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

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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<b>Earl Howe</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Anelay of St Johns</b>	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Whip
<b>Lord Bates</b>	Minister of State, Department for International Development
<b>Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, Wales Office
<b>Lord Bridges of Headley</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
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<b>Lord Dunlop</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office and Northern Ireland Office
<b>Lord Gardiner of Kimble</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Henley</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Lord Keen of Elie</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
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<b>Lord Nash</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
<b>Baroness Neville-Rolfe</b>	Commercial Secretary to the Treasury
<b>Lord O'Shaughnessy</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
<b>Lord Price</b>	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Prior of Brampton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
<b>Baroness Shields</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and Department for Culture Media and Sport
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<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Lord Young of Cookham</b>	Whip
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

*Tuesday, 31 January 2017*

## Agriculture and Fisheries Council

[HLWS447]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** My Hon Friend the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George Eustice) has today made the following statement.

I represented the United Kingdom at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, alongside my colleagues Fergus Ewing MSP, Lesley Griffiths AM and Michelle McIlveen MLA, on 12 and 13 December in Brussels.

EU quota negotiations, involving decisions on fishing opportunities for the next year for quota stocks in the North Sea, Atlantic, Channel, Irish and Celtic Seas, were first on the agenda, and were ongoing for the entire duration of the Council. This was the third annual Council at which fishing opportunities were set under the rules of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy, which aims to have all stocks fished at sustainable levels by 2020 at the latest.

The UK secured a number of crucial changes to the Commission's original proposals including, where science supports it, quota increases for fishermen around all parts of the UK. This is due to stocks recovering after years of the UK's insistence on limiting catches with sustainable scientific limits. Quotas secured include:

- North Sea: Cod +16.5%, Whiting +17%, Anglerfish +20% Saithe +53% Sole +22%
- Irish Sea: Haddock +25% and Nephrops +8.6%
- Western Channel: Haddock +7% and Sole +20%
- North Sea Hake +12% and Western Hake +9%

The quota settlement for 2017 is worth just over £705 million to the UK, around £34 million more than in 2016.

The agreement means that for 2017, 29 stocks of interest to the UK will be fished at or below their maximum sustainable yield rate (MSY), an increase on 2016, out of 45 such stocks for which MSY assessments have been made. At the EU level, 44 stocks are fished at or below MSY, as announced by Commissioner Vella at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/vella/announcements/agrifish-council\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/vella/announcements/agrifish-council_en).

Where the latest scientific evidence supported it, the UK Government argued against unnecessary quota cuts proposed by the European Commission, securing the same quota as in 2016 for many species, including Cod and Sole in the Irish Sea, Anglerfish in the Celtic Sea and Whiting in West of Scotland.

There were some challenges especially on stocks like Bass, Cod, and Megrin in the South West and Sole in the Eastern Channel, where action is necessary to cut fishing mortality in order to allow these stocks to recover. However, we worked hard to secure an agreement that strikes the right balance for both our marine environment and coastal communities.

For 2017, sea bass catch limits from vessels using fixed gill nets were set at 250kg per month for unavoidable by-catch – a reduction of around 80% from 2016 - while hook and line commercial fishermen saw their potential catch cut by around 23%. The restrictions on recreational angling will remain the same as in 2016.

Proportionate quota uplifts were agreed for demersal stocks subject to the landing obligation in 2017. As in 2016, the Government will continue to support the English inshore fleet to adapt to the landing obligation, by allocating to them the first 100 tonnes of quota uplift of a species and 10% thereafter. There will be additional quota uplift in 2017 for new species such as North Sea cod and North Western Waters Pollack.

A paper was presented on Climate Change Effort Share Regulation and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), discussed alongside the 'any other business' item on agroecology. Many Member States, including the United Kingdom, were broadly satisfied with the proposals outlined in the paper. The UK intervened to argue that a methodology should be found to ensure a fairer distribution of credits between Member States.

After this, the Council agreed Conclusions on tackling unfair trading practices in the farming supply chain. The UK managed to secure a wording change that lessens the chance in 2017 of burdensome EU legislation that could hinder our current work in this area, as undertaken by the Groceries Code Adjudicator.

There then followed a political discussion on new regulation for organic produce, which will continue into the upcoming Maltese Presidency.

Several other items were discussed under 'any other business':

- Austria lodged a request to maintain the current level of support for first generation biofuels, supported by other Member States. While noting this remains the responsibility of Commissioner Cañete, Commissioner Hogan informed Council that the reduction of support was very modest, pertaining to a very small part of the biofuel sector.
- France debriefed the Council on a conference of Mediterranean countries that took place in Tirana, Albania, where agricultural and rural development and migrations in the Mediterranean zone was discussed.
- Commissioner Andriukaitis informed the Council about the first meeting of the Food Waste Platform.
- Commissioner Andriukaitis also updated Ministers on the work of the expert group on accelerating sustainable plant protection products. The advisory group recommended speeding up approvals of low-risk active substances, measures to stimulate businesses to apply for authorisations and the identification of low-risk products already on the market.
- Commissioner Andriukaitis announced that the new regulation on plant pests was now in force. The Commission sees this new legislation as allowing a much more proactive approach to the prevention of the entry of new pests into the EU. Malta, as incoming

Presidency, mentioned plans to establish fora to take forward further discussion on identifying further action.

- The Slovak Presidency explained that the Commission had issued a guidance note expressing a preference for the use of the Plant Breeders' Rights framework, rather than the Patent Legislation to register new strains. This was welcomed by a range of other Member States.

On 23 June, the EU referendum took place and the people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Until exit negotiations are concluded, the UK remains a full member of the European Union and all the rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force. During this period the Government will continue to negotiate, implement and apply EU legislation. Leaving the EU will present us with opportunities to better manage fisheries in our waters and become global champions for sustainable fishing, while protecting the marine environment.

## Courts and Tribunals

[HLWS448]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** My right honourable friend the Minister of State for Courts and Justice (Sir Oliver Heald QC) has made the following Written Statement.

"This Government is committed to making sure people from all backgrounds can access justice.

Since fees were introduced, record numbers of working people have sought to resolve employment disputes either through tribunals or conciliation.

In 2015/16 there were more than 92,000 workplace disputes brought forward for resolution – the highest number since ET Fees were introduced.

We believe we can improve on this, so today I am launching a consultation on proposals to extend support available to people on low incomes through the Help with Fees scheme.

Under our proposals, the monthly threshold for a full fee remission would be increased from £1,085 to £1,250 – broadly the equivalent of someone earning the National Living Wage. There are additional allowances for people living as couples and those with children.

We will bring forward further measures to improve legal support in a Green Paper by early 2018 and the Prison and Courts Bill, due to be published shortly, which will enable more people to bring cases on-line, making it simpler and easier to access justice.

Under the extension to Help with Fees scheme, more people would not pay a fee at tribunal and others would contribute less than under current arrangements.

In particular the extended scheme would benefit women, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and younger people, who all feature disproportionately among low income groups.

These proposals would apply not only to people bringing ET proceedings, but also to those bringing proceedings in the civil and family courts and most other tribunals.

We have also decided to exempt from fees a small number of proceedings related to payments made from the National Insurance Fund. Unlike most proceedings before the ETs, in most cases the applicant is unable to conciliate, and they are unlikely to be able to recover the fee from an employer which in many cases will be insolvent.

We have decided to take this action following the findings of the post implementation review of the introduction of fees in the Employment Tribunals (ETs), which I am also publishing today.

The review has undertaken a very detailed and thorough analysis of the evidence, and we have concluded that fees have been generally successful in meeting the original objectives.

This Government believes it is important that those who can afford to pay for ETs continue to do so. An extra £9million a year is raised through ET fees.

The review concludes that fees have been successful in promoting conciliation as an alternative way to resolve workplace disputes.

The review states "there is no conclusive evidence that ET fees have prevented people from bringing claims" and that higher numbers turning to ACAS is a "positive outcome".

This indicates the current system is generally working effectively and is operating lawfully.

This does not mean there is no room for improvement and where we have identified issues, we have not been afraid to address them.

In particular there is evidence that some people have found the fees off-putting - even if they were affordable or they may have qualified for fees to be waived.

This has been addressed with a campaign to raise awareness of the scheme and a new on-line application form to make it easier for people to apply."

## Written Answers

Tuesday, 31 January 2017

### Air Pollution

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many government press releases have been issued since May 2014 alerting the media to an air pollution episode. [HL4796]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Defra routinely publishes on the UK-Air website Met Office air pollution forecasts and real-time monitoring data, which shows air pollution levels across the UK. Defra also issues daily tweets from the UK-Air Twitter account, which provides the latest information about current air pollution levels and health advice. These are followed by journalists who use this to inform their reporting, as well as health charities and campaign groups who regularly retweet information to vulnerable populations. Given that this system is in place, Defra does not routinely issue press releases during air pollution episodes, but has done so on three occasions.

Since the beginning of May 2014 there have been 27 air pollution episodes. A total of 441 tweets have been issued from Defra's UK-Air Twitter account on these occasions. Public Health England retweets these messages, as do their devolved counterparts in cases where episodes affect their territories.

Defra also alerts its network of health charities on each occasion. These alerts provide full details of the nature of the air pollution episode, its anticipated duration and links to further information including specific health advice relevant to the episode.

An air pollution episode is defined as a period during which the level of any measured pollutant monitored by the UK's network of air pollution monitoring sites has recorded High or Very High against the Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI). Also, when ozone is measured to have breached the Information threshold of 180 microgrammes per cubic metre for one hour (as defined in air quality legislation) this is classified as an air pollution episode.

### Aircraft: Air Conditioning

Asked by **The Countess of Mar**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Public Health England plans to conduct tests on blood samples taken from passengers involved in a reported contaminated air incident aboard BA Flight 286 on 25 October 2016; and if not, why not. [HL4736]

**Lord O'Shaughnessy:** The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States was involved in the investigation of this event. Public Health England has confidence in any assessments done by the CDC, which is a highly competent authority that produces sound evidence-based advice.

### Armed Forces: Alcoholic Drinks

Asked by **Lord Touthig**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are planning to devise a strategy on alcohol use among veterans and serving personnel, and if so, when that strategy will be published. [HL4887]

**Earl Howe:** The Government's alcohol strategy designed to address the binge drinking culture within the UK and reduce alcohol ill-discipline was published by the Home Office on 23 March 2012.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) already has a package of measures in place to discourage alcohol misuse in the Armed Forces including education, training, discipline and treatment. The Defence People Health and Wellbeing Strategy was published in July 2016 which includes a section on alcohol misuse and measures to reduce the consumption of alcohol in the Armed Forces.

More widely, the MOD has entered into partnerships with Public Health England as part of the 'One You' campaign and DrinkAware in their 'Have a Little Less, Feel a Lot Better' campaign. Both partnerships are designed to make everyone examine their lifestyle and make the changes necessary to live more healthily.

Whilst the MOD strategy is aimed at serving personnel the ultimate aim is for individuals to transition back in to the wider community in optimum mental and physical health.

### Balance of Trade

Asked by **Lord Hoyle**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in (1) 2014, (2) 2015, and (3) 2016, what were the balance of trade figures between the UK and (a) France, (b) Germany, and (c) Italy. [HL5026]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The latest available estimates show that the UK ran a trade balance (a) with France of –£6.1 billion in 2014 and –£5.2 billion in 2015; (b) with Germany of –£24.7 billion in 2014 and –£25.3 billion in 2015 and (c) with Italy of –£4.8 billion in 2014 and –£3.9 billion in 2015. Data is currently unavailable for 2016.

### Data Protection: EU Law

Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, given that data centres resident in the UK will no longer be subject to EU data protection rules following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, whether they will seek the UK's continued participation in the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 covering cross-border flows of personal data. [HL4870]

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** The General Data Protection Regulation will apply to EU member states from 25 May 2018. We fully expect still to be in the EU at that point,



and so we will ensure that the General Data Protection Regulation will apply in the UK from then.

Thereafter, as part of plans for the UK's exit from the EU, the Government is considering all the options on the most beneficial way of ensuring that the UK's data protection regime continues to build a culture of data confidence and trust, that safeguards citizen and supports business in the global economy.

### **Families: Disadvantaged**

*Asked by Lord Beecham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 25 January (HL4381), what was the cost of resolving the errors in the original report; how that cost was met; and what reduction, if any, was made in the fee payable to National Institute of Economic and Social Research. [HL4983]

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** The National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) resolved the errors made in the original report without drawing any further funding from DCLG. The costs to DCLG in identifying the errors and ensuring that NIESR rectified them were met through existing departmental resource. The peer review of this work was done on a pro bono basis by members of the existing Troubled Families independent advisory group comprising independent academics and analysts from other Government Departments. No reduction was made to the fee paid to NIESR.

### **Higher Education**

*Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask Her Majesty's Government which universities responded to the call for evidence on accelerated courses and switching university or degree; and, of those, how many allowed credits for previous study. [HL4810]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** We received responses to the Call for Evidence from 30 universities, out of a total of 44 responses from higher education providers. Of these 30 university respondents, 25 (83%) said they take students who transferred to their institution from other providers.

Publishing a list of those universities who responded to our recent Call for Evidence and details of their responses would risk damaging our relationships with them, as we would be releasing information directly related to them and their operations. This would not be in the public interest as it could potentially limit our capability to gather evidence from these institutions in the future.

*Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps are being taken to ensure that all higher education institutions have published credit transfer arrangements

in place; and how those arrangements are monitored. [HL4812]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The information gathered through our recent Call for Evidence on accelerated courses and switching university or degree has provided valuable data and insight. It has highlighted the key barriers to the take-up of credit transfer opportunities, including a general lack of information and awareness. We are now fully considering the available evidence before deciding on next steps.

### **Higher Education: Student Wastage**

*Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many students dropped out of their graduate degree course in each of the years from 2012 to 2015. [HL4811]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes data on students enrolled at UK higher education institutions (HEIs). The percentage of UK domiciled full-time first degree entrants at UK HEIs who did not continue their studies in the following year are published as part of the 'UK Performance Indicators for Higher Education' and can be found at:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation>.

The latest available statistics, found in Table T3a, show that 27,580 UK domiciled full-time first degree entrants at UK HEIs in the 2013/14 academic year were no longer in higher education in the following year. The equivalent statistic for entrants in 2012/13 showed that 24,745 entrants were no longer in higher education in the following year.

### **Homelessness: Older People**

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure older homeless people with additional needs, such as learning difficulties, mental health issues or drug and alcohol problems, receive the necessary support. [HL4693]

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** This Government takes its commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness seriously and our approach includes support available to homeless people of all ages with multiple complex needs. Local authorities also play an important role in ensuring that vulnerable people receive the support they need.

Before Christmas the Prime Minister announced the awarding of the £50 million Homelessness Prevention Fund to local areas right across the country, this included £10 million of Social Impact Bond funding for projects to support the most vulnerable rough sleepers in the country. This builds on the successful London Social Impact Bond which supported people with multiple and complex needs to exit homelessness.

## Hospital Beds

*Asked by Lord Ouseley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many hospital beds, on each day in the years (1) 2015, and (2) 2016, were filled by patients who could have been discharged; what estimate they have made of the numbers of such patients in 2017; and how they intend to tackle this issue. [HL4747]

**Lord O'Shaughnessy:** The information is not available in the format requested.

## Intelligence Services: Private Sector

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for greater regulation of the private intelligence industry. [HL4737]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Firms operating in the private intelligence industry must operate within the law of the state(s) in which they are conducting their business.

Furthermore, the Government is committed to ensuring the integrity of the private security industry and this includes private investigations. The regulation of private investigators was included within the scope of the recent review of the Security Industry Authority.

Once the findings of the review have been published, the Government will carefully consider any recommendations in relation to private investigators.

## Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the strategic importance to the UK of having a domestic steel industry; and whether the National Security Committee has discussed this issue. [HL4728]

**Lord Prior of Brampton:** Information relating to the proceedings of Cabinet Committees is generally not disclosed as to do so could harm the frankness and candour of internal discussion. However, Government is committed to ensuring a sustainable and competitive steel industry in the UK.

We have taken action on public procurements of steel, in response to requests from the steel sector. In Autumn 2015, Government issued guidance to central government departments on how to ensure that they take full account of the value provided by UK steel producers when conducting their procurement activities. All central departments, their agencies and arm's length bodies are already required to apply these guidelines on relevant projects. In addition, the steel procurement pipeline published in December 2016 will enable UK suppliers to plan to bid in response to procurement opportunities.

I can confirm that UK suppliers have provided significant quantities of steel for major defence equipment

procurement programmes – such as both of the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the involvement of the governments of Germany and the Netherlands in decisions by steel manufacturers whether to invest in their respective countries, whether they intend to become involved in such decisions relating to the UK. [HL4730]

**Lord Prior of Brampton:** The Government's goal is to work with the UK steel sector to create the right environment for investment and growth. At the request of the sector, we commissioned research into future market opportunities for UK Steel and the capabilities it will need to capitalise on these and to succeed in a competitive global market.

We will continue to engage with the sector, as well as with the unions, the devolved nations and other partners as we seek to find a long-term viable solution for the industry.

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the reduction in the size of the UK steel industry, what steps they are taking to retain the skills of UK metallurgists, particularly in the area of steel innovation. [HL4732]

**Lord Prior of Brampton:** This Department is funding an independent study to identify the future markets for steel products, and anticipate what capabilities the UK steel sector will need to capture these opportunities. This will include increasing the capability of the sector to innovate, and ensuring that the UK steel sector can benefit from the significant investments made by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and InnovateUK. These support UK capability in materials science, including steel, through their support for research and R&D, and specialist research and technology institutions such as the Sir Henry Royce Institute and the High Value Manufacturing Catapult.

## Israel: Bedouin

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel concerning the demolition by Israeli forces on 2 January of 10 structures in the Palestinian Bedouin community of Khan al Akhmar. [HL4725]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Our position is clear; demolitions cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; are harmful to the peace process; and are, in all but the most exceptional of cases, contrary to international humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention is clear that the destruction of any real or personal property in Occupied Territory is not justified unless it is rendered absolutely necessary by military

operations. We also make clear to Israel that forcible transfer would be a breach of international humanitarian law and would have serious ramifications on Israel's international standing.

On 3 November, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), met with Abu Khamis, leader of the Khan al Ahmar Bedouin community, and an UN Relief and Works Agency official to discuss the situation in Area C. On 29 November following the Minister's meeting, our Consul-General to Jerusalem made a return visit to Khan al Ahmar, where he also met with Abu Khamis.

### **Israel: Diplomatic Service**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the investigation by Al Jazeera into the action of Israeli embassy staff in the UK, whether they intend to expel any of those staff. [HL4722]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK has a strong relationship with Israel and we consider the matter closed. The Israeli Ambassador apologised for the actions of an individual about whom concerns had been raised.

### **Israel: Palestinians**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel concerning the report by Defence for Children International – Palestine that in 2016 there was the highest number of recorded cases of abuse towards Palestinian children in the past decade. [HL4724]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK continues to have strong concerns about continued reports of ill treatment of Palestinian minors, particularly those held in Israeli military detention. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv meet with the Israeli authorities on a regular basis to advocate for the end of night-time arrests and summons, consistent access to lawyers and parents for all minors and implementation of other protection measures. Our Embassy officials raised these issues most recently with the Israeli authorities on 19 January. This issue remains a human rights priority as the UK is firmly committed to the protection of human rights and compliance with international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention in Israel.

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the shooting by Israeli forces of Mohammed al-Salhi. [HL4726]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** While we have not made any representations to the Israeli authorities on this specific issue, we have an ongoing dialogue with the Israeli authorities about the Israel Defence Forces' use of live fire. We remain concerned by the use of force by Israeli security personnel in response to protests and security incidents. We regularly raise these concerns with the Israeli Government, stressing the need for proportionality and proper accountability.

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the reported wounding of two journalists by Israeli soldiers in the week commencing 5 January. [HL4727]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We have not raised this specific issue with the Government of Israel. However, we are clear that protection of the freedom of the media is an important part of respecting human rights.

### **Israel: West Bank**

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel concerning the data collected by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs showing that, during 2016, the Israeli authorities demolished or seized the highest number of West Bank structures since recording began in 2009. [HL4723]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK position on demolitions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is clear: demolitions cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; are harmful to the peace process; and are, in all but the most exceptional of cases, contrary to international humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention is clear that the destruction of property in Occupied Territory is not justified unless it is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. The Fourth Geneva Convention also makes it clear that individual or mass forcible transfer of protected persons from occupied territory is prohibited. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv has raised our concerns on demolitions with the Israeli authorities and has urged the Israeli authorities to provide a legal route for Palestinians to obtain building permits.

### **Kosovo: Overseas Aid**

*Asked by The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, with respect to Department for International Development funding programmes, what status Kosovo has as a post-conflict state requiring assistance. [HL4975]

**Lord Bates:** The Department for International Development does not provide any direct funding support to Kosovo.



## Macquarie Group

*Asked by Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any former employees of Macquarie are acting as special advisers, or in an advisory capacity, in (1) Downing Street, (2) the Cabinet Office, or (3) the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. [[HL4861](#)]

**Lord Young of Cookham:** The information requested is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

## Marriage

*Asked by Baroness Thornton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to enable the recognition in law of marriages in England and Wales conducted by a humanist celebrant; and if so, when. [[HL4721](#)]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** The Government is carefully considering the report published by the Law Commission on initial scoping work to identify the issues for potential reform of the law concerning how and where people can get married in England and Wales, including considering the differences in treatment that already exist within marriage law alongside any further differences that would result from permitting legally valid non-religious belief marriages.

## Mass Media

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have met social media providers to discuss how to combat the spread of fake news online; and what their policy is for addressing the issue. [[HL4892](#)]

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** We are currently considering the implications of the dissemination of fake news on social media sites.

## Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

*Asked by Lord Steel of Aikwood*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the total amount raised by Vehicle Excise Duty in each of the two years prior to abolition of the tax disc, and in each of the subsequent years. [[HL4765](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The amount of vehicle excise duty collected varies year on year. A decrease of £300 million in vehicle excise duty income between 2014-15 and 2015-16 was previously forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility due to expected decreases in the average cost of licences issued as vehicles continue to become more fuel-efficient. The actual reduction for the financial year 2015-16 was £93 million.

The tax disc was abolished in October 2014.

The following table shows the net revenue for each full financial year prior to and after the abolition of tax disc:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vehicle Excise Duty collected£m</i>
2012-13	£6,013
2013-14	£6,052
2014-15	£6,023
2015-16	£5,930

## NATO

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other members of NATO following the remarks by the US President-elect that the alliance is obsolete. [[HL4714](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK has regular discussions with all NATO Allies on the full range of issues affecting the Alliance. Our goal is an Alliance that is capable of planning for and responding to the full range of threats its members face.

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the US President-elect after his inauguration following his description of the NATO alliance as obsolete. [[HL4715](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** During their meeting at the White House on 27 January, President Trump told the Prime Minister, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) that he is 100% behind NATO. We will continue to work with the US to ensure NATO is capable of planning for and responding to the full range of threats its members face. This must include NATO Allies investing more in their own defence.

## Sierra Leone: Health Services

*Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of UK financial support to Sierra Leone for family planning and sexual reproductive health and rights is provided through (1) direct bilateral aid to the government of Sierra Leone, (2) the United Nations Population Fund, (3) non-governmental organisations, and (4) other mechanisms. [[HL4914](#)]

**Lord Bates:** Over the next five years, UK assistance aims to save the lives of 2,000 women and provide family planning for more than 134,000 women and girls through our 5-year Saving Lives programme.

To date

(1) No funding is being given to the Government of Sierra Leone as direct bilateral aid.

(2) Two thirds is being provided to the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organisation, who submitted a joint proposal of how they would work together to achieve most impact.

(3) One third is being provided to non-governmental organisations.

(4) No funding is being provided through other mechanisms.

Further funding decisions will continue to be based on our assessment of which offer the best value for money and highest development impact.

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will support the government of Sierra Leone in improving its general healthcare system. [HL4917]

**Lord Bates:** DFID is funding two major interventions to strengthen Sierra Leone's health systems. The Resilient Zero programme is helping the government be ready for future public health emergencies, including new cases of Ebola. Our assistance is helping to put in place surveillance systems so that new cases are identified early; to prevent infection in health facilities including through investment in water and sanitation; and to train health workers.

The Saving Lives programme is focused on ensuring women and young children, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, have access to good quality basic services. Its goal is to save the lives of over 22,000 children and over 2000 women, as well as providing family planning for more than 134,000 women and girls.

### **Sierra Leone: Overseas Aid**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan to support Sierra Leone with regard to (1) tax revenue, (2) agricultural practices, (3) tourism, and (4) job creation. [HL4915]

**Lord Bates:** (1) DFID is supporting the National Revenue Authority to increase domestic tax collection and the Ministry of Finance on tax policy. To date, our support has helped boost the Sierra Leonean Government's tax collection from 8% to 11% of GDP from 2006 to 2014.

(2) Agriculture has the potential to increase incomes for poor families and the Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project aims to reach 50,000 people, of which 40% will be women and young people. This project, which DFID are funding with the World Bank, focuses on improving access to markets by upgrading 500 km of rural roads, increasing access to finance and helping farmers to get a better price for their crops.

(3) DFID is not supporting work on tourism in Sierra Leone.

(4) On job creation we are funding the Strengthening Opportunities for Business Action programme. This project works with local enterprises and entrepreneurs to help them identify and take opportunities to expand their businesses and create more jobs. DFID expect that nearly 60,000 poor men and women will increase their annual incomes by more than 10%.

### **Tata Steel: Port Talbot**

*Asked by **Lord West of Spithead***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they are having with Tata Steel about the future of the Port Talbot plant following the end of the five-year commitment to keep two blast furnaces at the plant and avoid compulsory redundancies. [HL4733]

**Lord Prior of Brampton:** On 7 December, Tata Steel UK and the unions reached provisional agreement on a package of measures, including guarantees in relation to future employment, production and investment at Port Talbot, and changes to the current pension schemes. These proposals will be subject to a ballot by the workforce between 30 January and 16 February, and are a commercial matter for the company and its employees.

The Government remains in contact with Tata Group at all levels, and we remain committed to securing the long term future of Port Talbot. The Government is also committed to working with UK steel producers, trade unions, the devolved nations and other partners to create a sustainable and competitive steel sector in the UK.

### **Taxis: Greater London**

*Asked by **Lord Higgins***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of levels of congestion and pollution in London, whether they will take urgent steps to ensure that Transport for London has powers to limit the numbers of private hire vehicles they license, if possible without legislation. [HL4755]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Government supports choice for consumers, and wants to see both taxis and private hire vehicles prosper in London and elsewhere. The Mayor and Transport for London, together with the police and local authorities, have a range of tools available to them to deal with congestion and vehicle pollution. Effective use of these tools will allow both licensed taxi and private hire vehicles to lawfully meet the demands of London's travelling public.

### **Turkey: Politics and Government**

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the suspension of Garo Paylan, a member of the Turkish parliament, for making a reference to the Armenian Genocide; and what representations they

have made to the government of Turkey concerning his suspension. [[HL4708](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** This specific case has not been raised with the Turkish Authorities.

### **Ukraine: Sovereignty**

*Asked by Lord Risby*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the UK and Ukraine, what programmes are in place to support Ukraine's independence, and our bilateral relationship. [I] [[HL4800](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK is using a number of Government funding streams in Ukraine, including the Conflict Stability and Security Fund and the Global Britain Fund. In the Financial Year 2016/17 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is administering approximately £28 million worth of programme work covering a number of areas such as support to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, EU Advisory Mission, demining and defence, anti-corruption,

public administration reform, strategic communications, and reform of the business and economic environment.

### **World War I: Commonwealth**

*Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to commemorate the role played by Commonwealth countries during the First World War. [[HL4843](#)]

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** All Government's First World War Centenary events reflect the enormous contribution of those from across the Commonwealth. This significant contribution is reflected through cultural and military content such as readings and musical performances. In addition to this the first event of the centenary programme at Glasgow Cathedral on 4 August 2014 specifically focused on the commonwealth contribution to the war.

We also invite representatives from the participant nations to our events and will continue to do so when we commemorate the Centenary of Passchendaele – The Third Battle of Ypres on 30/31 July this year and Armistice in November 2018.

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