

Vol. 778
No. 29



Thursday
26 January 2017

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 Buscombe	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Dunlop	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office and Northern Ireland Office
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Henley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Mobarik	Whip
Lord Nash	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Commercial Secretary to the Treasury
Lord O'Shaughnessy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
Lord Price	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Prior of Brampton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Baroness Shields	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and Department for Culture Media and Sport
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	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

Thursday, 26 January 2017

Armed Forces' Pay Review Body Appointment

[HLWS440]

Earl Howe: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel (Mark Lancaster) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I am pleased to announce that I have appointed Janet Whitworth as a member of the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body. Mrs Whitworth will begin her three year appointment on 1 March 2017. This appointment has been conducted in accordance with the guidance of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Foreign Affairs Council – 16 January 2017

[HLWS443]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Alan Duncan), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 January. The Foreign Affairs Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The meeting was held in Brussels.

Foreign Affairs Council

A provisional report of the meeting and Conclusions adopted can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2017/01/16/>

Agenda items included the Middle East Peace Process, Syria and a forward look for 2017. Ms Mogherini briefed Foreign Ministers on the recent European Court of Justice ruling on Morocco. Ms Mogherini also informed Foreign Ministers of the outcome of the previous week's talks in Geneva on the Cyprus settlement.

Syria

Foreign Ministers discussed developments in Syria including the ceasefire agreement announced by Russia on 29 December; and the talks convened by Russia and Turkey to be held in Astana. Ms Mogherini updated Foreign Ministers on: the EU's regional outreach initiative; the EU's Syria strategy; and a roadmap for EU policy on Syria. Ms Mogherini also informed Ministers that the EU would co-host a conference on Syria to follow up the London conference of February 2015. The Foreign Secretary welcomed this and, together with other Ministers, reconfirmed support for post-conflict reconstruction in Syria once a credible political transition was firmly under way.

MEPP

Foreign Ministers had an informal discussion about issues relating to the Middle East Peace Process. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the UK's commitment to a Two State Solution.

Ministers agreed without discussion a number of measures:

- The Council adopted Conclusions on Lebanon
- The Council delisted four entities from the list of persons and entities subject to restrictive measures against Iran.
- The Council approved the delisting of five vessels from the list of persons and entities subject to restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, following the respective delisting by the United Nations Security Council.
- The Council decided on the withdrawal of the European Commission from the EU-level framework in accordance with the recommendation of the UN Committee for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so as to ensure the independence of the monitoring framework.
- The Council approved the conclusion of the protocol to the Euro Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the EU and Algeria. The protocol contains a Framework Agreement on the general principles for the participation of Algeria in EU programmes and agencies such as Europe's programme for small and medium-sized enterprises COSME, Europe Creative or Horizon 2020.
- The Council approved rules of procedure to be adopted by various trade sub-committees established under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary: RAF Police

[HLWS441]

Earl Howe: My hon. Friend the Minister for Defence, Veterans and Reserve Personnel (Mr Mark Lancaster) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I wish to inform the House that I am laying today, the first report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Inspection of the Royal Air Force Police (RAFP).

The Armed Forces Act 2011 places a duty on HMIC to inspect and report to the Ministry of Defence on the independence and effectiveness of investigations carried out by each Service police force, and this is HMIC's first statutory inspection report on the RAF Police.

I consider this report to be a positive endorsement of the RAFP providing assurance from an independent civilian authority that the RAFP is well led overall. Six recommendations have been made and five areas for improvement have been identified. The Royal Air Force accepts the report's findings and work is already under

way to address the recommendations and areas for improvement.

Overseas Security and Justice Assistance Guidance

[HLWS444]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My right Honourable Friend, the Secretary for State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I would like to inform the House that I have today published revised Guidance concerning Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA).

The need for UK security and justice assistance overseas is growing. Our expertise is highly valued across the world and improves the standards and capabilities of law enforcement and security agencies operating in the most challenging environments. Through this work we aim to improve the lives of people in the world's most insecure regions, by enhancing the abilities of states to uphold the rule of law. However, it is important that we ensure that the skills and expertise we impart are not used to cause harm. The OSJA Guidance is HMG's tool for assessing the human rights risks of our overseas security and justice assistance work and identifying measures to mitigate those risks.

The OSJA Guidance was first published in December 2011 by my predecessor, the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Hague of Richmond, and revised in 2014. I am proud that the new OSJA process will remain the most comprehensive and demanding tool of its type anywhere in the world. The document I am publishing today renews our commitment to take every reasonable step to identify and reduce the risk that we will inadvertently do harm when assisting overseas. It restates our commitment to proper oversight by Ministers of all assistance projects which carry serious risk.

The revised procedure today draws on five years of experience in applying the Guidance. The changes in this version include a more rigorous risk assessment; clearer guidance on the role of the UK's overseas network and of HMG Departments and agencies outside the FCO; and more detail on how to conduct the process in complex situations, for instance when several Departments are working together on the same project. It also provides for officials already deployed overseas who are caught in exceptional circumstances (such as an unfolding terrorist attack) to act immediately within the spirit of the Guidance to protect the public or safeguard the integrity of evidence provided that the full documentation follows within 24 hours. Finally the new procedure includes measures which will allow more public scrutiny of the OSJA process within this Department's Annual Human Rights Report.

The update will be available on gov.uk. My officials will continue to monitor the implementation of the Guidance and propose revisions from time to time.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Guidance concerning OSJA [170126 OSJA Guidance.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2017-01-26/HLWS444/>

Migration Advisory Committee: Shortage Occupation List

[HLWS439]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My hon Friend the Minister of State for Immigration (Robert Goodwill) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The independent Migration Advisory Committee has today published its partial review of the Shortage Occupation List relating to teachers. A copy can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/migration-advisory-committee>. I am grateful to the Committee for its thorough and detailed study.

The Committee has recommended that maths and physics teachers remain on the Shortage Occupation List; that computer science, Mandarin and science teachers should be added to the list; and that chemistry teachers should be removed from it.

The Government has accepted the Committee's recommendations in full and the necessary changes will be made to the immigration rules to reflect this.

The Government is committed to reducing net migration to sustainable levels, which means the tens of thousands. That means we need to look first to the resident labour market to fill vacancies. The Department for Education is spending over £1.3 billion up to 2020 to attract new teachers into the profession. This includes continuing to offer generous bursaries of up to £30,000 tax free in priority subjects and a £67 million investment in STEM teaching in England to recruit up to 2,500 additional maths and physics teachers, and increase the skills of up to 15,000 existing teachers over the course of this Parliament.

However, we recognise there may be a need to recruit overseas where we continue to have genuine skill shortages or require highly specialist experts. We adjust the Shortage Occupation List from time to time and in line with the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendations to ensure that, where necessary, labour can be sourced from outside the European Economic Area.

Welfare Delivery

[HLWS442]

Lord Henley: My honourable Friend The Minister of State for Employment (Damian Hinds MP) has made the following Written Statement.

DWP is today publishing its proposals for the future of its estate, including Jobcentres and back office sites.

On 31 March 2018 DWP's PFI PRIME (Private Resource Initiative for the Management of the Estate)

contract with Telereal Trillium expires. This 20 year contract covers the majority of DWP's current property portfolio of over 900 sites. This gives us an opportunity to review which offices we will need in the future, taking account of the increased use of our online services, the impact of Universal Credit and the anticipated demand on our services.

The roll out of Universal Credit and our reforms of Jobcentre Plus have increased the number of interactions claimants now have with us online. For example, eight out of ten claims for Jobseeker's Allowance are now made online and 99.6% of applicants for Universal Credit full service submitted their claim online.

As a result we only need 80% of the space we currently occupy to continue to deliver our services and make sure that people will always be able to access the support they need to get back to work. Moreover, we are recruiting and expect to have 2,500 more Work Coaches in post by March 2018 compared to today.

For the vast majority of offices there will be no change in location, although the purpose of the building may change. Where we are proposing closing a site we will take all possible precautions to minimise disruption for claimants, and vulnerable people will receive home visits and postal claims.

All of the planned changes will be made in consultation with staff, taking into account the impact on benefit claimants and DWP staff. We will do everything we can to offer staff affected alternative roles and want to avoid any redundancies wherever possible. However we do recognise that in a small number of cases relocation will not be reasonable or achievable for individuals working in our back office functions and exits may be required.

We have already announced proposals for around 93 sites. I am attaching to this statement a full list of our proposals for all of our remaining Jobcentre and back of house sites. There are a small number of sites which we are still negotiating with landlords. I have indicated these on the list and will update the House when I am able to. I will be writing directly to those Honourable members whose constituencies will be affected by the proposed closures or moves of DWP services announced today. I will also be writing to my counterparts in the Scottish and Welsh Governments.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

DWP Estates Proposals [DWP Estates Proposals.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2017-01-26/HLWS442/>

Written Answers

Thursday, 26 January 2017

Affordable Housing

Asked by **Baroness Byford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will take steps to ensure that new houses designated as affordable cannot be altered or extended in ways which remove them from that classification. [[HL4753](#)]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The National Planning Policy framework expects local authorities to identify and plan for the market and affordable housing needs of their area. The level and type of affordable housing provided on an individual site will depend on the Local Plan policies and overall viability of the proposal.

The Housing Act 1996 and the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 require that new affordable homes delivered through the provision of Government Grant must remain affordable in perpetuity. Where a grant funded property is sold or undergoes a change of use, for example, from affordable housing to private rent or sale, the grant element used to build the property is then recycled for the delivery of further new affordable homes or returned to the Government. This ensures that the number of properties available through our Affordable Housing Programmes remains at a consistent level.

Air Pollution

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve air quality. [[HL4779](#)]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The United Kingdom complies with EU legislation for nearly all air pollutants, but faces challenges in achieving nitrogen dioxide limits, along with 16 other EU member states. That is why we have committed more than £2 billion since 2011 to reduce transport emissions and the autumn statement provided a further £290 million to support greener transport.

Air quality is improving, but the Government recognises that we need to go further and faster and we will be consulting on a new national plan by 24 April. The final plan will be in place by the end of July.

Armed Forces: Recruitment

Asked by **Lord Touthig**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the UK Armed Forces Monthly Service Personnel Statistics 1 December 2016 showing a 1.4 per cent decrease in full-time trained strength since December 2015 and a 4.3 per cent deficit against the planned number of personnel needed, what action they are taking to ensure the necessary recruitment of new personnel; and what

assessment they have made of the ability of Capita to perform its recruitment role. [[HL4802](#)]

Earl Howe: The Armed Forces continues to offer exciting opportunities that inspire the best of our young people. We are investing in recruitment to attract the diverse and talented workforce we need now and for the future. A new Army marketing campaign 'This Is Belonging' was launched on 7 January 2017 across multiple platforms, including television.

We continue to deliver our recruiting operations with Capita through the Recruiting Partnering Project (RPP). This has focussed on modern and convenient recruiting processes, including online tools and facilities. The candidate's experience has been improved through better communication processes, with improved processing and greater levels of candidate involvement. A robust review framework is in place for RPP whereby the Army and Capita review factors such as performance, continuous improvement and value for money.

Cabinet Office: Advertising

Asked by **Lord Rennard**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the cost of their advertising budget in the current financial year; how much of that budget is for public information; and what, in particular, is the cost of promoting the married couples' tax allowance. [[HL4578](#)]

Lord Young of Cookham: The total advertising spend for April to December 2016 was £77.3m excluding VAT. This does not include agency fees and production costs. The budget for January to end March 2017 is under discussion.

HMRC is currently running an advertising campaign to encourage take-up of Married Couple's Tax Allowance. The total projected media spend for 2016-17, excluding production costs and fees, is £688,577 excluding VAT.

The Government do not categorise activity by 'public information' and 'non-public information'.

Courts: Interpreters

Asked by **Baroness Coussins**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the cost, in the last quarter of 2016, of cancellations and adjournments of court hearings because no interpreter arrived, or because the interpreter arrived too late, or was an interpreter in the wrong language, or proved to be an inadequate interpreter; and how this cost compares with each quarter of the previous year. [[HL4608](#)]

Lord Keen of Elie: The information requested is not held centrally.

Asked by **Baroness Coussins**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the future supply chain of qualified court

interpreters, in the light of the payment levels and cancellation policy established by the Ministry of Justice. [HL4609]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry is keen to maintain the quality and capacity of the future supply chain of qualified court interpreters, to make sure that the justice system continues to be supported by a range of high quality language services that meet the needs of all those that require them.

The Ministry has awarded a contract to 'The Language Shop' (part of the London Borough of Newham) to provide us with independent quality assurance of the translation and interpretation services. This contract also includes the requirement for The Language Shop to develop and administer a Language Professional Trainee Scheme with the primary objective of increasing the resource available to the other language service suppliers in pursuit of fulfilling Commissioning Body bookings.

The Trainee Scheme will provide one or more clear, structured and flexible pathways for part qualified language professionals to become qualified within specified timescales. The Language Shop, and the other language service suppliers, are also required to jointly promote and encourage participation in the Scheme at the point of registration and through industry and academic networks and events.

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the provision of court interpreters is being independently monitored. [HL4610]

Lord Keen of Elie: The new language service contracts began on 31 October 2016 and are subject to robust governance arrangements.

These include monthly meetings with suppliers and stakeholders to monitor and discuss, in detail, the quality of the services being provided and performance against contractual performance indicators. The contracts also provide for the Ministry to audit the suppliers to verify the accuracy of contractual payments, management information, and compliance with contractual obligations.

In addition, the Ministry has awarded a contract to 'The Language Shop' (part of the London Borough of Newham) to provide independent quality assurance of the services provided under the other contracts, including those awarded to the thebigword Ltd. The Language Shop undertakes this assurance in a number of ways, including managing the Ministry's register of interpreters, conducting an annual audit of supplier processes for introducing new linguists, and a programme of 'spot checks' of interpreters undertaking assignments.

The Language Shop also has a responsibility to assure the correct levels of qualifications, skills, security clearance and experience are held by each linguist through their ongoing assessment programme and in response to complaints or specific concerns during the contract period.

Defence Medical Services

Asked by Lord Touthig

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the concerns expressed by the British Medical Association in their parliamentary briefing of 12 January about under staffing of the Defence Medical Services; and what assessment they have made of the impact of under staffing on the morale, motivation and retention of army doctors. [HL4803]

Earl Howe: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognises that there are manning challenges regarding Armed Forces Medical Officers (MOs). While we are able to meet our current commitments both on operations and in the delivery of primary healthcare, we recognise more needs to be done. We welcome the British Medical Association's support in this regard.

The Surgeon General commissions an annual Continuous Attitude Survey (CAS) for all members of the Defence Medical Services. Whilst the 2016 CAS results showed that under-staffing is an issue for some cadres, they also revealed that morale has increased amongst MOs compared to 2015.

Concerning retention, we monitor closely the voluntary outflow of Regular MOs, with trends reported to the Surgeon General. To improve retention, in 2016 we piloted a Less Than Full Time Training programme for MOs under speciality training. This has now migrated to an Armed Forces wide scheme for which MOs at any stage of career will be eligible. The MOD is also looking at ways to incentivise recruitment of fully accredited General Medical Practitioners and Consultants in shortfall cadres.

Defence: Procurement

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Earl Howe regarding the A159 Wildcat Helicopter on 9 January (HL Deb, col 1728), whether they believe that there is a strategic requirement for the UK to design, develop and build (1) complex surface warships, (2) nuclear submarines, (3) military fast jets, and (4) military helicopters, and whether this subject has been considered by the National Security Council. [HL4770]

Earl Howe: The National Security through Technology White Paper 2012 explained that, while meeting defence requirements through open competition delivers the best value for money, the Ministry of Defence would take action to protect our freedom of action and operational advantage on national security grounds. For example complex warships and nuclear submarines are built in the UK. We are principally concerned with how we access the skills and technologies which underpin our critical capabilities. The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) committed us to take a more vigilant and systematic approach to the most sensitive components. It

also committed to refresh Defence industrial policy and outline the further action we will take to help UK industry to grow and compete successfully. SDSR implementation is kept under review by a Ministerial sub-committee of the National Security Council.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Telephone Services

Asked by Lord Laird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the average waiting time to speak to an official of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency by phone; and what steps they are taking to shorten the average waiting time. [HL4622]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In 2015/16 the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) contact centre advisers handled 12.9 million calls.

The current average waiting time for customers to speak to an official in the DVLA's contact centre by telephone is 32 seconds.

The DVLA is always looking to improve customer service and has introduced system improvements to manage demand.

Forests

Asked by Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what budget allocation they have made to fund new woodland planting in England. [HL4617]

Asked by Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to offer incentives to small scale forestry schemes in future. [HL4618]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Woodland planting schemes supported by Countryside Stewardship (and earlier Rural Development Programme schemes) for planting in 2016-17 and 2017-18 have budget allocations of £3.3m and £8.3m respectively.

The Woodland Carbon Fund has a budget allocation of more than £19 million for the remainder of this Parliament.

The Woodland Creation Planning Grant's budget allocation is drawn from the £1m Forestry Innovation Fund.

We have allocated up to £3.2m over 4 years to the Trees for Schools programme. This will give hundreds of thousands of children across England a chance to plant saplings in their school grounds and communities as part of a Government-backed scheme to give free trees to schools in partnership with the Woodland Trust.

Countryside Stewardship offers incentives for small scale woodland creation. The normal minimum application area is 3 hectares with a minimum block size of 0.5 hectares; or 1 hectare and 0.1 hectares where

woodland creation is part of a suite of measures for water quality or flood prevention.

Countryside Stewardship also provides support for existing woodlands as small as 3 hectares, including preparing a woodland management plan and support a range of woodland management activities and capital items. Additional support is available for woodland tree health

Asked by Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the annual rate of change in new woodland planting in England over each of the last 10 years, expressed in thousands of hectares per annum and including plantings made by private owners, charities and conservation bodies. [HL4619]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Forestry Commission collect and publish National Statistics for England on the area of new woodland planting. Figures for the ten years since 2006-07 are shown in Table 1 below, with the year-on-year annual rate of change. In this period almost all the new planting recorded was conducted by private owners including charities and conservation bodies supported by Government funding under successive Rural Development Programme grant schemes (Woodland Grant Scheme 2006-7; English Woodland Grant Scheme 2007-14; Countryside Stewardship 2015-)

Table 1: New planting of woodland in England over the ten years since 2006-07

Financial Year to 31 st March	a) New planting by land area	b) Annual change in new planting by land area compared to previous year
	Thousand hectares	Thousand hectares
2006-07	3.2	-0.5
2007-08	2.6	-0.6
2008-09	2.5	-0.1
2009-10	2.3	-0.2
2010-11	2.5	0.2
2011-12	2.7	0.2
2012-13	2.6	-0.1
2013-14	3.3	0.7
2014-15	2.4	-0.9
2015-16	0.7	-1.7

Source: Forestry Statistics 2016 (Forestry Commission).

Note: These figures do not include planting as part of restocking woodland.

Glyphosate

Asked by The Countess of Mar

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the publication of the paper *Multiomics reveal non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in rats following chronic exposure to an ultra-low dose of Roundup herbicide* by Robin Mesnage et al, published in *Scientific Reports* on 9 January, whether they will order an independent review of glyphosate-based herbicides. [HL4760]

Asked by The Countess of Mar

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the finding that long-term consumption of ultra-low doses of Roundup causes non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in rats, reported in the paper *Multiomics reveal non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in rats following chronic exposure to an ultra-low dose of Roundup herbicide* by Robin Mesnage et al, published in *Scientific Reports* on 9 January, whether they intend to ban Roundup formulations containing glyphosate and POE-tallowamine. [HL4761]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The paper by Mesnage et al reports some further analysis on samples collected in a study reported in an earlier paper. Regulatory studies (which are carried out both for active substances such as glyphosate and for products such as Roundup) investigate effects on the liver and any such effects are taken into account when acceptable human exposure levels are determined. There are a number of these regulatory studies which have tested larger number of animals at much higher doses than the Mesnage et al paper and have found no adverse effects.

The Government does not therefore consider that the paper requires any regulatory action in respect of Roundup products. The European Food Safety Authority has reviewed the scientific data as part of the ongoing EU review of the approval of glyphosate and concluded that glyphosate meets all of the relevant safety standards. UK regulatory experts agree. The EU is due to decide on the approval of glyphosate later this year. If approval is given, Member States will review glyphosate products to ensure that they meet modern standards.

The Commission revised the conditions of approval of glyphosate last year. All Member States are required as a result, to ensure that glyphosate products do not contain POE-tallowamine.

History: Publications

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Young of Cookham on 23 January (HL4523), whether they intend to commission any new projects to carry forward the Official History programme. [HL4879]

Lord Young of Cookham: As the Noble Friend knows from my answer to his written question, there are a

number of Official Histories currently being produced. The Government will decide on new history projects when the current programme has been completed.

Homelessness: Older People

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of older people who are (1) homeless, and (2) at risk of becoming homeless, but who are not included in official statutory homelessness statistics. [HL4689]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We do not hold this information. However, we will be overhauling data on homelessness so that we have a clearer picture of those affected.

We have embarked on a project to redesign our homelessness data collection system. The new system will capture information on all households receiving homelessness assessments from local authorities, as well as recording the assistance received and the outcome. This will provide a much clearer understanding of the causes of homelessness and the effectiveness of responses.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they provide to debt collection agencies on working with vulnerable older people who are risk of homelessness. [HL4691]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We work with and provide funding to Shelter to run the National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) in partnership with Citizens Advice who provide support and advice for vulnerable people facing difficulties. NHAS also provides specialist support and training to homelessness advisers across the country, and are reviewing what more they do in this area.

Moreover, the Financial Conduct Authority does regulate debt collection agencies to ensure that they are operating responsibly.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether homelessness services are accessible to, and adequate for, older people. [HL4692]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: England has a strong homelessness safety net, providing protection to the most vulnerable in our society so they always have a roof over their heads.

This Government is investing over £500 million in the next four years to prevent and tackle all forms of homelessness. This includes protecting £315 million for local authority prevention funding, and £149 million central government funding.

We recognise that homelessness amongst older people has its particular challenges, and we know how important

it is that when people are faced with a homelessness situation, they have somewhere to go and experts to talk to. Frontline staff need to be equipped to provide this service and getting the right training is one part of this. That is why we have provided £2 million for the Gold Standard Scheme, delivered by the National Practitioner Support Service, to help local authorities deliver more effective homelessness prevention.

We have also funded the National Homelessness Advice Service, delivered by Shelter and Citizens Advice, to ensure that frontline housing advisers have access to the best quality professional advice to help vulnerable people.

Of course, we are always keeping policies under review to ensure they are working for everyone.

Ivory: China

Asked by Lord De Mauley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the People's Republic of China has taken steps to ban completely the domestic trade in ivory. [HL4762]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We were pleased to hear of China's announcement to end its domestic commercial ivory trade in 2017.

We look forward to seeing further detail on China's measures, including understanding the nature of provisions for auctioning certified ivory 'relics' and how China plans to implement the new measures.

We particularly commend the announcement of enhancements to enforcement and education, both of which are an important part of tackling the illegal trade in ivory and stopping poaching.

Migration Impacts Fund

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will organise a national evaluation of the work of the Migration Impact Fund from 2009 to 2011, and publish lessons learned from that evaluation, with particular reference to their proposed Controlling Migration Fund. [HL4660]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Controlling Migration Fund is a new fund focussing on delivering a benefit to the local population. Local authorities know their areas best, and the Controlling Migration Fund is designed to allow them to identify where migration is causing pressures, and to come forward with effective solutions. We are committed to reviewing the local services element of the Controlling Migration Fund in 2017/18. There are no plans to evaluate the Migration Impacts Fund, a separate Fund which closed in October 2010 beyond the assessment made at the time that it was ineffective and inefficient.

Nurses: Training

Asked by Lord Clark of Windermere

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many nursing students were admitted to degree courses starting in (1) Autumn 2016, and (2) Autumn 2017; and what assessment they have made of the impact of the discontinuance of the NHS bursary scheme for nurses on those numbers. [HL4605]

Lord O'Shaughnessy: For autumn 2015 admissions, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) end of cycle data for B7 Nursing in England shows 21,450 students accepted onto B7 Nursing courses in England.

For autumn 2016 admissions, the UCAS end of cycle data for B7 Nursing in England shows 22,630 acceptances.

The information for autumn 2017 admissions is not yet available.

Opportunity and Integration Review

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration. [HL4659]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: We are currently considering the Casey Review's findings and recommendations very carefully as we prepare the Government's new integration strategy, which we plan to publish in the Spring. As my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Communities said in his statement to Parliament before Christmas:

"For too long, too many people in this country have been living parallel lives, refusing to integrate and failing to embrace the shared values that make Britain great. We will not allow that to continue, we have a moral responsibility to deal with that situation, and Dame Louise's report is a crucial step in that process".

Overseas Trade: Taiwan

Asked by Lord Steel of Aikwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have for increasing trade with, and investments in, Taiwan. [HL4633]

Lord Price: The UK enjoys a strong trade and investment relationship with Taiwan. Bilateral trade reached £5.8bn in 2014, a rise of more than 50% on the level five years ago.

Building on the visit to Taiwan in September 2016 by The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, Minister of State for Trade and Investment, we will continue to work with the Taiwanese authorities to address market access issues and to further increase UK trade with Taiwan as we promote the UK as a place to do business and trade with.

Severn River Crossing

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the full capital cost of the Severn Bridges and approaches together with interest charges have now been recovered and, if not, what is the outstanding debt and how much longer it will take for this to be repaid with the lower tolls announced on 13 January 2017. [HL4816]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The consultation that the Government launched on 13th January 2017 sets out that the revenue to be recouped under the current concession will be received by late 2017 or early 2018.

Once the Crossings are back in public ownership, there are costs that will need to be recouped from the proposed lower charges. These include those previously incurred outside of the concession, and future costs such as:

- periodic resurfacing,
- ongoing operating and maintenance costs of the roads and bridge structures,
- and potential costs of introducing free flow charging.

The consultation commits to setting future charges at levels which do no more than cover costs, and to keep the amount charged under review.

Severn River Crossing: Tolls

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government why they have reduced the tolls on the Severn Bridge without making a similar beneficial economic signal to the competing rail line and services. [HL4815]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has a longstanding policy that drivers using major river crossings should pay for their provision and upkeep. The proposed reduction in the toll on the Severn Crossings simply reflects that once the consortium that constructed the Second Severn Crossing have recouped their investment under the Concession, the subsequent return to public ownership will enable the Government to reduce the charges, and users will therefore benefit from lower prices. The Government is currently investing a record £40 billion in railways, which needs funding through a combination of taxpayer and farepayers contributions.

Submarines: Shipbuilding

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, when ordering steel required for the manufacture of UK submarines, they have released to overseas steel manufacturers (1) the steel recipe, or (2) the method of manufacture. [HL4768]

Earl Howe: The Tier One suppliers, BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce, are responsible for procuring steel for the two submarine programmes.

Throughout the tender process they will release technical specifications to contractors as appropriate and in accordance with the constraints of Ministry of Defence security policy.

Sudan: Visits Abroad

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the visit of Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Sir Simon McDonald to Sudan, what was discussed during the visit and what were the conclusions. [HL4647]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: A senior delegation led by the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Simon McDonald, and the Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Development, Sir Mark Lowcock, visited Khartoum and Darfur between 9-10 January for wide-ranging talks. In addition to Sudan-UK bilateral interests, discussions also centred around human rights, conflict, migration, humanitarian and development assistance, economic issues and regional security. These were productive and constructive discussions that helped build a frank and open dialogue on issues of mutual concern, whilst also allowing us to underline the central importance of respect for human rights and political freedoms.

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the account of the visit of Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Sir Simon McDonald to Sudan set out in the press release of 11 January by the Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan. Visit to Sudan by FCO's Permanent Undersecretary Sir Simon McDonald. [HL4648]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We welcome the fact that the press release published by the Sudanese Embassy in London portrays the visit to Sudan of the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Development as positively reflecting progress in the bilateral relationship. As we made clear in our press release published on 11 January, the visit also reinforced the UK's commitment to supporting peace, stability, human rights and economic development for Sudan; building space for a frank and open dialogue on issues of mutual concern, whilst allowing us to underline the central importance of respect for human rights and political freedoms.

Syria: Diplomatic Service

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what permanent representation they currently have in Syria. [HL4632]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK Government does not currently have any permanent diplomatic representation in Syria. We withdrew our staff from the British Embassy in Damascus in 2012.

Syria: Refugees

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the UN Security Council regarding the status of refugees from Syria. [HL4629]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: In the UN Security Council, we have sought to address the humanitarian situation inside Syria, calling for an end to the fighting and full access for humanitarian aid. At the UN, we have worked with partners to help Syrian refugees, including in September 2016 when we co-hosted a meeting in the margins of the General Assembly to review progress on implementation of the February conference. The UK is at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, including support for Syrian refugees. We have committed £2.3 billion in response to the Syrian crisis, of which £1.1 billion is for countries neighbouring Syria. This money is to meet the needs of refugees, help host communities and enable Syrian refugees to remain in the region. In February 2016, the UK co-hosted the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference, which raised over \$12 billion in pledges, and included a focus on education and employment opportunities for refugees in the region.

thebigword

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have a target figure for cost savings for the provision of court interpreters under the contract with thebigword; and if so, what is it, and against what baseline it is measured. [HL4606]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a range of quality language services that meet the needs of all those that require them.

All our new language service contracts contain robust performance and charging provisions which are designed to ensure the value for money and affordability of the services provided by the department's suppliers. However, we have not felt it appropriate to set a target figure for cost savings for the provision of court interpreters, which is a demand-led service, given the importance we attach to the provision of such support to those who most need it.

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the contract with thebigword for court interpreters specifies any particular level or type of qualification

which individual interpreters are expected to have. [HL4607]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a range of high quality language services that meet the needs of all those that require them.

Bookings are classified depending on their complexity level, namely: 'standard', 'complex' and 'complex written'. These complexity levels were determined by each Commissioning Body.

I can confirm that the contract sets out the minimum level of qualification and experience a language professional is required to have in order to work on each complexity level of booking. Details of these qualifications can be found at: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137>

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government which company, or companies, are being sub-contracted by thebigword to provide court interpreting services; and whether those companies are subject to quality assurance. [HL4611]

Lord Keen of Elie: To ensure a high and consistent level of fulfilment across all geographical areas and in rare languages, thebigword have partnered with a number of subcontractors, namely: Global Language Services Limited, Cintra Translations Limited, Debonair Languages Ltd, Supreme Linguistic Services Ltd, Mango Spice Language Solutions, J-anne Interpreting and Translation Service Limited, Global Translation Services and Language River.

Thebigword must ensure that its subcontracts contain obligations no less onerous on the sub-contractor than those imposed on them by the Ministry, including those relating to quality and performance standards. Thebigword are also responsible for carrying out audits to ensure subcontractor adherence to the contract service specification.

All language professionals provided by thebigword, whether directly or via subcontractor, will be subject to ongoing quality assurance provided by The Language Shop. This includes a programme of 'spot checks' of interpreters undertaking assignments.

Tree Planting

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their target for the planting of new trees in England for (1) 2016–17, and (2) 2017–18. [HL4738]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Woodland cover in England is at its highest since the 14th century. We have not set annual targets for the numbers of trees planted in England, but have instead set an overall target of 11 million trees to be planted by the end of this Parliament.

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the impact of environmental stewardship schemes in the planting of new trees in England. [HL4739]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: New woodland planting is supported by the Rural Development Programme Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant Scheme. Latest figures show that planting in 2015/16 and so far in 2016/17 has achieved 1,009 hectares or close to 1.4 million trees.

Additionally, to encourage further tree planting, we launched the second round of the Woodland Creation Planning Grant in September and the Woodland Carbon Fund in November.

UK Trade with EU

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the UK economy of leaving the Single Market. [HL4634]

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on GDP if trade negotiations with the EU are not successfully concluded prior to the UK's withdrawal; and what steps they are taking to ensure that they have access to adequate advice from trade experts as they approach those negotiations. [HL4637]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government continues to undertake a range of analyses to inform the UK's position for the upcoming EU exit negotiations. As the Prime Minister has said, we will pursue a bold and ambitious Free Trade Agreement with the European Union as a priority to allow for the greatest possible trade in goods and services between Britain and EU member states. Autumn Statement funding decisions ensure that departments have sufficient resource to deliver this new relationship.

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