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**Monday**  
**19 May 2025**

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

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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

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<b>Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent</b>	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
<b>Baroness Blake of Leeds</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Chapman of Darlington</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Coaker</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Baroness Gustafsson</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
<b>Lord Hanson of Flint</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Baroness Hayman of Ullock</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill</b>	Minister of State, Department for Transport
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<b>Lord Hunt of Kings Heath</b>	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
<b>Baroness Jones of Whitchurch</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Whip
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<b>Lord Leong</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Livermore</b>	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
<b>Baroness Merron</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Lord Moraes</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, Whip
<b>Baroness Sherlock</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Baroness Smith of Cluny</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Baroness Smith of Malvern</b>	Minister of State, Department for Education
<b>Baroness Taylor of Stevenage</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Whip
<b>Lord Timpson</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
<b>Baroness Twycross</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport, Spokesperson, Cabinet Office, Whip
<b>Lord Vallance of Balham</b>	Minister of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
<b>Baroness Wheeler</b>	Deputy Chief Whip
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# Written Statements

Monday, 19 May 2025

## Afghan Special Forces Relocation Review

[HLWS644]

**Lord Coaker:** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Luke Pollard) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Following my statement in the autumn of last year, I would like to further update the House on progress of the Triples Review.

In my previous statement on the Triples Review of 14 October 2024 (Volume 754, column 612), I committed to updating the House on the review's progress. I can now announce that the case work within the initial scope of the review has been completed, with approximately 30% of those decisions now overturned. We have continued to relocate and settle eligible Triples who supported the UK mission in Afghanistan to restart their life in UK. All eligibility decisions are made against policy considering the individual circumstances of the applicant in line with UK Immigration Rules.

However, the work of the review is not yet complete. As I set out in my previous statement, officials have continued to analyse and strengthen their understanding of the payment records that MOD hold relating to members of Afghan Partner Forces.

Following further advice, I am now satisfied that, in addition to the payment records that for some Triples have been sufficient to evidence a direct employment relationship with HMG, for others Top Up Pay will also be sufficient in this context to demonstrate that they have worked alongside us. Further, it will mean that, in some cases, evidence of certain Top Up Payments will also be sufficient to demonstrate a substantive and positive contribution to the UK's military or national security objectives in Afghanistan due to the nature of the work undertaken by those individuals. This revised approach will make it more likely that some Triples previously found ineligible will secure a positive decision, if they can also demonstrate that they meet the other conditions for eligibility.

So, I am today announcing that the Triples Review will move into a second and final phase to ensure that all those impacted by this change in approach will have their case reviewed. This will include some applicants who were in scope of the original review, but also others who were not.

Further details on Phase Two of the Review are available in the Terms of Reference, which will be published online in the coming days alongside the ARAP criteria. We are also publishing more details of the earlier work that will be known as Phase One of the Review.

I want to reiterate that I am committed to getting this right and I believe that launching a second and final phase of this review is the right thing to do to ensure we deliver

on our moral obligation to all those who should be eligible. I can assure the House that all those who have already had their application reviewed under Phase One and have had a fresh decision made have either been contacted or will be contacted in due course, and that all those who have decisions made throughout Phase Two will be contacted on a rolling basis.

All decisions made in Phase One and Phase Two of the Triples Review will also carry a right to have this decision reviewed. I am not going to fall into the trap that the previous Government did of committing to a timeline which was clearly not deliverable, but I will keep the House updated on progress and am personally invested and remain committed to completing this as quickly as possible.

Finally, as the Defence Secretary set out in his statement in December, the Government intends to reach a position where the UK Afghan resettlement schemes can be closed. We will update the House on this accordingly.

## Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

[HLWS645]

**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:

On 16 May 2025 CPTPP Parties met in Jeju, Republic of Korea, in the margins of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade conference. Those present comprised Ministers and representatives of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

The meeting provided a strategic mid-year point to assess CPTPP's objectives for 2025 and agree ambitions for the coming year. Following the meeting CPTPP Parties issued a [Joint Ministerial Statement](#), which covers the following important areas:

*Trade and Investment Dialogues with the EU and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)*

In light of increasing challenges across the global economic landscape, CPTPP Parties welcomed the opportunity to advance the Trade and Investment Initiatives identified in the [Vancouver Statement](#) published in November 2024, through agreement to pursue dialogues with the EU and ASEAN. These dialogues would aim to promote shared trade and investment interests and reinforce CPTPP's role in the global economic architecture, and CPTPP Parties committed to pursuing them as soon as possible in 2025.

*The General Review*

Parties noted progress with the CPTPP General Review and highlighted the importance of officials providing recommendations before the end of the year on ways to update and enhance the agreement. Areas of strong UK

interest, such as e-commerce and financial services, remain at the forefront of the Review.

#### *Future Accessions to CPTPP*

Parties discussed the importance of CPTPP's continued expansion and welcomed the progress made on Costa Rica's accession process.

#### *Next Steps*

We welcome the conclusions reached in the Jeju Joint Ministerial Statement and will continue working closely with CPTPP Parties to drive significant economic and strategic gains from our CPTPP membership, whether that be as we widen the agreement through accessions, deepen it through the General Review, or build bridges with key partners across the world through establishing new dialogues.

CPTPP Ministers will convene again towards the end of this year for the CPTPP Commission Meeting under Australia's Chairship, and I look forward to keeping the House updated with further developments.

## Consumer Credit Regulation

[HLWS646]

**Lord Livermore:** My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Emma Reynolds) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (CCA). The way people interact with their finances and the consumer credit market is dramatically different today and the transformation in 50 years has been vast. Digital technology has transformed how people use and take out credit; with that, many new challenges and opportunities have emerged, such as the rapid emergence and growth of Buy-Now, Pay-Later (BNPL) products.

Today, the Government has announced a package of measures designed to future-proof the regulatory framework of the UK's £200bn+ consumer credit market. These measures aim to allow businesses to innovate effectively and ensure consumers have access to useful and affordable credit products, and clear rights where things go wrong.

BNPL products have become increasingly popular with many UK consumers. When offered responsibly, they can serve as a useful and affordable credit option. However, these unregulated products carry certain risks, as highlighted in particular by the 2021 Woolard Review.

Last October, the Government published a consultation setting out its plans to address this by bringing the sector into regulation. [1] Under the proposals, BNPL firms will need to be authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and will be subject to ongoing supervision. These proposals aim to ensure people using BNPL products receive clear information, avoid unaffordable borrowing,

and have strong rights when issues arise. The Government's approach will maintain access to these popular products while adding crucial safeguards.

The Government has today published its consultation response, summarising the feedback it received and setting out its final position on the proposals. [2] Respondents expressed a strong desire for action in this area and were generally supportive of the proposed regulatory regime. The Government has also laid The Draft Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Regulated Activities etc.) (Amendment) Order 2025, the affirmative procedure SI needed for bringing BNPL products into regulation.

Once the SI is approved by Parliament, the FCA will proceed to draft and consult on its rules for BNPL lending. This will give interested parties the opportunity to comment on the rules before they are finalised. Regulation is then expected to come into force in mid-2026.

Alongside this, HM Treasury is also publishing its consultation on phase one of CCA reform. [3] The CCA has served the UK well for many decades and continues to provide important protections, but it has failed to keep up with developments in the market and the changing ways in which people engage with credit. As a result, the regime is confusing and burdensome for firms, stifling innovation and is not delivering the best outcomes for consumers.

The consultation sets out the Government's proposals to move much of the CCA out of regulation so that it sits in the more agile rulebook of the FCA. The proposals aim to create a modern, agile and proportionate regulatory regime for consumer credit that is equipped to provide robust protection for consumers. A further consultation will follow in due course, covering rights and protections, scope and definitions.

Overall, reforming regulation for firms while ensuring robust consumer protection will unlock the full potential of the consumer credit sector. This is an important milestone in delivering the Government's plan to go further and faster to drive economic growth through the Plan for Change by supporting our consumer credit sector to innovate and become a driving force in delivering economic growth and enhancing competitiveness.

[1]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-buy-now-pay-later-consultation-on-draft-legislation-october-2024>.

[2]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-buy-now-pay-later-consultation-on-draft-legislation-october-2024>.

[3]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-consumer-credit-act-1974-cca-reform>.

# Written Answers

Monday, 19 May 2025

## Agriculture: Genetically Modified Organisms

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much public funding has been allocated to research and development for the commercialisation of crops, livestock, foods and micro-organisms produced by agricultural genetic modification since 2014; and what proportion of this funding has been awarded to UK-based companies. [HL7050]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Since 2014 UKRI, through BBSRC (approximately £13.9 million) and Innovate UK (approximately £1.35 million), has invested more than £15 million in research involving genetic modification (including genome editing) of crops and farmed animals for agricultural- and food-based research based in the UK.

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have conducted a review on the balance of public investment between agricultural genetic modification and alternative strategies for sustainable farming and food security. [HL7052]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Department recognises that we need a variety of approaches to address sustainable farming and food security. For example, the industry-led Farming Innovation Programme funds a range of approaches to address how innovation can increase farming productivity sustainably. This is complemented by Defra's agri-food science programme which develops R&D to enable sustainable farming and help ensure food security.

## Agriculture: Subsidies

Asked by **Lord Cromwell**

To ask His Majesty's Government what quantitative estimate they have made, using the data they hold on Basic Payment Scheme payments now delinked, of the amount saved by the current reductions to delinked agricultural payments between now and the end of the period to which they apply, compared to the payments originally anticipated for the same period at the introduction of delinked payments. [HL7173]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** When delinked payments were introduced in 2024, no decision had been made about the reductions that were to apply to these payments for years after 2024.

We estimate that the reductions to be applied to delinked payments for 2025 will lead to a further £550 million reduction in these payments compared to 2024. This money is being re-invested in full into our other

schemes for farmers and land managers in England, within an overall farming budget of £2.4 billion for 2025/26.

The reductions to delinked payments for future years have not been decided yet and will be announced in due course.

## Ahmed al-Doush

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that Ahmed al-Doush is released by the government of Saudi Arabia. [HL7127]

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure Ahmed al-Doush receives a fair trial in Saudi Arabia. [HL7128]

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will attend the trial of Ahmed al-Doush on 4 May in Saudi Arabia. [HL7129]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** For data protection reasons, we are unable to comment publicly on the details of Mr Al-Doush's case; however, the Minister for the Middle East is following the case closely.

The UK Government is bound by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, which prohibits interference in the judicial affairs of another state.

Individuals detained overseas are encouraged to seek local legal advice and raise any due process concerns with their local lawyer who is best placed to raise these with the courts. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) provides families with a list of local lawyers to support them with this process. Our consular staff will aim to stay in regular contact with British nationals detained overseas and where British nationals feel they are not treated in line with international standards, with their consent, the FCDO can raise concerns with the appropriate authorities.

Consular officials do not routinely attend court hearings involving British nationals. Any exceptions to this are made on a case-by-case basis and will depend on several factors including the circumstances of the case and the local context.

## Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group

Asked by **Lord Pearson of Rannoch**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to make anti-Muslim hatred/Islamophobia, as defined by the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group or otherwise, a criminal offence, and if so what penalty the offence will carry. [HL7257]



*Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government when is the latest date by which they intend to publish the report from the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group. [HL7258]

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** I refer the Noble Lord to the [Terms of Reference for the Working Group](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Terms of Reference [Working Group Terms of Reference March 2025.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-05-07/HL7257>

## Apprentices: Young People

*Asked by Baroness Curran*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that young people have access to apprenticeships. [HL7056]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** I refer my noble Friend to the answer of 9 April 2025 to Question [HL2609](#).

## Armenia: Azerbaijan

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reported attacks in Khoznavar in Armenia allegedly by Azerbaijan in April, and what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan to protect civilian lives and infrastructure. [HL7107]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** We are aware of reporting that alleges ceasefire violations and we are following the situation closely. The UK government welcomes Armenia and Azerbaijan's agreement on a peace deal and urges them to sign it as soon as possible, to provide security and stability to the region. We continue to urge both sides to refrain from rhetoric or action that could undermine prospects for peace. The Minister of State, Stephen Doughty, underlined our support for a long-lasting peace deal with Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan on 11 April at the Antalya Diplomatic Forum, in a call with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov on 29 April and in a meeting with Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Yalchin Rafiyev on 30 April.

## Arm's-length Bodies: Operating Costs

*Asked by Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 10 April (HL6032), what is their estimate of the annual cost of each of the 26 arm's-length bodies

which they have confirmed are in the process of being set up. [HL6681]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** Departments are responsible for assessing the potential costs of proposed new bodies as part of their business case development. The Cabinet Office does not centrally estimate costs for departments' proposals.

The government is conducting a full line-by-line Spending Review which will cover the costs of proposed and existing ALBs to ensure value for money is being delivered for the taxpayer.

On 6 April, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced a full review of all arm's-length bodies to ensure their existence can be strongly justified against key principles. Any future decision to set up any new ALBs would need to demonstrate alignment with these principles and follow the joint HMT and Cabinet Office approval process for new bodies.

## Artificial Intelligence: Carbon Emissions

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how current net zero targets will affect the adoption of artificial intelligence technologies and investment in these technologies. [HL7140]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** Embracing the opportunities that AI can provide to drive growth and productivity in the economy is a government objective. Building the low carbon economy of the future will lead to significant increases in electricity demand across many sectors. These projected increases were a key part of the analysis that underpinned the department's Clean Power Action Plan, consistent with our net zero targets. By unlocking new low carbon electricity generation, improving access to the electricity grid and the efficient operation of the energy system we will achieve Clean Power by 2030. We will maintain secure, resilient energy supplies that can be used to enable these technologies.

## Artificial Intelligence: New Businesses

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that artificial intelligence start-up firms founded in the United Kingdom remain based here as they scale their businesses. [HL7139]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** The Government is committed to supporting the digital economy, removing barriers to inclusive economic growth, and ensuring that the UK remains one of the best places in the world for our great tech businesses to start, scale and stay.

Programmes such as the SEIS/EIS schemes and R&D Tax Credits demonstrate the UK's commitment to supporting tech companies in thriving in the UK.

The AI Action Plan sets out our intention to support the growth ambitions of businesses across the AI sector.

Initiatives include opening the AI Research Resource to a wider pool of SMEs to drive forward new AI-enabled innovations, fostering national champions within the UK startup ecosystem, and unlocking data assets for startups to access.

### Asylum: Housing

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many of those granted asylum in 2024 were accommodated in (1) dispersal accommodation, (2) hotel accommodation, and (3) other accommodation provided under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, at the time of the decision on their asylum claim. [HL7130]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** Specific information on the support status asylum seekers at time of initial decision is not currently available from published statistics, and the relevant data could only be collated and verified for the purpose of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

### Bank Services: Small Businesses

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of bank branch closures on small businesses. [HL7285]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and businesses, and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority.

That is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this Parliament. Over 220 hubs have been announced so far, and over 150 are already open.

Cash Access UK, who oversee the rollout of banking hubs, reported from their research in Brixham (Devon) and Rochford (Essex), in October 2024 that spend on the high street is 71% higher amongst those who have visited the banking hub. Almost half (47%) of businesses surveyed said they have experienced an increase in footfall thanks to the banking hub.

In addition, Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) guidance expects firms to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and put in place alternatives where reasonable. This seeks to ensure that branch closures are implemented in a way that treats customers, including business customers, fairly. Where firms fall short of expectations, the FCA may ask for closures to be paused or other options to be put in place.

### Cabinet Office: Redundancy

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total cost of (1) redundancy, (2) severance, and (3) human resources consultancy, as a result of the planned reduction of 2,100 roles in the Cabinet Office. [HL7122]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Cabinet Office has announced plans to restructure and reorganise, to create a more strategic, specialist, and smaller centre of government.

Savings will be made from non-pay budgets and pay budgets, and we expect up to 1,200 staff will leave the department in the next two years. Our priority is to achieve the necessary reductions through voluntary means or attrition. So far, 540 employees have been approved to leave through the Voluntary Exit Scheme, which is expected to cost £27 million. Estimates of the total cost of staff exits are under development. All exit payments will comply with the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. This is a long-term investment as part of this government's commitment to reshape the way the British state delivers for and serves working people

These staff exits are separate to c.900 people who have moved out of the department through machinery of government changes. This includes the transfer of the Government Digital Service to DSIT to create the digital centre of government.

### Carbon Emissions

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report published on 22 April by Friends of the Earth International, Climate and biodiversity in freefall, particularly the finding that 78 per cent of the top 50 carbon offsetting projects are likely ineffective or worthless. [HL7279]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The UK is a strong advocate for carbon pricing and a pioneer on carbon markets, through domestic action and our support for the uptake of pricing and market schemes globally.

Harnessed properly, carbon markets can help deliver global climate ambition, mobilise much-needed finance to tackle climate change, and deliver cost-effective abatement and wider development benefits. They can play a crucial role in protecting forests internationally and in the UK.

Stakeholders have called for greater clarity on what constitutes a high-quality carbon credit and how credits should be used. Therefore, in November last year the UK Government published a set of guiding principles for high-integrity voluntary carbon and nature markets and in

April this year we launched a consultation into steps that can be taken to implement these.

Through our climate finance programmes the UK has helped address the challenges linked with ‘project-based’ forest credits, for example, the ‘leakage’ of carbon emissions. We have worked with countries to develop jurisdictional approaches to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+), which cover entire countries or states, allowing greater transparency and the generation of higher-integrity carbon credits.

### Charities: Employers’ Contributions

*Asked by Lord McColl of Dulwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions on charities working in the social care and special education sectors; and what steps, if any, they are taking to reduce that impact. [HL7254]

*Asked by Lord McColl of Dulwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions on charities working in the social care and special education sectors; and what steps, if any, they are taking to reduce that impact. [HL7387]

**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.

The Government is making available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025/26, which includes a £880 million increase in the Social Care Grant. This represents an increase to local government spending power of up to 6.8% in cash terms.

The Government increased funding for the core schools budget by £2.3 billion, increasing per pupil funding in real terms, in 2025-26. £1 billion of this funding will go towards supporting the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system.

The Government also provides support for charities via our tax regime, which is among the most generous of anywhere in the world, with tax reliefs for charities and their donors worth just over £6 billion for the tax year to April 2024.

### Children: Social Services

*Asked by Lord Laming*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether local authority social care services are funded and equipped

to meet the needs of the 621,880 children referred to them in 2024. [HL6717]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) for the 2025/26 financial year will grant councils in England access to over £69 billion in funding, which is a 6.8% cash terms increase on the 2024/25 financial year. Decisions on allocation of funding for all local authority-delivered services, including children’s social care, are for local authorities to take based on local need, priorities and statutory duties.

In recognition of the need to ensure local authorities have the resources needed to deliver good quality children’s social care services, the LGFS for 2025/26 provides two new grants for children and family services. A new Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant is set to be introduced, which will provide £270 million of new funding for investment in additional prevention activity through the implementation of Family Help and child protection reforms. The Children and Families Grant, worth £414 million, will also be available. This will consolidate several previous departmental children’s social care grants, including £253.5 million from the former Supporting Families Programme.

The government’s investment in 2025/26 is a significant step in our ambition to rebalance the children’s social care system and will enable local authorities to move towards financial sustainability and deliver improved outcomes for children and families.

Funding for future years will be subject to phase two of the spending review.

### Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made representations to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to include events in Northern Ireland in their work commemorating Victory in Europe Day and Victory over Japan Day. [HL7215]

**Baroness Twycross:** Supported by DCMS, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is running the For Evermore Tour, with more than 250 mobile exhibitions and events across the UK and a number of global commemorative sites to the Pacific, highlighting the stories of those who fought in the Second World War.

CWGC has confirmed the Tour will visit Northern Ireland in June and is in the process of confirming venues at Stormont and Carrickfergus to coincide with the week leading up to and including National Armed Forces Day.

### Doctors: Regulation

*Asked by Lord Jones of Penybont*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the General Medical Council about



reforming regulatory procedures for doctors using powers under section 60 of the Health Act 1999. [HL7432]

**Baroness Merron:** Officials from the Department are working closely with the General Medical Council to develop the necessary legislation to modernise the legislative framework for doctors, as part of our professional regulation reform programme.

We anticipate being in a position to consult on this legislation, which will be made using the affirmative procedure under powers granted in Section 60 of the Health Act 1999, in late 2025.

## Electronic Government

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many, and which, of the 39 outcomes in the National Cyber Security Centre Cyber Assessment Framework are complied with by Gov.uk One Login; and what steps they are taking to ensure Gov.uk One Login achieves all 39 outcomes. [HL7121]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Government does not routinely comment on operational security matters. GOV.UK One Login works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to identify and mitigate risks and align to the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF). The programme is committed to achieving CAF compliance by the end of 2025/26, in line with Government standards.

## Forests: Carbon Emissions

*Asked by Lord Roborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the results of the consultation on allowing Woodland Carbon Credits under the Woodland Carbon Code to be admitted into the United Kingdom Emissions Trading Scheme. [HL7193]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** We are currently exploring the inclusion of greenhouse gas removals into the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, including the potential integration of high integrity woodland, such as Woodland Carbon Units under the Woodland Carbon Code. A consultation was launched in May 2024, and we will respond in due course.

## GCE A-level and GCSE: Statistics

*Asked by Baroness Golding*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether schools in England include the results of external candidates in their GCSE and A-Level statistics. [HL7060]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department's GCSE and A level statistics include the results of external

candidates at the end of key stage 4 (GCSEs) or 16-18 study (A levels), which are recorded against the school that a pupil has been allocated to. For state schools, pupils are allocated to a school based on the school census, while for independent schools or colleges, pupils are allocated based on exam data or the Individualised Learner Record. All exam results achieved by a pupil are recorded against the allocated school or college, regardless of where they were entered for the exam, including private exam entries.

Prior to publication, schools and colleges are given the opportunity to request the removal of incorrectly included external candidates from their GCSE and A level performance measures data, via the Check Your Performance Measures Data service.

## Gender Recognition Certificates

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many gender recognition certificates have been issued in each of the past 10 years. [HL7212]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The table below shows the number of applications received by the Gender Recognition Panel that were granted full Gender Recognition Certificates in the last 10 years.

Table 1: Number of Gender Recognition Certificates granted in full during the complete financial years from 2014/15 to 2023/24

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Gender Recognition Panel</i>
2014/15	244
2015/16	329
2016/17	316
2017/18	351
2018/19	323
2019/20	364
2020/21	427
2021/22	495
2022/23	871
2023/24	1,088

Date source: [Tribunals statistics quarterly: October to December 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

## Home Education

*Asked by Baroness Golding*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure the availability of free and accessible educational materials suitable for KS3 and KS4, particularly for elective home education. [HL7059]

*Asked by **Baroness Golding***

To ask His Majesty's Government how elective home education students can access exam centres as external candidates. [[HL7061](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Golding***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether funds are allocated to local education authorities to ensure that elective home education students can access free testing for level 1, 2, 3, and 4 qualifications. [[HL7105](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Parents who choose to educate at home assume full responsibility for the education of their child, including financial responsibility, as a state school place (or state-funded place) is available.

Home educators are not required to follow the national curriculum but if they choose to, local authorities can be a source of information and advice for parents.

As part of the children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, the department is introducing the first ever duty on local authorities to provide support for home educating families, in the form of advice and information. This will include signposting to high-quality, reputable educational materials, such as those offered by the Oak National Academy.

Government does not provide funding to local authorities for the specific purpose of assisting home educating families accessing examinations. Local authorities do have discretion to provide such financial assistance from within their existing budgets, and we are aware that some do so.

To sit an exam as a private candidate, students need to find an exam centre to enter them for all aspects of their chosen subject or subjects, including any assessments.

The department is committed to supporting home educated students to access exams and as such have worked with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) to better support home educating families. This includes a search function on JCQ's website, which enables students to locate the nearest centre available to sit their GCSE, AS or A level exams.

## Hydrogen

*Asked by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote the use of green hydrogen as an energy source. [[HL7240](#)]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** Hydrogen Allocation Rounds (HARs) remains our primary mechanism for allocating revenue support through the Hydrogen Production Business Model to low carbon, non-CCUS enabled hydrogen production facilities across the UK.

In the Autumn 2024 Budget, we confirmed support for 11 green hydrogen projects from the first Hydrogen Allocation Round (HAR1), and on 7 April 2025 we announced a shortlist of 27 projects that were invited to

the next stage of the Second Hydrogen Allocation Round (HAR2) process.

This announcement reinforces the Government's recognition of the key role low carbon hydrogen will play in delivering our Clean Energy Superpower and Growth Missions.

## Independent Public Advocate: Public Appointments

*Asked by **Lord Wills***

To ask His Majesty's Government when the interviews for Independent Public Advocate concluded. [[HL7220](#)]

*Asked by **Lord Wills***

To ask His Majesty's Government when the name of the successful candidate for the Independent Public Advocate role will be announced. [[HL7221](#)]

*Asked by **Lord Wills***

To ask His Majesty's Government when the successful candidate for the Independent Public Advocate role will take up their position. [[HL7222](#)]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Government is committed to placing victims at the heart of processes that follow a major incident, which is why we are establishing the Independent Public Advocate. We are on track for the successful candidate to take up their position in the Summer.

The public appointment campaign to appoint the Standing Advocate of the IPA was launched on 24 September 2024 and is nearing completion. Interviews concluded on 14 February, and we will announce the preferred candidate shortly.

As this public appointment is made by Ministers and regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the recruitment process must comply with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

The candidate will be subject to a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing by the Justice Select Committee.

## Individual Savings Accounts: Tax Allowances

*Asked by **Lord Lee of Trafford***

To ask His Majesty's Government how tax relief through independent savings accounts allowing investment overseas contributes to (1) the UK economy, or (2) the growth agenda. [[HL7183](#)]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government is committed to incentivising greater saving and investment, to help people save for their future goals and build greater financial resilience. The Government offers a generous tax treatment on Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) to support people of all incomes and at all stages of life to save.

Individuals can currently save or invest up to £20,000 per year in an ISA, with all income and gains received in the wrapper received tax-free.

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.

The Government is looking at options for reforms to ISAs that get the balance right between cash and equities to earn better returns for savers, boost the culture of retail investment, and support the growth mission.

The Government keeps all aspects of tax and savings policy under review.

### International Assistance

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what contribution they have made to the UN's Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan in 2025. [HL7271]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** According to the United Nations Financial Tracking Service, as of 9 May the UK has contributed \$260.4 million to UN-coordinated appeals in 2025 so far. Of this, \$198.9 million went to Humanitarian Response Plans and Needs and Response Plans. This data is gathered and reported by the UN; The UK's official Statistics on International Development, covering the whole of 2025, will be published in autumn next year.

The UK will continue to play a key humanitarian role, including in Sudan, in Ukraine, and in Gaza. For example, last month we announced £120 million in new support for Sudan, which will target over 600,000 people with lifesaving assistance.

### Iron and Steel: Production

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of world steel production is supplied by (1) China, and (2) the United Kingdom. [HL7159]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** According to the World Steel Association, world crude steel production totalled 1,884 million tonnes (Mt) in 2024. Of this, China produced 1,005Mt, representing around 53% of world crude steel production. The UK produced 4Mt of crude steel, representing around 0.2% of world crude steel production.

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the percentage of UK steel production as a proportion of the demand for steel in the UK. [HL7160]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** According to the World Steel Association, UK demand for finished steel products totalled 9.1 million tonnes (Mt) in 2023 (the latest year for which consumption data is available). World Steel Association data also shows that in 2024, the UK produced 4Mt of crude steel. As a proportion of domestic demand in 2023, this represented around 44%.

### Judges and Magistrates: Training

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the compulsory digital training on domestic abuse introduced for family judges, magistrates, and legal advisers in October 2021; how many individuals have completed the training; how frequently it is delivered or refreshed; and what evaluation has been conducted of its effectiveness in improving outcomes in the family courts. [HL7248]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** To preserve judicial independence, statutory responsibility for the training of the courts judiciary in England and Wales is held by the Lady Chief Justice and fulfilled by the Judicial College. It would therefore be constitutionally inappropriate for the Government to undertake assessments of judicial training.

I am aware that the Judicial College launched updated digital training on domestic abuse for all family judges in October 2021 and for magistrates and their legal advisers in November 2021. The judicial training and magistrates and legal adviser training were mandatory.

This was followed in 2022/23 by an intensive one-year programme of mandatory live training for family judges on the harms of domestic abuse, which was also offered to judges in the civil jurisdiction, and intensive mandatory continuation training for family magistrates and legal advisers.

Domestic abuse remains a central part of induction and continuation training for all judges, magistrates and legal advisers who hear family cases. Training is regularly evaluated and reviewed by the Judicial College and updated as appropriate.

### Ministry of Justice: Civil Servants

*Asked by Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the decision of the Supreme Court in *For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers* [2025] UKSC 16, what plans they have to include the biological sex of civil servants in reports about those employed by the Ministry of Justice and its agencies and public bodies. [HL7230]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Supreme Court ruling made it clear that the provision of single-sex spaces is on the basis of biological sex. Providers and Government Departments should note and follow the ruling.

The Government is considering the implications of the Court's judgment.

The Government publishes annual statistics on the UK Civil Service workforce, including reporting on sex. The statistics can be found here: [Statistical bulletin - Civil Service Statistics: 2024 - GOV.UK](#).

### **Motorways: Construction**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the quantity of new motorway constructed in the past ten years, and what plans they have to develop further motorways. [[HL7200](#)]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** No government for 30 years has proposed building significant stretches of new motorway.

The Department for Transport sets out forward investment plans for England's strategic road network of motorways and major A-roads within 5-year road investment strategies. During the first RIS, covering 2015-2020, National Highways delivered 36 major enhancements schemes, adding 343 lane miles of capacity. In RIS2, covering 2020-2025, National Highways delivered a further 30 major enhancements, adding a further 363 lane miles of capacity. The Department is in the process of developing RIS3, starting in 2026. The scope of investment will be determined by the ongoing Spending Review.

The Department publishes total lengths of England's road network including trunk A-roads and Motorways on the GOV.UK website.

### **Myanmar: Humanitarian Aid**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what value of humanitarian aid they have provided to Myanmar following the recent earthquake. [[HL7270](#)]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK has announced up to £25 million in life-saving support for people affected by the recent earthquake in Myanmar. This includes up to £5 million to match the British public's generous donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal.

The UK's earthquake support is funding local actors on the ground, who can directly access affected populations. UK-funded food, water, healthcare and shelter supplies are already reaching affected areas, helping over 300,000 people so far.

Since the 2021 coup the UK has provided more than £170 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance, emergency healthcare and education support, and support to civil society and local communities, in Myanmar.

### **NHS and Social Services: Digital Technology**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report published on 8 May by the Health Foundation, Digitising the NHS and adult social care. [[HL7395](#)]

**Baroness Merron:** Digital transformation offers substantial opportunities for the National Health Service to improve care outcomes and to lower cost, while improving the experience of patients. The impact of digital tools and programmes are measured individually, and organisations are required to identify, manage, actively track, and report impacts, outcomes, and benefits against agreed plans.

Our investment in digitising the frontline will ensure value for money and that health and care staff have access to health-related information when and where it is needed, supporting them to deliver care efficiently, effectively, and safely, reducing variation and improving outcomes.

Currently, 187 out of 206, or 91% of, secondary care trusts have an Electronic Patient Record (EPR) in place, with work underway to provide tailored support to the remaining 19 trusts that do not yet have an EPR. Our ambition is for all trusts to meet our stated core digitisation standards, including having EPRs in place, by March 2026.

In adult social care, 75% of registered care providers now have digitised care records, up from 41% in December 2021, benefiting 85% of people who draw on care.

### **NHS: Negligence**

*Asked by Lord Jones of Penybont*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Civil Procedure Rule Committee regarding the implementation of fixed recoverable costs for clinical negligence claims valued up to £25,000. [[HL7431](#)]

**Baroness Merron:** Currently, the Government is considering the way forward on a wide range of matters relating to clinical negligence reform, and we will announce our position in due course.

### **Nuclear Reactors: Thorium**

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government what investment they have made or intend to make in thorium-based nuclear energy technology. [[HL7284](#)]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** There are currently no funded projects specifically for thorium-based nuclear technologies. Potential for future investment will be subject to the Spending Review and the scope of future R&D schemes.



## Obstetrics: Negligence

*Asked by Lord Jones of Penybont*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to reforming the loss of future earnings element of clinical negligence compensation for cases arising from obstetrics. [HL7430]

**Baroness Merron:** We recognise that clinical negligence is an important issue, and ministers will examine the drivers of costs, how to manage spending on clinical negligence, and the potential merits of reform options.

## Offenders: Foreign Nationals

*Asked by Lord German*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to publish an update on the note published by the Home Office on 24 February 2022, Statistical note: FNO appeals lodged and allowed on human rights grounds, 2008 to 2021, to include data up to 2025 and the proportion of foreign national offender appeals allowed solely on Article 8 grounds. [HL7125]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Home Office keeps its statistical products 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.

## Overseas Trade: Morocco

*Asked by Lord Udney-Lister*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the importance of the United Kingdom's trading relationship with Morocco. [HL7209]

*Asked by Lord Udney-Lister*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to facilitate investment in Morocco as part of the 2030 International Federation of Association Football World Cup. [HL7210]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The UK-Morocco Association Agreement, which entered into force in January 2021, facilitates our trading relationship. HM Government is keen to strengthen trade ties with Morocco. In January 2025, Ben Coleman MP was appointed Trade Envoy for Morocco and Francophone West Africa. Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and Morocco was £4.2 billion in 2024, up £0.6bn in current prices from 2023.

In March 2025, Gareth Thomas MP, Minister of State for Services, Small Business and Exports, visited Morocco with a delegation of businesses to showcase UK support for major infrastructure projects and signed a

declaration of intent with the Head of the World Cup Committee to progress UK-Morocco collaboration on Morocco's co-hosting of the Men's Football World Cup in 2030. The UK looks forward to working with Morocco on this event and other infrastructure projects.

## Permanent Secretaries: Contracts

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there is a model contract for permanent secretaries; and if so whether they will place a copy in the Library of the House. [HL7118]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** Contracts for Permanent Secretaries and all other SCS are not published publicly so we will not be placing a copy in the Library of the House.

## Permanent Secretaries: Recruitment

*Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 7 April (HL6018), and to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office on 21 October 2019 (HC463), why it was possible, in the case of the latter, to provide a full list of Permanent Secretary-level appointments, but not in the case of the former; and whether they will now provide a corresponding list of current Permanent Secretary-level appointments, including whether each appointment is fixed-term and its expiry date. [HL6915]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** Since 2014, permanent secretary appointments have been made on the basis of a five-year fixed tenure; this is set out in contracts of employment. There is no automatic presumption in favour of renewal, but renewals are possible at the discretion of the Prime Minister.

The table below sets out the tenure end dates of the current permanent secretary group.

<i>Permanent Secretary</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Appointment to current post</i>	<i>Tenure end date</i>
Susan Acland-Hood	Permanent Secretary DFE	01/09/2020	06/12/2025
Madeleine Alessandri	Chair Joint Intelligence Committee	01/07/2023	30/06/2026
Sam Beckett	Second Permanent Secretary HMT	31/05/2023	30/05/2028
Graeme Biggar	Director General NCA	15/08/2022	14/08/2027
James Bowler	Permanent Secretary HMT	17/10/2022	16/10/2027
Gareth Davies	Permanent Secretary DBT	07/02/2023	06/02/2028



<i>Permanent Secretary</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Appointment to current post</i>	<i>Tenure end date</i>	<i>Permanent Secretary</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Appointment to current post</i>	<i>Tenure end date</i>
Jessica DeMounteney	First Parliamentary Counsel	01/05/2024	30/04/2029	Susanna McGibbon	Treasury Solicitor and Permanent Secretary GLD	08/03/2021	07/03/2026
Ian Diamond	Permanent Secretary ONS	20/08/2019	31/03/2028	Angela McLean	Government Chief Scientific Adviser	01/04/2023	31/03/2028
Nick Dyer	Second Permanent under Secretary FCDO	03/07/2023	02/07/2028	Maddy McTernan	Chief of Defence Nuclear MoD	06/09/2023	05/09/2028
Michael Ellam	Second Permanent Secretary European Union and International Economic Affairs CO	13/01/2025	12/01/2030	Richard Moore	Chief Secret Intelligence Service	01/10/2020	30/09/2025
Tamara Finkelstein***	Permanent Secretary Defra	19/06/2019	18/06/2029	Sarah Munby***	Permanent Secretary DSIT	02/02/2023	01/02/2028
Andrew Goodall*	Permanent Secretary Welsh Government	01/11/2021	31/10/2026	Stephen Parkinson	Director of Public Prosecutions CPS	01/11/2023	31/10/2028
Joe Griffin	Permanent Secretary Scottish Government	06/04/2025	05/04/2030	Jeremy Pocklington	Permanent Secretary DESNZ	07/02/2023	06/02/2028
Jenny Harries***	Chief Executive UKHSA	01/04/2021	31/03/2026	Simon Ridley	Second Permanent Secretary HO	18/04/2023	17/04/2028
Julie Harrison	Permanent Secretary NIO	06/09/2023	05/09/2028	Tom Riordan	Second Permanent Secretary DHSC	23/09/2024	22/09/2029
Sarah Healey	Permanent Secretary MHCLG	07/02/2023	06/02/2028	Oliver Robbins	Permanent under Secretary FCDO	13/01/2025	12/01/2030
Anne Keast-Butler	Director GCHQ	12/05/2023	11/05/2028	Antonia Romeo	Permanent Secretary MoJ	14/04/2025	13/04/2030
Bernadette Kelly	Permanent Secretary DFT	18/04/2017	13/06/2025	Beth Russell	Second Permanent Secretary HMT	17/10/2022	17/10/2027
Cat Little	Permanent Secretary CO	02/04/2024	01/04/2029	Peter Schofield	Permanent Secretary DWP	16/01/2018	15/01/2026
Angela MacDonald	Second Permanent Secretary HMRC	01/08/2020	31/07/2025	Jo Shanmugalingam	Second Permanent Secretary DFT	30/05/2023	29/05/2028
JP Marks	Permanent Secretary HMRC	06/04/2025	05/04/2030	Andy Start**	Chief Executive DE&S	05/09/2022	04/09/2025
Clive Maxwell	Second Permanent Secretary DESNZ	06/02/2023	11/11/2027	Susannah Storey	Permanent Secretary DCMS	10/07/2023	09/07/2028
Ken McCallum	Director General Security Service	25/04/2020	24/04/2030	Clara Swinson	Second Permanent Secretary Mission Delivery Unit, CO	16/09/2024	15/09/2029

<i>Permanent Secretary</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Appointment to current post</i>	<i>Tenure end date</i>
Chris Whitty	Chief Medical Officer DHSC	01/10/2019	30/09/2029
David Williams	Permanent Secretary MOD	06/04/2021	05/04/2026
Chris Wormald	Cabinet Secretary	16/12/2024	15/12/2029

\*Andrew Goodall is on secondment from NHS Wales

\*\*Andy Start is on a Fixed Term contract

\*\*\* Tamara Finkelstein, Jenny Harries and Sarah Munby are leaving the Civil Service in Summer 2025, and therefore before their tenure end date

## Prawns: Industry

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect the proposed trade deal with India will have on the prawn industry in (1) the United Kingdom, and (2) Northern Ireland. [\[HL7307\]](#)

**Baroness Gustafsson:** A trade deal with India will deliver on this Government's core mission of economic growth and unlock new opportunities for businesses in every corner of the UK, including in Northern Ireland, increasing bilateral trade by £25.5bn, UK GDP by £4.8bn, and wages by £2.2bn each and every year in the long run.

We will set out further information on the sectoral impacts of this agreement in our impact assessment.

## Public Appointments

*Asked by Baroness Deech*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many competitions for public appointments have been paused before completion since 9 July 2024; what are the reasons for pausing these processes; and when they will be resumed. [\[HL7115\]](#)

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The public appointments digital system, run by the Cabinet Office, enables departments to effectively and consistently manage their public appointment campaigns. It shows the current stage of a campaign and the outcome when completed. However, the system does not record if a campaign has been paused, and where campaigns are paused, the Cabinet Office does not collect the reasons for this or data on when such campaigns might be resumed. That would be a matter for individual sponsor departments and their ministers as part of the normal day-to-day management of the recruitment campaigns they run.

## School Milk: Expenditure

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the total annual spend on free and subsidised milk schemes for schools. [\[HL6973\]](#)

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to fund the free and subsidised milk schemes for schools through a multi-year guaranteed budget rather than through annual renewal. [\[HL6974\]](#)

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Milk must be provided free of charge to pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) who request it. Overall, the department spent over £1.5 billion on FSM and free milk in 2023/24.

To assist with the cost of providing milk, schools can take part in the voluntary National School Milk Subsidy Scheme run by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. In 2023/24, over £2 million was paid out through the National School Milk Subsidy Scheme.

Schools can claim reimbursement from the Nursery Milk Scheme in respect of their pupils aged under five. In 2023/24, the total cost of reimbursements for all settings from the Nursery Milk Scheme was over £54 million.

## School Milk: Free School Meals

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what arrangements are in place to monitor schools to ensure that they provide free milk to pupils who receive free school meals. [\[HL6975\]](#)

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of pupils who receive free school meals receive free milk daily. [\[HL6976\]](#)

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Section 512ZB(3) of the Education Act 1996 relates to the provision of free milk. Milk must be provided free of charge to pupils eligible for FSM who request it, we do not hold data on the number of children who make such requests. We expect schools to follow their statutory duty around the provision of free milk.

## Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors: Sexual Dysfunction

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance NHS England provides to people who are prescribed selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) on the risks of developing post-SSRI sexual dysfunction; whether they plan to recognise post-SSRI sexual dysfunction as a condition; and what support is available for people discontinuing SSRIs. [HL7363]

**Baroness Merron:** The product information for selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) provides advice on the risk of withdrawal/discontinuation reactions, and advises patients not to stop their medication suddenly. Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for planning health services for their local population. This includes consideration of services for patients taking medicines associated with dependence and withdrawal symptoms, based on local population needs.

An increasing number of non-pharmacological alternatives have become available on the National Health Service, such as NHS Talking Therapies for anxiety and depression, with over 670,000 courses of treatment provided in 2022/23. NHS England is encouraging ICBs to address inappropriate antidepressant prescribing and to consider commissioning services for patients wishing to reduce or stop prescribed medicines that can cause dependence and withdrawal.

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved product information, provided to healthcare professionals and patients for all SSRIs, was updated in 2019 to inform them that reports had been received of long-lasting sexual dysfunction, where symptoms continue despite discontinuation of the SSRI. The MHRA was an integral part of the European Union wide review of the available evidence which underpinned the current warnings.

The term Post SSRI Sexual Dysfunction was added to the regulatory dictionary in 2021, which will help with the recording and retrieval of Yellow Card data and literature cases, and in the future, will contribute to the much-needed research into this important health issue. Persistent sexual dysfunction following withdrawal of an SSRI as a disorder was added to the electronic health records system, known as SNOMED, in October 2024, as a code that will help with the clinical identification of patients with persistent sexual dysfunction, including those after taking SSRIs.

An Expert Working Group of the Commission on Human Medicines has been established by the MHRA to consider how the risk of sexual dysfunction which continues after stopping antidepressants is communicated in patient information leaflets, however this work will not address the clinical recognition of post-SSRI sexual dysfunction, as that is outside the remit of the MHRA.

## Sudan: Sexual Offences

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the £120 million humanitarian funding for Sudan announced on 15 April will be allocated to support survivors of sexual violence. [HL7272]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is a major humanitarian donor to Sudan with £226.5 million provided in financial year (FY) 2024/25 and a further £120 million in support this current FY which the Foreign Secretary announced at the London Sudan Conference on 15 April. Since the start of the conflict in April 2023, millions of Sudanese civilians have benefitted from UK-funded humanitarian programmes including survivors of sexual violence. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office officials are now determining how funding for FY 2025/26 will be allocated and further information will be provided in due course.

## Sustainable Farming Incentive

*Asked by Lord Grantchester*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend that any future reinterpretation of the Sustainable Farming Incentive would comprise a universal scheme open to all farm types on an equal basis. [HL7062]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Defra is working closely with farmers and industry stakeholders to design a future Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offer that fairly and responsibly directs funding. Further details about the reformed SFI offer will be announced following the spending review in summer 2025.

*Asked by Lord Cromwell*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the full details of the next round of the Sustainable Farming Incentive will be announced, and when that scheme will open to applications. [HL7171]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** We will provide further details about the reformed Sustainable Farming Incentive in summer 2025.

*Asked by Lord Cromwell*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much of the savings from the reductions in delinked payments will be allocated to payments to farms participating in the new Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme. [HL7172]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Reductions to delinked payments allowed this Government to unlock a record level of funding for Environmental Land Management schemes, as part of the £5 billion for farming secured over 24/25 and 25/26 financial years.

In line with its obligations under the Agriculture Act 2020, Defra regularly publishes an annual report, setting out commitments in the previous financial year. Defra

intends to publish the annual report for the financial year 2024/25 later this year. The annual report for financial year 2025/26 will be published next year and will include Farming and Countryside programme spend broken down by each scheme.

### **Syria: Druze**

*Asked by Baroness Whitaker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recent violence against the Druze community in Syria. [HL7218]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Recent violence against the Druze community in Syria was appalling. In our statement on 3 May, we publicly urged the Syrian government to take steps to shield civilians from violence and hold those responsible to account. The protection of all civilians and their full inclusion in the transition process is vital for peace in Syria. This will continue to be a priority in our engagement with the Syrian government.

*Asked by Baroness Whitaker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about offering support or protection to the Druze population in Syria, and what steps they are taking to support these actions. [HL7219]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We regularly engage with Israel, including to discuss recent events in Syria and the importance of refraining from actions that could risk aggravating tensions between Syrian communities. We will continue to work with the Syrian Government and international partners, including Israel, to advocate for the protection all Syrians.

### **Trade Agreements: India**

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the trade agreement between the UK and India; and whether they plan to seek Parliament's approval prior to ratification. [HL7283]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** A summary document of the trade agreement between the UK and India is already on the Gov.uk website. This Government plans to publish the full agreement when the deal is signed, which will then be subject to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. The Act provides Parliament with the opportunity to scrutinise new trade agreements that are subject to ratification and, if it wishes, to resolve against them.

Additionally, any changes to UK legislation will need to be scrutinised and passed by Parliament in the usual way.

### **Trade Agreements: USA**

*Asked by Lord Jopling*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch on 16 April (HL6564), whether they plan to insist on a loosening of impediments to access of the UK financial services sector to the United States financial services sector in seeking a new trade agreement with the United States. [HL7073]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** On 8 May the UK government announced a landmark economic deal with the US, making the UK the first country to reach an agreement with President Trump. We are continuing talks which will look at increasing digital trade, access for our world-leading services industries and improving supply chains.

The US and the UK are each other's largest single country trading partners for financial services. Following discussions between the Chancellor and US Treasury Secretary Bessent, we agreed to use the upcoming Financial Regulatory Working Group (FRWG) to discuss collaboration on digital assets, including to support the use and responsible growth of digital assets, and the proposals put forward by the Commissioner on the Security and Exchange Commission for a transatlantic sandbox for digital securities.

### **Turkey: NATO**

*Asked by Lord Gold*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Turkey's financial, military, and political ties with the proscribed terrorist organisation Hamas; and what plans they have to address concerns about a member of NATO financing Hamas. [HL6949]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Government has proscribed Hamas as a terrorist organisation and condemns its unacceptable attacks against civilians. Turkey has not proscribed Hamas, which is a sovereign decision. The UK supports Turkish efforts to encourage Hamas and Israel to end the conflict in Gaza and is working with a range of international partners, including our North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ally Turkey, to counter the threat of terrorism and secure a lasting peace in the Middle East.

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