improve the risk rating of a building via a holistic and fact-based assessment of a building's construction.

Once buildings comply with Building Regulations or align with industry-accepted PAS 9980 standards, insurers should offer affordable premiums and should not be prescribing additional remedial works.

BSI has commenced the review, which will include a six-week public consultation, and BSI anticipates publishing the updated guidance in early 2026. The consultation will provide the opportunity for industry and the public to participate in the review of PAS 9980.

Legal Aid Scheme: Equality

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government how much money has been provided for legal assistance to individuals under section 28 of the Equality Act 2006 since its enactment, and to how many individuals. [HL6485]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) intervention and enforcement decisions are independent of government. This question has been passed to the EHRC who will be providing a written response to Baroness Coffey.

Legislation

Asked by **Lord Norton of Louth**

To ask His Majesty's Government which Acts of Parliament are undergoing post-legislative review by Government departments. [HL6254]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: This information is not held centrally. All bills that have reached Royal Assent are eligible for post-legislative scrutiny three to five years after they are enacted, though it is open to the department and relevant Commons departmental select committee to agree that a memorandum is not required.

Post-legislative scrutiny memoranda have been published on GOV.UK where bills have undergone the process. In addition, the Lords Special Inquiry Committee appointed to carry out post-legislative scrutiny on specific Acts publishes information on its inquiries on parliament.uk.

Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

Asked by **Lord Jamieson**

To ask His Majesty's Government which sections of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 they intend not to be (1) implemented via further secondary legislation, or (2) commenced. [HL6429]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: I refer the noble Lord to the answer given to Question UIN 27566 on 7 February 2025.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

PQ 27566 [PQ 27566.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-04-01/HL6429>

Lipoprotein(a) Taskforce

Asked by **Lord Weir of Ballyholme**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they have met the Lipoprotein(a) Taskforce in the past six months, and when they are next scheduled to meet the taskforce. [HL6159]

Baroness Merron: Neither the Department nor NHS England have met with the Lipoprotein(a) (Lp(a)) Taskforce in the past six months, and there are no meetings scheduled.

Routine Lp(a) testing is not recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance, and there are currently no treatments available which specifically target Lp(a).

The Government continues to focus on improving the uptake of lipid lowering therapies and treatment, as per NICE targets, to manage cholesterol for the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Listed Buildings: Energy Performance Certificates

Asked by **Lord Truscott**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether landlords will be able to let listed properties which do not reach energy performance certificate rating C in the future under current plans to reform energy performance certificate regulations. [HL6594]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government is consulting on proposals to increase minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector. Current regulations include a number of exemptions to ensure minimal disruption to tenants and the number of homes available in the private rented sector, including exemptions for listed buildings where compliance would unacceptably alter the character or appearance of the existing building. We are looking to ensure appropriate exemptions are in place for any new standards.

Local Government Finance

Asked by **Lord Jamieson**

To ask His Majesty's Government what individual programmes or initiatives have been launched since 5 July 2024 that require local authorities to bid to the government to receive funding. [HL6123]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has committed to providing multi-year funding settlements and moving away from wasteful competitive bidding in order to give councils the stability and certainty they need to plan for the long-term. No department currently holds information on all individual programmes or initiatives that require local authorities to bid to the government for funding.

MHCLG is leading a programme of funding simplification to move Whitehall away from a system reliant on hundreds of separate funding pots and tight spending controls, to one based on partnership and respect. We estimate there are currently circa 300 grants provided to the sector each year with around a third allocated via a bidding process. We are working with all government departments to confirm (1) data on existing grants, including those allocated by bidding process, and (2) arrangements for the 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement, where the Government has committed to further consolidation.

In line with the usual approach, we will set out more detail at the local government finance settlement, towards the end of the calendar year.

Local Government: Devolution

Asked by **Lord Jamieson**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the role of the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff in determining devolution deals with (1) combined authority mayors, (2) council mayors, and (3) council leaders. [HL6122]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has moved away from individual negotiated deals to a consistent devolution offer for new areas and to existing Mayors and combined authorities, as set out in the English Devolution White Paper. Discussions on new devolution agreements or unlocking further powers for existing combined authorities are led by the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution on behalf of the Government. There is no role for the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff in these negotiations.

New devolution agreements must be supported by all the proposed constituent councils and can only go ahead if the Secretary of State is satisfied that the statutory tests have been met to proceed with the necessary secondary legislation to establish the strategic authority.

Long Covid: Health Services

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government what analysis has been undertaken of the variation in the cost of providing first appointments for those presenting with long Covid symptoms at different hospital trusts across England; and what are the highest and lowest per-patient costs for such initial consultations. [HL6406]

Baroness Merron: There is an outpatient activity speciality for post-COVID-19 syndrome services, also known as long COVID services, with a treatment function code (TFC) of 348. The average costs for a first-time appointment for those presenting with long COVID symptoms for the 2023/24 financial year were as follows:

- for face to face attendance to a consultant-led appointment, the cost was £595;
- for face to face attendance to a non-consultant led appointment, the cost was £205;
- for non-face to face attendance to a consultant-led appointment, the cost was £595; and
- for non-face to face attendance to a non-consultant led appointment, the cost was £205.

The attached table shows a breakdown of highest, lowest, and average costs of face to face and non-face to face, as well as consultant led and non-consultant led, appointments for those presenting with long COVID symptoms.

Many patients may have been referred to other specialities and then subsequently been identified as suffering from long COVID and may, therefore, be being treated under a different speciality. This could include respiratory medicine, with a TFC of 341, cardiology, with a TFC of 320, and neurology, with a TFC of 400. Outpatients will only include the speciality the patient was seen in, and not what the patient was seen for, unless they were referred to a specific long COVID clinic. The average cost is available on the national cost collection publication on the NHS.UK website, in an online only format.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table for HL6406 [Table for HL6406.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-04-01/HL6406>

Marriage

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to legally recognise humanist marriages in England and Wales. [HL6585]

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are aware of (1) religious, and (2) non-religious, groups who wish to conduct legally recognised marriages in England and Wales and are unable to do so. [HL6586]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Government is aware that humanists have long been campaigning to conduct legally binding weddings, and we are grateful for the contributions that humanists make to our society.

The Law Commission's 2022 report on weddings law made 57 recommendations for the wholesale reform of weddings law, including recommendations that would enable non-religious belief groups, such as humanists, to conduct legally binding weddings. The Law Commission also concluded that weddings law is not working for couples belonging to many different groups, and that it is unfair and inconsistent.

Marriage will always be one of our most important institutions and we have a duty to consider any changes to our marriage law carefully. As a new Government, it is right that we take the time to consider this issue, and we will set out our position on weddings reform in the coming months.

Means-tested Benefits: Disability

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of disabled people who are in receipt of a means-tested benefit but are not in receipt of personal independence payment. [HL6440]

Baroness Sherlock: There are an estimated 2.0 million disabled people of working age who are in receipt of a means-tested benefit but not receipt of personal independence payment or an equivalent disability benefit, and an estimated 0.7 million of pension age.

Source: These figures are modelled estimates from DWP's Policy Simulation Model (PSM), and therefore should not be treated as official statistics.

The PSM is tax/benefit static microsimulation model used widely throughout DWP and across Government to assess the impact of welfare policy. The PSM is based on a three-year pooled sample of the Family Resources Survey (FRS 19-20, 21-22 and 22-23). It is therefore subject to potential sampling error and respondent error.

This is projected forwards to 2025/26 based on multiple assumptions about incomes for all households. The PSM corrects benefit under-reporting in the FRS by aligning the sample weights to benefit forecasts. The PSM is also calibrated to population data from the ONS and incorporates the OBRs economic forecast. The model does not yet take account of Spring Statement 2025 policy measures.

Notes:

1. Disability is defined as the Equality Act 2010 core definition, self-reported by survey respondents who report that they have a long-term physical or mental health condition, lasting or expected to last at least 12 months, that limits their daily activities either 'a little' or 'a lot'.

2. Means-tested benefits includes any of the following: Universal Credit (UC), Income Support (IS), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Working Tax Credit (WTC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Housing Benefit (HB, or Northern Ireland equivalent), Council Tax Rebate (CTR, or Northern Ireland equivalent), or Pension Credit (PC).

3. Receipt of Personal Independence Payment includes other broadly equivalent disability benefits: Disability Living allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA). Eligibility for these benefits is based on different criteria from the legal definition of disability (see Note 1). The PSM does not estimate eligibility for disability benefits, relying on those who have reported it in the FRS.

4. Estimates relate to 2025/26 and are rounded to the nearest 0.1 million people.

Medical Treatments

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to manage the NHS provision of biologic medications and other high-cost treatments, particularly to avoid inequality between patients under different integrated care boards. [HL6291]

Baroness Merron: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service in England on whether new medicines, including biologics, should be routinely funded by the NHS based on an assessment of their clinical and cost-effectiveness.

The NICE evaluates all new medicines and significant licence extensions for existing medicines, and NHS England and the integrated care boards are legally required to fund the medicines recommended in a NICE appraisal, usually within three months of final guidance. The NICE's evaluations and the associated funding requirement ensures that patients are consistently able to benefit from clinically and cost-effective medicines wherever they live in England.

Minimum Wage: Fines

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government how many employers have received the maximum financial penalty for failing to pay the statutory minimum wage since its introduction. [HL6142]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: There is no total maximum financial penalty for underpayment. The penalty is set at 200% of total arrears due to workers, subject to a minimum of £500 per case and a maximum of £20,000 per worker.

The number and maximum values of penalties per year since 2015/16 are outlined in Table 3 of the supplementary data for the [National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage: government evidence on enforcement and compliance 2023](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage [National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage Government evidence on enforcement and compliance 2023.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-25/HL6142>

Minimum Wage: Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government how many employers have had criminal prosecutions brought against them for non-payment of the statutory minimum wage since its introduction. [HL6143]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) enforces the National Minimum Wage on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade.

Criminal prosecution is reserved for the most serious cases involving deliberate underpayment or reckless pay practices. This is usually for cases where there is a wider public interest, or where employers are persistently non-compliant, or refuse to cooperate with HMRC.

Between 2007/08 and 2022/23, 21 employers have been successfully prosecuted for underpaying the minimum wage with an additional case accepting a caution. For more information about these prosecutions, see Table 12 of the supplementary data for: [National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage: government evidence on enforcement and compliance, 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

The Answer includes the following attached material:

National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage [National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage Government evidence on enforcement and compliance 2023.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-25/HL6143>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Contracts

Asked by *Lord Jamieson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of firms contracted to (1) the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and (2) each of its arm's-length bodies, which are now contractually entitled to fee increases for the 2025–26 financial year in order to pay for the cost of the increase in employer National Insurance from April 2025. [HL6432]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: No contract held by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government explicitly provides for cost increases as a result of changes to National Insurance contribution rates as these are classed as General Change in Law. Where the contract allows for rates to be reviewed, any request by a supplier to do so would be considered by MHCLG on a case-by-case basis.

Mobile Phones: Rural Areas

Asked by *Lord Smith of Finsbury*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the potential for emergency use of satellite communication in remote areas of the UK which are currently without any normal mobile coverage. [HL6148]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Satellite connectivity can complement the coverage provided by terrestrial mobile networks by providing connectivity, for example, in remote areas beyond their reach. The mobile operators have already used satellite services to provide backhaul to some Shared Rural Network sites where it is challenging to provide traditional fibre or microwave backhaul.

Ofcom is currently consulting on proposals to authorise Direct to Device satellite services in certain mobile spectrum bands in the UK. These proposals could enable people to make satellite calls from their mobile phones and bring mobile coverage to rural areas. This consultation is an important and pioneering step towards enabling these services. We also welcome Vodafone's recent trial in which the first ever video call over satellite was made, from an area with no terrestrial mobile coverage.

Music and Dance Scheme

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will adjust the means testing methodology of the Music and Dance Scheme to reflect the cost of VAT on fees. [HL6033]

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether financial assistance to absorb the cost of changes to Employer

National Insurance and minimum wage, similar to arrangements for maintained schools, will be provided to institutions that receive funding through the Music and Dance Scheme. [HL6035]

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they are having with providers of the Music and Dance Scheme on an appropriate future earnings threshold as part of support to offset VAT. [HL6036]

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to increase the £45,000 threshold of combined household income per family as part of the support package for the Music and Dance Scheme; and whether they plan to make that support package permanent. [HL6037]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: For the 2024/25 academic year, the department adjusted the Music and Dance Scheme bursary contribution for families with a relevant income below £45,000 to account for the VAT introduction from January 2025. This methodology will be reviewed for future years and details will be set out in due course.

With reference to employer National Insurance contributions and the minimum wage, the Music and Dance Scheme grant funding of both private schools and Centres for Advanced Training relates to financing places for individual students via means-tested bursaries only and is not intended as direct funding to meet wider employment costs.

Music: Children and Young People

Asked by *Baroness Thornton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards making music education and the opportunity to learn a musical instrument available for all children and young people. [HL6158]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: This government believes that music is an essential part of the well-rounded and enriching education that every child deserves. That is why music is included in the national curriculum for all maintained schools, for students aged 5 to 14. To support the delivery of music education, the government has committed £79 million per year for the Music Hubs programme, including the 2024/25 academic year.

The 43 Music Hubs partnerships across England offer a range of services, including musical instrument tuition, instrument loaning and whole-class ensemble teaching. To widen access to musical instruments, the government is investing £25 million in capital funding for musical instruments, equipment, and technology from the 2024/25 academic year. This funding enables Music Hubs partnerships to better cater to the needs of the children and young people they work with.

The government is also investing £2 million to support the Music Opportunities Pilot over a four year period from the 2024/25 academic year to the 2027/28 academic year, backed by a further £3.85 million funding from Arts Council England and Youth Music. The pilot is delivered by Young Sounds UK in 12 areas of the country and aims to help disadvantaged children and young people, as well as those with special educational needs and disabilities, to learn how to play an instrument of their choice or learn to sing to a high standard.

On 18 March 2025, the government announced its intention to launch a National Centre for Arts and Music Education to promote opportunities for children and young people to pursue their artistic and creative interests in school, including through the government's network of Music Hubs. The intention is to launch in September 2026, with a delivery lead appointed through an open procurement. Further details will be released in due course.

Myanmar: Disaster Relief

Asked by Lord Crisp

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to help ensure that their aid reaches those affected by the earthquake in Myanmar. [HL6413]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: On 30th March, we announced up to £10 million of UK support to respond to the devastating earthquake in Myanmar. Our support will be channelled through long-standing local partners, who are able to operate across the earthquake-affected area. On 3rd April, we also announced our support to the Disaster Emergency Committee's efforts to do more for people in desperate need in Myanmar. We are matching public donations pound-for-pound up to £5 million, meaning the public's support will go even further. On 4 April, we announced a further £10 million of funding, bringing our total response to up to £25 million.

Asked by Lord Crisp

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how UK aid and volunteers can provide further help to the population of Myanmar affected by the earthquake. [HL6416]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: On 3 April, the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) launched a public appeal for the Myanmar earthquake. The DEC brings together 15 leading UK-based aid charities to coordinate public appeals under one banner. The UK Government are providing match funding pound-for-pound up to £5 million. We encourage all those who want to get involved to visit: <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/myanmar-earthquake-appeal>.

Myanmar: Violence

Asked by Lord Crisp

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the military

junta in Myanmar is attacking civilians and others in areas damaged by the earthquake. [HL6414]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: We are aware of recent reports of the Myanmar military conducting airstrikes in the aftermath of the earthquake and are actively investigating this with partners. Since the 2021 coup, we have consistently condemned airstrikes. On 2 April, the Myanmar military announced a temporary ceasefire until 22 April, which we welcome, as we do all other recent ceasefires. We now call on the Myanmar military, and all other parties to the conflict, to fully respect the ceasefires and allow full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

National Careers Service: Jobcentre Plus

Asked by Viscount Younger of Leckie

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure careers services remain operationally effective following the merger of the National Careers Service with Jobcentre Plus. [HL6607]

Baroness Sherlock: The National Careers Service provides free, up to date, impartial careers information and advice for citizens aged 13+, plus in-depth careers guidance from 19+, and can help people make informed decisions on learning, training, and work at all stages in their career.

As we set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper, we are reforming Jobcentre Plus, and in England bringing it together with the National Careers Service, to help get more people into work and help them get on at work, including through greater focus on skills and careers. We are starting a test and learn approach to develop the new service, ensuring that we develop a service that is locally tailored and embedded, designed to meet the different needs of local labour markets, local people and local employers.

As a start to our commitment to better integrate employment support and careers advice in England, we have launched a data sharing agreement between the Department for Education (DfE) and DWP. This will encourage 'join-up' of our services and promote a more streamlined process for our customers ahead of the new service. We will continue to work closely with the DfE to develop the new service, including career advisers, who will be able to share their experiences, views and ideas around how we deliver careers services in the future.

Asked by Viscount Younger of Leckie

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish the (1) timeline, and (2) plan, for the merger of the National Careers Service with Jobcentre Plus; and what estimate they have made of the financial implications this merger will have on the budget of (a) the Department for Work and Pensions and (b) the Department for Education. [HL6611]

Baroness Sherlock: Bringing together the National Careers Service with Jobcentre Plus in England and the

creation of a new Jobs and Careers Service will form a key part of our plans to transform our employment support, as we set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper.

We will deliver this transformation using a test and learn approach, allowing us to gather evidence based on small-scale tests, iterate the service design, and scale up interventions that meet success criteria. Through this approach, lessons from our small-scale tests will be taken into consideration as part of our plans to bring the two services together.

At the Autumn Budget, the government announced £55m to take forward the first steps of building, testing and trialling the new service in 2025/26. Departmental budgets for the next Spending Review period will be outlined by the Chancellor in due course.

As a start to our commitment to better integrate employment support and careers advice in England, we have launched a data sharing agreement between the Department for Education (DfE) and DWP. This will encourage ‘join-up’ of our services and promote a more streamlined process for our customers ahead of the new service. We will continue to work closely with the DfE as we develop the new service, including careers advisers, who will be able to share their experiences, views and ideas around how we deliver careers services in the future.

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Asked by **Lord Robathan**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the remarks by the World Heritage Committee in the State of Conservation report 2021 about the impact of the Holocaust Memorial Centre on the outstanding universal value of the Palace of Westminster. [HL6447]

Baroness Twycross: The independent planning Inspector who considered the planning application for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, took into account all evidence; including pre-application advice from Historic England in its capacity as statutory advisor, guidance from (International Council on Monuments and Sites - heritage advisors to UNESCO) and statements from the World Heritage Committee.

The assessment in the Inspector’s 2021 report was that: “...the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre would not result in compromise to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site because it does not harm it or its setting, thus conserving it.” Whilst the inspector's assessment pre-dates the Committee's decision relating to the 2021 State of Conservation Report, there was no substantive change in the Committee's position which reiterated earlier statements.

NATO

Asked by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Estonia and other NATO allies concerning their commitment to provide military support. [HL6222]

Lord Coaker: The UK remains committed to Baltic and NATO security through a variety of means, including its commitment to the Enhanced Forward Presence deployment, NATO Air Policing, and the Joint Expeditionary Force. The Secretary of State for Defence regularly meets with his Estonian counterpart to discuss military contributions to European defence and security, having met most recently on 26 March 2025.

Network Rail: Standards

Asked by **Lord Birt**

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of trains on Network Rail are (1) cancelled, and (2) arrive more than five minutes later than timetabled, and what proportion of these cancellations and delays are caused by (a) signal failure, (b) lack of crew availability, and (c) other reasons. [HL6027]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: (1) The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) reported that in the 12 months up to December 2024 the cancellation measure was 4.0%.

(2) The ORR publish train punctuality on a quarterly basis. They report trains arriving within 59 seconds, within 3 minutes or within 15 minutes of their scheduled arrival time. These are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Train punctuality in the year ending December 2024, Great Britain

Trains arriving within 59 seconds	Trains arriving within 3 minutes	Trains arriving within 15 minutes
67.0%	84.8%	98.2%

Source: ORR Table 3133: Delay minutes by operator and cause

The proportion of cancellations by the available causes is report in Table 2.

Table 2. Train Cancellations by cause and responsibility in the year ending December 2024, Great Britain

Infrastructure and network management	Infrastructure owner external event	Train operator fault	Operator external event
26.0%	18.6%	51.4%	3.9%

Source: DfT analysis of ORR Table 3123: Trains planned and cancellations by operator and cause

Information on the cause of delays is published by Rail Period by the ORR. This information is reported in delay minutes. The latest data (covering 3 March 2024 – 2 March 2025) on the proportion of delays minutes attributed by the available causes is reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Share of delay minutes by cause in the year ending 2 March 2025, Great Britain

NR-on-TOC	
External	14%
Network Management / Other	16%
Non-Track Assets	17%
Severe Weather, Autumn, & Structures	7%
Track	7%
NR-on-TOC total	61%
TOC-on-Self and TOC-on-TOC	
Fleet	15%
Operations	3%
Stations	3%
TOC Other	7%
Traincrew	10%
TOC-on-Self total	39%

Source: DfT analysis of Office of Rail and Road Table 3184 - Delay minutes by operator and cause.

NHS England

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what legislation will be required or amended to legally abolish NHS England; and what functions and powers held by NHS England cannot be transferred to other bodies until new legislation is enacted. [HL6269]

Baroness Merron: Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to determine the structure and requirements needed to support the creation of a new centre for health and care.

Primary legislation will be required, and we intend to bring this forward when Parliamentary time allows.

NHS: Databases

Asked by *Lord Kamall*

To ask His Majesty's Government which body directions to transfer data, made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care under section 254 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, will be given to following the abolition of NHS England. [HL6250]

Baroness Merron: Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation. As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds.

As we develop what this new centre looks like we will be transparent and clear about the precise changes in

organisational design. It is essential that information relating to people's identifiable health and care is shared appropriately, lawfully, and in line with their reasonable expectations.

NHS: Environment Protection

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure the future of the Greener NHS programme following the abolition of NHS England. [HL6290]

Baroness Merron: Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation. As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds.

NHS: Negligence

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the actions outlined in the response to the consultation on fixed recoverable costs in lower damages clinical negligence claims will be implemented. [HL6458]

Baroness Merron: Currently, the Government is considering the way forward on a wide range of matters, including fixed recoverable costs, and we will announce our position in due course.

NHS: Redundancy Pay

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what provision they have made for redundancy payments for the abolition of NHS England, and the reduction in size of integrated care boards. [HL6271]

Baroness Merron: We recognise that there may be some short-term upfront costs as we undertake changes to integrated care boards and the integration of NHS England and the Department, but these costs and more will be recouped in future years as a result of a smaller, leaner centre. By the end of the process, we estimate that these changes will save hundreds of millions of pounds a year, which will be reinvested in frontline services.

Nigeria: Christianity

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 2 January (HL3636), what assessment they have made of the progress made to address intercommunal violence following the implementation of the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria programme. [HL6323]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK's strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria programme (SPRING) is working to reduce rural violence in northwest and north-central Nigeria, including by supporting collaboration and productive livelihoods for both farmers and pastoralists, and strengthening conflict early warning, management and response. Whilst SPRING is still in the early phases of implementation, its partnership with the Institute for Integrated Transitions has achieved encouraging results already. Mediation efforts in Nasawara State have fostered a negotiated agreement between the Bassa and Egbura People, enabling the return and resettlement of 5000 internally displaced persons.

Nigeria: Religious Freedom

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 6 February (HL4583), what specific measures they are taking to address the root causes of marginalisation of minority faith communities in Nigeria, and what targeted support they are providing to protect individuals' freedom of religion or belief in the light of local blasphemy laws. [HL6090]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK supports programmes working to address the root causes of intercommunal violence in Nigeria through locally led peace-building efforts. Through our Strengthening Peace and Resilience programme ('SPRING') the UK is providing £38 million to reduce rural violence in northwest and north-central Nigeria, including by supporting collaboration and productive livelihoods for both farmers and pastoralists, and strengthening conflict early warning, management and response. The UK Government also funds the provision of legal and judicial expertise to make legislative changes to protect Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), including addressing blasphemy laws. The right of individuals to express their beliefs or non-belief is essential to a free and open society. Our dialogue on human rights, including FoRB, will remain an important part of the UK's partnership with Nigeria.

Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 7 November 2024 (HL1998), when they intend to publish feedback to the licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures consultation, which ran from 2 September to 28 October 2023. [HL6511]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to taking action to address longstanding concerns about the safety of the cosmetics sector and is exploring options for further regulation in this area. We will set out the details of our approach in our response to the consultation on the

licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures in England, which we will publish as soon as possible.

Nuclear Fusion

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the development of fusion energy and allied technologies. [HL6353]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Fusion supports the Government's Plan for Change and its Missions to Kickstart Economic Growth – through innovation, highly skilled jobs, and tech transfer to adjacent sectors, and make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower.

The Government has announced a record £410m for fusion R&D to fund world leading new facilities, cutting edge research, support for the UK's thriving industry and skill provision across the UK.

The Government is supporting rapid development of the fusion energy sector, investing in cutting-edge research capabilities and facilities, and implementing a proportionate regulatory framework to cement the UK as a global hub for fusion investment and commercialisation.

Nuclear Power: Public Consultation

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many responses were received for the Alternative Routes to Market for New Nuclear Projects consultation. [HL6336]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Department of Energy Security and Net Zero received 82 responses from across the public realm, including industry and academia. The government will respond in due course.

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to respond to the Alternative Routes to Market for New Nuclear Projects consultation. [HL6337]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government intends to ensure the long-term security of the nuclear sector including advanced nuclear. We will publish a response to the Alternative Routes to Market Consultation in due course.

Nuclear Power: South Korea

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have held, or plan to hold, discussions with the government of South Korea on the potential for joint projects to accelerate the roll-out of nuclear-generated electricity in the UK. [HL6166]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The UK has a strong civil nuclear relationship with the Republic of Korea, including an annual Civil Nuclear Dialogue, where officials from

both governments discuss shared challenges and opportunities to collaborate.

Nurses: Higher Education

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to abolish university tuition fees for nursing. [HL6115]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Currently, there are no plans to abolish tuition fees for nursing courses for the 2025/26 academic year. Students undertaking nursing, midwifery and allied health profession courses qualify for non-repayable grant support through the NHS Learning Support Fund. In addition, for the 2025/26 academic year, we will be increasing loans for living costs by 3.1%. This ensures that the most support is targeted at students from the lowest income families, while keeping the student finance system financially sustainable.

The higher education (HE) sector needs a secure financial footing to face the challenges of the next decade, and to ensure that all students can be confident they will receive the world-class HE experience they deserve. This is why, after seven years of frozen fee caps under the previous government, the department has taken the difficult decision to increase maximum tuition fee limits for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of inflation.

In recognition of the increased investment students are being asked to make, the department expects the sector to deliver the very best outcomes, both for those students and for the country. We will publish our plan for HE reform in the summer, and work with the sector and the Office for Students to deliver the change that the country needs.

Offenders: Deportation

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 25 March (HL5728), why information about the removal of foreign nationals following the revocation of student visas is not collected and published. [HL6174]

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 25 March (HL5728), whether they collect or collate information about the removal of foreign nationals following the revocation of their student visas in unpublished format. [HL6175]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, the resources required to compile the statistics, as well as quality and availability of data. These reviews allow us to balance the

production of our regular statistics whilst developing new statistics for future release.

Office for National Statistics

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the independent report published on 19 March, Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, by Professor Alice Sullivan, that there is a 'partisan climate on certain issues, including gender' within the Office for National Statistics. [HL6248]

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.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

The Lord Jackson of Peterborough

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

8 April 2025

Dear Lord Jackson,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what assessment has been made of the finding in the independent report published on 19 March, Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, by Professor Alice Sullivan, that there is a 'partisan climate on certain issues, including gender' within the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (HL6248).

The ONS has a long history of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders on all the census questions. We listen impartially and objectively to all voices to safeguard the production of official statistics that serve the public good in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics[1].

We welcome the Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender and are reviewing the findings in detail. We are committed to working with others to improve the comparability, consistency, and coherence of government statistics. This year, the Government Statistical Service (GSS) is holding a series of regional listening events to inform ongoing work on the topics of sex and gender identity.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1] <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

Office for National Statistics: Databases

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made, based on the latest approved business case, of the average cost per user of the Integrated Data Service, including a breakdown of how this cost is calculated. [HL6020]

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the suitability of successive Senior Responsible Owners of the Integrated Data Programme having been appointed for 35 per cent and 50 per cent of their time, given its whole life cost of £525 million and "red" delivery confidence assessment rating; and what evidence they hold to show that this approach is appropriate for projects of this scale and complexity. [HL6094]

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether to continue to fund the Integrated Data Programme at its whole life cost of £525 million, given its "red" delivery confidence assessment rating and the 26 per cent reduction in forecast monetised benefits between 2022–23 and 2023–24. [HL6095]

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government how many times the Office for National Statistics' Integrated Data Service has undergone an accreditation assessment or audit under the Digital Economy Act 2017 since 2020, and what the results of such assessments or audits have been. [HL6096]

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 Lord Agnew of Oulton DL

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

1 April 2025

Dear Lord Agnew,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your following Parliamentary Questions:

- To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made, based on the latest approved business case, of the average cost per user of the Integrated Data Service, including a breakdown of how this cost is calculated (HL6020).

- To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the suitability of successive Senior Responsible Owners of the Integrated Data Programme having been appointed for 35 per cent and 50 per cent of their time, given its whole life cost of £525 million and "red" delivery confidence assessment rating; and what evidence they hold to show that this approach is appropriate for projects of this scale and complexity. (HL6094).

- To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether to continue to fund the Integrated Data Programme at its whole life cost of £525 million, given its "red" delivery confidence assessment rating and the 26 per cent reduction in forecast monetised benefits between 2022–23 and 2023–24 (HL6095).

- To ask His Majesty's Government how many times the Office for National Statistics' Integrated Data Service has undergone an accreditation assessment or audit under the Digital Economy Act 2017 since 2020, and what the results of such assessments or audits have been (HL6096).

The Integrated Data Programme (IDP) Business Case is being reviewed as part of Spending Review 2025. From when the Integrated Data Service (IDS) is fully operational, the current estimate of the average gross cost per user accessing the IDS is approximately £4,645 per year over the financial years 2026/2027 to 2028/2029. This cost is calculated by including the service support costs for users, the IT licensing and usage costs, and the platform operational management costs.

The current Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) has dedicated substantially more than 50% of their time to the Integrated Data Programme. The "red" delivery confidence assessment rating primarily relates to obtaining data owner permission for analysis, as highlighted in numerous other reports. Significant progress is being made in unblocking data flows, however senior sponsorship is still required to fully realise the benefits of mission delivery. We're now making good progress in obtaining that sponsorship.

The annual cost of the service is now low. The majority of the expenditure has been invested in building infrastructure that is also used for other core ONS business and it is now ready for use.

Future funding of the IDP is under consideration as part of Spending Review 2025, the outcome of which will not be announced until 11 June 2025. All Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) programmes are subject to an Accounting Officer assessment as part of established governance procedures.

The IDS was accredited under the Digital Economy Act (2017) in September 2023. The accreditation of the IDS under the DEA was reviewed after 12 months, in September 2024.

During the development of the platform prior to September 2023, the IDS was audited by the UKSA Research Accreditation Panel to establish the readiness of

the IDS for DEA accreditation. These audits occurred in February 2023 and June 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

For further details, you can refer to the Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority by Professor Denise Lievesley CBE and Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee: Transforming the UK's Evidence Base report.

Office for National Statistics: Remote Working

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the independent investigation into the effectiveness of the Office for National Statistics will consider the impact of full-time remote working. [HL6556]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Sir Robert Devereux's independent review of the ONS will take into account a wide range of factors relating to performance and culture in the organisation.

Office for National Statistics: Standards

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure access to accurate and up-to-date statistics, following reports of delays and mistakes in releases of data from the Office for National Statistics. [HL6081]

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.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

The Lord Taylor of Warwick

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

31 March 2025

Dear Lord Taylor,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what steps have been taken to ensure access to accurate and up-to-date statistics, following reports of delays and mistakes in releases of data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (HL6081).

In recent months, as part of routine quality assurance, the ONS identified issues with some of our statistical outputs, resulting in a small number of publications being delayed. Prioritising quality in our statistics is at the

forefront of what we do. As such, we are consistently improving systems, investing in quality assurance, and undertaking vital transformation programmes. Further steps to ensure quality in our statistics will be communicated in our 2025/26 Strategic Business Plan. In early April, we will also be publishing our new survey strategy. This will build upon our existing surveys recovery plan, and will chart the pathway to a robust, sustainable survey system that can deliver the critical data required by Government and other key stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Office for Value for Money

Asked by Baroness Finn

To ask His Majesty's Government how much has been saved by the Office for Value for Money since it was established. [HL6102]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Value for Money has an immediate focus on supporting value for money decisions surrounding the spending review, including developing efficiency targets and plans, scrutinising investment proposals and conducting value for money studies. It will also recommend system reforms.

Asked by Baroness Finn

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessments the Office for Value for Money has made of where and how to tackle waste and inefficiency. [HL6103]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Value for Money is working with departments to deliver technical efficiency targets, supported by robust delivery plans. This process seeks to realise efficiencies worth at least 1% of day-to-day spending in each year of the Spending Review.

Asked by Baroness Finn

To ask His Majesty's Government how the Office for Value for Money plans to scrutinise investment proposals to ensure they offer value for money. [HL6104]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Value for Money will scrutinise investment proposals where it can make the most impact, while avoiding duplication of the work of others. The Office for Value for Money has developed a short set of appraisal criteria to inform its assessment of investment proposals, which it has shared with departments and published [1].

[1] Gov.UK (2025) OVfM Investment appraisal criteria.

Asked by Baroness Finn

To ask His Majesty's Government what interventions the Chair of the Office for Value for Money has made to drive better value for money. [HL6105]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Value for Money has an immediate focus on supporting value for money

decisions surrounding the spending review, including developing efficiency targets and plans, scrutinising investment proposals and conducting value for money studies. It will also recommend system reforms.

*Asked by **Baroness Finn***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Office for Value for Money has made more savings than it has spent in staffing costs. [[HL6106](#)]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Value for Money has an immediate focus on supporting value for money decisions surrounding the spending review, including developing efficiency targets and plans, scrutinising investment proposals and conducting value for money studies. It will also recommend system reforms. The Office for Value for Money will publish its budget for 2024-25 with HM Treasury's annual report and accounts.

Offshore Industry

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the report published on 25 March by Offshore Energies UK, Business Outlook Report 2025, that by 2050 the UK could produce half of its projected demand for oil and gas. [[HL6155](#)]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: On its website, the North Sea Transition Authority publishes projections on oil and gas production and demand, and reports on remaining reserves and resources.

The offshore basin is mature. The most accessible hydrocarbons have already been extracted. Future licences would not meaningfully increase production, nor change our status as a net importer of oil and gas. Nevertheless, oil and gas will be with us for decades, and the Government will continue to support existing fields.

Our priority is to deliver a fair, orderly and prosperous transition to clean energy industries, driving towards energy security, lower bills, and good, long-term jobs.

Osteoporosis: Drugs

*Asked by **Lord Black of Brentwood***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that all medicines approved for treatment of osteoporosis by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence are available in (1) integrated care systems and (2) local formularies. [[HL6545](#)]

Baroness Merron: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new licensed medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS based on an assessment of their costs and benefits.

The NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended by the NICE, usually within three months of final guidance.

The 2025/26 NHS Standard Contract, which applies to all contracts between NHS commissioners and providers, stipulates that, where any service involves or may involve the prescribing of medicines, the provider must ensure that its formulary reflects all relevant positive NICE technology appraisals.

The NICE has also published guidance on developing and updating local formularies, which is intended to support commissioners and healthcare providers in developing formularies that reflect local needs, reduce variation in prescribing, and allow for the rapid adoption of new medicines and treatments. Further information is available on the NICE website, in an online only format.

Osteoporosis: Fractures

*Asked by **Lord Black of Brentwood***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of osteoporotic fractures on hospital bed occupancy. [[HL6544](#)]

Baroness Merron: The latest data for 2023/4 on hospital inpatient admissions with a primary diagnosis of 'Osteoporosis with pathological fracture' shows that patients with this diagnosis accounted for 60,760 'bed days', or approximately 0.1% of the overall total number of bed days that year.

The Government recognises that patients around the country, including those suffering from osteoporosis, are waiting too long for care and treatment. Our Plan for Change will get the health service back on its feet and make it fit for the future.

Palliative Care: Children

*Asked by **Baroness Manzoor***

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that palliative care for seriously ill children is not dependent on where they live. [[HL6363](#)]

Baroness Merron: We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to the end of life. We know there are inequalities in access to high-quality palliative and end of life care, and we, alongside NHS England, are looking at how best to reduce these.

NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications, which outline areas for consideration when commissioning palliative and end of life care services and, within this, there is reference to improving equity of access and reducing inequity in outcomes and experiences. Additionally, NHS England has developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of their local population, enabling integrated care boards to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health

inequalities, and ensure that funding is distributed fairly, based on prevalence.

Parliamentary Estate: Pedestrians and Road Traffic

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 19 September 2023 (HL9892), when he was informed that there was more up to date information than he provided in that Answer, as set out in his Written Answer on 5 March 2024 (HL2638). [HL6426]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I was recently made aware that the answer to HL9892 on 19 September 2023 used data collected from a study in 2019 which looked at the total number of vehicles accessing and leaving the Estate from both Carriage Gates and Black Rod's Garden. This data was used as it was from a study carried out by traffic consultants prior to the COVID pandemic and helped inform the implementation of the one-way system in January 2023. The study provided an average estimate of traffic movements on the Estate of circa 3,500 vehicle movements in sitting times, compared to 2,500 vehicle movements during recess periods.

Since the implementation of the one-way system in January 2023 counting has been carried out internally, and the system was refined to provide more precise figures, rather than an estimate. This data was used to answer the written question HL2638 on 5 March 2024, to give an average of 4,052 vehicles in sitting times and 2,285 in recess, based on the data collected in the 2023 calendar year. Unfortunately, it was not identified in HL2638 that this was based on 2023 figures rather than the original 2019 data.

Parliamentary Estate: Road Traffic Control

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 28 March (HL5836), what is the cost to Parliament including VAT of a traffic marshal service working 12 hours a day, 5 days a week and 50 weeks a year. [HL6423]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Further to the Written Answer on 28 March 2025 (HL5836), the cost of the provision of a marshal service at one marshal point for 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year would be approximately £75K including VAT.

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 28 March (HL5836), what was the cost in 2023 to Parliament including VAT of a traffic marshal service working 12 hours a day, 5 days a week and 50 weeks a year. [HL6424]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: In December 2023, the cost of the provision of a marshal service at one marshal point for 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year would have been approximately £75K including VAT.

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 28 March (HL5836), between December 2023 and March 2025, what was the percentage increase in cost to Parliament of providing a traffic marshal service working 12 hours a day, 5 days a week and 50 weeks a year. [HL6425]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The cost of the provision of a marshal service at one marshal point for 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year has not changed between December 2023 and March 2025.

Pathways to Work

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the £1 billion employment, health and skills support package for disabled people and those with long-term medical conditions will be available to people across the entire UK. [HL6453]

Baroness Sherlock: We announced in the Pathways to Work Green Paper that we would establish a new guarantee of support for all disabled people and people with health conditions claiming out of work benefits who want help to get into or return to work. This is backed up by £1 billion of new funding across the United Kingdom, with the share of funding for devolved governments calculated in the usual way.

The UK government will respect settlements with devolved governments.

Within Great Britain, we will work closely with the Scottish and Welsh Governments to ensure all aspects of our new approach to delivering employment support partner effectively with devolved provision, including but not limited to skills, health and careers as well as Scottish and Welsh Government-funded employment support.

In Northern Ireland, health, skills, careers and all aspects of employment support are transferred matters. We will work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive, including sharing best practice with the Northern Ireland Executive's Department for Communities about how our reforms to reduce economic inactivity and support disabled people and people with a health condition are working.

Pathways to Work: Employment and Support Allowance

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the proposal in Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and

Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, published 28 March, for a time-limited contribution-based employment and support allowance, what estimate they have made of the number of people who will no longer be entitled to this allowance if it is time-limited for (1) six months, and (2) 12 months. [HL6439]

Baroness Sherlock: Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, and some information was published alongside the Spring Statement. These publications can be found in ‘[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)’.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Attachment [spring-statement-2025-health-and-disability-benefit-reforms-impacts.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-04-01/HL6439>

Pension Credit

Asked by **Lord Sikka**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of individuals who (1) were eligible to receive pension credit, and (2) received it in 2024–25. [HL6514]

Baroness Sherlock: The latest available Pension Credit take-up statistics cover the financial year 2022 to 2023 and are available at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2023 - GOV.UK](#). In the financial year ending 2023, it is estimated that 1.32 million pensioner households were in receipt of Pension Credit and up to 760,000 pensioner households were entitled to Pension Credit but not receiving the benefit.

The latest available Pension Credit caseload statistics cover the period up to August 2024. At August 2024, there were 1,360,660 pensioner households in receipt of Pension Credit in Great Britain. These statistics are available via [DWP Stat-Xplore](#).

Pensioners: Poverty

Asked by **Lord Sikka**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of pensioners living below the poverty line in 2024–25. [HL6515]

Baroness Sherlock: The [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics](#) contain estimates of the number and percentage of people living in low-income households in the UK. This is published by the Department annually. The latest data covers financial year ending 2024.

In financial year ending 2024, it is estimated that 1.9 million pensioners were in relative poverty after housing costs, and 1.6 million pensioners were in absolute poverty after housing costs.

Performing Arts: Children and Young People

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that young performers are safeguarded under the proposed registration requirement in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. [HL6210]

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of local authorities licensing young performers absent from schools for performing engagements; and of how that licensing regime will be impacted under the provisions of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. [HL6211]

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of provisions in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill on the ability of young performers to request absences from school for performances. [HL6212]

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to ensure that the provisions of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill do not prevent young performers from contributing to the creative industries. [HL6213]

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how safeguarding provisions for young performers absent from school for work will operate following the enactment of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. [HL6214]

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to manage the sharing of information regarding children who perform as part of the process of ensuring compliance with regulatory restrictions. [HL6215]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is concerned with strengthening child employment legislation. The department's proposed measures will offer children greater opportunities for meaningful, suitable employment whilst ensuring it does not have a negative impact on their health, development and education. It will not change the length of time children are able to work per week, but it will provide greater flexibility on when those hours are taken.

The child employment measures in the Bill will work alongside, but are distinct from, existing legislation related to child performance. The current regulatory framework for child performance ensures that a licence must be obtained before children can take part in certain types of performance, both professional and amateur, and in paid sport and modelling. Local authorities are responsible for safeguarding all children in their area and are therefore responsible for licensing. A licence will only be granted once the local authority is assured that the child's education, health, and wellbeing will not suffer, and that the conditions of the licence will be observed.

The requirement in the Bill to introduce compulsory registers of children not in school in every local authority in England and Wales would include young performers if they were not on the school roll, if they were part of a flexi-schooling arrangement, or using unregistered alternative provision. The registers will support local authorities to identify all children not in school in their areas and to take action if they are not receiving a safe or suitable education.

Both existing child performance regulation and the department's proposed child employment measures in the Bill have children's needs at their heart and seek to balance access to opportunities, safeguarding and a high-quality education.

Permanent Secretaries: Performance Appraisal

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the formal performance management process for permanent secretaries; who is the designated line manager of each permanent secretary; what role, if any, ministers play in (1) setting objectives, (2) assessing performance, and (3) contributing to appraisals; whether this is set out in any Cabinet Office guidance; and if so, whether they will place a copy of this guidance in the Library of the House. [HL6019]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: As with all other civil servants, the performance of Permanent Secretaries is monitored through formal performance management arrangements. The majority of First Permanent Secretaries report to the Cabinet Secretary with Second Permanent Secretaries reporting to (First Permanent Secretary) Heads of Departments. Performance management activity is undertaken by the relevant line manager.

Objectives for each Permanent Secretary are set at the beginning of the performance year and include input from Ministers. Mid-year and end-year reviews are conducted by the relevant line manager, with feedback/evidence from Ministers forming an important part of the overall performance assessment. Ministers do not participate in mid and end-year review meetings.

Guidance on the process is not published.

In March, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced that the Government will be strengthening performance processes for the SCS.

Permanent Secretaries: Recruitment

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to page 31 of the 2013 report Civil Service Reform Plan: One Year On, whether it is their policy to appoint all new permanent secretaries on fixed-term tenures; and whether they will publish (1) all permanent secretary-level appointments, (2) whether those appointments are fixed-term and (3) the date on which those appointments expire. [HL6018]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: It remains the case that Permanent Secretaries are appointed on fixed term tenures and that their appointments are published on GOV.uk.

Personal Income

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Resolution Foundation titled Happy new tax year 2025 published on 3 April which indicates that household income will fall by £400. [HL6592]

Lord Livermore: The Government's Plan for Change outlines our goal to raise living standards across the United Kingdom. The measure of living standards used in the Government's Plan for Change milestones is real household disposable income (RHDI) per person.

In the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) March 2025 forecast, RHDI per person is expected to rise over this parliament – twice as fast compared to the previous parliament, which was the worst on record for living standards growth.

The Resolution Foundation report uses an alternative measure of living standards, rather than the more widely used RHDI per person. This measure excludes some categories of income and some groups that would be included in living standards as measured by RHDI per person.

Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government, following their Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, what steps they will take to upscale resources to accommodate the proposed increase in face-to-face Personal Independence Payment assessments. [HL6257]

Baroness Sherlock: The Green Paper sets out measures to make improvements to the PIP assessment, including looking again at our safeguarding processes, moving back to having more face-to-face assessments while continuing to meet the needs of people who may require different assessment methods, recording more assessments to increase trust in the process, and exploring ways to use evidence from eligibility for other services to reduce the need for some people with very severe health conditions to undergo a full PIP functional assessment. The Department will consider its commitment to ensure resources are in place to carry out more face to face PIP assessments alongside other plans for reform laid out within Pathways to Work.

We also plan to review the PIP benefit assessment, working closely with stakeholders and those with lived experience, with an ambition of shaping a system of active support that helps people manage and adapt to their condition in ways that expand their functioning and improve their independence.

Personal Independence Payment: Myasthenia Gravis

Asked by Lord Caine

To ask His Majesty's Government what criteria are applied when assessing levels of personal independence payment awarded to those suffering from myasthenia gravis resulting in severe mobility impairment. [HL6549]

Baroness Sherlock: Personal Independence Payment provides support based on the needs arising from a health condition or disability. Individuals can be impacted by their health conditions in different ways, so the assessment considers the effect on a person's day to day life, rather than focusing solely on the health condition or impairment itself. As such, our focus is on ensuring that PIP assessors are experts in disability analysis rather than diagnosing a condition or its severity or recommending treatment options.

The PIP assessment criteria are set out in legislation. The assessment looks at how a long-term health condition or disability impacts on daily life across 12 activities, taking into account fluctuations over a 12 month period. The activities are grouped into two components, for daily living and mobility and within each activity a descriptor must be chosen to score an individual depending on how well they are able to perform the activity. Every claim to PIP is assessed against all 12 activities.

Pets: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 25 March (HL5539), how many people will be employed at ports in Great Britain to facilitate non-commercial pet movements under the Northern Ireland pet travel

scheme, and what estimate they have made of the cost. [HL6261]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: UK authorities will be available to support and assist those travelling under the Northern Ireland Pet Travel Scheme. The scheme will enable travel from Great Britain to Northern Ireland with a simple lifelong pet travel document. We expect that the vast majority of people will comply, and the Government will be providing comprehensive support to those travelling with their pets to ensure they can do so. In line with the commitments we have made under the Windsor Framework, the UK authorities will be undertaking checks to ensure that GB pet owners hold a valid pet travel document and that their pet is microchipped to mitigate against abuse of the scheme and disease risks.

In order not to undermine that approach, as is the case across the UK, we do not disclose the specific number of staff undertaking, or the nature of, interventions made by UK authorities. Facilitating these activities, including staffing, equipment and infrastructure, will cost an estimated £3.4 million over financial years 25/26 to 26/27 inclusive.

Philippines: Sexual and Reproductive Health

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government what support they are providing to (1) grassroots organisations, (2) local non-governmental organisations, (3) international non-governmental organisations, and (4) development partners, who advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Philippines. [HL6076]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK has supported efforts to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in post-conflict areas of the Bangsamoro region, recognising that gender equality is essential to sustainable peace. The Integrated Security Fund Philippines programme has contributed to the development of the Bangsamoro Gender and Development Code and the Gender Ombud Guidelines, supported awareness-raising initiatives to end harmful practices such as child marriage, and worked with communities to strengthen the capacity of women's desks to provide better support for survivors of gender-based violence. The UK has also engaged with UNFPA to discuss how they can protect and promote SRHR in the Philippines further.

Pigs: Conservation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce a national monitoring system for wild boars and feral pigs. [HL6330]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra encourages all pig keepers and members of the public to be vigilant and help protect our pig sector and wildlife from the threat of African swine fever and other notifiable diseases. Found

dead feral wild boar and feral pigs in England should be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Sightings of live feral wild boar and feral pigs can be made through the Mammal Societies Mammal Tracker app or directly through the National Biodiversity Network, the work of which is supported Natural England, Environment Agency and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Defra have no plans at this time to introduce alternative monitoring systems for live feral wild boar and feral pigs. However, Defra work closely with Forestry England to actively monitor and control the population of feral wild boar in the Forest of Dean and work closely with stakeholder organisations share intelligence and monitor the population of feral wild boar and feral pigs nationally.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have commissioned advice from the Office for Environmental Protection about the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. [HL6223]

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are aware of any plans the Office of Environmental Protection may have to publish advice regarding the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. [HL6225]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government welcomes continued collaboration with the Office for Environmental Protection as the Planning and Infrastructure Bill progresses. As an independent body, it is for the Office for Environmental Protection to decide whether to advise on proposed changes to environmental law within the Bill.

Planning Permission

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of planning applications that were considered by local authorities in 2024 were determined by (1) planning applications committees, and (2) planning officers. [HL6040]

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will require planning officers who determine planning applications through their national scheme of delegation to declare any interests; and whether the bill will require local authorities to create a register of interests for planning officers along the lines of those for local councillors. [HL6041]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Our live tables on planning statistics show that in 2024 for district planning decisions 96% of applications were delegated to officers,

and for county planning decisions 81% of applications were delegated to officers.

Proposals in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill in relation to planning committees and a national scheme of delegation do not include changes to requirements to declare interests for either officers or councillors.

Clause 46 of the Bill gives the Secretary of State the power to, through regulations, require planning decisions to be made by committees or officers. We will consult on the details of this in due course.

Port of London Authority: Licensing

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Port of London Authority regarding the requirement set out in its latest draft Harbour Revision Order for property owners to pay for licences for use of balconies overhanging the River Thames; and whether it is their understanding that such a requirement will apply to the parliamentary estate. [HL6331]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Harbour Revision Orders (HRO), and the associated consultations for these orders are conducted by the Marine Management Organisation who handle direct discussions with HRO applicants in the majority of cases.

Unusually in the case of this HRO, the department had initial discussions with the Port of London Authority around some of its proposed changes, which would have made changes to the powers of the Department within the ports' operational area.

The Department has been made aware of the concerns of some property owners around the issues of balcony charges, but as the order has gone to an independent public inquiry, the department judged the inquiry to be the correct body to handle this issue.

The department has not made any investigations as to whether this would apply to the parliamentary estate.

Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will list the names of Post Office directors and executives, and the amount of bonus paid to each for co-operating with the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. [HL5570]

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government when the "transformation incentive" scheme authorising bonuses to be paid to Post Office directors for co-operating with the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry was designed, approved and implemented; and which Ministers, if any, approved it. [HL5571]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: These questions relate to the performance metrics for the Post Office Limited

'Transformation Incentive Scheme' in place 2020-2022. The Government at the time agreed to the original targets but were not consulted on whether the Post Office could legitimately say that it had achieved those targets.

The Department for Business and Trade does not hold information on which directors and executives received bonuses relating to cooperation with the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. Whilst Post Office will hold this information, it is personal information and therefore not appropriate for publication. We understand that all Post Office employees who received bonuses voluntarily returned the remuneration associated with the metric relating to the Post Office's support for the Inquiry except for one who was on long term absence.

Poultry: Animal Welfare

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what actions they will take, if any, in response to a campaign launched on 3 April called 'Ban Hatch & Dispatch' by the Vegetarian Society calling on the Government to ban the practice of male chick culling in the United Kingdom. [HL6563]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The legislation sets out strict requirements to protect the welfare of animals at the time of killing, including male chicks from the egg production sector.

Permitted killing methods for chicks, such as gas stunning and maceration, are based on scientific research and assessment to ensure birds are spared any avoidable pain, distress, or suffering. All laying hen hatcheries in the UK use argon gas mixtures as their stunning method.

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards. In recent years there has been rapid global progress in the development of technologies that allow chicks to be sexed in-ovo (within the egg). We welcome the UK egg industry investing in the development of day zero sexing technology.

Poverty: Impact Assessments

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will provide the Office for Budget Responsibility with the necessary information to enable an assessment of the impact on poverty of the measures announced in the Spring Statement on 26 March that includes those aimed at increasing employment. [HL6258]

Baroness Sherlock: The government's impact assessment regarding Health and Disability reform is available at: [Spring Statement 2025 health and disability benefit reforms – Impacts](#).

This assessment does not include the impact of the £1 billion a year, by 2029/30, funding for measures to support those with disabilities and long-term health

conditions into employment, which we expect to mitigate the poverty impact among people it supports into work.

We are engaging with the OBR to enable them to make a full assessment of the policies including employment impacts ahead of the next fiscal event.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

spring statement [spring-statement-2025-health-and-disability-benefit-reforms-impacts.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-27/HL6258>

Primary Biliary Cholangitis: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what support they are providing to integrated care boards to develop effective multidisciplinary care pathways for primary biliary cholangitis, ensuring consistent and equitable care across different regions. [HL5924]

Baroness Merron: The initial management of primary biliary cholangitis is through secondary care liver services, known as hepatology, and is commissioned by integrated care boards (ICBs). ICBs are responsible for arranging National Health Service services which meet the needs of their respective populations. A proportion of patients do not respond well to first line medical treatments and should be referred to specialised hepatology centres for advanced, second line therapies. These are commissioned by NHS England from specialised centres. Through the England rare diseases action plans, we are working to address sources of inequity and build a fairer system. Work is ongoing to include rare diseases in NHS England's Core20PLUS5 framework, to support ICBs in addressing inequalities. In the 2025 action plan, we have introduced an action to incentivise providers to run clinics for multi-system disorders, which recognises the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and reduces the burden of co-ordination of care on families.

Prison Sentences

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of prisoners who have been mis-sentenced to imprisonment for public protection after the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 came into force to abolish the sentence. [HL6030]

Lord Timpson: The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 abolished the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence and it could not be imposed for anyone convicted on or after 03 December 2012.

No individuals were convicted after 03 December 2012 and subsequently given an IPP sentence.

Nine people were given an IPP sentence in 2013 but all were convicted before the sentence was abolished.

Prisoners: Disability

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prisons are fully accessible to individuals with a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010. [HL6301]

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government whether all prisons are equipped to accommodate prisoners with a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010. [HL6303]

Lord Timpson: New prisons are designed to be fully compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, with many accessible rooms. This includes a large number of low mobility cells (72 at Millsike, 84 at Five Wells and Fosse Way), dependant on the number of house blocks. There are also accessible and medical cells, and all areas of the prison are wheelchair accessible via lifts.

In older prisons, the Equality Act requirements are assessed on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate provision being made accordingly. This can include adaptations to prisoner cellular accommodation (grab rails, adapted taps), and cells that can accommodate people with low mobility, cells in medical units, and cells with adaptations for higher disability requirements.

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government what training regarding prisoners with disabilities they provide to staff. [HL6302]

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they take to assist prisoners whose disability worsens over the course of their incarceration. [HL6304]

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government how many diversity officers are available to prisoners with disabilities in prisons. [HL6305]

Lord Timpson: The Disability Advocacy & Wellbeing Network in HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) offers internal disability awareness training to promote understanding of the issues faced by prisoners with disabilities. Prison staff have access to a suite of guidance materials in relation to disability, enabling them to be confident in their approach and meet the needs of prisoners with disabilities. These resources are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to complement our national equality policies, which provide direct instruction to prison staff on meeting the requirements of our Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Dedicated Neurodiversity Support Managers are now in place in every public prison in England and Wales. These

specialist staff are tasked with making sure prisoners with neurodiverse needs are identified and can access the right education and training opportunities while in prison, as these are crucial to reducing re-offending.

Some neurodiverse offenders may have speech and language needs which can lead to challenging behaviour, meaning they struggle to engage with prison rules and rehabilitation programmes. Support managers will ensure other prison staff know how to avoid and de-escalate volatile situations when working with offenders who have neurodiverse conditions.

HMPPS has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for prisoners with disabilities. These adjustments must be monitored and adapted as necessary throughout the course of the prisoner's sentence. Where prisoners are transferred, the adjustment requirement will transfer with them.

There is an expectation that each prison will allocate sufficient resources to ensure that equality and diversity are managed effectively locally. The amount of resource required varies from prison to prison, and it would not be possible to obtain a total figure without incurring disproportionate cost. Our newly revised policies place renewed emphasis on the responsibility of senior leaders, including prison governors, for identifying and addressing disparity and promoting inclusion.

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prisoners with a disability are in prisons in each region of England and Wales. [HL6342]

Lord Timpson: The requested information is held locally but cannot be collated without incurring disproportionate cost.

Private Education: Business Rates

Asked by Baroness Pinnock

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Khan of Burnley on 1 April (HL Deb col 134) that clause 3 of the Non-Domestic Ratings (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill provides powers to "exclude classes of hereditament from the higher multiplier", whether they will exclude those hereditaments that are publicly funded, including (1) hospitals, (2) police stations, and (3) educational buildings. [HL6567]

Lord Livermore: To deliver our manifesto pledge, we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, with rateable values below £500,000, from 2026-27.

This tax cut must be sustainably funded, and so we intend to apply a higher rate from 2026-27 on the most valuable properties - those with a Rateable Value of £500,000 and above. These represent less than one per cent of all properties, but cover the majority of large distribution warehouses, including those used by online

giants, so that they can help support the viability of high streets.

The Spring Statement confirmed the spending envelope for phase 2 of the spending review, which will deliver new mission-led, technology-enabled and reform-driven budgets for departments. We will consider the full range of priorities and pressures facing departments in the round, including any impact of the higher multiplier, when setting these budgets.

The rates for any new business rate multipliers will be set at Budget 2025 so that the Government can take into account the upcoming revaluation outcomes as well as the economic and fiscal context.

Private Finance Initiative: Contracts

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 19 February of Current PFI and PF2 projects as at 31 March 2024, what assessment they have made of the total remaining public liability across all PFI contracts where (1) no equity holder is named, and (2) the special purpose vehicle is registered offshore. [HL6464]

Lord Livermore: His Majesty's Government is aware of a total of £5,242m of public liability across all PFI contracts represented by 33 projects, where the contracting authority has indicated they do not know who the equity holders are, and 44 projects, where the contracting authority has indicated they know who the equity holders are, but have not provided data to His Majesty's Government. To our knowledge no Special Purpose Vehicles are registered off shore.

This information is provided by the central government departments and devolved administrations that have procured or sponsored projects and represents 98.7% of PFI projects on the portfolio provided a data return in 2024. With the eight projects that did not provide a return, the most recently available data from previous years is used.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 19 February of Current PFI and PF2 projects as at 31 March 2024, what is the total value of all unitary charge payments made on projects with (1) no equity holders listed, and (2) equity holders listed as "not known", in 2023–24. [HL6465]

Lord Livermore: The value of those charge payments where no equity holder is listed, where the contracting authority has indicated they do not know who the equity holders are, is £5,570m across 33 projects. Where the contracting authority has indicated they know who equity holders are but have not provided the information to His Majesty's Government, thereby making it "not known", represents £8,872m across 44 projects. Cumulatively both

represent a total value of £14,442m for unitary charge payments made on projects.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 19 February of Current PFI and PF2 projects as at 31 March 2024, what steps they take to detect when (1) equity holders, or (2) special purpose vehicles, transfer ownership of their stake in a project without notifying the contracting authority; and how often this has occurred in the last five years. [HL6466]

Lord Livermore: The Infrastructure and Project Authority, now the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority as of the 1st April, collects data annually on PFI projects. This includes for each Special Purpose Vehicle the UK registered company number, name and address and the name of the equity holders (investors) in the Special Purpose Vehicle. Standard contract drafting provides that a contractor shall inform an authority as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event within [30] days, of any change of ownership occurring. This information is collated and published annually.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 19 February of Current PFI and PF2 projects as at 31 March 2024, why data for 273 projects does not include one or more of (1) the date of the Official Journal of the European Union, (2) the date of preferred bidder and (3) the date of financial close. [HL6531]

Lord Livermore: For the 273 projects lacking information on (1) the date of the Official Journal of the European Union, (2) the date of preferred bidder, and (3) the date of financial close, this is because the relevant data has not been provided to His Majesty's Government by the responsible department or contracting authority. The data published on 19 February regarding Current PFI and PF2 projects as of 31 March 2024 is not audited by His Majesty's Treasury or the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (now NISTA, the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, as of 1 April). NISTA continues to collaborate with departments to enhance the quality and reliability of the data.

Public Bodies: Disclosure of Information

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce legislation to provide for a duty of candour for public bodies. [HL6375]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government has committed to implement a 'Hillsborough Law' which will place a legal duty of candour on public servants and authorities. The details of this Bill will be announced in due course.

Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the Barnett consequential for Northern Ireland following its agreement of a new funding package for community pharmacies in England. [HL6372]

Lord Livermore: The Barnett formula applies to all increases or decreases to UK Government Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL). As the Community Pharmacy Contract is being funded from within existing Department for Health and Social Care's budgets, there will be no additional Barnett consequential for the devolved governments. The Barnett formula has already been applied to funding previously allocated at the Budget in October 2024 and Phase 1 of Spending Review 2025 for 2025-26.

The Block Grant Transparency publication breaks down all changes in the devolved governments' block grant funding from the 2015 Spending Review up to and including Main Estimates 2023-24. The most recent report was published in July 2023, and the next version of the Block Grant Transparency will be published in due course.

The Northern Ireland Executive's 2025-26 Spending Review settlement is the largest settlement in real terms of any since devolution and ensures that the Northern Ireland Executive continues to receive over 24% more per person than equivalent UK Government spending in the rest of the UK, including the 2024 restoration financial package.

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what the Barnett consequential are for Northern Ireland arising from the £1 billion support package announced for employment, health and skills for the disabled and those with long-term medical conditions. [HL6454]

Lord Livermore: The Barnett formula is applied when UK Government departmental budgets change, not when additional funding is announced. The Barnett consequential from the £1 billion employment support package will be confirmed at Phase 2 of the Spending Review 2025.

The Northern Ireland Executive is receiving £18.2 billion in 2025-26, including an additional £1.5 billion through the operation of the Barnett formula. This is the largest spending review settlement in real terms since devolution and ensures that the Northern Ireland Executive continues to receive over 24% more per person than equivalent UK Government spending in the rest of the UK, including the 2024 restoration financial package.

Public Sector: Procurement

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they submitted (1) a costing note, or (2) a draft scorecard to

the Office for Budget Responsibility for the updated versions of (a) the National Procurement Policy Statement, and (b) Procurement Policy Note 002, in accordance with paragraph 2.9 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Office for Budget Responsibility, HM Treasury, the Department for Work & Pensions, and HM Revenue & Customs, published on 9 November 2023. [HL6394]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The National Procurement Policy Statement and Procurement Policy Note 002, as Cabinet Office policies, are not subject to the requirements set out in paragraph 2.9 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Office for Budget Responsibility, HM Treasury, the Department for Work & Pensions, and HM Revenue & Customs, published on 9 November 2023.

An impact assessment in relation to the Procurement Act and associated reforms was published in May 2022 and can be found at:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46429/document/s/1767>

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government how many full-time equivalent staff are employed in the Procurement Review Unit, and how this compares to the number of full-time equivalent roles allocated to the unit. [HL6396]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Procurement Review Unit has 13 permanent full time equivalent roles in the unit. The unit is supported by a flexible resource model where additional resources can be allocated to the unit as required. Currently the team is being supported by 4 flexible members of staff.

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what analysis they undertook to assess the material fiscal impact of the updated social value model in the Procurement Policy Note 002, published on 13 February. [HL6399]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Central government uses the same tool for assessing social value that has been used since 2021, where central government buyers select evaluation criteria from the options available in the social value model.

The updates made to the social value model have streamlined the content, aligning it to the government's missions. This ensures social value reinforces policy delivery and does not add additional requirements.

When in scope contracting authorities are choosing evaluation criteria from the model they must ensure the criteria are proportionate and relevant to the contract in question. Suppliers then have the flexibility to choose solutions that suit them. The updated guidance emphasises the importance of pre-market engagement to ensure the criteria selected are appropriate for the contract.

Public Transport: Disability

Asked by *Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with disabled passenger groups about achieving independent travel for disabled travellers on all forms of public transport. [HL6240]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The government is committed to making transport more inclusive and accessible right across the country, so that it enables disabled people to travel safely, confidently and with dignity. Ministers are advised on accessible transport policy by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, whose membership is required to include at least 50% disabled people.

The Department for Transport also regularly meets with stakeholders to discuss a range of issues, including improving accessibility across the transport network. For example, the Department has engaged with organisations representing disabled passengers throughout the development of the Bus Services (No.2) Bill and the continuing consultation on the forthcoming Railways Bill, as well as through the engagement activities for the Integrated National Transport Strategy.

Radiotherapy

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have published guidance endorsing the use of selective internal radiation therapy; and what plans they have, if any, to encourage hospitals to achieve ENETS centre status, as awarded by the European Neuroendocrine Tumor Society. [HL6053]

Baroness Merron: No guidance has been published endorsing this particular treatment. Radiotherapy treatment for cancer is highly individualised and decisions about cancer treatment are typically made by clinicians and multidisciplinary teams of healthcare professionals. They consider all aspects of a patient's health and circumstances when recommending treatment options. While certain treatments may not be advised for some patients, these decisions are based on medical assessments, and what is best for the individual's overall health and well-being.

There are no plans to specifically encourage hospitals to achieve this status. Currently there are 10 European Neuroendocrine Tumour Society Centres of Excellence in England.

Railway Stations: Disability

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many of the railway stations in London are fully wheelchair accessible; and what plans they have to increase that number. [HL6460]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: There are currently 137 railway stations with step free access between the entrance/ exit and platforms in Greater London (this excludes those operated by Transport for London). Since April 2024, the Access for All programme has delivered step free access at 25 stations across Britain, with Newtown station in Powys being one of the most recent. This Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognises the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

Railways: Catering

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the provision of hot food options on long-distance inter-city train services that are under public ownership. [HL6217]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: There are two train companies under public ownership that operate long-distance inter-city services: London North-Eastern Railway (LNER) and TransPennine Express.

LNER provides catering facilities on all of its services in both standard and first class. Many services include hot food options depending on time of day and route. There are no current plans to expand LNER's offer.

On TransPennine Express, an enhanced catering option including hot food was introduced on services between Liverpool and Newcastle on 17 February 2025. This followed a successful trial of enhanced catering options on West Coast routes in 2024. The 'West Coast Kitchen' initiative exceeded forecasted revenue uplift and has created additional employment opportunities for onboard catering staff.

As a principally short-distance and commuter operator, Northern does not offer catering on its services.

Railways: Disability

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to ensure that additional railway station staff are employed to help people with disabilities negotiate barriers to travelling on public transport following their proposed cuts to personal independence payments. [HL6433]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Providing assistance for passengers who require it is crucial. Under license conditions and as part of their Accessible Travel Policy (ATP), operators must participate in the Passenger Assist scheme. This scheme is designed to help disabled passengers and those with additional needs to use the rail network with confidence and in safety. More broadly, rail operators are responsible for ensuring staff are available to deliver this assistance.

Railways: Freight

Asked by *Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote the carriage of freight by rail. [HL6408]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Government recognises that the economic and environmental potential of rail freight is significant and is committed to supporting its growth.

We encourage modal shift from road to rail through the Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme which has a budget of £18 million. The scheme has been extended to March 2026.

Under our plans to reform the railway, there will be a statutory duty on Great British Railways to promote the use of rail freight and there will be an overall rail freight growth target set by the Secretary of State, with clear and meaningful targets for rail freight growth within pre-defined periods.

Recycling: Greater Manchester

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Greater Manchester Renew Hub on circular consumer practices, and what plans they have to replicate this project in other areas. [HL6479]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We have not made an assessment into the impact of the Greater Manchester Renew Hub. However, at the heart of the Circular Economy Strategy is delivering circular economy principles through local action; this is something the Secretary of State for Environment – a former Council leader – is passionate about. We recognise the Greater Manchester Renew Hub as an excellent example of local action that we can learn from as we work on developing the Circular Economy Strategy for England.

Recycling: Infrastructure

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve recycling infrastructure and technologies to enable the increased recovery of critical minerals and other materials. [HL6539]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has convened the Circular Economy Taskforce to help us develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England, which will be supported by a series of roadmaps detailing the interventions that the government and others will make on a sector-by-sector basis. We are considering the evidence for interventions right across the economy,

including interventions that would enable the increased recovery of critical minerals and other materials.

Critical minerals in particular are crucial for the Government's ambition to kickstart economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower. The Department for Business and Trade plans to bring forward a Critical Minerals Strategy, which will support the aims of the forthcoming Circular Economy Strategy by driving ambitious reform to promote recycling and the retention of critical minerals within the UK economy.

Beyond critical minerals, the largest waste management companies in the UK estimates that over the next decade the forthcoming Collection and Packaging Reforms alone will stimulate £10 billion investment in recycling infrastructure and create 21,000 new jobs; whilst also enhancing UK domestic material security by reducing reliance on virgin imports of critical materials.

Recycling: Scotland

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to establish a nationwide accreditation scheme for tested and repaired products similar to the Revolve programme in Scotland. [HL6478]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. To support the Government in achieving this goal, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has convened the Circular Economy Taskforce to help us develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England, which will be supported by a series of roadmaps detailing the interventions that the government and others will make on a sector-by-sector basis. Through this work we are considering the evidence for interventions right across the economy. We are exploring the circularity impacts of a wide range of levers, including encouraging reuse and repair, as we develop our strategy.

Relationships and Sex Education

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that reproductive health issues, such as polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis, fertility and menopause symptoms, are covered in relationships and sex education in schools in England. [HL6287]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Statutory guidance on the current relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum, published on GOV.UK states that by the end of secondary education, pupils should know the facts about reproductive health, including fertility, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause. This guidance is attached and is also available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>. While endometriosis and polycystic

ovary syndrome are not mentioned specifically in the statutory guidance, it is open to schools to include it as part of this education.

To support schools further, in 2020 the department developed teacher training modules which are freely available to download from GOV.UK and are attached and is also available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>. This included working with Endometriosis UK when developing the ‘changing adolescent body’ module, which references endometriosis. In addition, the ‘intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health’ module refers to endometriosis, polycystic ovaries, fertility and menopause.

The department is currently reviewing the RSHE statutory guidance. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has been clear that children’s wellbeing must be at the heart of this guidance for schools and as such we will talk to stakeholders, analyse consultation responses and consider relevant evidence before setting out next steps. This will include assessing whether amended content on reproductive health issues is needed.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL6287 attachment 1
[Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf]

HL6287 attachment 2 [Teaching about relationships, sex and health guidance.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-28/HL6287>

Religion: Higher Education

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Office for Students-registered theological colleges’ compliance with academic freedom and freedom of speech. [HL6374]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: As the independent regulator, it is the role of the Office for Students to monitor and assess registered providers’ compliance with all of its conditions of registration, including those relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom, and to take regulatory action where they have been breached. This includes theological colleges.

All higher education (HE) providers have longstanding duties to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law which they must comply with. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education will shortly be making regulations to commence the expanded duties on HE providers in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. This will include new duties to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom, to put in place a free speech code of practice and a ban on non-disclosure agreements.

Religious Freedom

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask His Majesty's Government what specific legal and judicial expertise they are funding to support legislative changes aimed at protecting freedom of religion or belief in countries with blasphemy laws. [HL6091]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Government is deeply concerned by the use of blasphemy laws that undermine human rights including freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and freedom of expression. The UK regularly raises FoRB issues in multilateral fora and our important bilateral work.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office continues to work with countries (or governments) that request support on legislative reform through our programme funding, including the John Bunyan Fund, a designated programme for FoRB-focused overseas projects, and the Rule of Law Expertise (ROLE UK) programme.

Together with our partners, including the International Bar Association Human Rights Institute and the UK legal sector, we are supporting efforts across seven countries in this area, including on increasing knowledge on international standards and protections through existing legislation.

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the rising number of prisoners of conscience detained for their religious beliefs worldwide; and what assessment they have made of international law as a framework for holding governments accountable for violations of freedom of religion or belief. [HL6098]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK champions, and remains strongly committed to, freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. It is our firm opinion that no one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We are championing the right to FoRB and promoting tolerance and mutual respect through our engagement in multilateral organisations, our bilateral work, working with the Special Envoy for FoRB, David Smith, and our programme funding, including the Rule of Law (ROLE UK) legal reform programme.

We also use our skilled global diplomatic network to engage directly with governments. Ministers and FCDO officials regularly raise specific cases of concern, and do not shy away from challenging those we believe are not meeting their obligations, whether publicly or in private. The UK continues to hold countries to account on their FoRB commitments and obligations, through our engagement with the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and at the UN Human Rights Council. This work is mutually reinforcing of our wider human rights efforts, underpinning our belief that human rights are universal.

Religious Hatred

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to formulate official definitions of hatred or abuse of adherents of Sikhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or any other religions besides Islam. [HL6295]

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group is obliged to take into consideration the views of adherents of any other religion besides Islam. [HL6296]

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group will meet with representatives of any other religion besides Islam. [HL6297]

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the police will be expected to use the working definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia once it is formulated by the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group. [HL6298]

Lord Khan of Burnley: All forms of racial and religious discrimination are completely unacceptable and have no place in our communities.

In the most recently published Home Office statistics the number of religious hate crimes targeting Muslims accounted for 38% of all religious hate crimes. The number of religious hate crimes targeting Jews accounted for 33%. These together make up 71%, and show government action here is urgently needed and whilst the government has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition for antisemitism, it does not have an equivalent definition to aid its work in tackling hate directed towards Muslims.

The Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group's objective is to develop a working definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia which is reflective of a wide range of perspectives and priorities for British Muslims. The Chair will agree a work and engagement plan with the Minister for Faith and Communities and will use this as the basis for the work of the Group.

The Group's proposed definition will be non-statutory and will provide the government and other relevant bodies, including the police, with an understanding of unacceptable treatment and prejudice against Muslim communities.

Full terms of reference for the Working Group have been [published](#) on GOV.UK.

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to formulate official definitions of hatred or abuse against adherents of any religion other than Islam. [HL6310]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will require the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group to take into consideration the views of adherents of religions other than Islam; and if not, why not [HL6311]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will require the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group to meet adherents of religions other than Islam. [HL6312]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the planned definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia will allow for ridicule or abuse of Islamic beliefs and practices. [HL6313]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government on what grounds they determined that the work of the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group should not be made public. [HL6314]

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will invite the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group in formulating its definition to protect freedom of expression in similar terms to the saving provision in section 29J of the Public Order Act 1986, so that the definition does not, for example, restrict criticism of Islam or prevent individuals from urging Muslims to cease practising Islam. [HL6315]

Lord Khan of Burnley: All forms of racial and religious discrimination are completely unacceptable and have no place in our communities.

In the most recently published Home Office statistics the number of religious hate crimes targeting Muslims accounted for 38% of all religious hate crimes. The number of religious hate crimes targeting Jews accounted for 33%. These together make up 71%, and show government action here is urgently needed. Whilst the government has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition for antisemitism, it does not have an equivalent definition to aid its work in tackling hate directed towards Muslims.

The Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group's objective is to develop a working definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia which is reflective of a wide range of perspectives and priorities

for British Muslims. Full terms of reference for the Working Group have been [published](#) on GOV.UK.

It is important that government is transparent in the actions it takes to address all forms of hatred, however any independent work should also have the space to consider sensitive and complex issues in private. This is the approach the Working Group will take when considering the appropriate and sensitive language to describe, understand and define unacceptable treatment, prejudice, discrimination and hate targeting Muslims or anyone who is perceived to be Muslim.

Once the Government has had time to review the advice, it will consider its next steps.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that patients at higher risk of severe illness from respiratory syncytial virus infection, such as those with pre-existing conditions or children who were born prematurely, are protected ahead of winter. [\[HL6316\]](#)

Baroness Merron: In line with independent expert advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programmes were introduced in England in September 2024 to protect infants, via maternal vaccination, and older adults at the greatest risk of harm from RSV infection. The JCVI did not provide advice on other groups, as the analysis that informed their advice looked at burden by age.

When advising on the introduction of the RSV programmes, the JCVI said that an extension to the initial programmes would be considered when there was more certainty about protection for patients at higher risk of severe illness from RSV, including people aged 80 years old and older, and the real-world impact of the programme for 75 to 80 year olds. Advice for individuals less than 75 years old in clinical risk groups, including the immunocompromised and those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, would be guided by emerging evidence on disease incidence.

At their October 2024 main committee meeting, the JCVI agreed that it would need to formally review the evidence for a potential extension to the programme for people aged 80 years old and older and those in clinical risk groups. During the main committee meeting of 5 February 2025, the JCVI noted that it planned further discussions on potential advice towards extending the programme to those over 80 years old. JCVI meeting minutes are publicly available on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format. The Department will consider any further JCVI advice on who should be offered an RSV vaccine in due course.

The National Health Service also offers high-risk eligible infants a monoclonal antibody called palivizumab over the RSV season. Palivizumab is typically reserved

for premature infants with specific major underlying medical conditions. In February 2023, the JCVI advised that existing infant risk groups eligible for RSV monoclonal antibody immunisation should preferentially be protected with nirsevimab over palivizumab. In October 2024, the committee supported work being taken forward for such a programme for all very/extremely premature infants, ideally from 2025/26. However, to date it has not been possible for the NHS to obtain a supply of nirsevimab for the programme. We are continuing to explore all options to ensure there is effective protection against severe RSV illness for this high-risk group.

Road Signs and Markings

Asked by **Lord Pickles**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to implement via secondary legislation the provisions in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 on street votes for new development and street referendums on renaming streets; and, if not, why not. [\[HL6508\]](#)

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government is monitoring the arrangements for locally supported street name changes put in place by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act and does not currently consider there is a need for regulations or guidance to support local authorities. Other policies inherited from the last government in the Act that have not been implemented, including street votes, continue to be kept under review.

Roads: Accidents

Asked by **Lord Wigley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the most recent figure for the number of people killed annually in road traffic accidents in England per million of the resident population; and how this compares with the rate of deaths in road traffic accidents in each of the other parts of the United Kingdom. [\[HL6461\]](#)

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Data on road injury collisions are reported by police using the STATS19 system. In STATS19, a fatality is defined as a death that occurred within 30 days of the collision. The rates of fatalities in road collisions in 2023 per million population for different parts of the United Kingdom are shown in the table below.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Fatality rate per million population (2023)</i>
United Kingdom	24.8
Great Britain	24.5
England	23.7
Wales	31.9
Scotland	27.9
Northern Ireland	37

Russia: Ukraine

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of reported attacks on religious communities and places of worship in Ukraine by Russian forces on freedom of religion or belief in that country. [HL6060]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: We are deeply disturbed by the impact of Russia's illegal war on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), as well as the damage done to places of worship and religious significance. Following Russia's extension into the occupied territories in Ukraine, its domestic repression of FoRB sees Orthodox Church of Ukraine clergy, Crimean Tatars, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and Protestant Churches suffer repression and physical abuse. This includes the prohibition of religious literature and arbitrary arrests and detentions, where religious figures are reportedly subjected to torture. Jehovah's Witnesses have been banned altogether. Russia's war is not just an attempt to destroy Ukraine's democracy, but their identity and culture - extending to Ukraine's religious and belief communities.

Rwanda: Military Aid

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what military support they are providing to the government of Rwanda for (1) training, (2) technology, (3) tactics, and (4) weapons licensing, and whether they have reviewed these arrangements following the support by the government of Rwanda for M23 rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL6358]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what financial support, debt relief and development assistance they are providing to Rwanda, and what steps they will take to review these arrangements as a result of the support by the government of Rwanda for M23 rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL6359]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK has condemned the offensives by M23 and the Rwandan Defence Force as an unacceptable violation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a breach of the UN Charter. On 25 February, the UK issued a statement following the Foreign Secretary's visits to Kinshasa and Kigali announcing several measures impacting Rwanda. These included a suspension of future defence training assistance to Rwanda, revoking relevant extant licences for the armed forces in Rwanda, and a pause in direct bilateral financial aid to the Government of Rwanda, excluding support to the poorest and most vulnerable.

Schools: Attendance

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Institute for Public Policy Research, *Who is Losing Learning? Finding Solutions to the School Engagement Crisis*, published on 18 March; and what steps they are taking to address the loss of engagement in education. [HL5972]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department welcomes the recommendations from the Institute for Public Policy Research's report and will take the findings into consideration. This government's ambition is that all children and young people receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life, and we are taking action to realise this across the system.

The government is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools. The department will drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities through early identification, effective support, high quality teaching and effective allocation of resources. By prioritising early intervention and inclusive provision in mainstream settings, our ambition is to improve outcomes for this cohort across key measures including attainment, absence and sustained employment.

The department has expanded its attendance mentor programme to cover a total of 17 areas, with a £15 million investment, directly supporting pupils and their families with the barriers to attendance. Attendance is also one of the first national priorities of our regional improvement for standards and excellence teams.

Free breakfast clubs will also be offered in every state-funded school with primary-aged pupils, supporting children's attendance and attainment and enabling them to thrive academically and socially.

Schools: Catering

Asked by *Lord Knight of Weymouth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what mechanisms exist to ensure that catering contracts agreed by schools and academies comply with the duty in the Children and Families Act 2014 to support pupils with medical conditions, by including provision for children with conditions such as coeliac disease and severe food allergies to have access to the same opportunities as others, including safe meals. [HL6124]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: For the provision of school food, catering companies and suppliers are subject to allergen and packaging rules and regulations, such as the Food Information Regulations. Compliance with the Regulations falls under the responsibility of the Food Standards Agency.

Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on governing bodies of maintained schools, proprietors of academies and management committees of pupil referral units to make arrangements for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions. These may be food-related, for example a pupil may have a food allergy or coeliac disease. Schools should therefore take appropriate action in supporting such pupils to access food provision, particularly when schools have a legal requirement to offer free school meals (FSM) to those eligible for means-tested FSM or universal infant free school meals.

Schools: Software

Asked by Lord Knight of Weymouth

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost to schools and academies in England of upgrading computers following the most recent update to the Windows 11 operating system. [HL6125]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: I refer my noble Friend to the answer of 1 April 2025 to Question HL5134.

Schools: Transport

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the total expenditure on taxis for school transport in England in the 2023–24 financial year, broken down by local authority; and what was the highest per-mile rate paid for taxi journeys compared to the lowest per-mile rate. [HL5946]

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the proportion of school transport budgets in England that has been spent on children attending out-of-area schools due to a lack of local provision in each of the past three financial years. [HL5949]

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of children in England who have been granted free school transport solely because of a parent's disability in each of the past three financial years, under the discretionary powers granted to local authorities by section 508C of the Education Act 1996. [HL5950]

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities whose free school transport was provided via single-occupancy vehicles in 2023–24. [HL5951]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Local authorities are responsible for arranging free home to school travel for

eligible children. The department collects data on the total amount each local authority spends, broken down by phase of education and by two broad categories of eligibility – travel agreed for reasons of the child's special educational needs or disability (SEND) and for reasons other than SEND. This is attached and available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/la-and-school-expenditure#subjectTabs-createTable>.

To date, the department has not collected data on the number of pupils receiving free home to school travel or on the travel arrangements local authorities make. We therefore do not hold the specific information requested.

In February 2025, the department launched a voluntary data collection, seeking more detailed information from local authorities.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Home_To_School_Transport_2324_spend_by_LA
[Home_To_School_Transport_2324_spend_by_LA_HL5946.xls]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-19/HL5946>

Shared Rural Network

Asked by Lord Smith of Finsbury

To ask His Majesty's Government what further consideration they have given to the size and coverage of the Shared Rural Network programme, and whether they have made any change to the scale of the programme or number of masts required as a result. [HL6147]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Shared Rural Network (SRN) has already delivered significant coverage improvements across the UK. However, there are still rural parts of the UK where there is either limited or no mobile coverage. The government-funded parts of the SRN will deliver this new coverage by utilising existing Home Office masts across Great Britain and building new masts in Scotland. We continue to work with the four mobile network operators to minimise the number of new masts required in Scotland and now expect to meet this part of the programme's objectives with far fewer masts than originally planned. We expect to reach a position on exactly how many new masts will be built in Scotland soon.

Shared Rural Network: Highlands of Scotland

Asked by Lord Smith of Finsbury

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with representatives of community councils in the Highland Council area about the future of the Shared Rural Network programme. [HL6149]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Feedback from community councils and special interest groups play an important role in agreeing the best locations for new infrastructure as part of the Shared Rural Network (SRN). Both the government and the four mobile network operators have worked with stakeholders across Scotland to ensure the benefits of new sites are balanced with any environmental impacts and other concerns.

Shingles: Vaccination

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take towards a decision on the expansion of the shingles national immunisation programme for adult cohorts aged 80 and over, as recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation in November 2024, and what is their timeline for that decision. [HL6370]

Baroness Merron: In November 2024, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation provided advice to the Government on eligibility for the shingles vaccination programme. This included advice that the Government should consider expanding the shingles vaccination offer to include older adult cohorts aged 80 years old and over, as well as severely immunosuppressed adults aged 18 years old and over.

The Department is considering this advice as it sets the policy on who should be offered shingles vaccinations, and will update in due course. A timeline for decision-making has not been formally agreed.

Skilled Workers: Visas

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend how long a person with a Skilled Worker visa can remain in the UK. [HL6117]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government currently has no plans to extend how long a person with a skilled worker visa can remain in the UK.

Skin Cancer: Screening

Asked by Baroness Crawley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made an assessment of the skin cancer detection pilot scheme "Map My Mole" conducted by a small number of NHS GP surgeries in the South West, in particular with regard to potential for reducing unnecessary referrals and for saving NHS time and expense; and whether they plan to deliver home-use technology for detecting and assessing skin cancer risks. [HL6338]

Baroness Merron: The Department has not made a formal assessment of Map My Mole, the skin cancer detection pilot scheme. The Department is committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases, including skin cancer. To

achieve this, the NHS has delivered an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week as the first step to ensuring early diagnosis and faster treatment.

Since 2023/24, NHS England has also been rolling out teledermatology services, which allow a virtual review of dermoscopic images. In providers where this has been fully implemented, improvements in workforce capacity have been seen doubling the number of patients that can be reviewed per clinic in some cases, and improving faster diagnosis standard performance.

NHS England's Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) national report has provided recommendations to encourage the wider use of technology to ensure skin cancer patients get faster and more equitable access to care. GIRFT is also planning a programme to support primary care colleagues, offering training for new staff to recognise harmless skin lesions, like moles and warts, with the aim of reducing unnecessary referrals to hospital and freeing up capacity for other patients on the waiting list.

Small Businesses: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what assistance they have made available to small firms in Northern Ireland who receive goods from Great Britain to ensure a smooth flow of trade. [HL6086]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the Government will ensure the interests of small businesses are embedded into our Industrial and Trade Strategies, as part of a comprehensive approach to delivering on our economic growth mission. The Windsor Framework established a broad set of arrangements to support Great Britain-based businesses to move goods to Northern Ireland, including to small businesses based in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme reduces checks and administrative burdens on retail agrifood movements. The Northern Ireland Plant Health Label scheme removes unnecessary costs and enables previously prohibited goods to enter Northern Ireland. The first stage of the UK internal market scheme was implemented in 2023, and ensures thousands of businesses can move goods without being subject to customs duties. Businesses can also use the Customs Duty Waiver Scheme to waive any duties entirely, regardless of the destination of the goods, subject to an overall limit. The Government works closely with industry stakeholders and trade associations on the implementation of these arrangements and will continue to do so.

Social Rented Housing: Furniture

Asked by Lord Katz

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the levels of furniture poverty among social housing tenants. [HL6307]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My department engages actively with a range of stakeholders on issues facing social housing tenants, and has engaged with groups such as End Furniture Poverty to understand their research on this issue.

People currently living without important pieces of furniture may be able to get support from their local authorities via the 'Household Support Fund' and other services available locally. The Deputy Prime Minister is also part of the ministerial Child Poverty Taskforce, which is considering the impacts of living in poor quality housing on children.

Social Rented Housing: Immigration

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the long-term impact on social housing of prospective successful applications for indefinite leave to remain until 2029. [HL6178]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Eligibility for social housing is tightly controlled. If a person's visa means that they cannot access state benefits or local authority housing assistance, they are not eligible for an allocation of social housing. Only eligible individuals can join waiting lists and be given a social housing tenancy.

Where foreign nationals are eligible, they will have their housing needs considered on the same basis as other eligible applicants in accordance with the local authority's housing allocation scheme. People who are homeless, in overcrowded housing or who need to move for medical reasons are prioritised.

The previous government consulted on changes to social housing allocation tests. This government's response was published on 2 September and can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

The Government are committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable house building in a generation.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

The government response [HL6178 -Government response to the consultation on changes to social housing allocation tests.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-26/HL6178>

Solar Power: Forced Labour

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero raised the use of Uyghur slave labour in the manufacture of solar panels and in other forms of green technology during his recent visit to China, and, if so, what response he received. [HL6023]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: This Government continues to stand firm on the issue of human rights in China, including relating to forced labour. The recent visit by the Secretary of State gave the opportunity to discuss issues that matter to the UK with senior levels of the Chinese government, including areas where we disagree.

South Eastern Trains: Ticket Offices

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on people with disabilities of the plans of South Eastern Trains to cut ticket office hours by an estimated 555 hours each week across 14 stations, according to the Association of British Commuters. [HL6434]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Ensuring accessibility for all passengers is at the heart of our passenger-focussed approach. Southeastern Trains (SET) is seeking to implement changes to ticket office opening hours at 14 of its stations. We are aware that SET's proposals include mitigations to ensure staff would continue to be available to support passengers.

South Sudan: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of the UK's role as a member of the Troika, and as a co-signatory of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, what specific action they have taken during March, and what action they plan to take in the coming weeks, to prevent further escalation of armed violence in South Sudan. [HL6285]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Following increases in fighting in South Sudan, and the house arrest of First Vice President Machar, we have called on President Kiir to reverse this action and prevent further escalation - including through engaging with regional efforts towards de-escalation. On 27th March we published a joint statement with the Troika and other likeminded partners and reiterated this message at the UN Human Rights Council. We will continue to work with partners, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the UN, to press for the full implementation of the 2018 peace agreement.

South Wales Police: Biometrics

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the deployment of live facial recognition by South Wales Police in Cardiff in February and March, how many police officers were involved; how many civilian staff were involved; how many police person hours were used in preparation and delivery of the project; what was the total cost of the project, including contractors;

and how many arrests resulted from the project, and for what offences. [HL6322]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Details of the pilot schemes carried out by South Wales Police will be set out in due course as part of a wider publication by the Home Office on its approach to the use of live facial recognition technology.

Special Advisers

Asked by Lord Brennan of Canton

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands of Government special advisers in each year from 2020; and how many special advisers were employed in each pay band in each of those years. [HL6547]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: Details of special adviser numbers and pay bands from 2020 are published in the annual report on special advisers and available on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/special-adviser-data-releases-numbers-and-costs>.

The 2024/25 annual report will be published later this year.

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands for Government special advisers for each year from 1997 to 2001; and how many special advisers were employed in each of those years within each pay band. [HL6598]

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands for Government special advisers for each year from 2002 to 2005; and how many special advisers were employed in each of those years within each pay band. [HL6599]

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands for Government special advisers for each year from 2006 to 2010; and how many special advisers were employed in each of those years within each pay band. [HL6600]

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands for special advisers for each year from 2011 to 2015; and how many Government special advisers were employed in each of those years within each pay band. [HL6601]

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands for Government special advisers for each year from 2016 to 2017; and how many special advisers

were employed in each of those years within each pay band. [HL6602]

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the pay bands for special advisers for each year from 2018 to 2019; and how many special advisers were employed in each of those years within each pay band. [HL6603]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Cabinet Office has published details of special adviser appointments annually on gov.uk since 2010 and these are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/special-adviser-data-releases-numbers-and-costs> on GOV.UK.

Details of special adviser appointments between 2002 and 2010 were periodically released in Written Parliamentary Statements and are available via Hansard but records from this period are not readily available.

Speed Limits

Asked by Baroness D'Souza

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have observed a reduction in death and injury caused by road traffic accidents in areas, such as central London, which have introduced a 20 miles per hour speed limit. [HL6099]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Department for Transport published a comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph limits, which are 20mph schemes relying only on signage, on 22 November 2018.

The evaluation looked at twelve case studies including two in city centres (Brighton and Winchester). No case studies were in London.

It found insufficient evidence to conclude that there had been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.

The only case study area showing a significant change in collisions and casualties, relative to its 30mph comparator area, was Brighton City Centre. This scheme covered both major and minor roads, with a 19% reduction in overall casualties, a 29% reduction in pedestrian casualties and a 51% reduction in casualties aged 75 or over. No significant change in casualties of cyclists or under 16s was found.

The evaluation stated that the changes appeared to be a reflection of the city characteristics, and the blanket implementation of 20mph limits across all roads within the scheme area, including higher flow A and B roads which were typically excluded from the residential case study schemes. There was a significant reduction in collisions across all road types, but the change was most pronounced on major strategic roads. The evaluation stressed that this represented just one case study, and the extent to which the findings were transferable to other locations was unclear.

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reduction in deaths and serious injuries from road accidents that has occurred since the introduction of 20 mph speed limits in built-up areas in Wales; and what studies they have undertaken to determine what reduction could be expected if a 20 mph speed limit was similarly applied to roads in built-up areas of England. [HL6216]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Setting and evaluating national limits in Wales, including the restricted road limit on street-lit roads, is a matter for the Welsh Government. The power to introduce 20mph limits on roads in England rests with local authorities.

The Department for Transport published a comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph limits, which are 20mph schemes relying only on signage, on 22 November 2018. The evaluation looked at twelve case studies in England, including two in city centres.

The evaluation found insufficient evidence to conclude that there had been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.

There is some evidence to suggest a positive 20mph impact in one city centre location in Brighton. A blanket 20mph limit was introduced, covering both major and minor roads, and there is sufficient data to show a statistically significant change in collisions and casualties relative to the 30mph comparator area. It should be stressed that this represents just one case study, and the extent to which the findings are transferable to other locations is unclear.

The Department for Transport has regular discussions with our counterparts in the devolved governments, including on road safety.

Sports

Asked by *Baroness Nye*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to develop a strategic vision for the future of sport in the UK. [HL5852]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is clear that sport has a fundamental role to play in delivering its Plan for Change whether through getting the nation more active, driving growth through our world leading sport sector or tackling issues such as youth violence by offering positive routes of engagement.

We are committed to working in partnership with the sport sector to maximise the role it has to play across our society.

Sports: Children

Asked by *Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to encourage young children to participate in sports, and (2) to emphasise the benefits of physical activity. [HL6134]

Baroness Twycross: The Government puts children and young people at the heart of our priorities. This includes breaking down barriers to opportunity for every child to realise the benefits of and access high-quality sport and physical activity, especially those who are less likely to be active.

The independent, expert-led review of the school curriculum will ensure that all children can engage with a broad range of subjects, including PE and sport.

The Government recently announced £100 million additional funding for the UK-wide Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme which funds new and upgraded pitches, facilities, and equipment. Funding will ensure that sites can provide a more inclusive and sustainable offer throughout the year for local communities, including for children and young people.

Sports: Girls

Asked by *Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that young girls continue to engage in sport from primary school to senior school. [HL6133]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is committed to breaking down barriers to accessing sport and physical activity for children and young people, including girls. We set out our intention to support more children to be active by protecting time for physical education (PE) in schools and working across government to support the role grassroots clubs play in expanding access to sport and physical activity.

The School Games Mark, funded by the government and managed by the Youth Sport Trust, has introduced mandatory equality criteria for PE, school sport and physical activity participation for the 2024/25 academic year. Schools can review their provision and test whether they are overcoming barriers girls and boys may face and ensure they are listening to the voice of the pupils as part of their planning and delivery. Best practice from the School Games Mark will be shared with all schools to enhance girls' equal access to sport.

Schools are also supported to increase girls' engagement in sport through programmes delivered by sector organisations, such as the Football Association's 'Barclays Girls' Football School Partnerships programme and Sport England's online 'Studio You' programme.

Stocks and Shares

Asked by *Lord Lee of Trafford*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase domestic ownership of UK equities. [HL6007]

Lord Livermore: The Government wants to see more consumers participate in capital markets and benefit from the long-term financial security that investing can provide.

The Financial Services Growth & Competitiveness Strategy Call for Evidence, which closed on 12 December, asked how increasing retail participation in capital markets could support long-term sustainable growth within the sector and the wider economy. The call for evidence welcomed further evidence on how to improve consumer engagement with investing, and the Government is considering the feedback provided.

More broadly, the Government is committed to boosting our capital markets to deliver growth across the UK and is pursuing ambitious reforms to make our markets even more competitive. For example, reforms to the Prospectus rules will give investors, including retail investors, access to better quality information and so participate more easily in the capital raising process. The Government is also working with the FCA to review the boundary between financial advice and guidance, to ensure consumers get the support they need to make decisions about their finances.

The Pensions Investment Review has put forward ambitious proposals to reform the UK pension system, which includes encouraging further pension investment into UK assets to boost growth across the country, and will publish its final report in the Spring.

Surrogacy

Asked by *Baroness Manzoor*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to ban people from going abroad to obtain paid surrogacy in poorer countries. [HL6362]

Baroness Merron: The Government has no plans to restrict international travel for surrogacy. We recognise that surrogacy is a complex and sensitive issue, but we do not support arrangements in which any party may be at risk of exploitation. We have issued guidance for those considering surrogacy overseas, clearly outlining the possible risks for individuals returning to the United Kingdom with a child born through an international arrangement.

Sustainable Farming Incentive

Asked by *Baroness Rock*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following their blog post "Update on the farming budget", published on 12 March, what plans they have to meet the National

Farmers' Union, the Country Land and Business Association and the Tenant Farmers Association to discuss the reopening of the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme. [HL5784]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Secretary of State attended the National Farmers Union (NFU) conference in February. Minister Zeichner has had 1:1 bilateral meetings on the Sustainable Farming Incentive specifically with the NFU, National Beef Association, British Poultry Council, Soil Association, Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, National Pig Association, National Sheep Association, British Egg Industry Council, National Federation of Young Farmers, British Free Range Egg Producers Association, LAA, Tenant Farmers Association and Country, Land and Business Association.

Asked by *Earl Cathcart*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to publish the revised offer for the Sustainable Farming Incentive. [HL6480]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We will provide further details about the reformed Sustainable Farming Incentive in summer 2025.

Taiwan Strait: Security

Asked by *Lord Kempsey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the security situation in the Taiwan Strait. [HL6055]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK has a clear interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. We consider the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by people on both sides of the Strait through constructive dialogue, without the threat or use of force or coercion. We are concerned by any activity that risks destabilising the status quo and have stated this alongside our G7 partners, including in the most recent G7 Foreign Ministers' statement.

Teachers

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many teachers were employed in primary and secondary state-funded schools in England on 31 December 2024. [HL6218]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Information on the school workforce, including the number of teachers in each school phase and type, is published in the 'School workforce in England' statistical publication, which can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

As of November 2023, the latest date for which data is available, there were 218,534 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers employed in state-funded nursery and primary

schools in England and 217,563 FTE teachers employed in state-funded secondary schools in England.

School workforce statistics as of November 2024 will be published in June 2025.

Teesworks

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 6 February (HL4386) about correspondence from the Tees Valley Mayor, whether they have now made a determination about the value for money of the Teesworks project and, if not, why not; and when they expect to publish a response to the Tees Valley Review and to the Mayor's letter issued on 27 September 2024. [HL6200]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: On 3 April 2025 my department issued Tees Valley Combined Authority with a non-statutory Best Value Notice for an initial period of 12 months. The Notice seeks assurance from the authority that it is complying with its Best Value Duty and has a clear strategy for improvement.

Television Licences

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government how many black and white television licences have been issued in each of the past five years. [HL6455]

Baroness Twycross: The BBC publishes information about the number of licences in force in its Annual Report and Accounts. For the years 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023, and 2023/2024 there has consistently been approximately 4,000 monochrome licences in force.

Tell MAMA: Finance

Asked by Baroness Gohir

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the total funding they allocated to Faith Matters for the Tell MAMA project for the 2025–26 financial year; what was the duration in months for which the funding was granted; and what specific activities will be supported by this funding. [HL6109]

Lord Khan of Burnley: The government is committed to providing a comprehensive service to monitor anti-Muslim hatred and providing support for victims, and on 2 April announced the Combatting Hate Against Muslims Fund. We are seeking grant applications to support organisations to provide a comprehensive service to monitor anti-Muslim hatred and support victims. We welcome applications from Tell MAMA as well as alternative providers.

The government has also made available £500,000 for funding Tell MAMA in 2025/26, to support their work for

Q1 and Q2 of 2025/26. This is subject to their signing of a Grant Funding Agreement for 2025/26 which will detail the specific activities the funding will support.

Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will invite the Police Service of Northern Ireland to investigate the conduct of ministers following the declassification of the minutes of a meeting with Sinn Féin at Hillsborough Castle on 9 October 2001 which record that ministers had "turned a blind eye" to serious crimes of the IRA, as reported in the Belfast Telegraph on 28 March. [HL6348]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government does not comment on National Archives releases or releases relating to previous Governments.

Tigray: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the departure of Getachew Reda as interim President of Tigray, what steps they are taking to prevent the fragmentation of governance in Tigray. [HL6534]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Both before and after the departure of Getachew Reda as Tigray's Interim Regional Administration President, and since the appointment of his successor Tadesse Werede, the UK has consistently engaged with the government of Ethiopia, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front and the African Union to prevent a return to conflict, support the implementation of the peace agreement, and encourage political dialogue. The UK is urging the parties to reduce the risks of fragmentation by responsibly agreeing a way forward on the key issues, including return of Internally Displaced People and Demobilisation, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR). The UK is a leading contributor to the DDR process in Tigray and supports women-led organisations to influence peace and recovery efforts.

Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) international companies, and (2) jobs, have been created by Northern Ireland having dual access to the UK and EU markets. [HL6085]

Baroness Gustafsson: The Windsor Framework positions Northern Ireland as a unique gateway for the sale of goods to two of the world's largest markets, as well as access to global markets through the UK's new trade agreements.

Whilst the Government has not made an assessment of the impact of dual market access on the number of jobs or international companies created, between 2019 and 2023,

Northern Ireland's sales of goods to Great Britain increased by £4.7bn or 69%, and sales to the EU increased by £2.9bn or 54%.

UK Internal Trade: Repayments

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government how many applications they have received to the Duty Reimbursement Scheme in each year since the scheme was set up, and how much has been reimbursed in each year. [HL6490]

Lord Livermore: The Duty Reimbursement Scheme (DRS) has been operational since 30 June 2023, allowing businesses who move goods into Northern Ireland to reclaim or remit duty provided that the goods can be shown not to have subsequently entered the EU.

As of 3 April 2025, 1,407 claims have been submitted under the DRS.

Period	Claims Submitted	Amounts Repaid
30 June 2023 – 31 December 2023	92	£134,925.30
1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024	873	£1,706,950.41
1 January 2025 – 3 April 2025	442	£1,720,655.27

Businesses also have a three-year window from the date they were notified of the duty being owed to make a claim under the DRS.

HMRC has published extensive guidance and will continue to support businesses to use the scheme effectively, as well as other schemes like the Customs Duty Waiver Scheme.

UK Relations with EU

Asked by Lord Gascoigne

To ask His Majesty's Government what specific outcomes they expect from the UK–EU summit on 19 May. [HL6230]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Prime Minister and President of the European Commission have agreed to strengthen the relationship between the UK and EU. We are working with the EU to identify areas where we can strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit, such as the economy, energy, security and resilience.

The UK-EU Summit on 19 May will provide an opportunity to make further progress on areas which will deliver tangible benefits, for those in the UK and the EU on making people safer, more secure and more prosperous. We will set out further details in due course.

Asked by Lord Gascoigne

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of their discussions on a proposed new security and defence pact with the EU, whether they intend to make a financial contribution to the EU as part of any such arrangements; and whether it is their position that there should be a link between those discussions and other aspects of their negotiations to "reset" the UK's relationship with the EU. [HL6231]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: We are ready to negotiate a Security and Defence Partnership agreement with the EU which builds on the EU's existing partnership agreements with other third countries, while recognising the unique nature of our security relationship. We are ready to look at strengthening our wider cooperation with the EU on defence and security matters, given the shared challenges facing us both, but as we've consistently said, we won't be giving a running commentary on our discussions with the EU.

Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support non-governmental humanitarian initiatives providing emergency aid and medical supplies to Ukraine. [HL5993]

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to provide financial support to non-governmental humanitarian initiatives providing emergency aid to Ukraine through (1) matched-giving using Official Development Assistance; and (2) encouraging business and industry to engage in matched-giving. [HL5994]

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to assist non-governmental humanitarian initiatives delivering medical aid to Ukraine by (1) helping identify recipient organisations; and (2) releasing surplus medical supplies in the United Kingdom which would otherwise go to waste. [HL5995]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office continues to support medical practitioners through funding partners in Ukraine. For example, the FCDO contributed to £320,000 of funding to the Superhumans War Trauma Centre in Ukraine last year. The clinic provides innovative rehabilitation services to people who have been impacted by war, including training surgeons on prosthetics. In addition, the Ukraine Red Cross Society, funded by UK assistance, provides specialised training at the Burns Unit in Kyiv.

Between 3 March 2022 and 31 December 2024 the UK Government matched £25 million of donations via the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal.

Ukraine: War Crimes

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, following reports that the government of the United States of America has (1) withdrawn from the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, and (2) reduced funding to the Humanitarian Research Lab investigating the mass deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia, how they are supporting efforts to ensure justice and accountability for Ukraine. [HL5983]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is committed to ensuring that those responsible for atrocities committed during the conflict in Ukraine are held to account for their actions. Since the full-scale invasion we have provided over £11 million in funding to support Ukraine's domestic accountability efforts. We are supporting the work of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and the International Criminal Court to ensure allegations of war crimes are fully and fairly investigated, by independent, effective and robust legal mechanisms. We are also supporting work towards establishing a Special Tribunal on the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and have played an active role in discussions with Ukraine and close partners to progress this commitment.

The UK raises the mass deportation of Ukrainian children continually with our allies and in multilateral fora, and we are playing our full part in international efforts to reunite these children with their families. On 19 November 2024, the UK released its third sanctions package targeting those involved in Putin's attempt to deport and indoctrinate Ukrainian children. Minister Doughty met with Ukrainian organisations 'Save Ukraine' and 'Bring Kids Back UA' in London on 27 March 2025. We continue to support the vital work to identify, locate, return and reintegrate Ukrainian children through the Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Asked by Lord Hampton

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the development of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the rights to early childhood education, free pre-primary education and free secondary education. [HL6346]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is committed to investing in children and ensuring equal access to education. In the UK we already provide free pre-primary (reception years), primary and secondary education and have been leading globally on ensuring

education for all. The UK considers that States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child should already be providing free education under the existing provisions of the Convention.

Unemployment: Men

Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have set a target to reduce the number of economically inactive men aged 16 to 24 years old. [HL6588]

Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to deliver additional employment support to young men aged 16 to 24 years old. [HL6589]

Baroness Sherlock: The steps set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper set us on a path to bring down economic inactivity levels and to take the first steps to delivering our long-term ambition of achieving an 80% employment rate. The Department understands the negative effects of unemployment can be particularly pronounced for young people and can have longstanding implications on their future earnings potential and life chances. This is why DWP have a particular focus on ensuring young people are supported into employment, whilst also recognising their needs will vary depending on where they live and their own individual circumstances.

DWP currently provides young people aged 16-24 with labour market support through an extensive range of interventions at a national and local level. This includes flexible provision driven by local need, nationwide employment programmes and support delivered by work coaches based in our Jobcentres and in local communities working alongside partners such as the Kings Trust, Local Authorities, National Careers Service/Career Wales, local colleges and Youth Trusts.

As part of our plan to Get Britain Working, we are launching a new Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18-21 in England to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or help to find work. The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education are working closely with the eight Mayoral Strategic Authorities in England set to receive grant funding to deliver the Youth Guarantee Trailblazers from Spring 2025. We will use the learning from these Trailblazers to inform the future design and development of the Youth Guarantee as it rolls-out across the rest of England.

This is alongside a new national jobs and careers service to help get more people into work, work health and skills plans for the economically inactive, and the launch of Skills England to open new opportunities for young people. We will work in partnership with organisations and businesses at the national and local level to offer exciting and engaging opportunities to young people. This could include work experience, training courses or employability programmes.

The Government is also reforming the apprenticeships offer into a more flexible growth and skills offer, aligned to the industrial strategy. The Department for Education is working to introduce new foundation apprenticeships for young people, as well as shorter duration apprenticeships, in targeted sectors. These will help more people learn new high-quality skills at work, fuel innovation in businesses across the country, and provide high-quality entry pathways for young people.

Unpaid Taxes

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what assumptions they have made in their budget estimates for additional resources gained from the recovery of unpaid tax. [HL6383]

Lord Livermore: The Government expects an additional £6.3 billion per year to be gained by 2029-30 from the measures announced as part of the Budget in October 2024 and Spring Statement 2025. These estimates have been certified by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility.

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional staff and funding they have provided to allow HMRC to pursue unpaid tax. [HL6384]

Lord Livermore: As announced by the Chancellor in July 2024 (and confirmed in the Budget in October 2024) £1.4 billion of funding will be provided to HMRC over the next five years to recruit an additional 5,000 HMRC compliance staff, raising £2.7 billion per year in additional revenue by 2029-30.

In addition, the Government confirmed at the Budget in October 2024 that £262 million will be invested over the next five years, to fund 1,800 HMRC debt management staff, raising £2 billion per year in additional revenue by 2029-30. Further investment of £272m to modernise HMRC's IT and data systems and increase tax receipts as a result, is expected to raise additional revenue of £700m per year by 2029-30.

As part of the Spring Statement 2025, a package of measures to help further close the tax gap and raise over £800 million in additional gross tax revenue per year by 2029-30 was announced. Specifically, investment of £100m in 500 additional HMRC compliance staff and £114m in 600 additional HMRC debt management staff, as well as £87m to increase collection of overdue tax debt using Debt Collection Agencies acting on HMRC's behalf.

Unpaid Taxes: Debts Written Off

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government how much uncollected tax they have written off in each of the past 10 years. [HL6582]

Lord Livermore:

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Write-offs</i>	<i>Remissions</i>	<i>Total Losses</i>
2023-24	£5,049m	£567m	£5,616m
2022-23	£3,154m	£596m	£3,750m
2021-22	£1,892m	£515m	£2,407m
2020-21	£1,517m	£445m	£1,962m
2019-20	£3,538m	£546m	£4,084m
2018-19	£3,669m	£794m	£4,463m
2017-18	£3,370m	£367m	£3,737m
2016-17	£3,564m	£303m	£3,867m
2015-16	£3,171m	£604m	£3,775m
2014-15	£3,865m	£372m	£4,237m

HMRC revenue losses are made up of remissions and write-offs. Remissions are debts capable of recovery, but HMRC has decided not to pursue the liability on the grounds of value for money. Write-offs are debts that are considered to be irrecoverable because there is no practical means for pursuing the liability.

Vaccination: Publicity

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to other governments regarding the importance of international action to promote the uptake of vaccinations. [HL6221]

Baroness Merron: The United Kingdom continues to be the largest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private partnership that works to ensure that 54 of the world's poorest countries have affordable access to life-saving vaccines. We are providing a further £1.65 billion in financing for the period covering 2026 to 2030.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) works in partnership with the devolved administrations to deliver on our commitments to the global elimination of vaccine preventable diseases such as polio, measles, rubella, hepatitis B and C. The UKHSA collaborates closely with international partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), on a range of activities aimed at strengthening routine immunisation programmes and improving uptake.

The UKHSA holds a mandatory role in the WHO's Expanded Programmes for Immunization to ensure that all children, in all countries, benefit from life-saving vaccines, and is also contributing to work in the European Immunization Agenda 2030. The UKHSA also collaborates with international partners on relevant research, for example the Reducing Inequalities in Vaccine uptake in the European Region – Engaging Underserved communities project.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, sponsored by the Department, supports international work

to improve the development of evidence-based advice on vaccination. This includes representation on the global National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) steering committee, and through bilateral and multi-lateral communication with NITAGs globally.

VAT: Foreign Companies

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of VAT paid by overseas-based online vendors that operate in the UK. [HL6153]

Lord Livermore: UK VAT is charged on goods and services sold by overseas-based online vendors at the same rate as domestic sales. This ensures a level playing field, and that these vendors contribute fairly to public finances from their UK business activities.

The Government is aware of VAT non-compliance among some overseas-based online vendors. HMRC has an overall compliance strategy which focuses on addressing all forms of non-compliance. The most recent published VAT gap shows a continued downward trend, falling from 13.7% to 4.9% between tax years 2005/06 and 2022/23.

Since 2021, for some sales, VAT is collected and remitted by the marketplace that facilitates the sale. The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates these changes, alongside the removal of low-value consignment relief, will generate an additional £1.8 billion per annum by 2026-27.

VAT: Recycling

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce VAT on reuse and repair practices. [HL6477]

Lord Livermore: VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. Tax breaks reduce the revenue available for vital public services and must represent value for money for the taxpayer.

One of the key considerations when assessing a new VAT relief is whether the cost saving is likely to be passed on to consumers. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any savings from lower VAT rates. The Government therefore has no plans to introduce a new VAT relief on reuse and repair practices.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

Victoria Tower Gardens

Asked by Lord Robathan

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the inclusion of Victoria Tower Gardens on the list published by Europa Nostra and the

European Investment Bank, 7 most endangered heritage sites in Europe for 2025, on 18 March. [HL6446]

Lord Khan of Burnley: The design for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre was chosen because it is sensitive to the heritage and existing uses of Victoria Tower Gardens, and includes enhancements that will help all visitors, including better pathways and improved access to existing memorials.

In considering the planning application, the independent Inspector looked in detail at matters such as the impact on the Gardens and existing Memorials. He concluded that any harms to heritage assets or open space were outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.

Video Games

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve access to investment and funding for video game developers in the UK, particularly those from under-represented groups. [HL6379]

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the video game industry to increase (1) diversity of characters shown in games, and (2) the diversity of main characters in games. [HL6519]

Baroness Twycross: The Government has announced £5.5 million funding for the UK Games Fund (UKGF) for 2025/26, which will provide grants to early-stage studios across the UK to develop prototypes and new intellectual property, and run development programmes for new graduates. The Fund includes diversity criteria in its assessment process for grant funding and encourages applicants to consider the British Film Institute's Diversity Standards.

Video games companies can also benefit from the Video Games Expenditure Credit, and can access support from the Create Growth Programme and UK Global Screen Fund, all of which require applicants to consider diversity criteria.

In January, the British Business Bank also committed to increase its support for the UK's Creative Industries, including video games, to help them realise their full growth potential.

Video Games: Tax Allowances

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the video game industry, particularly in regard to tax relief schemes for companies. [HL6518]

Lord Livermore: The Government recognises that the creative industries, including the video games sector, play a key role in driving economic growth. As part of the Government's Industrial Strategy, a creative industries

sector plan will be developed, working with business, local leaders, and sector experts.

The Government supports the video games sector through the tax system and through funding. Video games companies benefit from the Video Games Expenditure Credit, which provides a generous tax credit of 34 per cent on UK video games development costs.

In addition, companies may benefit from the £5.5 million UK Games Fund, which helps high-potential start-ups scale-up.

Visas: Scientists

Asked by Lord Hain

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the average cost of a visa for a scientist from overseas to work in the UK, and whether they have benchmarked this against costs for similar visas provided by other countries. [HL6048]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The cost of a visa for a scientist to work in the UK will vary depending on the visa route they enter the UK through. Visa fees are published on gov.uk and can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-fees-transparency-data>.

Should an applicant wishing to work in the UK as a scientist apply for a skilled worker from overseas the current cost is £719 (up to three-years) or £1,420 (over three-years). Alternatively, should they enter the UK via the Global Talent route the current fee is £716. They could also apply for a 12-month Standard Visitor visa for academics which currently costs £200.

Visa products are difficult to compare because visa offers, including benefits and entitlements gained and duration of stay, vary significantly between countries. However, UK visa fees are broadly competitive when compared with the fees charged by comparative countries globally.

Water Charges

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of increasing water bills on consumers, and what action they will take to limit that impact. [HL6409]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: For too long, investment has not kept pace with the challenges of an ageing infrastructure system, a rapidly growing population and climate change. Bills will therefore now need to rise to invest in our crumbling infrastructure and deliver cleaner waterways.

Ofwat published their final determinations for Price Review 2024 in December, which sets company expenditure and customer bills for 2025-2030. These bill rises equate to around £3 additional per month on average before inflation.

The Government expects water companies to put robust support measures in place to ensure that vulnerable customers across the country are supported and is working with industry to keep current support schemes under review to ensure that customers are sufficiently supported.

Furthermore, we expect companies to hold themselves accountable for their commitment to end Water Poverty by 2030 and will work with the sector to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to this end.

West Coast Main Line: Standards

Asked by Lord Inglewood

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the percentages of total delays on the West Coast Main Line caused by (1) mechanical failure, (2) infrastructure failure, and (3) staff problems. [HL6172]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publishes data on train delays, which can be publicly accessed through their data portal. The ORR also reports the causes of these delays by operator. Given that multiple operators provide services on the West Coast Main Line, it is not possible to isolate the causes of delays occurring specifically on this route.

However, data on the delay causes for Avanti West Coast, the primary operator of intercity services on the West Coast Main Line, for the last 12 months for which data is available is set out in the attached document.

(1) Mechanical failure - 18% of Avanti West Coast delay minutes were attributed to 'Fleet', either the TOC's own or that of another operator.

(2) Infrastructure failure - 64% of Avanti West Coast delay minutes were attributed to 'Network Rail' including track, and network Management.

(3) Staff Problems - 8% of Avanti West Coast delay minutes were attributed to 'Traincrew' either the TOC's own or that of another operator.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table of delays on the West Coast Main Line [Table 1 shows the percentage of delay minutes recorded for Avanti West Coast.docx]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-26/HL6172>

Wild Boar: Dartmoor

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to publish a new Wild Boar Action Plan following the appearance of a new population in Dartmoor National Park. [HL6470]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Primary responsibility for wild boar management lies with local communities and individual landowners. Defra works closely with stakeholder organisations to ensure communities, local

authorities and landowners have access to guidance and information where needed to control populations and mitigate the impact of feral wild boar in their areas. Advice and further information on licensing and legislation relating wildlife management including wild boar is available on GOV.UK.

As part of ongoing work on contingency plans relating to wildlife disease management, Defra is undertaking a review of the Feral Wild Boar Action Plan. We will announce further details on this in due course.

Windsor Framework: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what its policy is on deciding whether to consult stakeholders in Northern Ireland on changes to European Union legislation which are imposed on Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework. [HL6226]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government regularly consults with stakeholders in Northern Ireland on a wide range of policy issues, including those relating to the Windsor Framework.

Regulations that apply under the Windsor Framework are also subject to scrutiny both in Parliament and, as provided for in law, in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Government will continue to uphold these scrutiny commitments, which include the provision of explanatory materials on amended or replaced EU legislation which is included in the annexes to the Framework.

Young People: Surveys

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the UK Youth Poll 2025. [HL6584]

Baroness Twycross: We are co-producing the National Youth Strategy in partnership with young people and cross-sector experts. As part of this, we have launched a national survey to ask young people about their needs and priorities. This will build on the findings from the UK Youth Poll 2025, providing further insights on young people's issues including democracy, financial security and employment.

Zimbabwe: Politics and Government

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current protests and demonstrations in Zimbabwe and the detention of opposition party members by the Zanu PF government. [HL6349]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is monitoring political developments in Zimbabwe, including demonstrations on 31 March when a number of protestors were arrested. The UK supports the rights to peaceful protest and due process guaranteed by Zimbabwe's constitution.

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