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**Wednesday
14 December 2016**

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

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

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 14 December 2016

Chair of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

[HLWS351]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Amber Rudd) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce that Dr Owen Bowden-Jones has been appointed to the ACMD both as a member and as its new Chair. This appointment is for a 3 year term, beginning on 1st January 2017. Dr Bowden-Jones is an experienced clinician who provides assessment and treatment for people experiencing harms from emerging problem drugs.

The ACMD was established under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and provides advice to Government on issues related to the harms of drugs. It also has a statutory role under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. Dr Bowden-Jones will replace Professor Les Iversen, whose term ends at the end of this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Iversen for his dedication to chairing the ACMD over the past seven years.

Energy Council

[HLWS352]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Today my honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under- Secretary for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has made the following statement:

The Energy Council, chaired by the Slovak Presidency, took place in Brussels on 5 December. I represented the UK at the Council on 5 December.

The meeting began with a political debate on the options for regional cooperation, solidarity and transparency for the Gas Security of Supply Regulation. The aim of the Presidency was to find compromises and get political guidance from Member States.

On regional cooperation, there was a broad split with no clear majority for either option put forward by the Presidency. A majority of Member States supported a risk-based approach, whilst others wanted the clarity and certainty provided by the fixed region approach. On solidarity, most Member States supported some flexibility but others wanted some detail laid down in the regulation in order for arrangements to be consistent across the Union. On transparency of contracts, most Member States agreed on the need for strengthened exchange of information. On the basis of the discussion, the Presidency developed a compromise set of conclusions which gave more flexibility to Member States on solidarity, more transparency on contracts and agreement

to pursue a risk-based approach to regional co-operation but with greater clarity on the composition of regions. These conclusions were consistent with the UK position and were agreed by all Member States. Adoption of these conclusions sets the path towards a general approach, which will form the basis for negotiating a final agreement with the European Parliament.

Vice President Šefčovič (Energy Union) introduced the Commission's Clean Energy Package, which was published on 30 November. He highlighted the Energy Union governance framework, and a need for reliable, transparent and long-term monitoring that streamlined reporting as well as the need to support the 2014 and 2015 European Council Conclusions. Commissioner Cañete (Climate Action and Energy) then provided a high-level overview of each of the main elements of the package, which together were intended to ensure that the EU stayed ahead in the clean energy transition and in mobilising the Paris agreement. An informal exchange of views on the package took place over lunch. We are considering how best to work with the Commission and other Member States during the forthcoming negotiations to improve the proposals in the package.

The Council then held an exchange of views on the external dimensions of EU energy policy. There was general support for the progress that the EU had made in relation to its relationship with third countries on energy policy. Some Member States stressed the importance of the work with Ukraine, and that it should remain a priority. Others stated that diversification of supply sources and routes for energy into Europe was critical.

The Council received an update from the Presidency on progress in negotiation of the Energy Efficiency Labelling Directive and the Decision on Inter-Governmental Agreements.

The Commission presented recent developments in the field of external energy relations, which included the Paris agreement entering into force and the recent signature of the Memorandum of Understanding with Ukraine.

Finally, the Maltese delegation presented its priorities for its Presidency. These fell into three areas: completing files already under discussion; creating momentum on the clean energy package, with informal and formal Council meetings focussed on this agenda; and EU-Mediterranean cooperation.

North Korea

[HLWS354]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Honourable Friend, The Parliamentary Under Secretary for State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Alok Sharma), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I would like to update the House on recent developments regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the international response and what actions the government is taking.

The Government remains deeply concerned by North Korea's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. This year we have seen two nuclear tests from North Korea, and an unprecedented number of ballistic missile launches. These actions have been accompanied by threatening rhetoric, and the continued prioritisation of the weapons programme over the well-being and needs of the North Korean people.

On 14 September, I informed the House that the UN Security Council had agreed that North Korea's fifth nuclear test on 9 September was a clear violation of existing Security Council resolutions, and that there would be a robust response.

On 30 November, the UN Security Council adopted Security Council resolution 2321, a package of new, stronger measures to deter and challenge North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. This resolution builds on the provisions of UN Security Council resolutions 1718, 1874, 2087, 2094 and 2270.

Significant measures in the new resolution are designed to constrain and disrupt the DPRK's nuclear intentions. The new cap on coal exports, with a UN oversight mechanism, will directly affect the DPRK's ability to raise foreign currency for their nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. This is estimated to reduce DPRK foreign trade income by \$700m, and when combined with a metals export ban, will cut DPRK trade income by a quarter.

The resolution tightens existing measures, and enhances controls on technology imports, on shipping, and on banking, as well as demonstrates a new resolve to disrupt any abuse of diplomatic privileges. This will send a strong signal as well as have important practical effects. This text, in addition to the UN Third Committee resolution on DPRK Human Rights adopted on 15 November, makes clear the explicit link between the DPRK's proliferation choices and their shameful treatment of their own people. The United Kingdom has worked closely with P5 partners throughout the development of UNSCR 2321, and will be at the forefront of the discussion amongst EU Member States as we transpose the UNSCR swiftly into EU law.

Both I and My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, have spoken with counterparts regarding the increasingly belligerent and dangerous behaviour of the DPRK. The threat posed by the DPRK's programmes to both regional and international security will continue to be at the forefront of our work.

As the United Kingdom has done on many occasions, we continue to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to credible and authentic multilateral talks on its nuclear programme. We ask it to abide by its

obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to permit full access by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Renewable Heat Incentive

[HLWS353]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: In March 2016, the Government set out its proposals to reform the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme in the consultation ' [The Renewable Heat Incentive - A reformed and refocused scheme](#) '. The consultation ran from 3 March to 27 April 2016 and received 370 responses from individuals, businesses, trade bodies and other organisations. I am pleased to announce that the Government Response to the consultation has been published today.

Heat accounts for almost half of UK energy use and a third of UK carbon emissions. Decarbonising how we use heat in our homes, businesses and buildings is therefore an essential part of how we transition to a low carbon economy. It can also in time help to make heating homes and other buildings more efficient and affordable.

In November 2015, the Government renewed its commitment to the transition to a low carbon economy by confirming a continued budget for the RHI out to 2020/21. By confirming the available budget and setting out a number of reforms for how the scheme will operate, the Government intends to provide the level of certainty needed for consumers and industry to invest in renewable heating and for the market to transition towards being sustainable without Government support in future.

It is vital that the scheme delivers value for money for taxpayers and supports the development of technologies that will be important for the long term. That is why we will be reforming the scheme to ensure it:

- Focuses on long-term decarbonisation: promoting the deployment of the right technologies for the right uses, while ensuring the RHI contributes to both our decarbonisation targets and to the UK's renewable energy target.
- Offers better value for money and protects consumers: improving how costs are controlled, giving consumers more confidence in the performance of particular technologies and addressing potential loopholes in the scheme.
- Supports supply chain growth and challenges the market to deliver: driving cost reductions and innovation to help build growing markets that provide quality to consumers and are sustainable without Government support in future.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 14 December 2016

Brexit

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they have received on whether the European Court of Justice has any jurisdiction over the manner and timing of the triggering of the use of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. [HL3720]

Lord Bridges of Headley: Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union states that 'any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements' and 'shall notify the European Council of its intention'. It is for the Member State concerned to determine what its constitutional requirements are. The manner in which the notice is given - to the European Council - is clearly set out in Article 50 itself. On the timing, the Prime Minister has been clear that we will notify by the end of March 2017.

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by the Prime Minister on 30 November (HC Deb, col 1518) that there would be two years of negotiations on the UK exiting the EU, whether it is their intention for the UK to leave the EU at the earliest possible point, notwithstanding the two year period set out under Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon. [HL3837]

Lord Bridges of Headley: The process is as set out in Article 50. The precise timing and organisation of the negotiations will be a matter for discussion. It will be in everyone's interests to get a good deal agreed as quickly as possible.

British Nationals Abroad: Voting Rights

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement on 7 October that they intend to remove the 15-year rule on British citizens living overseas voting in parliamentary elections, where, and how, expatriate UK citizens would vote. [HL3789]

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen: Overseas electors will register in respect of their last UK address, and will cast their ballot in that constituency. They may choose to vote by postal ballot, in person (if they are in the UK on polling day) or by nominating a proxy to vote on their behalf (postal ballots are not available to overseas electors registered in Northern Ireland).

Full details are set out in the policy statement published on 7 October 2016 entitled 'A democracy that works for everyone: British citizens overseas' which can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-democracy-that-works-for-everyone-british-citizens-overseas)

democracy-that-works-for-everyone-british-citizens-overseas

The franchise for any future referendum would be determined by Parliament in the primary legislation which provides for that referendum.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Overseas electors policy statement
[overseas_electors_policy_statement.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-02/HL3789>

British Transport Police: Scotland

Asked by Baroness Harris of Richmond

To ask Her Majesty's Government what meetings and discussions they have had with Police Scotland regarding the transition of British Transport Police officers in Scotland to Police Scotland; and whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of any written reports supplied to Police Scotland about this matter. [HL3769]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: No meetings or discussions have taken place with Police Scotland. The Government is however working closely with the Scottish Government and with the two police authorities - the British Transport Police Authority and the Scottish Police Authority - on the arrangements required to enable the smooth transfer of the British Transport Police's railway policing functions in Scotland to Police Scotland. No written reports have been supplied to Police Scotland on this matter.

Criminal Proceedings: WiFi

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the duty in the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments, what assessment they have made of the benefits to hearing and visually impaired defendants of allowing the use of wi-fi in the criminal courts to enable them to input and receive relevant information. [HL3711]

Lord Keen of Elie: We want a justice system that works for everyone. HMCTS takes its public sector duty responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 seriously, and provides guidance to staff about the requirements of the Act and our obligation to consider reasonable adjustments for all court users with disabilities to provide equal access to its service and facilities.

The judiciary are also aware of their responsibilities when interacting and communicating with people with disabilities and have access to the Equal Treatment Bench Book to support them. Requests for reasonable adjustments for court users with disabilities are dealt with

on a case by case basis and a range of measures are available.

The Professional Court User Wi-Fi service is not available to the public. It can only be used by Judges, Defence Practitioners (acting on behalf of defendants), Prosecutors, and those who work in a professional capacity to deliver criminal justice in criminal courthouses in England and Wales. However, all courtrooms have access to large screens on which evidence can be shared with the court and there is provision for temporary access to be provided to a defendant if required.

Defence: Procurement

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many defence procurement projects have overrun their original budgets over the last three years; at what cost; and who has been responsible for meeting the increased cost. [HL3863]

Earl Howe: Defence procurement projects cover an extensive range of equipment, infrastructure, information services and broad service contracts. Following the Levene reforms, responsibility and budgets for procurement have been delegated in large degree to the Front Line Commands, who use Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), as well as Information Systems and Services (ISS), as their principal delivery organisations. The time and cost performance of delegated projects is monitored and controlled by these organisations at a level appropriate to their cost. Only the largest or most contentious projects, such as equipment projects over £400 million or infrastructure projects over £75 million ('Category A' Projects), are approved directly by Head Office. This includes review of those projects that overrun on time or cost.

In recent years the National Audit Office (NAO) has provided an independent review of the Ministry of Defence's delivery performance of the largest procurement projects and presented the findings in an annual publication, the "Major Projects Report" (MPR). These reports include details of the cost, time and quality delivery forecasts for a sample of the largest defence procurement projects that had reached the demonstration and manufacture phases of their project lifecycle – that is to say they had passed the main investment decision point. The reports contain a summary of the projects' original budgets and their latest forecast costs to completion, enabling individual identification of increases and decreases in cost.

The table below shows the combined MPR results for the last three financial years.

	MPR15	MPR14	MPR13
	£ million		
In-Year Cost Variation	-£247	-£397	£708
Total Cost Variation Since Original Approval	£5,552	£5,691	£6,086

[Note: A direct comparison from year-to-year is not possible. Projects enter or exit the MPR population annually following approval or reaching in-service date respectively. Additionally, the scope of projects has also been known to change in response to emergent requirements.]

A more in-depth breakdown on a project-by-project basis, including total cost variance by project, is available in the MPR. Additionally, explanations of the causal factors of the variances can be found for each project in the project summary sheets which accompany the reports.

MPR15:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/major-projects-report-2015-and-the-equipment-plan-2015-to-2025/>

(For the MPR15 Summary Table see Appendix 3, page 42)

MPR14:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/major-projects-report-2014-and-the-equipment-plan-2014-to-2024/>

(for the MPR14 Summary Table see Appendix 2, page 40)

MPR13:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/ministry-of-defence-the-major-projects-report-2013/>

(For the MPR13 Summary Table see Appendix 3, page 40)

In the first instance, cost overruns must be absorbed by the Front Line Commands by prioritising their projects within overall procurement control totals. How these were apportioned for each of the projects cited in the reports would require further analysis.

EU Law

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, following notice to leave the EU under Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon, they intend to continue to implement new EU Directives. [HL3838]

Lord Bridges of Headley: 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. The outcome of the exit negotiations will determine what arrangements apply in relation to EU legislation in future once the UK has left the EU.

Hong Kong: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to fulfil their legal obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration to monitor and speak out for basic freedoms and the rule of law in Hong Kong. [HL3795]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Our commitment to Hong Kong as a co-signatory of the Joint Declaration is as strong as ever. On 2 December the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Mr Sharma) visited Hong Kong and spoke publicly about the importance of Hong Kong's rights and freedoms. The Government's most recent assessment of the basic freedoms and the rule of law in Hong Kong is set out in the Foreign Secretary's Six-Monthly Report to the House of 12 October. In this we stated that "despite challenges, the UK believes that "One Country, Two Systems" has provided a successful framework for almost two decades, and can continue to do so". The full report can be found online - (<https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/six-monthly-report-to-parliament-on-hong-kong-january-june-2016>).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Foreign Secretary's six monthly report - Hong Kong [Six-Monthly_Report_on_Hong_Kong_-_1_January_-_30_June_2016.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-05/HL3795>

Hong Kong: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of basic freedoms, the rule of law and democracy in Hong Kong. [HL3844]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Government issued its most recent assessment of the basic freedoms, the rule of law and democracy in Hong Kong on 12 October in the Foreign Secretary's Six-Monthly Report to the House. In this we stated that "despite challenges, the UK believes that "One Country, Two Systems" has provided a successful framework for almost two decades, and can continue to do so".

Judiciary

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 22 November (HL3029), where in the Cabinet Manual criteria or guidance are given about how the Lord Chancellor and other Ministers should perform their duty under section

3 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 to uphold the independence of the judiciary. [HL3710]

Lord Keen of Elie: Paragraph 16 of the introduction and Chapter 6 of the Cabinet Manual make clear that it is a long-established constitutional principle that the judiciary is independent of both the government of the day and Parliament. This is to ensure the even-handed administration of justice.

Magistrates: Resignations

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many magistrates have resigned this year; and why this figure has not previously been disclosed. [HL3696]

Lord Keen of Elie: There have been 842 magistrate resignations in England and Wales so far this financial year. Data on numbers of resignations from the magistracy is not routinely published, but is disclosed on request.

This Government values the judiciary greatly. A strong, independent judiciary is essential for a modern, democratic society and we do not take for granted the central role judges play in upholding the rule of law and delivering justice. Magistrate remains a sought after role and competition for vacancies tends to be strong.

North Korea: Sanctions

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2321, whether any UK organisations or nationals engage in scientific and technical co-operation involving persons or groups officially sponsored by or representing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and whether this co-operation will be suspended. [HL3847]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We are aware of some limited scientific engagement between UK nationals and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). As per the provisions of UNSCR 2321, such cooperation does not need to be suspended when there is a determination that such activity does not contribute to the DPRK's proliferation, nuclear activities or ballistic missile programmes.

Overseas Students

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial contribution of overseas students to the UK economy. [HL3840]

Lord Young of Cookham: The Government estimated in 2013 that overseas students (EU and non-EU) in higher education in the UK contributed £9.7 billion to the UK

economy in 2011, through tuition fees and living expenditure.

The Department for Education will publish a new estimate of the total value of education exports to the UK economy shortly, based on data from 2014. This will include updated estimates on the financial contribution of overseas students.

Prison Service: Recruitment

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement by the Justice Secretary on 3 November that 2,500 additional prison officers are to be recruited to address issues including safety, how many officers will need to be recruited to replace existing officers as they leave the service, and over what timescale. [HL3697]

Lord Keen of Elie: Last month we launched the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper and we are already implementing measures to tackle drugs, drones and phones. This major overhaul of the prison system will include the recruitment of an extra 2,500 frontline officers. Our reforms will empower governors to make the changes they need, ensuring that prisons are places of safety and reform.

Of course, people will leave the service due to retirement or other reasons, so therefore we will also be recruiting to fill those spaces. We estimate that this will lead to us recruiting 8,000 prison officers in total over the next 2 years. This means that by the end of 2018 the overall frontline workforce will have risen from 19,000 to 21,500.

Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

Asked by Lord Bird

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ashton of Hyde of 23 November (HL3177), whether they plan to conduct a second review of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, and if so, when. [HL3768]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Following Lord Young's 2014/15 review of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, progress has been made to implement the recommendations. This includes the publication of measurement and impact case studies and the development of training materials and a cross-Whitehall paper. A decision on a second review of the Act will be taken in due course.

Reading Prison

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the annual cost of maintaining the redundant HM Prison Reading; and what are their plans for its future use or sale to an appropriate buyer. [HL3724]

Lord Keen of Elie: Parts of the former HMP Reading are listed and the level of services, such as security, routine maintenance and utilities, have been reduced to a level which is appropriate to ensure that it remains safe and secure until its final disposal. In 2015-16, the last full financial year for which figures are available, the maintenance and upkeep of the former HMP Reading, including maintenance, utilities and security was £256,798.

The Ministry of Justice and its external planning and development advisers are currently working in close collaboration with Historic England, Reading Borough Council and others to ensure that the historic integrity of the site is documented and preserved after disposal. We will prepare a planning brief for approval by Reading Borough Council during the latter half of 2017. Following this, we anticipate that the site will be marketed for sale for residential development.

The MoJ is committed to providing best value to the tax payer through maximising the financial value of the site whilst safeguarding its heritage value for future generations.

Refugees: Children

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much welcoming each unaccompanied child refugee will cost the UK. [HL3693]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office funds local authorities for the care and support of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children. The rates are based on a detailed analysis of financial information sent to the Home Office by local authorities about their actual cost of caring for UASC. The analysis showed that the average cost across all local authorities of looking after a UASC aged under 16 was approximately £41,610 per annum and the average cost of supporting those aged 16 and 17 was approximately £33,215 per annum.

River Exe: Flood Control

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the flooding and railway closures in 2012 and 2016, when they expect the improvements to the River Exe, upstream of Exeter, to be completed. [HL3737]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Cowley Bridge Junction (on the railway to the immediate north of Exeter) was closed for two days from 21 to 23 November 2016 due to flooding from the Rivers Exe, Culm and Creedy.

Network Rail has already raised all of the lineside railway signal cabinets at the site which put them above the level of the recent flood, significantly reducing train service restitution times after the incident. They advise that more work is planned, including widening and

improvement of the existing flood culvert during 2017 and installation of an additional culvert in 2018.

Type 23 Frigates

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what effect the lack of clarity on the replacement of the Type 23 frigates has had on recruitment to the Royal Navy. [HL3858]

Earl Howe: In the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 we committed to building eight Anti-Submarine Warfare variant Type 26 Global Combat Ships to replace the current eight Anti-Submarine Warfare variant Type 23 Frigates on a one-for-one basis. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 4 November that the steel cut for the first of the Type 26 Global Combat Ships will take place in mid-2017, subject to contract negotiations.

The Royal Navy remains focused on the target set in the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 of 30,450 Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel in April 2020.

Unified Patent Court

Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement on 28 November that they intend to ratify the Unified Patent Court Agreement, whether the UK, once a signatory to the agreement, will be subject to the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the EU following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. [HL3761]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The UK has been a long-standing supporter of creating an international patent court for Europe. The decision to proceed with ratification provides a tangible realisation of the UK's commitment to continue to play a full role in relation to our European partners while we remain a member of the EU.

This decision should not be seen as pre-empting the UK's objectives in the forthcoming negotiations with the EU. It is also without prejudice to the UK's future position on the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union once the UK has left the EU.

Universal Credit

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, what progress they have made in reducing the universal credit

decision backlog referred to in paragraph 2.27 of the NAO report *Benefit Sanctions*, and what proportion of universal credit decisions took longer than (1) 28 working days, and (2) three working days, in the latest month for which statistics are available. [HL3926]

Lord Freud: The Universal Credit Decision position is significantly improved and by January, it is anticipated the volume of outstanding sanction decisions would take 5 working days to clear.

We do not currently have data to indicate performance by time band for Universal Credit Full Service or for 3 days. The information below relates to Universal Credit Live Service only as a result.

Of the 25,154 decisions made in October 2016, 7789 (31.0%) were made in 0-5 working days. 14,705 (58.5%) were made in a timeframe exceeding 28 working days.

Universal Credit: Refugees

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the average time taken to make a decision on (1) all universal credit claims, and (2) UK claims relating to individuals who have been granted leave to remain as a refugee. [HL3927]

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evidence, if any, they have of people who have been granted refugee status facing problems claiming universal credit because they do not have a bank account. [HL3928]

Lord Freud: The Department does not track individual claims made by refugees. However, where people have problems getting a bank account, they are not prevented from making a claim for Universal Credit. Furthermore, DWP in conjunction with the Home Office, are currently piloting a new process to assist asylum seekers granted refugee status and needing support to make a claim to benefits.

Officials are currently assessing the data for Universal Credit and will only release information once the necessary quality assurance work has taken place. These statistics will be published in accordance with the relevant protocols in the Code of Practice for official statistics. The Department does not track individual claims made by refugees and therefore this information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

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