

**Vol. 781
No. 31**



**Monday
3 April 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, Whip
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, Whip
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
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

Monday, 3 April 2017

Schools Capital Allocations

[HLWS589]

Lord Nash: Today, I am announcing £2.4 billion of capital funding to create new school places needed by September 2020 and to maintain and improve the condition of school buildings. This forms part of our wider plan to invest more than £24 billion in the school estate by 2021.

We want to build a country that works for everyone – and that means providing a good school place for every child, one that offers them the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Investing in our school buildings and creating a sufficient amount of school places are key parts of the Government's plan to ensure that every child has the opportunity of a place at a good school, whatever their background.

We are committed to investing £7 billion in this Parliament to create new school places. Together with our further investment in free schools we expect this to deliver 600,000 new school places over the course of the Parliament. We have already announced £4.8 billion of funding to local authorities for 2015-19, and today we are announcing a further £980 million for 2019-20, taking total investment so far through this Parliament to £5.8 billion. In doing so, we continue to recognise that good investment decisions require certainty. Announcing allocations for 2019-20 today means local authorities can plan years ahead with confidence, and make good strategic investment decisions to ensure they deliver good school places for every child who needs one.

Alongside this new funding we are publishing data from the 2016 School Capacity Survey, which highlights the progress made by local authorities to date in providing new school places using our previous investment. By May 2016, our investment had already helped to create nearly 735,000 additional school places since 2010, with 136,000 delivered in 2015/16 alone.

Alongside this investment in new school places, we are committing more than £10 billion over 2016-2021 to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate. As part of this, I am today confirming allocations of £1.2 billion for local authorities, voluntary aided partnerships,

multi-academy trusts and academy sponsors to invest in their own condition priorities, and a further £0.2 billion of Devolved Formula Capital directly to schools in the financial year 2017-18. This allocation includes the Condition Improvement Fund which is providing funding of £466 million for 1,435 projects across 1,184 academies and sixth-form colleges. These projects will help to ensure that children across the country have access to a good school place, further supporting them to reach their full potential.

This funding will help improve the quality of school buildings across the country – targeting schools with the highest need. It can also help schools reduce their running costs, by replacing outdated facilities with buildings that are more efficient to run. So I want schools, local authorities and academy trusts to look carefully at how they can achieve the best value from this investment.

Details of today's announcement will be published on the GOV.UK website, and copies will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Service Complaints Ombudsman: Annual Report

[HLWS588]

Earl Howe: I am pleased to lay before Parliament today the Service Complaints Ombudsman's annual report for 2016 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the service complaints system.

This report is published by Nicola Williams, her first as Service Complaints Ombudsman, and covers the first year of operation of the new service complaints system and the work of her office in 2016.

The new service complaints system was introduced on 1 January 2016. The system is shorter, seeks to promote greater confidence in the system and strengthens the oversight and accountability through the powers of the Ombudsman. I am pleased that the report acknowledges the good work undertaken by each of the Services in 2016 as they have implemented the new system. The Ombudsman also reports on those areas where further work is required to improve the way in which complaints are handled, and makes twelve new recommendations.

The findings of the report and the recommendations made will now be considered in detail, and a formal response to the Ombudsman will follow once that work is complete.

Written Answers

Monday, 3 April 2017

Air Force

Asked by Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelpington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of RAF pilots who already possess private pilot's licences on joining the service. [HL6452]

Earl Howe: This information is not held. The RAF does not record extra-curricular qualifications held by entrants into the RAF.

Air Pollution

Asked by Lord Hunt of Chesterton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by the Prime Minister on 8 March 2017 (HC Deb, col 807), what data they have collected that shows an improvement in air quality in recent years. [HL6317]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The UK's National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) is compiled annually to report total emissions by pollutant and source sector in a systematic way, and to facilitate compliance with EU emission ceilings and targets.

An overview of this information and the trends in air pollution since 1970 is publicly available in the latest National Statistics publication 'Air Pollutants in the UK, 1970 to 2015', which was published on 21 December 2016.

Emissions data demonstrate a long term decrease in the emissions of all of the main air pollutants between 1970 and 2015. Emissions of:

- sulphur dioxide (SO₂) reduced by 96%;
- nitrogen oxides (NO_x) by 69%;
- non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) by 66%;
- particulate matter: PM₁₀ by 73% and PM_{2.5} by 76%.

In addition, ammonia (NH₃) emissions from agriculture decreased by 19% between 1990 and 2015.

Furthermore, the emissions inventory indicates that levels of all these pollutants continued to decrease in 2015, with the exception of ammonia and PM_{2.5}. The most prominent examples of this are:

- Emissions of sulphur dioxide further decreased by 23% from 2015 compared to 2014, dropping to the lowest level so far since 1970.
- Emissions of nitrogen oxides decreased in 2015 compared to 2014 by 4.0%, dropping to the lowest level so far since 1970.

The trajectories of emissions levels for each of the key pollutants for the UK, in each year since 1970, based on

the data that are available, are set out in the attached graph.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Long Term Emissions Trends (1970-2015) [HL6317 - Long Term Emissions Trends (1970-2015).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-03-27/HL6317>

Air Pollution: Urban Areas

Asked by Lord Hunt of Chesterton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accuracy of local air pollution forecasts in major cities; and what comparisons they make between these forecasts and those provided by other organisations. [I] [HL6318]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra publishes the daily air pollution forecast provided by the Met Office on the UK Air website. A 2013 Defra-commissioned study made a comparison of the Met Office air quality forecasting model against three other models over a six month period. This found that the Met Office model generally performed best overall in both urban and rural areas.

The Met Office has built a system for acquiring air quality observations from the Automatic Urban and Rural Network and comparing its air quality forecast against these observations, in order to evaluate and verify performance of the forecast system. In addition, a recent development of the system allows a comparison against the EU Copernicus forecasting system. This evaluation runs on a daily basis, to inform forecasters about current and recent forecast performance; and on a longer timescale, to identify areas requiring further research.

Basil al-Araj

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding the killing of the activist Basil al-Araj. [HL6187]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We have not raised this issue with the Israeli authorities.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Asked by Baroness Parminter

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the recent outbreak of bovine tuberculosis in hounds, what assessment they have made of the risk of future outbreaks; and what steps they are taking to prevent future outbreaks. [HL6338]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: TB in dogs caused by *Mycobacterium bovis*, the bovine TB bacterium, is extremely rare. Dogs pose a very low risk of transmitting

the disease to cattle herds and, overall, they play an insignificant role in the persistence of bovine TB in England.

Defra's Chief Veterinary Officer met the Chairman of the Master of Fox Hounds Association and others on 8 February. The discussion included possible new best practice guidance that would reduce the risk of infection in hounds.

Burma: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the Interim Report and recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State; and what representations they will make to the government of Burma regarding the implementation of those recommendations. [HL6157]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We welcome the Rakhine Advisory Commission's interim recommendations. The Minister for Asia and the Pacific expressed this directly to former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Chair of the Commission, on 16 March. The recommendations represent an important step in resolving the long-standing issues in Rakhine State and we welcome the Burmese Government's endorsement of them. The UK stands ready to provide support to the Burmese Government in implementing the recommendations.

Business Appointments Advisory Committee

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will review the effectiveness of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. [HL6215]

Lord Young of Cookham: The Government believes that the independent Advisory Committee on Business Appointments discharges its remit effectively and efficiently.

Cameroon: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Cameroon concerning reports of the suspension of internet and email services in the English-speaking regions of that country and alleged government repression of the Anglophone minority. [HL6173]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We continue to raise the shutdown of the internet in certain areas with the Government of Cameroon.

We have called for the Cameroon authorities to allow everyone to voice their concerns peacefully and without hindrance, restore access to the internet, and for the

Government and those in the English speaking regions to come to a peaceful resolution.

CH2M Hill

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Gardiner of Kimble on 16 March (HL5813 and HL5815), since HS2 Ltd, Thames Water Utilities Ltd and Bazalgette Tunnel Ltd are all private limited companies, why the information requested is available for HS2 but not the other companies. [HL6301]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: HS2 Ltd is funded by the Government, whereas Bazalgette Tunnel Ltd and Thames Water Utilities Ltd are not, and as such, different arrangements apply in respect of the information which the Government can request from them and the extent to which it can be disclosed.

In the particular case of information about CH2M Hill staff referred to in the noble Lord's previous question (HL5813), this is not required by the Secretary of State to carry out her functions, and Defra therefore does not hold it.

Child Tax Credit

Asked by Baroness Drake

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of families that would be affected, over the next five years, by the Child Tax Credits (Amendment) Regulations 2017 whereby a child or qualifying young person born before 6 April 2017 who is taken into a household as a result of a kinship care arrangement, will not be disregarded for the purposes of the two child limit if the claimant or joint claimants subsequently have a third child of their own born on or after 6 April 2017; and what is the anticipated saving to the public purse of such a change. [HL6205]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: From 6 April 2017 families will no longer be able to claim additional support of up to £2,780 per child per year for third and subsequent children born on or after this date through Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit. All households should think carefully about whether they are financially prepared to support a new child without relying on means-tested benefits.

There will be no cash losers as a result of the Government's policy to limit support to two children in Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit.

We recognise that some claimants are not able to make the same choices as others about the number of children in their family. We have been clear that for third and subsequent children there will be exceptions for certain groups.

The forecast savings from the policy to limit support to two children in Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit were updated at the Spring Budget 2017. The cost to the public purse of the exceptions were also outlined in the Spring Budget 2017.

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government why they have not ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. [HL6360]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: It is necessary to carefully prioritise resources towards those Conventions that will have the most impact on the safeguarding of our heritage, such as the recent final steps taken towards ratification of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property. However, the Government fully recognises the contribution that the UK's oral traditions, social practices and festive events make to the country's cultural fabric, and continues to encourage communities to celebrate these practices and to continue them for future generations. A particularly notable example of research into this area has recently been undertaken by Museums Galleries Scotland, as their project to record and map the intangible cultural heritage of Scotland has identified an impressive breadth and variety of practices.

Corporate Manslaughter: Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Knight of Weymouth

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 9 March (HL5640), whether the legal guidance for prosecutors concerning the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, as set out on the Crown Prosecution Service's website at 14 March, is current; and whether the Special Crime Unit in the Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division, CPS Headquarters, continues to maintain an overview of corporate manslaughter cases, as set out in the penultimate paragraph of that advice. [HL6293]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Crown Prosecution Service's publicly available legal guidance concerning corporate manslaughter accurately reflects the CPS's policy on prosecuting for this offence. The guidance includes a requirement for cases to which the guidance may ultimately apply to be referred to the Special Crime Unit of the Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division.

Electoral Register

Asked by Lord Bird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to assist electors without a permanent address to register to vote, including registering online; and whether any forthcoming review of electoral law will address and include measures to reduce the

proportion of homeless and vulnerably housed electors who are not registered to vote. [HL6280]

Lord Young of Cookham: We are committed to a democracy that works for everyone, including homeless people. The Minister for Constitution has gathered specific evidence on the registration barriers faced by homeless people as part of his Every Voice Matters tour.

Specifically, the Minister for the Constitution met with homelessness organisations and their clients to hear how the electoral registration system could better respond to their needs. We will continue to work with homelessness charities, such as Shelter and others, to overcome barriers and help those with no fixed address to register to vote.

Employment: Disability

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the Green Paper consultation *Improving Lives: Work, Health and Disability*, what assessment they have made of the ability to work of some disabled people with complex needs; and what measures they are taking to support those people. [HL6165]

Lord Henley: We are committed to understanding what works for people in the ESA Support Group, many of whom have complex needs, and announced in the Green Paper that we will undertake comprehensive research and develop a large scale trial to test and learn from different approaches of offering employment support to people in this group taking into consideration views and ideas gathered through the consultation, which closed on 17th February.

In the Green Paper, we also announced the details of the Personal Support Package. This package includes a broad spectrum of employment support, with specific provision made for the hardest to help Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants placed in the work-related activity group (and Universal Credit equivalents). This comprises:

- More places on the Specialist Employability Support (SES) programme; and
- Trialling and testing new forms of employment support to continue to build our evidence base for the hardest to help, including:
 - i) Testing a jobcentre-led alternative to the SES programme;
 - ii) Testing locally delivered Supported Employment; and
 - iii) Testing the use of Supported Work Experience for young people.

Entry Clearances: India

Asked by Lord Green of Deddington

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Tier 4 (General) student visas were granted to Indian nationals in each year since 2001. [HL6311]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Information on Tier 4 (General) grants for Indian nationals is published quarterly; latest data in the Home Office's 'Immigration Statistics, October - December 2016', Visa data tables volume 3, table vi_06_q_s, available from the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2016/list-of-tables#visas>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table vi-06-q-s- Immigration Stats - Oct-Dec 2016 [entry visas 3 - q4 tables vol 3 - table vi-06-q-s.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-03-27/HL6311>

Exports

Asked by Baroness Quin

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Mobarik on 24 January (HL Deb, col 550) concerning UK exports, what criteria the Department for International Trade uses in deciding which markets and sectors to target through its export campaigns. [HL6174]

Lord Price: No set criteria are used in deciding which market-sectors should be export campaigns. Instead a range of different factors determine the campaigns. Primarily, we consider the ability of Government to add value to UK exports as recorded by the ONS. This is judged over a five-year forecasting period. We also consider the diversification across sectors and markets to ensure the portfolio of export campaigns is balanced. It is a proven framework for analysing where Government interventions can add the most value for the benefit of the whole of the UK.

Asked by Baroness Quin

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Mobarik on 24 January (HL Deb, col 550) concerning UK exports, what export campaigns are currently sponsored by the Department for International Trade, broken down by market and sector. [HL6175]

Lord Price: It is the Department for International Trade's policy not to disclose campaigns by market and sector. This is because many of the campaigns relate to specific commercial deals targeted by UK firms with Government support. Disclosing that information may put at risk the commercial deals they are pursuing.

Fly-tipping

Asked by Viscount Goschen

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many instances of fly tipping have been reported in each of the past three financial years; and how many successful prosecutions have been brought over the same period. [HL6229]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The number of instances of fly-tipping reported by local authorities, and the number of successful prosecutions brought over the last three years are set out in the table below.

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Number of Incidents</i>	<i>Number of successful prosecutions</i>
2013/14	852,036	1,953
2014/15	899,763	1,771
2015/16	936,090	2,091

The data is published on the GOV.UK website.

The overall trend in fly-tipping incidents had shown a steady decline between 2007/08 and 2012/13 until 2013/14 when there was an increase to 852,000 incidents. Prosecutions have been more variable, with a peak in 2011/12. The 2015/16 figure is more average.

Many local authorities have started to improve the way they capture and report fly-tips over the past few years, so the increase over time should be interpreted with some care. It has also been brought to our attention that the definitions used to describe fly-tips are interpreted broadly from the guidance.

Former Ministers

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments has ever advised a former minister not to accept an appointment. [HL6294]

Lord Young of Cookham: The independent Advisory Committee on Business Appointments provides its advice direct to the former Minister in question.

The Committee's final advice is published online when an appointment has been taken up and/or publicly announced. Until this point, the process is confidential between the Committee and the former Minister in question, to allow for free and frank discussion.

France: Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Stevens of Ludgate

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 24 January (HL4702), what is the policy that has resulted in the British Embassy in Paris having had no contact with Marine Le Pen. [HL6177]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: It has been the longstanding policy of this and previous governments not to engage with the Front National, based on positions the party has adopted in the past. We keep this policy under review.

Freedom of Expression

Asked by Lord Vinson

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, through instruction to the appropriate authorities and through the dissemination of guidance, to clarify their position concerning the right to insult as an element of freedom of speech. [HL6273]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Guidance on the Public Order Act 1986 was published by the College of Policing in December 2013. This supplements guidance produced by the College of Policing on Public Order issues which was published in October 2013. Crown Prosecution Service guidance on public order offences was published in May 2013.

Gambling: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the position paper published by the Gambling Commission in March concerning online gambling using virtual in-game currencies, whether they will take further steps to protect children from being exposed to such gambling. [HL6429]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Where online gambling using virtual in-game currencies is offered to British consumers located in Britain, a Gambling Commission license is required and licensing requirements to protect children and the vulnerable must be met including measures to prevent underage gambling.

The Gambling Commission has a range of enforcement powers available. In February 2017, following a prosecution brought by the Gambling Commission, two Directors of Game Gold Tradings Limited, a company which operated as FutGalaxy.com (an unlicensed gambling website) entered guilty pleas to offences under the Gambling Act 2005.

The Government keeps this issue under review will not hesitate to take action if it is needed to protect young people from gambling-related harm.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the position paper by the Gambling Commission published in March drawing attention to the risk of users of social casino games transitioning to real money gambling, whether they will take steps to restrict children's access to social casino games. [HL6430]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Social gaming is already covered by existing consumer protection legislation and other regulatory bodies. Evidence of the transition from social games to real money gambling is limited, however the Gambling Commission continue to monitor participation in social casino games. The Gambling Commission position paper, published in March 2017, concluded that there is not a persuasive case to pursue further regulatory intervention in social gaming.

The Government expects the social casino industry to adopt a socially responsible approach and awareness of potential harm.

Government will not hesitate to take action if it is needed to protect young people from gambling-related harm.

Government Departments: Procurement

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government which government departments are responsible for their own procurement. [HL6390]

Lord Young of Cookham: All central government departments are responsible for their own procurement.

The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) provides a range of commercial services to the public sector to enable departments to achieve best value for money from their procurement.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government from which professional bodies the civil service seeks support to discharge procurement responsibilities, broken down by department. [HL6391]

Lord Young of Cookham: HM Government works with a number of professional bodies to discharge its procurement and commercial activities, principally the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) and the International Association for Contract and Commercial Management (IACCM).

A detailed breakdown of departments' dealings with these organisations is not held centrally.

Home Office: Correspondence

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to reply to a letter from the European Centre for the Study of Extremism sent on 27 February about requests for UK visas for Syrian officials. [HL6203]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office is not aware of any correspondence from the European Centre for the Study of Extremism.

Horses: Animal Welfare

Asked by Lord De Mauley

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the new Code of Practice for the keeping of equines. [I] [HL6413]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are currently aiming to lay the updated statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids before Parliament before the end of the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Equine Sector Council for their assistance and expertise in updating the code.

Human Rights: Republic of Ireland

Asked by Lord Laird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the government of the Republic of Ireland ensures an equivalent level of protection for human rights in Ireland to that established in Northern Ireland by the Belfast Agreement 1998; and if not, what actions they propose. [HL6353]

Lord Dunlop: The Belfast Agreement commits the Irish Government to ensuring an equivalent level of protection for human rights in Ireland to that established in Northern Ireland by the Agreement.

As a result of this commitment, the Irish Government established the Irish Human Rights Commission, which in November 2014 merged with the Equality Authority to form the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, like the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, is a UN 'A status' accredited National Human Rights Institution, structured and operated in accordance with the Paris Principles.

The commitment to ensure an equivalent level of protection for human rights in Ireland to that established in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Irish Government.

Asked by Lord Laird

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Dunlop on 13 March (HL5767), what issues of human rights in the Irish Republic they have discussed with the government of the Republic of Ireland since 1998, and what was the outcome of those discussions. [HL6355]

Lord Dunlop: The Government has regular meetings with Ministers from the Irish Government.

These discussions cover a wide range of issues which are relevant to the situation in Northern Ireland including on human rights.

Immigrants: Detainees

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in introducing detention reviews for those held in immigration removal centres. [HL6236]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Any individual detained within immigration detention is already subject to regular review, both on a scheduled basis and whenever there is any change in circumstances that might be material to the decision on whether or not to continue detention. Reviews are carried out at successively more senior levels the longer the detention continues.

Following publication of the Government's response to Stephen Shaw's Report into the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons on 14 January 2016, work has been ongoing to design a more effective case management process to replace the existing procedure for reviewing detention. This includes a more proactive approach to the review of detention, through Case Progression Plans which show the monitoring and review of ongoing detention and with a focus on return or, if appropriate, release. Case Progression Plans are currently being piloted across the Home Office and are subject to evaluation.

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with civil society organisations regarding community-based alternatives to immigration detention centres. [HL6243]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office engages with civil society organisations at official and Ministerial level on a regular basis as part of the development of policy.

Immigration Bail

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to introduce automatic bail hearings under Schedule 10 to the Immigration Act 2016. [HL6237]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We are currently working with the Ministry of Justice, Her Majesty's Court Service and the First-tier Tribunal to implement the Secretary of State's duty to introduce automatic bail hearings, as set out in paragraph 11 of Schedule 10 to the Immigration Act 2016. This is one of a number of reforms necessary to implement the wider immigration bail provisions in Schedule 10 and it will be commenced alongside those other provisions in due course.

Irish Language

Asked by Lord Laird

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the parity of esteem under the 1998 Belfast Agreement, whether any change of status for the Irish language would also be granted to the Ulster Scots language. [HL6255]

Lord Dunlop: Although the recent talks have not yet delivered a devolved power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland, the Government's priority is to see a functioning Executive in place at Stormont.

Under the devolution settlement, the majority of responsibility for language issues rests with the Northern Ireland Executive, including policy relating to the promotion of minority languages.

As the Government has previously made clear it is committed to affording due respect and parity of esteem to the cultural traditions in Northern Ireland.

Israel: Bedouin

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 14 March (HL5738), what response was received when the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office raised the issue of the possible demolition of houses and the village school of Al Khan al Ahmar in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 1 March. [HL6267]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Israeli Ambassador said no action could be taken to demolish Khan Al Ahmar without following due process and endeavoured to raise the issue with his Government. The Foreign Secretary also raised the UK's grave concerns about demolitions, including the village of Khan Al Ahmar, with Prime Minister Netanyahu during his visit to Israel on 8 March.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning reports that Palestinian children living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza needing hospital treatment outside Gaza cannot be accompanied by a parent unless that parent is aged 55 or older or is subject to a security check. [HL6186]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: While we have not raised this specific issue, we have consistently urged the Israeli Government to ease movement and access restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), most recently on 13 March. We are also supporting the UN Access Coordination Unit to work with the Israeli Government, Palestinian Authority and aid agencies to help facilitate humanitarian access in the OPTs.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had at the UN regarding the report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia which stated that Israel practises apartheid against Palestine. [HL6219]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK does not endorse the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia report. The British Government has not engaged the UN in discussions about the report, and it has been withdrawn by the UN.

The situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains

committed to the two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of reports of the shooting of Ibrahim Mahmoud Matar by the Israeli police on 13 March, what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding the killing of Palestinian suspects who have already been detained. [HL6220]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We have not raised this issue with Israeli authorities.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received reports of tear gas and rubber bullets being used in schools in Abu Dis in March. [HL6221]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Yes, we have received a report on this issue from our Consulate-General in Jerusalem.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent representations they have made to the government of Israel about the treatment of Palestinian child prisoners; and what assessment they have made of whether that treatment has improved during the last year. [HL6222]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Minister for the Middle East and Africa raised this issue with the Israeli Ambassador to London on 1 March. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv also regularly raised this issue with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 9 March 2017. We welcomed progress made in recent Israeli policy amendments.

However, the UK continues to have strong concerns about continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors. Embassy officials 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.

Lebanon and Tunisia: Travel Information

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will review their travel advice for (1) Tunisia, and (2) Lebanon, in the light of the economic development and democratic progress made by those countries; and what assessment they have made of the appropriateness of issuing blanket guidance for the whole of each country. [HL6231]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Travel advice is kept under constant review. Risk to British nationals is our foremost consideration. The advice for each country is varied to reflect local conditions: there are two categories

of overall advice in Tunisia, three in Lebanon plus detailed and specific guidance for each.

Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March. [[HL6209](#)]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the findings of the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March, in particular that (1) too many detainees were held for prolonged periods, (2) the average length of detention was high, (3) children were detained for long periods of time due to failures in age assessment processes, (4) in one case, an incorrect Home Office age assessment led to the detention of a child for 36 days before social services confirmed that the boy was 16 years old, (5) the adults at risk policy was not yet widely understood, (6) there had been a three-fold increase in incidents of self-harm since the previous inspection, (7) the causes of self-harm had not been sufficiently analysed and there was no strategy to reduce it, and (8) four detainees had narrowly escaped fatal or serious injuries as a result of self-harm during the previous year. [[HL6210](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government takes the welfare of detainees extremely seriously and has carefully considered the HM Chief Inspector of Prison's (HMCIP) report on Morton Hall immigration removal centre. The service improvement plan will be published on the HMCIP website shortly.

We will closely monitor progress towards implementing these recommendations. Stephen Shaw CBE has been invited to carry out a short review later this year to assess progress against his previous review into the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March, what assessment they have made of the reasons for children being detained at the centre for (1) 12 days, (2) 36 days, and (3) 151 days, during the last year. [[HL6234](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not comment on individual cases.

The Home Office policy is not to detain children. Where there is doubt as to the age of an individual. Immigration Enforcement will detain individuals who

claim to be a child (under 18) until they are referred to a local authority for a Morton-compliant age assessment. Individuals who frustrate the age assessment and identification process may incur a lengthened period of detention. All three individuals were later identified as children and released into the custody of local authorities.

The Government will respond to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Report on the unannounced inspection of Morton Hall immigration Removal Centre in due course.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March, what steps they are taking to reduce the length of time individuals are detained; and whether they plan to introduce a maximum length of detention. [[HL6235](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It is already the case that individuals detained under Immigration Act powers are held for the minimum time necessary to achieve their removal from the United Kingdom.

As part of the Government's response to the review of the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons undertaken by Stephen Shaw CBE the Home Office has introduced, or is planning to introduce, a range of measure designed to further minimise the length of time individuals spend in immigration detention. These measures include: a new internal detention gatekeeper function to monitor admissions to the detention estate; new case progression plans with a clear focus on the individual's removal from the UK; and quarterly internal case progression panels to monitor progression of all detained cases and reduce the number of long-term detainees.

The Government has no plans to introduce a maximum time limit on immigration detention.

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March, what steps they are taking to reduce the length of time individuals are detained for immigration purposes. [[HL6242](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: As part of the Government's response to the review of the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons undertaken by Stephen Shaw CBE the Home Office has introduced, or is planning to introduce, a range of measures designed to further minimise the length of time individuals spend in immigration detention. These include: a new internal detention gatekeeper function to monitor admissions to the detention estate; new case progression plans with a clear focus on the individual's removal from the UK; and quarterly internal case progression panels to monitor progression of all detained cases and reduce the number of long-term detainees.

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March, what steps they are taking to ensure that staff in immigration detention centres understand and apply their guidance on adults at risk in immigration detention. [HL6244]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: A training presentation pack on Detention Services Order (DSO) on the care and management of adults at risk in the detention estate (08/2016) was circulated to all Home Office Immigration Enforcement staff in the immigration detention estate, including staff at Morton Hall Immigration removal centre (IRC) in September 2016.

The final version of DSO 08/2016 was published on 27 February 2017. Home Office business embedded trainers are delivering training on the DSO to staff in the IRCs, including supplier and healthcare staff. Staff at Morton Hall IRC received training in February and a refresher training session will be added to the annual training schedule for NOMS staff at the centre.

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government, with reference to the Report on an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 21 March, what assessment they have made of the relationship between the absence of limits on the length of time an individual can be detained and the incidence of self-harm in immigration detention centres. [HL6245]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: All incidents of self harm are treated very seriously and every step is taken to prevent incidents of this nature. Staff at all centres are trained to identify those at risk of self harm so that action can be taken to minimise the risk. Notices in various languages are displayed in IRCs setting out that where a detainee is concerned about a fellow detainee this should be brought to the attention of a member of staff. Formal risk assessments on initial detention and systems for raising concerns at any subsequent point feed into established self harm procedures in every IRC. These are in turn underpinned by the Home Office Operating Standard on the prevention of self-harm and detention services order 06/2008, Assessment Care in Detention Teamwork (ACDT).

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government when (1) the Home Secretary, and (2) the Immigration Minister, last visited Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre. [HL6246]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Secretary and Home Office Ministers conduct visits, and host meetings, on the whole spectrum of Home Office business regularly. It is our policy not to provide details of such visits.

Information on ministers' meetings is released quarterly as part of Government transparency and accountability data and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-july-to-september-2016>

A copy has also been attached to this answer.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Ministerial Meetings [Copy_of_Ministerial_Template_Final_July-Sep_16__2_(1).xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-03-21/HL6246>

National Income

Asked by Lord Triesman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the average per capita contribution to GDP in each of the last five years, broken down by electoral division in the 23 June 2016 referendum. [HL6190]

Lord Young of Cookham: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply, and I will place a copy of their letter in the House Library.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UKSA Response to HL6190 [PQHL6190 v.02.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-03-20/HL6190>

NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to replace the UK's representative to the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, and if so when. [HL6399]

Earl Howe: The United Kingdom (UK) continues to support strategic communications as an important element of NATO's renewed deterrence and defence posture. The next UK member of staff at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence is due to take up their appointment in August 2017.

North Korea: Terrorism

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 3 November 2015 (HL2960), what assessment they have made of the terror threat to UK nationals, including those who are North Korean refugees and human rights workers in North Korea, from the government of North Korea and its diplomatic personnel. [HL6262]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Any credible threats against British nationals would be fully investigated by the relevant authorities.

Northern Ireland Government

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to bring forward legislation to prevent a second Northern Ireland Assembly election this year if there is no agreement to form a new Executive. [HL6292]

Lord Dunlop: The Government remains focused on re-establishing an inclusive, devolved government that the overwhelming majority of the people in Northern Ireland want to see. Progress has been made in recent discussions which provide a basis for further intensive discussions to resolve outstanding issues. If these further talks are successful, it would be the Government's intention quickly to bring forward legislation after the Easter recess to allow an Executive to be formed and avoid a second Assembly election. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be keeping the situation under close review.

Occupational Pensions: Tax Allowances

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord O'Neill of Gatley on 19 September 2016 (HL1586, HL1587 and HL1757), Lord Freud on 15 September 2016 (HL1588), and Lord Young of Cookham on 25 October 2016 (HL2186), what analysis they have undertaken to identify how many employees are saving into a workplace pension which denies them tax relief. [HL6194]

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what will be the effect on the pension provision for low-paid workers earning (1) between £10,000 and £11,000 a year from their employer, and (2) below £10,000 a year from one or more employers, of being put into a defined contribution workplace pension scheme which operates on a net pay basis. [HL6195]

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the challenges faced by low earners whose employers use a net pay arrangement pension scheme which denies them the tax relief they would receive in a relief at source scheme. [HL6197]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Tax relief is granted on contributions to all registered pension schemes, including workplace pensions. This relief can be provided for through two mechanisms: net pay or relief at source.

Where a scheme operates the net pay mechanism, contributions are deducted from pay before any tax is

applied. This approach applies to all members of the scheme including those earning (1) between £10,000 and £11,000 a year from their employer, and (2) below £10,000 a year from one or more employers. The pension provision would depend on these contributions as well as those made by the employer.

The Government appreciates the impacts on low paid workers whose employers use a net pay arrangement pension scheme. However, it has not been possible to identify any straightforward or proportionate means to align the effects of the net pay and relief at source mechanisms more closely for this population.

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that employers and workers are told that net pay arrangement pension schemes may be unsuitable for workers who earn below the personal tax threshold, and that they face paying more than 20 per cent extra for their pension than if they were in a relief at source scheme. [HL6196]

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that employers and workers are informed that net pay arrangement pension schemes may be unsuitable for workers who earn below the personal tax threshold unless the employer or the scheme pays in the amount they would receive in tax relief on their behalf. [HL6198]

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what contact they have had with the Pensions Regulator during the past six months to ensure that the Regulator and the MasterTrust Assurance Framework take all necessary steps to ensure that workers earning below the personal tax threshold, and their employers, who are paying into net pay pension schemes under the auto-enrolment rules, are not disadvantaged by the loss of tax relief, and are properly informed of the personal impact of those schemes. [HL6199]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government has regular discussions with the Pensions Regulator on a range of issues, including workplace pensions.

Workplace pension schemes are chosen by employers and the Pensions Regulator (TPR) provides guidance on this in relation to automatic enrolment. The guidance covers the choice between net pay and relief at source schemes, and the implications of net pay schemes for employees who do not pay tax. It also points out that some schemes that use the net pay arrangement may have lower charges than schemes that operate relief at source.

All employers, including public sector employers, are expected to follow TPR's guidance about providing their employees with relevant information on the arrangements for tax relief.

PAYE

Asked by Lord Triesman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the average per capita annual PAYE receipts in each of the last five years, broken down by electoral division in the 23 June 2016 referendum. [HL6192]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Analysis of income tax liabilities by region is published in HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) statistics table 3.15 – “Income and tax by Parliamentary Constituency”, which is available on the gov.uk website[i].

This liabilities table relates to income tax whether collected through PAYE or another mechanism (such as Self-Assessment). Furthermore, the liabilities table excludes Class 1 National Insurance Contributions which are collected through PAYE.

HMRC does not hold information on all PAYE receipts broken down by parliamentary constituency.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-and-tax-by-parliamentary-constituency-2010-to-2011>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table 3.15 [table3-15final.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-03-20/HL6192>

Prisoners: Suicide

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the increasing annual number of self-inflicted deaths in prisons since 2012, what steps they are taking to reduce the number of such deaths. [HL6247]

Lord Keen of Elie: We are clear that violence, self-harm and deaths in our prisons are too high. The department has taken immediate action to stabilise the estate by tackling the drugs, drones and phones that undermine security and are also investing £100m annually to boost the frontline by 2,500 officers. These are long-standing issues that will not be resolved in weeks or months but our wholesale reforms will lay the groundwork to transform our prisons, reduce reoffending and make our communities safer. We will carefully study the details of all deaths in custody to determine whether there are any patterns, or lessons to be learned, to further our understanding of why these tragic events happen. A range of measures will be put in place to help support prisoners who are at risk of self-harm or suicide, especially in the first 24 hours where prisoners are at their most vulnerable. We are also investing more in mental health awareness training for staff.

Sheep Worrying

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to reduce the incidence of dogs worrying sheep. [HL6268]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra and the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England (AHWBE) recently met police forces, farming and rural interests groups to discuss the situation. Under the auspices of the National Police Chiefs' Council, five police forces are collaborating to pilot more systematic data collection of incidents and good response practices.

Social Services: Finance

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 28 December 2016 (HL4037) and the variation in yield revealed, what assessment they have made of the implications of the variation in yields for the NHS locally; and whether they remain committed to social care precept increases as a basis for funding adult social care on a sustainable basis. [HL6251]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: No assessment has been made of the implication of the variation in yields for the NHS locally; this is a tax raised and managed by local government, to be spent on adult social care. Our policy on the social care precept has been set until 2019-20. No decision has been made about the policy after 2020.

The government has taken several steps during this Parliament to help secure a strong and sustainable social care system, including an additional £2 billion of funding announced at Budget to support adult social care in the short term. Taken all together, councils have access to £9.25 billion more dedicated funding for social care over the next three years, as a result of measures introduced by the government since 2015. In the longer term, the government is committed to establishing a fair and more sustainable basis for adult social care, in the face of future demographic challenges, and proposals to put the system on a more secure and sustainable long term footing will be set out in a green paper.

Sovereignty: Scotland

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the Scottish Government concerning the inclusion of a third option, offering further devolution of powers to Scotland, in any future Scottish independence referendum; what assessment they have made of the benefits of including such an option; and whether they have ruled out its inclusion. [HL6159]

Lord Dunlop: The Government is focused on our negotiations with the European Union and getting the right deal for Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom. We have already committed that no decisions currently taken by the devolved administrations will be removed from them and we will use the opportunity of bringing decision making back to the UK to ensure that more decisions are devolved.

Sudan: Chemical Weapons

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have supported the call by Amnesty International to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons by the government of Sudan against the civilian population of that country; whether the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons is conducting an investigation, or plans to do so; and if not, what action they have taken in response. [HL6160]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We and other states encouraged the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to look into the serious allegations made by Amnesty International. The OPCW asked the Government of Sudan, as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to share all relevant information, and offered its assistance in any investigation. The Sudanese authorities have since reported to the OPCW that their national investigations have found no evidence of chemical weapon use in the Jebel Marra region. We have had discussions with Amnesty representatives following their report and encouraged them to engage with the OPCW directly. We continue to press the government of Sudan to allow the AU/UN Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) unrestricted humanitarian access to all parts of Darfur.

Sudan: Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they supported the appointment of a representative of the government of Sudan as Vice Chairman of the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons; and, in making this appointment, what account was taken of the allegations by Amnesty International that chemical weapons have been used against the civilian population of Sudan, and of the decision of the International Criminal Court to indict the President of Sudan on charges of genocide. [HL6158]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Regional groupings of the States Parties to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) designate candidates for the Chairmanship and four Vice-Chair positions, which are traditionally adopted by consensus within the Executive Council in accordance with established OPCW rules and practice. On this occasion, Sudan was the Africa

Group's chosen representative. Given that we understand that more information would be required for the OPCW to investigate further the allegations against Sudan and that the role of Vice-Chair does not have authority over any action by the OPCW to look into allegations of use, we did not object to the Africa Group's nominee. This is a separate issue to the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of President Bashir. The UK remains a strong supporter of the ICC and we continue to make clear that we expect compliance with the arrest warrants for all those indicted.

Syria: Internally Displaced People

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conditions in which displaced persons in Idlib Province, Syria, are living. [HL6322]

Lord Bates: There are an estimated 1.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Idlib province, of which more than 900,000 are internally displaced persons. The greatest humanitarian needs are for health, protection, and early recovery and livelihoods services. Food insecurity affects around 710,000 people. There has been a decrease in hostilities following the 30 December ceasefire, although airstrikes continue to pose a significant risk to civilians. Despite ongoing insecurity, humanitarian organisations continue to respond to the needs of the affected population and provide lifesaving support.

Syria: Military Intervention

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 20 March (HL Deb 10), whether they will cease giving political and practical support to armed insurgent groups in Syria in the interests of promoting the expulsion of Daesh from that country. [HL6232]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK supports the moderate opposition in Syria, which has repeatedly underlined its commitment to a negotiated political settlement in line with international agreements. We recognise that the brutality of the Syrian regime has been the primary driver of extremism and terrorism in Syria. In the long term, therefore, terrorism and extremism can only be sustainably defeated in Syria through a political transition.

We provide certain groups in the moderate opposition with political and practical support so that they can stand up to both the tyranny of Asad and that of Daesh. This has included communications, medical and logistics equipment and equipment to protect against chemical weapons attacks. The UK does not provide weapons to anybody in Syria. We will maintain this support, while continually and rigorously assessing all recipients to

ensure that they are not involved in any extremist activity or human rights abuses.

Universal Credit

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the rationale for setting a single benefit cap earnings exception threshold in Universal Credit linked to the National Living Wage; and whether this will require under-25s receiving the lower National Minimum Wage, including young lone parents, to work a longer number of hours before qualifying for the exception. [HL6169]

Lord Henley: A threshold linked to the national living wage ensures the work incentive provided by the benefit cap is maintained. The new threshold is consistent with the original intention of the earnings exception threshold by excepting from the cap any household that earns the monthly equivalent of working 16 hours per week at the highest minimum wage rate in force.

The Government has fully considered the position of people who may have to work more than 16 hours to qualify for the exception. More information is in the impact assessment and equality analysis published with the Universal Credit (Benefit Cap Earnings Exception) Amendment Regulations 2017 (SI No: 2017/138). The Government also published a statement in response to comments made by the Social Security Advisory Committee on the amendments.

These documents can be found on: the 'legislation.gov.uk' website by searching for year 2017 number 138

And on the 'gov.uk' website by searching 'universal credit benefit cap earnings exception amendment regulations 2017 ssac report'

Yemen: Press Freedom

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia regarding enabling journalists to enter Yemen. [HL6233]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: This Government recognises the importance of free movement of journalists to cover issues of global importance. This must be balanced against security and safety considerations. The Government currently advises against all travel to Yemen.

The Foreign Secretary last spoke to the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, Adel al Jubeir on 22 March and

discussed the importance of finding progress towards a political settlement.

Zimbabwe: Overseas Aid

Asked by Lord Oates

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much overseas development aid funding has been committed to Zimbabwe in each of the last ten years for which figures are available. [HL6271]

Lord Bates: The amounts of UK official bilateral development assistance to Zimbabwe in the last ten years are set out below. The final figure for 2016 will be published in mid-2017.

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Total UK Net Bilateral Official Development Assistance (£ thousands)</i>
2015	92,896
2014	104,024
2013	93,836
2012	138,831
2011	48,357
2010	69,936
2009	71,309
2008	49,323
2007	47,022
2006	37,970

Zimbabwe: Pensions

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of making the necessary financial arrangements to enable the government of Zimbabwe to pay the pension arrears owing to those former members of HM Overseas Service who responded to the British Government's request that they remain in their posts after Southern Rhodesia became independent. [I] [HL6228]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Government understands the hardship that lack of pension payments causes to former service-people and their families. The British Ambassador to Zimbabwe raises pensions frequently with the Zimbabwean Government and has secured written confirmation that it will resume payments when the economic situation improves. However, we have not made an estimate of the cost as these payments are the responsibility of the Government of Zimbabwe as set out in the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979.

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